Graduate School of BUSINESS
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

INCLUSION CHALLENGES AT THE INTERSECTION OF MARGINALISED IDENTITIES: A STUDY OF BLACK MIGRANT WOMEN IN SOUTH AFRICA

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VLNELE001

A thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

at The Graduate School of Business

Faculty of Commerce

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

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FEBRUARY 2025

University of Cape Town

University of Cape Town

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank the 23 participants who shared their personal life stories with me. These resilient women were keen to share their intimate thoughts, feelings, and experiences, which were the backbone of my study. They selflessly offered their time and insightful feedback and allowed themselves to be vulnerable, yet truthful. This study would have never been possible without their contribution and their voices. A special note of appreciation goes to individuals such as Bianca Rousseau and Jonathan Sudi Anzuluni, as well as the Scalabrini NGO, who went above and beyond to connect me with some of the participants.

I would also like to thank my supervisor, Dr Babar Dharani, for his unwavering support, guidance, and mentoring throughout my PhD journey. Further, I am very grateful to Professor Kurt April and the Allan Gray Centre Scholarship Committee, who believed in my research idea and awarded me the Allan Gray Centre Scholarship for four continuous years (2021-2024). My gratitude is also offered to the University of Cape Town for awarding me two Conference Scholarships, giving me the opportunity to present my research to international and local audiences, and connecting me with unique people from around the globe.

I extend my gratitude to other academics, scholars, and emerging researchers who significantly contributed to shaping my research project, provided me with constructive feedback, and shared significant bibliography and research articles.

Finally, my love and gratitude go out to my parents, my sister, and my life partner for offering unconditional love and continuous encouragement, as well as my beloved fur babies, who experienced the most challenging moments with me and never left my side.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABBREVIATION	DEFINITION
B-BBEE	Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
SADC	Southern African Development Community
UCT	University of Cape Town
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore the inclusion challenges faced by highly educated, documented, professional Black migrant women in a Black-majority context, analysing the impact of their identities on inclusion across institutional, organisational, and social levels. While much research on migrant women has been conducted in Western contexts, little is known about how highly educated Black migrant women experience inclusion in African settings. Grounded in intersectionality theory (Crenshaw), identity theory, and social identity theory, the research examined how inclusion challenges emerge at the intersection of gender, race, and migration status. The main research question that guided this study was: *How do inclusion challenges emerge at the intersection of marginalised identities of Black migrant women in a Black majority setting?* Twenty-three highly educated professional Black migrant women, selected through purposeful and snowball sampling, participated in the study, which employed a qualitative, inductive, hermeneutic phenomenological methodology, utilising semi-structured interviews.

The primary study findings revealed that gender, race, and migration status intersect in multiple ways, producing both inclusionary and exclusionary experiences. Meaningful inclusion requires engagement with processes operating at individual, organisational, and institutional levels. The contextual relevance of South Africa reinforces the salience of these identities, which are shaped by the interplay of social categorisation, self-identification, and differentiation. This interplay predisposes Black migrant women to institutionalised xenophobia, gendered and racial exclusion, and persistent othering.

By investigating the strategic deployment of agentic identities in decentring otherness and marginalisation, the study develops a multi-layered intersectional identity framework that integrates individual, organisational, and institutional dimensions. The research advances intersectionality theory by introducing newly formed identities in response to institutional and societal exclusions, while also emphasising the need for nuanced approaches to inclusion. The findings underscore the urgency of robust intersectional institutional policies, structural reforms in organisations and institutions, and reworking notions of “otherness” within and beyond the workplace, offering significant contributions to both theory and practice.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH STUDY

Migration as a subject of contemporary study has typically been identified with the movement of people across nation-states and territorial borders, highlighting issues of ethnicity, cultural adaptation, and social dislocation (Anthias, 2012). According to the 2020 World Migration Report (McAuliffe & Khadria, 2020), the total number of international migrants was estimated at approximately 272 million globally, with nearly two-thirds classified as labour migrants. The World Bank (2006) further reported that nearly half of all international migrants are women, migrating for purposes similar to men, including employment opportunities, education, escaping economic hardship, and self-actualisation. Similarly, Diop and A'Aloisio (2014) supported that nearly 49% of all migrant workers are women, contrary to earlier migration patterns in which women remained behind while men migrated. As such, women have found empowerment, gaining a greater sense of agency over their destinies (Caritas Internationalis, 2007). This trend has been recognised as the "feminisation of migration," a phenomenon across several studies, including migration and gender studies, a topical subject of immense interest to scholars.

Extant research has consistently shown that migrants face high levels of exclusion and marginalisation in host countries, experiencing several forms of discrimination in the form of xenophobia, racism, and gender bias (Crush & Ramachandran, 2014; Fong et al., 2016; McKinley et al., 2001). Within organisational and management studies, discourses on migrant inclusion frequently intersect with workplace marginalisation. Workplace inclusion has gained momentum in both academic and practitioner literature (Ferdman & Deane, 2014; Mor Barak et al., 2016), emphasising the experiences of employees whose membership in particular social identity categories increases the likelihood of their discrimination (Folguera, 2014; Kulkarni et al., 2016; Ozturk & Tatli, 2016; Ponzoni et al., 2017).

Systems of privilege have long existed within societal contexts, shaping people's lived experiences of inequality. Intersectional identities further affect these dynamics, resulting in the construction of privileged or non-privileged individuals (Marfelt, 2016). Invisible privilege is prevalent amongst those who possess it, whilst it remains visible to those excluded from it (Kimmel &

Coston, 2012). Privilege is also contextual, relational, and subject to circumstances (Marfelt, 2016; Nash, 2008). Intersectionality is, therefore, intrinsically intertwined with privilege, shaping social positionalities across multiple axes of advantage and disadvantage (Atewologun, 2018; Case et al., 2014). In professional settings, Atewologun and Sealy (2014) adopted an intersectional lens to investigate privilege, showing how ethnic, gender, and hierarchical status intersect to shape people's experiences in organisations.

Rodriguez et al. (2016) further suggested that the habitual mentioning of race, gender, and class not only eclipses other dimensions of difference, such as age, sexuality, religion, and, critically, migration status, but often obscures the identification of new, emerging categories, significant in transnational workplaces, perpetuating inequalities by establishing hierarchies among "global workers." Echoing the words of scholars advocating for a multidimensional theory building on an empirical examination of intersectional categories of difference (Blommaert & Rampton, 2015; Knapp, 2005), this research moves beyond the conventional gender-race-class triad to examine the understudied invisible identity of migration status/foreignness. This is evident from (1) Emerald's Publishing call for research on "visible disadvantage, invisible privilege" and "invisible disadvantage, visible privilege" around the topic titled *Intersectionality in Progressive Research: Contesting Privilege, Fostering Inclusion,* and within their esteemed *Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion* special issue (Klarsfeld et al., 2019), and (2) Australian and New Zealand Academy of Management's call for research on belongingness (Bryer, 2020), diversity management, human resources practices around marginalised groups, inclusion, and intersectionality in the workplace (Ayoko & Fujimoto, 2023; Köllen, 2021; Talwar, 2010).

By investigating the intersection of visible identities (race and gender) with an invisible identity (migration status), the present study responds to these research calls. In addition, by integrating the lens of Black psychology, this research aims to provide a nuanced theoretical contribution that is often absent in Western contexts. In particular, this study investigates "the lifestyles of Black people based on their authentic experiences" (White, 1970) and seeks to define "African psychological experiences from an African perspective that reflects an African orientation to the meaning of life, the world, and relationships with others and one's self" (Grills, 2006, p. 13). The inquiry, therefore, falls within the field of Black/African psychology, defined as "a dynamic

manifestation of unifying African principles, values, and traditions" (Parham et al., 2000, p. 95). Black/African psychology, as a system of thought and knowledge, extends beyond examining Black people's responses to racism and oppression, situating itself in African philosophy as a basis for meaning-making and relational understanding (Nobles, 1980; Robertson, 2005).

The racialisation of migrant women is deeply shaped by intersectional structures of race, gender, migration status, and labour. Scholars have emphasised the significance of addressing these complexities through intersectional and decolonial frameworks to better comprehend and challenge the systemic inequalities embedded in migrant women's lives. This growing area of scholarship provides critical insights into how racialisation operates across various contexts, gaining insights into the persistent challenges experienced by migrant women. In this regard, the study considers new developments in intersectionality, expanding existing research within Black social psychology, particularly in relation to personality, identity, cognition, attitudes, beliefs, and inclusion framed through an African-centered lens. The intersection of gender, race, and migration status within an organisational discourse is investigated, given the similarity of the social and psychological dynamics that exist in workplaces and the broader society (Dashtipour, 2015). From a holistic perspective, Wilde (2016) proposed the concept of "absent humanity," whereby toxic workplaces exacerbate individual performance, organisational effectiveness, and societal cohesion.

From a practical standpoint, migrant discrimination is intensified in workplace settings due to the simultaneous occurrence of multiple intersectional identities (Talwar, 2010). These overlapping identities often lead to distinct forms of discrimination and disadvantaged positions (Carbado & Gulati, 2013; Rajendran et al., 2017; Syed & Pio, 2010). For example, previous studies have shown how Afro-American women, Black gay men, Bosnian refugees, and Muslim women have experienced occupational "double jeopardy," resulting from the compounded outcome of racial and gender discrimination exacerbated by class oppression and other stigmatising dynamics (Beal, 1970; Bond & Perry, 1970; Colic-Peisker, 2005; Fields et al., 2016; Stasiulis et al., 2020; Syed & Pio, 2010).

Andrés T. Tapia, a well-known global diversity and inclusion strategist, stated that "diversity is

the mix. Inclusion is making the mix work" (Tapia, 2017, para. 1). Winters (2013) further highlighted that inclusion requires voluntary efforts, while diversity can be mandated and legislated. Inclusion can be attained through management and organisational strategies that offer access to equal opportunities for marginalised employees (Bell et al., 2011; Roberson, 2006). Inclusive workplaces ensure higher job satisfaction, staff retention, increased productivity, and greater innovation, aligning with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, as catalysts for organisational and societal transformation. Clearly defined by (Winters, 2013), "diversity counts heads, but inclusion makes heads count." Most of the studies on inclusion have been carried out in the United States of America (USA; Hwang & Hopkins, 2012; Shore et al., 2018). As a result, Stoermer et al. (2016) suggested for additional scholarship to understand inclusion globally. Given the significance of workplace inclusion, the present investigation of inclusion in South African organisations is considered topical, insistent, and pertinent, addressing an important gap. Legislative, social, and historical dynamics within national contexts determine the conditions in which inclusion is shaped and thrives, emphasising both general aspects and localised approaches (Kulkarni et al., 2016).

In light of these theoretical and practical considerations, this research is guided by the following central question: *How do inclusion challenges emerge at the intersection of marginalised identities of Black migrant women in a Black-majority context?*

1.2 Research Problem and Gap

Maxwell (2012) stated that a research problem is an issue occurring in the world that is either problematic or has problematic consequences. A robust theory that offers useful and original ideas while engaging with real-world problems helps identify key factors for study and explain their relationships (Corley & Gioia, 2011). Within this context, individuals of multiple layers of diversity, such as gender, race, and class, often experience multiple forms of discrimination, disadvantage, and subjugation. Women, particularly, remain one of the most vulnerable population groups across the globe, experiencing gender-based violence (GBV), multiple layers of discrimination, systemic inequalities, and exclusion in both society and the workplace. This is evident from the fact that one in three women and girls has experienced physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime. This form of discrimination is persistent across all countries,

undermining the transformative potential of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations Women, 2018). When gender-based discrimination intersects with other forms of marginalisation, it produces compounded forms of disadvantage and oppression that are particularly difficult to overcome.

Black migrant women in South Africa suffer compounded discrimination shaped by their intersectional identities as women, Blacks, and migrants. South Africa records some of the highest GBV rates worldwide, deeply rooted across institutions, cultures, and traditions (Foster, 1999). Intimate partner violence (IPV) and rape culture remarkably prevail amongst women (Machisa, 2011), often escalating to femicide (Abrahams et al., 2014). Despite legislative progress, by signing several international treaties, such as the Domestic Violence Act of 1998, the Sexual Offences Act of 2007, and the Prevention and Combating of Trafficking in Human Persons Act of 2022, GBV against women continues to increase. Between 2016/2017 and 2017/2018, there was an increase of 1320 homicides, reflecting the severity of the crisis (Artz et al., 2018).

Beyond GBV, institutional discrimination in South Africa remains alarming:

> Apartheid and the democratic system of governance failed to address the structural and institutional challenges reinforcing binaries based on inclusion and exclusion, race and class, gender and ethnicity, but also perpetuating democratic inequalities, pushing poverty and unemployment to high levels (de Silva, 2010; Rowser, 2010; Tshishonga, 2019).

Institutional racism against people of colour, primarily Blacks, was ingrained into nominally legitimised governmental policies, and continues to manifest as systemic exclusion from resources and opportunities (Bozalek, 2010). A nation branded by the concept of the "rainbow nation," traumatised by apartheid policies, colonialism, and imperialism, continues to alienate Black Africans from governance, exacerbating personal insecurity (Zegeye & Maxted, 2002), and undermining efforts to build an inclusive society founded on democracy and inclusive citizenship (Tshishonga, 2019). Although the late President Nelson Mandela reiterated what the old Freedom Charter supported, that all Blacks and Whites have the right to live in South Africa, as it belongs to everyone who lives there (Sonneborn, 2010), the African philosophy of ubuntu appears absent in the treatment of Black non-South Africans (Agyeno, 2019).

As a democratic and major economic industrial economy in Africa, post-Apartheid South Africa has become a key destination for international migrants, mainly from across the continent. According to the UN World Migration Report (McAuliffe & Khadria, 2020), approximately four million international migrants reside in South Africa, with the majority from South Africa's immediate neighbours, such as Mozambique, Lesotho, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Swaziland, and Botswana, as well as from other Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries, including Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, Ghana, Ivory Coast, and Senegal (Crush & Williams, 2002). However, Black immigrants, expatriates, and fellow African citizens face pervasive discrimination across all societal levels, often obscured by political narratives of "denialism" and "minimalism" within official xenophobia discourses (Barn, 2008; Harry et al., 2019; Mangu, 2019). Research has confirmed that xenophobia has manifested as Afrophobia, defined as "the fear of a specific other-the Black other from north of the Limpopo River" (Tshaka, 2016), and "hostilities among Africans of different nationalities," resulting in xenophobic attacks, violent abuses, anti-immigration attitudes, and negative sentiments (Akinola, 2017).

For Black migrant women, intersectional identities based on gender, race, and migration status amplify discrimination, exclusion, and marginalisation in professional settings. However, scholarship about such intersectional marginalisation has mostly focused on Western contexts, primarily in Europe and the USA. These studies have explored marginalised and historically excluded groups of devalued intersectional identities, including women and minorities in the Western context, but research remains scarce within the African context.

For example, the study conducted by Johansson and Śliwa (2016) investigated the intersection of gender and foreignness among non-national academic women in United Kingdom (UK) business schools, emphasising the dynamic and complex nature of foreignness. They argued that foreignness often has both beneficial and negative influences, encompassing multiple elements such as race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and cultural disparities. Similarly, Showers (2015) examined the intersection of gender, race, and ethnicity among African migrant women in the USA, revealing that occupations (i.e., nurses), professional contexts (i.e., healthcare), and workforce diversity in the USA shaped their professional identities and experiences, highlighting

ethnic differences. Similarly, Semu (2020) investigated the intersection of race, immigrant status, and gender, and concluded that African immigrant women nurses' experiences were shaped by their intersectional identities. In Turkey, Knappert et al. (2018) explored how refugee status intersected with gender, reinforcing workplace exclusion and exploitation, and generating precarious employment practices for female refugees.

While the above-cited studies contribute to an understanding of the phenomenon, it is important to acknowledge certain significant contextual differences when applying their findings and knowledge to a South African context. Firstly, South African diversity represents a unique demographic context where Black people form the overwhelming preponderance. The Black African population constitutes approximately 80.7%, compared to 7.9% White, 8.8% Coloured, and 2.6% Indian or Asian (Statistics South Africa, 2019). As such, this unique demographic composition permits the exploration of intersectional identities and inclusion challenges through the lens of Black social psychology. While racial minorities contend with White guilt in Western contexts (Ngamaleu, 2021), Black social psychology highlights different phenomena, such as imposter syndrome and success-related guilt, which shape Black individuals' experiences in distinct ways (Myeza & April, 2021). These differences can profoundly influence people's perceptions towards "otherness" (Brons, 2015), influencing exclusionary processes.

Secondly, there's a significant gap between policy and practice, manifesting as a negative treatment towards foreigners - a legacy of double colonisation: an institutionalised and legalised discriminatory system (Dassah, 2015). South Africa's immigration laws have been under scrutiny due to the maintenance of gendered and racialised exclusions, labelling migrant women as "undesirable" or "dependents" (Nyamnjoh, 2014). Thirdly, highly educated professional migrant women in South Africa face unique challenges at the intersection of race, gender, and migration status. Existing studies often focus on either low-skilled migrants or broader gender dynamics, without explicitly examining how highly educated women navigate professional environments in African contexts. This study aims to fill this gap by exploring the lived experiences of Black migrant women in South African workplaces.

Because of the above fundamental contextual differences, it is expected that the findings will differ

significantly from alternative contexts (Western contexts). Given the gravity of the situation illustrated through GBV, xenophobic attacks, and persistent institutional racism, there is a need for this gap to be immediately addressed through rigorous research, which will be conducted throughout this thesis. This thesis, therefore, seeks to provide new insights into the lived experiences of Black migrant women in South Africa, specifically within the workplace.

1.3 Research Purpose and Objectives

This study contributes to a better understanding of the inclusion of Black migrant women in South Africa by exploring the intersections of identities (gender, race, and migration status) and by taking into account multiple factors, including individual choices, organisational procedures, and structural conditions that contribute to persistent power disparities and disadvantage within both social and workplace settings (Syed & Özbilgin, 2009). Existing scholarship has only sparsely explored this particular intersection (Johansson & Śliwa, 2016; Rodriguez & Scurry, 2019; Semu, 2020; Showers, 2015; Tariq & Syed, 2017). The relational framework whereby inclusion is analysed differentiates the macro-national from the meso-organisational level and considers their interplay in order to conceptualise inclusion within a comprehensive, context-specific frame of diversity management.

Emphasis will be given on the shared experiences of Black migrant women, considering the persistent institutional racism in their daily lives, with the aim of contributing to ongoing scholarly debates in the fields of intersectionality and diversity management (Atewologun et al., 2016; Hennekam et al., 2017; Rodriguez et al., 2016; Zanoni et al., 2010). Intersectionality at the institutional level requires further investigation, and in particular, theoretical development and empirical research to build a solid foundation and realise its full potential. Therefore, the objectives of the present study are to:

- investigate how the intersection of gender, race, and migration status is shaped within an institutional context and how it affects the inclusion of Black migrant women in South Africa;
- identify organisational- and country-level influences affecting inclusion, and analyse patterns of their interrelations across levels;
- determine whether the intersectionality framework fosters inclusive workplace

environments for migrant women within the South African context;

- achieve a broader conceptualisation of inclusion by considering a specific migrant group across micro-, meso- and macro-environments; and
- construct a realistic and holistic theoretical framework that embeds intersectional identities and advances greater inclusion for marginalised groups.

1.4 Research Area

As the "godfather of Black psychology," Joseph White (1970) noted that Black psychology considers the psychological aspect and conduct of Black people shaped by their authentic experience in American society. Similarly, Louis Williams (1974, p. 3) argued that "Black psychology is the psychological consequence of being Black." This body of work presents the problems and issues of psychology from various operational viewpoints, including Eastern, African, Western, and Afro-American perspectives. While the approach to psychology adopted in this treatment owes little to these other perspectives, it centers on the general principle of the uniqueness of the Black Experience. However, scholars such as Nobles (1980), Baldwin (1989), and Akbar (2003) ground Black psychology in African culture, critiquing oppression- and racism-oriented conceptualisations that define Black people primarily through their oppression rather than their humanity (Smith, 1974; Wilcox, 1971).

African culture serves as a critical foundation in defining Black psychology and justifying its Afrocentric approach to formulating a cultural and theoretical basis in the field (Akbar, 1975; Baldwin, 1989; Clark, 1972). Nobles (1980) emphasised that Black psychology "is more than the 'darker dimension' of general psychology. Its unique status is derived not from the negative aspects of being Black in America, but rather from the positive features of basic African philosophy" (p. 23). Wilson (1998) elaborated further that Black psychology is a "psychology of liberation that is both prescriptive and descriptive," an amalgamation of critical consciousness and social actions that could create Black social theories. Therefore, Black thought, attitudes, and perceptions must be studied through a cultural lens linked to psychological phenomena that addresses the issues that people of African descent experience, evaluates their relations with other groups, and aims to improve their quality of life.

Most Black psychologists agree that the methodologies and tools of Western (European/White) psychology lack applicability to the experiences of Black or African people (Chrisman, 1975). White (1970) noted:

> It is vitally important that we develop, out of the authentic experience of Black people in this country, an accurate, workable theory of Black psychology. It is very difficult, if not impossible, to understand the lifestyles of Black people using traditional theories developed by white psychologists to explain white people" (p. 5).

Drawing on White's manifesto, Baldwin (1989) argued that Black psychology, as it stands, is largely dependent on Western psychology. Thus, he proposed to separate the two, as African cultures and philosophy are antecedents of Western cultures. Baldwin employed a worldview framework to develop the Worldview Scale and concluded that Black people own a more Afrocentric worldview, while White people exhibit a more Eurocentric orientation (Baldwin & Hopkins, 1990). His findings were corroborated by other scholars who clearly distinguished African from European cosmologies and, hence, African (Black) psychology from Western psychology, justifying African (Black) psychology's existence (Carruthers, 1972, 1981, 1984; Clark, 1972; Nobles, 1980; Williams, 1974). By contrast, some Black psychologists do not recognise Black psychology as an independent realm even if they acknowledge the existence of African (Black) psychology (Cross Jr, 1971; Evans, 1971; Guthrie, 2004; Hayes, 1991; Mosby, 1972; White, 1970; Williams, 1987).

Worldview analysis and paradigms have been employed as conceptual frameworks within Africa-centered psychology to develop cultural constructs, which evaluate the psychological experiences of people of African descent. Carroll (2010) argued that "a cultural group's understanding of the universe (cosmology), being (ontology), values (axiology), reasoning (logic), and knowledge (epistemology), all contribute to how a people make sense of their lived reality, i.e., their worldview" (p. 113). Most of the African worldview scholarship has generally concluded that its typical features involve collectivism, the unity of spirituality-materiality, respect of human-nature oneness, affective-cognitive synthesis, positive interpersonal relationships, the union of opposites, multidimensionality of self, and appreciation of spiritualism (Baldwin, 1989; Kambon, 2012; Myers, 1993).

Nobles (2015) valued the use of "spiritness," elaborating that merely applying Western psychology to the African world reinforces the negative aftermath of colonialism, enslavement, dehumanisation, and the westernisation of African people. The notion of spirit, or Sakhu (an ancient African notion), is parallel to the Greek term "psyche," and is quintessential to making sense of the world, interpreting phenomena, and being the main essence in psychology (Akbar, 2003; Nobles, 2013). Cokley and Garba (2018), citing Parham et al. (2000), explicated:

> Black/African-centered psychology is a dynamic manifestation of unifying African principles, values and traditions. It is the self-conscious 'centering' of psychological analyses and applications in African realities, cultures, and epistemologies. Black/African-centered psychology, as a system of thought and action, examines the processes that allow for the illumination and liberation of the Spirit. Relying on the principles of harmony within the universe as a natural order of existence, Black/African-centered psychology recognises: the Spirit that permeates everything that is; the notion that everything in the universe is interconnected; the value that the collective is the most salient element of existence; and the idea that communal self-knowledge is the key to mental health" (p. 95).

However, Black psychology demands more empirical research and theoretical formulations. Cokley et al. (2014) stated that African-centered psychology has remained largely theory-oriented, with limited empirical work, except for contributions by scholars, such as Joseph Baldwin and Daudi Azibo.

Intersectionality has emerged as a critical key concept across disciplines; a theoretical and methodological framework, an analytical tool, and a heuristic device that highlights interlocking systems of privilege and oppression within society interacting with multiple overlapping identities (Collins, 2022; Crenshaw, 1991). Intersectionality in psychology explores how individuals and communities are impacted by systemic, institutional, and structural inequalities (Cole, 2009; Lewis & Grzanka, 2016). Social psychology, which concerns how people think about, connect with, and influence one another (Myers, 1993), has advanced from a conventional to a critical field of study, examining social problems and psychological phenomena, such as stereotypes and discrimination. It, therefore, "challenges social institutions, practices, and power relations that contribute to forms of inequality and oppression" (Gough, 2013, p. 4) and incorporates the intersectionality framework (Bowleg, 2017). Social psychology has faced criticism for much of the published empirical

literature's failings in replication, causing a "replication crisis." However, it lays the foundation to conduct research focusing on group-level phenomena and bridging psychology and sociology. Within this study, intersectionality is employed to investigate the intersection of identities (gender, race, and migration status), thereby examining the inclusion challenges faced by Black migrant women at both meso- and macro-structural levels (Shore et al., 2011).

This study unfolds within Black social psychology, exploring typical African situations to contribute towards improving the living conditions of African populations. As African settings fundamentally differ from Western countries, in-depth investigation will pave the way for developing reliable psychosocial knowledge of African psychological realities (Ngamaleu, 2021). Applied social psychology focuses on solutions to social issues; therefore, it provides a valuable lens for studying African contexts and guiding interventions in this domain.

1.5 Research Questions

The primary research question was: *How do inclusion challenges emerge at the intersection of marginalised identities of Black migrant women in a Black majority setting?*

The sub-research questions inquired about how Black migrant women in South Africa:

- experience inclusion challenges at the macro-level;
- experience inclusion challenges at the meso-level;
- experience inclusion challenges at the micro-level; and
- overcome inclusion challenges?

1.6 Significance and Contribution of the Study

To determine whether the intersectionality framework fosters an inclusive workplace environment for migrant women in the South African context, this study contributes to the development of a multi-layered intersectional inclusion framework that integrates individual, organisational, and institutional dimensions, advancing intersectionality theory, and emphasising the need for nuanced, context-specific approaches to inclusion.

While the subject of migrant women and their inclusion in the workplace and society continues to

attract interest globally (Bailey, 2012; Knocke, 1991; Pio & Essers, 2014; Rodriguez & Scurry, 2019; Syed & Pio, 2010), there is a lack of literature on the experiences of working professional Black migrant women in non-Western contexts. Few studies employing an intersectional lens have investigated how marginalised identities influence and are influenced by inclusion in institutional terms in a non-Western context. Most studies have explored the migration experiences of Black women in the USA (Semu, 2020; Showers, 2015) and Europe (Atewologun et al., 2016; Johansson & Śliwa, 2016). The present study is therefore significant as it explores the inclusion challenges at the intersection of marginalised identities in South Africa by considering a specific group and incorporating foreignness/migration status as an innovative, analytical category within organisational and diversity management studies.

Although prior scholarship has explored the lived experiences of Black migrant women in the workplace, it has not investigated how their identities generated locations of discrimination, marginalisation, and disadvantage, nor mechanisms to address these issues at the intersection of their identities at three levels (i.e., macro, meso, and micro). By filling this gap, the study provides a critical foundation for advancing both theoretical and practical understandings of inclusion.

1.6.1 Contributions to Theory

This study contributes to intersectionality theory by carefully contextualising the exploration of the intersection of marginalised identities (gender, race, and foreignness) within a system of deeply entrenched racial and gender inequalities and institutionalised xenophobia. First, it makes a theoretical contribution to intersectionality theory and the identities field by introducing a multi-layered intersectional identity framework that embeds newly formed identities to achieve greater inclusion for Black migrant women. This framework integrates identity theory, social identity theory, and intersectionality theory, providing a novel lens to understand how these women reconstruct their identities in response to institutional and societal exclusions. The thesis postulates that Black migrant women develop new, dynamic identities to address inclusion challenges at the micro, meso, and macro levels.

Second, the study addresses the context of the lives of Black migrant women within Black/African psychology, exploring group phenomena and individual agency from an Afri-centric perspective.

Unlike dominant Eurocentric models of intersectionality, this research incorporates an Afri-centric perspective, examining how cultural and historical contexts shape collective agency and identity formation. This research also expands the concept of racialisation in migration studies (Atewologun et al., 2016; Mor Barak, 2000; Nkomo & Ngambi, 2009; Rodriguez et al., 2016; Syed & Pio, 2010). It empirically investigates how the racialisation of Black migrant women is not only a process of 'othering,' considering the stereotypes, prejudice, and biases in place, but also a structural mechanism reinforcing institutionalised xenophobia and gendered exclusion.

Fourth, it unpacks institutional and structural discrimination in South Africa by analysing organisational and country-level influences, identifying specific exclusionary patterns, and therefore, addressing a gap in South African migration and diversity scholarship. In doing so, the study advances inclusion research in a non-Western, Global South context, providing insights into anti-Black racism, xenophobia, and gendered labour exclusion.

1.6.2 Contributions to Practice

Beyond its theoretical contributions, this study offers valuable knowledge for policy and practice initiatives aimed at dismantling systemic obstacles that Black migrant women in South Africa and beyond experience. The study's results have crucial real-world implications not only for South African organisations but also for international, policymakers and community leaders. The proposed multi-layered intersectional identity framework is a pathway to comprehend the distinct challenges experienced by Black migrant women in diverse settings. It is a solid tool for practitioners to design interventions that address how race, gender, and foreignness are interconnected, promoting more inclusive and equitable workplaces and communities.

The study advises organisations to develop policy initiatives sensitive to intersectional identities without ignoring the unique obstacles faced by Black migrant women. Training programmes explicitly addressing institutionalised xenophobia and gendered racism must be part of the employee training and development policy for managers and teams, equipping organisations to support diverse workforces. The study provided evidence-based insights into equal opportunity measures, including recruitment, promotion procedures, and career growth; thus, organisational leaders and human resources professionals should incorporate them into human practice practices

to foster an inclusive workplace. Last, the introduction and implementation of mentorship programmes, language support, peer groups, and tailored support systems can lead to reduced biases, promote belonging, and strengthen retention.

The study also highlighted the persistence of institutional and structural discrimination, an additional contribution for practitioners to reform migration, labour, and anti-discrimination legislation for migrant women. Considering that migrant women are unfairly disadvantaged because of foreignness, accessing equal employment opportunities and legal support resources can be addressed by inclusive and equitable policies and practices. Community leaders and civic organisations can leverage the study's findings to deploy an Afrocentric perspective and empower migrant women with resources and support programmes. Programmes that promote intercultural communication, solidarity, and safe spaces for sharing experiences can reduce xenophobia and build robust community bonds. Faith-based organisations can play a pivotal role by offering emotional and spiritual support, strengthening resilience and well-being among Black migrant women.

1.7 Research Assumptions

An assumption, as defined by Vogt and Johnson (2011) in the Dictionary of Statistics and Methodology, is "a statement that is presumed to be true, often only temporarily or for a specific purpose, such as building a theory." In research, assumptions are constructed, applied, and accepted as true or at least plausible, and are applicable in both quantitative and qualitative research. In quantitative research, assumptions are formulated as hypotheses, whereas in qualitative research, they typically relate to research design, sampling, statistical tests, or other delimitations. Assumptions are indispensable as they establish the context within which a study is conducted, ensuring that the results and conclusions are not easily contested (Cooper & Schindler, 2014).

The following assumptions guided the present study:

- Participants responded candidly and explicitly to the questions posed.
- The study assured that all participants had experienced the same or a similar phenomenon related to the study, shaped by South Africa's historical background and the associated

gender-, race-, and migration-related discrimination.

- Participants had no motive to participate in the study other than contributing to the research cause.
- The intersection of gender, race, or migration status affects workplace inclusion and the broader inclusion of Black migrant women in South Africa.
- Workplace strategies, national policies, and legislative frameworks constrain the inclusion of Black migrant women within South African organisations and society.

The study reports on the inclusion of Black migrant women employed across different organisations in South Africa by capturing their personal narratives within both work and societal contexts. Through an intersectional framework, it scrutinised this premise through insights gained by analysing personal stories of inclusion challenges. The research employed a qualitative methodological approach, allowing for an in-depth exploration of first-order experiences and subjective perspectives, in alignment with the stated assumptions.

1.8 Research Strengths and Limitations

Within hermeneutic phenomenological research, the researcher serves as the primary analytical tool, inevitably assuming prior knowledge and experiences, and complicating the existence of biases in research. However, Van Manen (2017) supported that researchers should engage in the process of clarifying assumptions and pre-understandings. To ensure that biases and subjectivity are alleviated from the research, the practice of "bracketing" is indispensable. "Bracketing" in hermeneutics is similar to epoché in qualitative research. Wertz (2011) estimated that "epoché entails bracketing prior knowledge, or setting aside theories, hypotheses, measuring instruments, and prior research" and assures that the researcher exclusively focuses on participants' experiences. While Van Manen (2017) underscored the value of hermeneutic phenomenology in inspiring researchers to leverage their experiences and maintain a conversational relationship with participants, the researcher engaged in epoché to focus on participants' lived experiences. Given the inherently subjective nature of phenomenological data, the risk of researcher-induced bias is high, complicating validity (McLellan et al., 2003). The researcher mitigated this by suspending judgment and sustaining an open, engaging dialogue with participants.

Furthermore, the interpretation of the data was also challenging, as inherent biases can be persistent during the interview process. Additionally, participants may have been hesitant to disclose personal experiences of potential subordination, marginalisation, or discrimination, making data collection on racism, sexism, and xenophobia extremely difficult. Despite the strengths of qualitative research methods, such as interviews and participant observations for vulnerable populations (Dundon & Ryan, 2010; O'Day & Killeen, 2002), the researcher had to be an interactive, empathetic listener to build a trusting relationship with participants to strengthen the quality and validity of the data.

Finally, while the study employed a small number of participants (n = 23) and content areas were represented, participants' experiences could not be considered typical. Different sample sizes are recommended for phenomenological research by various textbooks. However, according to Ellis (2022), a sample of between six and twenty individuals is sufficient. In hermeneutic phenomenology, the inclusion of more participants may alter the study's findings. Importantly, hermeneutic phenomenology does not aim for generalisability; rather, it explicitly focuses on the lived experiences of participants, the meanings, and "the world as we immediately experience it pre-reflectively rather than as we conceptualise, categorise, or reflect on it" (Van Manen, 2017, p. 9).

Several limitations were experienced, and included the following:

- Participants often referred to their overall professional experience, sharing moments from different working environments. Since the methodology requires lived examples, the women delved into their experiences beyond their current employment contexts.
- The study employed a cross-sectional design due to time restrictions. Longitudinal studies provide insights into cause-and-effect relationships, notwithstanding that the objectives of this study were to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon experienced by the participants. Therefore, the study followed a cross-sectional approach.
- The study utilised a representative sample, with participants selected from diverse industries and countries.
- Many participants referred to their school and childhood experiences. However, this study did not explore these experiences as they fell outside the scope of the research objectives

and questions.

- There was a lack of range in the age of participants. The study utilised purposeful and snowball sampling. Age was not the first criterion to identify the participants — the inclusion criteria required participants to be working professionals over 18 years old with high educational qualifications. Black migrant women of a different age may have provided additional insights into the phenomenon of interest.
- Data collection primarily took place via online interviews. Only two face-to-face interviews were conducted due to time restrictions, participant location, and technical challenges in transcription, including distractions and background noise. Zoom and Microsoft Teams served as the primary platforms, which proved efficient, although some participants kept their camera off due to technical issues.

This study also had several notable strengths:

- Thick, detailed accounts of the participants' experiences were collected, bringing a deeper meaning to the experience of Black migrant women, facing inclusion challenges at the intersection of their marginalised identities in South Africa.
- The participants were employed in a wide variety of industries, from the non-profit sector to academia, to accounting, the pharmaceutical industry, and law firms.
- The participants were highly educated Black migrant women holding qualifications, from Bachelor's, Master's, to Doctor of Philosophy, and Postdocs. They were all working professionals with varied years of experience, from interns and early junior professionals to leaders, senior professionals, and managers, providing a meaningful cross-section of their experiences.
- Thick, rich narratives about the phenomenon experienced were collected through a philosophical hermeneutic approach and semi-structured, open-ended interview questions. The participants were open and honest about their experiences and shared sensitive and valuable information; thus, the authentic representations of their lived realities were captured.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a comprehensive literature review on the intersectionality of migrant women. Initially, it offers an overview of the intersection of gender and race within both the workplace and society, laying the foundation for the conceptualisation of race, racism, Black, and Blackness. Subsequently, it explores the intersection of gender and migration, providing an overview of the challenges faced by migrant women, which contributes to the development of intersectionality within migration research. Furthermore, the chapter delves into the racialisation of migrant women, offering a historical context within South Africa and highlighting the multiple barriers they encounter, including gendered barriers and structural and institutional discrimination. Following this, the chapter outlines the agency and identity negotiation of migrant women, with a detailed examination of relevant studies. The chapter concludes by outlining the theoretical and conceptual framework of intersectionality, as well as the conceptualisation of inclusion, identity, and social identity theory.

2.2 The Intersection of Gender and Race at the Workplace and Society

Being a woman does not exist in isolation from bearing other identities. Black women's experiences, as depicted by Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw (1991), are unique because of their dual identity of being a woman and being Black. Black women have been at the centre of the intersectional analysis, located within a range of social groups and systems intersecting and producing structural inequalities which can result in marginalised identities (Crenshaw, 1991). Their experiences do not necessarily reflect the sum of oppressions of racism and sexism (race + sex), but their unique identities and social locations have been created by the melding (melting, welding, blending) of these relationships. Their life stories and perspectives are not necessarily related to, or based on, other groups such as White women or Black men (Bowleg, 2017; Crenshaw, 1991).

Several studies have extensively examined the multifaceted challenges Black women encounter within organisational settings, discussing compounded racial and gender biases, structural discrimination and barriers, stereotypes, microaggressions, as well as racism and sexism

(Baboolal, 2019; Henning, 2020; Holt, 2023; Lean In & McKinsey & Company, 2021; Pio & Essers, 2014; Sue et al., 2007). Normalised attitudes or messages towards specific social identity groups, such as Black women, stemming from systems of domination (racism, sexism) have translated into intentional or unintentional actions and words perpetuating social and systemic inequalities (Pierce, 1970; Solórzano, 1998; Sue et al., 2007). The context surrounding these events is important, as ongoing and repetitive actions significantly affect victims, inflicting both psychological and physiological harm, which is further worsened by institutional issues (Pierce, 1970; Solórzano, 1998; Sue et al., 2007). Deeply entrenched societal disparities such as racism and sexism often go unnoticed, and the nature of aggressions shifts based on the context (Sue et al., 2007).

Organisational research has also indicated that the intersectional stereotypes of Black women may convey certain disadvantages during the hiring process. Rubin and Badea (2007) argued that the trait of dominance owned by Black people can be perceived as interpersonally negative. Natural characteristics, such as Afrocentric hairstyles, that have been associated with Black identity and dominance, make Black people less professional than Black women with Eurocentric hairstyles, less competent, and stand little chance to obtain an interview recommendation compared to White women or Black women with straightened hair (Opie & Phillips, 2015; Rosette et al., 2018a). However, stereotypical perceptions of Black women as masculine and agentic may serve as a privilege during hiring, as it appears to pave the way for their entry into positions that demand masculine qualities such as assertiveness or forcefulness (Hall et al., 2015).

Daya and April (2014) supported that "stereotypes lead to a lack of respect and acceptance, as people make assumptions based on groups, not considering an individual's contribution. When acceptance and respect are missing, individuals feel threatened, bullied, and potentially harassed." According to Adam and Moodley (1993), many White people consider Black people are inherently less capable, and "centuries of oppression have led to the 'inferiorisation of Blacks' whereby Blacks were seen as innately inferior and intellectually limited."
Stereotyped perceptions of Black women as overbearing and domineering have been persistent for decades in the USA (Pratt, 2012). Black women have either been portrayed as angry and oppositional to interracial relationships (Childs, 2005) or strong (Collins, 2022; Radford-Hill,

2002). For example, while exploring Black women's stances on Black-White heterosexual relationships, Childs (2005) reported that the impact of racism and sexism was significantly present in their lives, as Black women were devalued based on their race and gender. Subsequently, he recommended that everyone (i.e., Whites, Blacks, men, and women) address these racial and gender inequalities in order to make a change (Childs, 2005). Empirical research has indicated that while White women face expectations of warmth, Black women face stereotypes of strength, assertiveness, and aggression, in addition to perceptions of incompetence (Ghavami & Peplau, 2013; Niemann et al., 1994; Rosette et al., 2018a).

Due to systemic inequalities and societal pressures, Black women may experience an extensive range of emotions, including stress, frustration, anger, sadness, and anxiety (Ramos & Yi, 2020). The Strong Black Woman schema is a cultural stereotype depicting Black women as resilient, self-reliant, and independent (Liao et al., 2020). While this stereotype can be empowering, it may also have detrimental effects, including causing Black women to suppress their emotions and refrain from seeking assistance when necessary (Kelly et al., 2021). Embodied intersectionality has also focused on how Black women experience both racial and gender oppression, with physical and emotional consequences, whereby the body, as a site of oppression and resilience, holds trauma and societal meaning (Mirza, 2013). Nevertheless, overcoming this schema is crucial for the emotional growth of Black women (Liao et al., 2020).

Within the South African context, constructions of race and gender are salient, considering the legacy of apartheid policies, patriarchal systems, and colonialism which controlled daily life. "Becoming racialised" may be more powerful than "becoming gendered" because of the context, yet this does not undermine the social forces that interact to create racialised and gendered experiences for individuals. This study shares the viewpoint of modern authors who support that in today's South Africa, the process of becoming "a person" and finding integration in meaning, identity, and opportunities for survival encompasses all experiences arising from racialisation, the process of "becoming gendered," and the considerations of culture, class, and sexuality.

Black women have been extensively examined in South Africa as they encounter distinct challenges influenced by historical, social, and political dynamics that marginalise their identities.

Research conducted by Mama (1995) examined the lasting effects of apartheid, which established institutional racial and gender discrimination, creating systemic obstacles to inclusion for Black women. Even in the post-apartheid era, these inequalities remain prevalent, as highlighted by Chisale (2018), who emphasised that patriarchal and racial norms continue to disadvantage Black women in both social and organisational environments. Likewise, Nkomo and Ngambi (2009) investigated how the "double jeopardy" of being both Black and female places South African women in a less favourable position in the workplace, restricting their chances for career advancement and access to leadership positions. These insights illustrate that the intersection of race and gender is essential for comprehending the lived experiences of Black women in South Africa, where socio-economic and cultural factors further intensify their exclusion.

Further, researchers have highlighted how societal narratives and institutional policies influence the experiences of inclusion for Black women. Msimang (2002) argued that cultural narratives, which are grounded in patriarchy, often portray Black women as inferior caregivers, limiting their chances for empowerment. This perspective is supported by findings from Booysen (2007), who reported that Black women encountered substantial discrimination when trying to gain equal access to educational and job opportunities, reinforcing cycles of disadvantage. Investigations by Ncube (2017) showcased the strength and agency of Black women, who skilfully navigate systemic barriers by establishing networks and cultivating solidarity within their communities. Together, these studies emphasise the critical need for an intersectional approach and intersectional strategies to tackle the complex oppressions faced by Black women in South Africa, promoting their complete involvement in both society and the economy.

2.2.1 Conceptualisation of Race, Racism, Black, and Blackness

Race is a social fabrication constructed to categorise individuals based on physical features such as skin colour, hair, and eye and nose shape (Desmond & Emirbayer, 2009). Scientifically, race has no biological basis, as the human race is one. Yet, the notion is used by societies to rationally establish systems of privilege, power, disenfranchisement, subordination, and oppression. The American Anthropological Association states:

> The 'racial' worldview was invented to assign some groups to perpetual low status, while others were permitted access to privilege, power, and wealth. The tragedy in the United

> States has been that the policies and practices stemming from this worldview succeeded all too well in constructing unequal populations among Europeans, Native Americans, and peoples of African descent (American Anthropological Association, 2019).

Racism and racial discrimination are worldwide problems and espouse the belief that different racial groups are inherently ranked either as superior or inferior. Schmitt et al. (2017) explained racism as a "multiscale, resilient practice of social discrimination in a world going plural but [remaining] unequal" (p. 242). Racism manifests itself in various ways, taking into account different localities and nation-states (Dikötter, 2008). Racism is a system of beliefs, policies, and practices aimed at maintaining White superiority (Pincus, 1996). It can be institutional or individual and refers to actions or policies intended to impact minorities or women differently (Goodhart, 2014; Pincus, 1996; Seekings, 2008). Although Pincus (1996) and Pincus and Ehrlich (1994) elucidated the term racism to be derogatory, it emphasises the social system of domination that results in oppression and inequalities and is influenced by interlocking racial hierarchies and privileges.

The term Black is used for the African population group only. While Black is an inclusive term referring to the racially classified population groups during apartheid: Coloured, Indian, and African (Manzo, 1996), it is also used in politics or power struggles, signifying all non-White minority populations. In this study, Black migrant women refer to the migrant women from any sub-Saharan country or with sub-Saharan African ancestral origin with brown or black complexion who have immigrated into South Africa (Agyemang et al., 2005). Despite the limitations of the term Black being considered offensive and associated with slavery, it is a socially recognised and historically lasting concept (Agyemang et al., 2005; Senior & Bhopal, 1994). Although this is not supported by other sciences (McKenzie & Crowcroft, 1996; Senior & Bhopal, 1994), in studies of racism, the term Black is central and has a psychosocial and political significance covering diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds (Claybrook Jr., 2021). It conceals a remarkable heterogeneity of cultures among diverse African populations and reinforces racial stereotypes.

Fanon expressed the all-encompassing experience of Blackness as seen through the eyes of White individuals (Drabinski, 2019). He supported that being Black entailed the negation of one's own

subjective feelings and perceptual reality, while simultaneously being faced with “a thousand details, anecdotes, and stories” (Drabinski, 2019, p. 63) about Blackness as it is narrated and enforced by Whites. He defined Blackness as a relational construct which “not only must the black man be Black; he must be Black in relation to the White man” (Drabinski, 2019, p. 63). In this study, the Black experience is not wholesome, but its shades rather fluctuate, grounded in the regional racial dynamics, the historical context of White supremacy, the legacies of colonisation, slavery, and acts of resistance, and the interactions between different ethnic groups, particularly among Black individuals. Therefore, in this study, Black people must (also) be Black in relation to other Blacks.

2.3 Gender and Migration

Gender refers to the traits associated with women and men that are shaped by social constructs and are connected to their roles and responsibilities, developed within families, societies, and cultures (Stead, 2013). People are born female or male, but they acquire the behaviours and identities of women and men. This learned behaviour makes up gender identity and determines the gender roles and expectations of both men and women, which vary according to a society’s cultural norms and beliefs. As a result of gender stereotypes, girls and women are confronted with gender discrimination and are frequently less valued and marginalised. Gender discrimination often stems from stereotypes based on the societal expectations of both genders and describes situations in which males and females are treated differently because of their gender rather than based on their individual skills or capabilities. Previous studies on gender have shown that women’s experiences are not only shaped by their gender but other identities such as foreignness, race, age, religion, class, and sexuality (Atewologun et al., 2016; Holvino, 2010; Rosette et al., 2018b; Stephens, 2018; Stypińska & Gordo, 2018; Syed & Pio, 2010).

The International Organisation for Migration defines a migrant as any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a state away from his or her habitual place of residence temporarily or permanently and for various reasons. Here, it refers to voluntarily documented migrants who migrated with or without being coerced, capitalising on available opportunities abroad. They can be highly skilled, seeking family unification, or business people seeking better-paid employment prospects or economic empowerment (Solimano, 2006).

Three decades ago, migrant women were initially seen as “dependants of men.” Men were the prototype migrants, breadwinners, and decision-makers in the household; nevertheless, migrant women play a crucial role in a variety of migration streams (Bastia & Piper, 2019). Zlotnik (2019) stated that the number of female migrants has been steadily increasing across the globe; the quantitative significance of migrant women in the total share of the overall migration population increased from 46.6% in 1960 to 48.8% in 2000. Within this pattern, there are significant differences by region, and a few regions and countries account for the bulk of total and female migrants. According to the 2009 UN Development Programme report, Northern America, Western Europe, and Asia accounted for 55% of the stock of all migrants in 1990, which went up to more than 60% in 2005. By the same token, women’s share of the total migrant population in these regions made up the majority, 52% and 57.5%, in these two years, respectively. Africa shared 11% of all migrants and 10% of women migrants in 1990; this decreased in 2005 to 9% for both groups.

Primarily, economic reasons make women immigrate. Adepoju (2005) pointed out that women primarily turn into migrants to meet their own economic obligations, seek better living conditions, and not join a husband and family. They move not as family dependents accompanying their husbands or reuniting but migrate independently, seeking better job opportunities, personal autonomy, and independence (Ncube et al., 2019). In contrast with Adepoju’s stance, Llácer et al. (2007) claimed that women follow their husbands for family reunification purposes, while other women migrate as primary caregivers from single-parent homes. Furthermore, the demand for specific services such as nurses, teachers, domestic workers, and other professions primarily dominated by women can drive them to migrate. Another case is when women are eager or forced to take jobs that men deny. In the International Committee for the Red Cross report, Diop and A'Aloisio (2014) noted that under specific circumstances, women were obliged to work, with families and children depending on their labour, from which they cannot escape.

Diop and A'Aloisio (2014) continued that these women also face “the double burden of professional work and the caring, unpaid work done in the home;” therefore, they could exercise their rights to move within the host country. In other countries where patriarchy and communal traditions are the main features of society, freedom and women’s rights are eventually restricted

to a great extent. Hence, women choose to escape and seek a host country where their rights are fully respected (Eisenstadt, 2002). In other cases, domestic violence and abusive relationships/marriages lead women to move elsewhere (Dako-Gyeke, 2013). Certain groups of women, including single mothers, unmarried women, widows, or divorcees, are confronted with a high level of discrimination and prejudice in their home countries, which leads them to migrate (Caritas Internationalis, 2007).

Economic and social unrest can also drive skilled and educated women to move to another country due to experiencing discrimination in the work environment in their home country (Njogu & Orchardson-Mazrui, 2013). Although extensive research has been conducted on migration and gender, for professional women, it has mostly concentrated on low-skilled migrant women, often highlighting their experiences of discrimination, exploitation, and exclusion in host societies (Adjai & Lazaridis, 2013; Misago, 2016). Research on highly-educated migrants typically emphasises men or investigates skilled migration within Global North environments, where systemic issues are more commonly recorded (Kofman, 2005; Rodriguez & Scurry, 2019). Nonetheless, there is a significant lack of understanding regarding the unique challenges and opportunities that highly educated professional migrant women encounter in African countries, where distinct social, political, and economic factors influence their inclusion, integration, and career paths.

In this study, the keywords “foreigner,” “migrant,” “foreignness,” and “migration status” are used interchangeably. Additionally, foreignness is considered a universal concept that merges all women who are foreign nationals in a given context (Rodriguez & Scurry, 2019). Contrarily, foreignness is viewed as a dynamic characteristic that generates varying outcomes based on how and by whom it is utilised, and for a specific intention (Johansson & Śliwa, 2016). Foreignness is measured in terms of “not being,” or not speaking the local languages, and is linked to markers such as legal status and nationality. It also refers to the state of being perceived as an alien, outsider, or non-national within a particular social, cultural, or national context. It is not merely a matter of legal or geographic origin but is also linked to cultural perceptions, identity, and power dynamics that influence inclusion and exclusion (Anthias, 2012; Yuval-Davis, 2011). Foreignness has been significantly racialised, is inherently complex, and, along with gender in intersectional terms,

enhances social hierarchies of belonging and addresses the complexity of social categories and their purpose (Collins, 2022; Kaufman, 2012; McCall, 2005; Walsh, 2014).

Overall, the current era is delineated by experts as "The Age of Migration," outlined by five phenomena: globalisation (there are a greater number of countries affected by migratory movements), acceleration (reflected in an increased volume of migrants), differentiation (migrants moving to a single country belong to a variety of ethnicities and groups), politicisation (domestic policies, bilateral, and regional relations and national security policies of states are being increasingly affected by concerns about risks of international migration and vice-versa), and feminisation (Castles et al., 2005). The growing feminisation of human movement has made it essential to incorporate intersectionality into migration studies. The goal is dual: to identify different categories of migrant women and break down their homogeneity, and examine the vulnerabilities they face as well as their impact on reshaping societies with a rich history of immigration (Cabieses et al., 2024). This study addresses the implications of the identities at the intersection of gender and foreignness, which is the root of the oppression, discrimination, marginalisation, and inequality that establishes the experiences of highly educated professional Black migrant women in South Africa.

2.4 INTERSECTIONALITY AND MIGRATION

Most of the intersectionality literature has primarily focused on two identities, gender and race (Cole, 2009; Crenshaw, 1989), as it was initially identified regarding Black women in the USA who experienced oppression, discrimination, and subordination due to the negative aftermath of the intersections of race and gender. Black feminism, born in the 1970s and 1980s, was an expression of Black women standing up against both Black male patriarchy and White feminism. The Combahee River Collective (1977/1995), a group of Black feminists, wrote a manifesto in which they expressed that they experienced discrimination and subordination based on three intersections: race, class, and sex.

They argued that "we find it difficult to separate race from class from sex oppression because in our lives they are most often experienced simultaneously" (Combahee River Collective, 1977/1995, p. 234). Their manifesto has been cited as one of the earliest expressions of

intersectionality (Beal, 1970).

Research has shown that identities can exist in forms other than gender and race, for example, class, sexual orientation, religion, migrant status, physical ability, and age, and can be underprivileged or privileged depending on the context (Alberti et al., 2013; Atewologun et al., 2016; Syed & Pio, 2010). For example, the favoured triumvirate of gender, race, and class which has been extensively used in intersectional analyses of historically excluded groups and marginalised individuals such as minorities, has been further applied to various identities such as citizenship status, age, ethnicity, sexuality, religion, ability to explore power, domination, and social relations across diverse disciplines, nationalities and local spaces, and communities of people. In this respect, gender, race, and migration status constitute an innovative intersection that is applied to study the complexity of power relations, forms of discrimination, marginalisation, and inequities through the deployment of intersectionality as an analytic tool (Abu-Laban, 1998; Anthias, 2012; Bastia & Piper, 2019; Carastathis et al., 2018; Grosfoguel et al., 2018; Truong et al., 2014).

Migration research has embraced intersectionality, producing numerous research studies drawing on intersectionality theory and addressing key concerns in the migration literature. Until the 1970s, migration studies have been gender gender-blind, supporting that the primary (economic) migrants were men, and women were either secondary migrants (Donato et al., 2006) or assisting partners (Bastia, 2014). It was only in the early 1980s that researchers criticised migration studies from a feminist perspective and emphasised women's role in migration (Anthias & Ayres, 1983; Morokvaśic, 1984; Phizacklea, 1983). The holistic concept of gender as "a dynamic and constitutive element of migration and immigrant integration" (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2011) was incorporated at a later stage, emphasising migration as a gendered process (Donato et al., 2006; Grasmuck & Pessar, 1991; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2011; Kibria, 1993).

The feminisation of migration has been widely acknowledged and studied by scholars and international organisations across diverse disciplines. The idea of feminisation is based on the differences between the experiences of migrant men and women, setting gender at the core of the term. Piper (2008) made use of the term, highlighting that gender is a crucial factor in our

understanding of the causes and consequences of international migration and that it is germane to most, if not all, aspects of migration. More recently, feminist studies encompass reversed gender roles, where a wife is the family's breadwinner, and the man takes care of the household and children's responsibilities (Piper, 2008). Anthias (2012) called for the need for:

> Transnational migration studies to be framed within a contextual, dynamic and processual analysis that recognises the interconnectedness of different identities and hierarchical structures relating to gender, ethnicity, race, class, and other social divisions at local, national, transnational, and global levels.

Other studies have suggested that migration is a highly stratified phenomenon; the notion of stratification revolves around the "combined effects of gender, ethnicity, legal status, skill level, and mode of entry or exit, with the result of women's migration(s) emerging as highly stratified" (Piper, 2008).

Intersectionality has predominantly been used to study migrant women (Ali et al., 2017; Karlsen, 2012; Mulinari, 2015; Ressia et al., 2017; Riano et al., 2015; Sang et al., 2013). As a result of the disadvantage discourse often being used in both migrant and women studies, it can be assumed that the intersection of gender and migration negatively affects working migrant women, such that they experience a double disadvantage. Notwithstanding, Sang et al. (2013) reported that the intersection of two marginalised identities (i.e., female and ethnic) does not necessarily result in a double disadvantage; rather, it often offers opportunities. For example, a professor stated that working closely with her cultural group in the UK provided opportunities for unique research publications and further academic career development. Intersectionality is primarily focused on delineating the formation and maintenance of inequality, rather than elaborating on strategies for social change. Nevertheless, specific social categories such as migration status can be a source of power. Intersectionality undermines the agency of migrants, whereas researchers have reported the efforts and ability of migrants to move forward and change.

Murray and Ali (2017) reported Muslim women professionals successfully exercising their agency within the workplace "in response to western stereotypical organisational and societal norms and deep-seated patriarchal customs." In a study conducted in Qatar, non-White, skilled migrant women stated that the visibility of being different and stereotypical views of their racio-ethnic

identities remarkably affected their relationships with Qataris (Rodriguez & Scurry, 2019). This "fetishisation" of women creates unwritten rules which legitimise various types of gender violence against women justified by the need to uphold societal values through the enforcement of gendered social governance (Malit & Naufal, 2014; McDowell, 2008; Nagy, 2006). The findings further underpin the inseparability of the gender-foreignness intersection and how it plays out in making migrant women experience simultaneous dynamics of inclusion and exclusion; for example, through participation in the labour market and stagnation in low-level occupations.

As migrant women are fast becoming the new quintessential intersectional subjects, considering that they cross multiple boundaries – ethnic, racial, class, and gender (Nash, 2008), this study acknowledges the significance of utilising intersectionality as an analytical tool in "accounting for the diverse racial, class and gendered experiences in international migration" (Grosfoguel et al., 2015, p. 644). In her research on migration and intersectionality, Anthias (2012) explicitly suggested that intersectionality be seen as a social process and not as an interplay in people's group identities of gender, class, ethnicity, and racialisation. She further noted that structures (broader economic and political institutional frameworks) and processes (broader social relations in all their complexity, including discourses and representations) must be defined to position social actors. Carastathis et al. (2018) argued that the addition of more intersections did not empower the intersectionality theory as a critical framework to advance the social justice claims of migrants. Instead, specific categories of power, including racialised, gendered, class, and other power relations within a temporal and spatial context, provide remarkable, evidence-based knowledge of migrant experiences.

The context of a country, including characteristics such as skin colour, delineates the sense of belonging or non-belonging of people, noted by "who counts as 'Black' and who as 'White' differs from one place to another, as to do specific meanings attached to the designations and their placements" (Goldberg, 2009, p. 1275; Grosfoguel et al., 2015). Africa has witnessed a recent overall feminisation of migration, with different migration patterns within and from the continent. Solomon (2006) noted that migration patterns entailed flows within Africa, between African countries, and between European countries with no previous ties to the past (i.e., between countries with colonial links). Highly-skilled professionals are involved in more permanent migration, and

while their qualifications are leveraged in their host country, their home country is negatively impacted by losing critical human capital, and Gross Domestic Product growth is remarkably reduced in the long term (Straubhaar, 2000). The so-called "brain drain" phenomenon portrays African migration with qualified and educated Africans leaving the continent and "crippling the activities of some countries, for example, in sub-Saharan Africa and particularly in South Africa" (Ellerman, 2003, p. 30).

However, South Africa has benefited to a great extent from the influx of skilled professionals, which has generated a massive brain drain in other parts of Africa (Alonso, 2011). Adepoju (2005) supported that "skilled professionals from Africa have been finding the countries of Gabon, Botswana, Namibia, and South Africa to be good alternatives to the US and Europe for migration," contributing to what is referred to as brain circulation. Foreign skilled workers add a high value to the private sector and some government departments, despite the unreciprocal strategy of policymakers towards skilled labour. Landau (2011) asserted that not only are highly skilled Africans outside of South Africa confronted with the harsh reality of political reluctance, but also that the lack of a regionally institutionalised approach and data on foreign workers in different sectors debilitates the current situation. However, there has been little research focused on the intersectionality of marginalised identities, including gender, race, and foreignness of highly educated professional working women.

2.4.1 Racialisation of Migrant Women

Individuals or groups can be labelled with racial meanings based on perceived traits that frequently result in their marginalisation and subordination. This so-called "process of racialisation" applies to migrant women and interacts with factors such as gender, migration status, and socio-economic standing, leading to distinct forms of marginalisation (Miles, 1990; Omi & Winant, 1993). Scholars have highlighted that race, gender, and class function as interconnected systems in the racialisation of migrant women (Anthias, 1998; Yuval-Davis, 2011). Migrant women are frequently subjected to stereotypes that depict them as submissive, diligent, or ideally suited for low-paying caregiving and domestic roles (Anderson, 2003; Salazar-Parreñas, 2001). Such stereotypes bolster their exclusion from prestigious positions and contribute to the broader systemic devaluation of their work.

Furthermore, the discourse surrounding the "good worker," which is rooted in stereotypes about the perceived characteristics of immigrant employees, reinforces the marginalisation and racialisation of migrant women in the workplace (Findlay et al., 2013). Distinct stereotypes and prejudices ascribed to non-White migrant women have been reported in several studies over the past 30 years. Black migrant women experience stereotypical behaviours and attitudes as non-citizens, as members of particular ethnic groups, as Black Africans, as women, and because they are poor, which is the case in South Africa. Culturally, migrant women are often racialised as "outsiders" who lack belonging to the prevailing national identity, which is typically indicated by differences in physical appearance, language, or cultural practices (Essed, 1991).

Additionally, gendered and racialised labour is highly linked to migrant women, as, primarily in the Global South, they are often over-represented in domestic and caregiving roles, being racialised as "natural caregivers" (Hochschild, 2015; Parreñas, 2003). By allowing wealthier countries to externalise care responsibilities onto racialised migrant workers, this racialised labour dynamic perpetuates global inequality. Further, migrant women are prone to exploitation and precarious working conditions shaped by interlocking racial and gender hierarchies, with limited labour rights and protections (Ehrenreich, 2003). The theory developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991) emphasises how racialisation, gender, and migration status interact to create particular vulnerabilities and intersectional oppression for migrant women.

The "triple oppression" frequently experienced by migrant women at the intersection of their gender, race, and non-citizen status results in structural disadvantages across multiple domains (Anthias, 2012). However, scholars have highlighted their active resistance and agency to fight against these stereotypes and hostile systems through transnational networks (Huang et al., 2012). When life becomes challenging for these women, they acquire resilience through their use of community networks, collective organising, and advocacy to counter racialised marginalisation (Huang et al., 2012).

Existing scholarship has also focused on how immigration policies often racialise migrant women by framing them as threats to national identity or as economic burdens (De Genova, 2002; Yuval-Davis et al., 2005). Targeted state policies lead to the structural racialisation of migrant women

and the institutionalisation of their racialised labour roles, such as the targeting of domestic worker visa schemes (Anderson, 2003). Moreover, being excluded from citizenship rights negatively influences their sense of belonging and reinforces their racialisation as "perpetual outsiders" (Balibar & Swenson, 2004). Within South Africa, the racialisation of Black migrant women takes place not only by dominant groups such as the White minority, but also within Black-majority settings as an intra-racial process due to xenophobia and cultural hierarchies (Harris, 2002). These dynamics are shaped by migration histories, cultural practices, and socioeconomic status. Therefore, Black migrant women experience racialisation and inclusion differently and in their own unique way depending on the context of the country, the working environment, as well as their specific gender, racial, and foreignness identities. This area of research continues to expand, offering critical insights into the mechanisms through which racialisation operates in various contexts and its impacts on migrant women's lives.

2.4.2 Historical Context of Racialisation in South Africa

The racialisation of migrant women in South Africa is deeply rooted in the nation's colonial and apartheid histories, intersecting with the contemporary dynamics of gender, migration, and xenophobia. Colonial and apartheid legacies involved institutionalised racial hierarchies, depriving specific racial groups from access to resources, mobility, and human rights because of their identities (Posel, 2001). Black people were targeted, institutionally marginalised, and oppressed by the apartheid state in South Africa, shaping the country's social, economic, and political landscape.

Black South Africans were restricted to underfunded schools, segregated communities, and low-paying jobs by apartheid policies, leading to their lack of mobility, unemployment, social exclusion, and economic exploitation (Bonner, 1990; Posel, 2001; Seekings & Nattrass, 2004). Nevertheless, Black men's experiences of marginalisation under apartheid often contrasts those of Black women, showcasing both shared and gender-specific forms of oppression and pointing to their dual marginalisation at the intersection of race and gender, including exclusion from formal employment and systemic violence (Hunter, 2010; Meer, 1985; Ramphele, 1993; Walker, 1990).

Similarly, migrant women of African origin nowadays face similar intersectional oppressions, are

racialised as “others,” and are stereotyped as uneducated, inferior, and hypersexual, reflecting broader patterns of exclusion rooted in apartheid's segregationist policies (Dodson & Crush, 2004; Neocosmos, 2010). Research has indicated how Black migrant women are frequently racialised as “foreigners,” despite shared racial or ethnic identities with locals (Crush et al., 2008). Black migrant women have also been scapegoated as economic threats or cultural outsiders, which has resulted in their racialised exclusion in South Africa (Landau, 2011). According to the scapegoating hypothesis, they are accused of limiting resources, stealing the jobs of nationals, and ultimately being held responsible for poor service delivery in the country (Harris, 2001). Conversely, the biocultural hypothesis explains that physical and cultural appearances trigger xenophobia and that nationalism-relevant international literature supports that xenophobia is the repercussion of nation-building (Harris, 2001).

The stereotyped images of Black migrant women persist to such an extent that the interconnection of discrimination based on other forms of otherness with gender-based discrimination locates them in situations of double or triple jeopardy, marginalisation, or vulnerability to exploitation and abuse (Dias & Jayasundere, 2002). Gendered xenophobia intersects with racialised narratives of migrant women as “job stealers,” portraying them as “prostitutes” or threats to local family structures (Nyamnjoh, 2006). Migrant women, particularly from Zimbabwe, are heavily concentrated in domestic work, where they face racialised and gendered exploitation. Employers often racialise Zimbabwean women as “better workers” compared to local South African women, but use this stereotype to justify lower wages and poor working conditions (Griffin, 2011).

Migrant women’s experiences are shaped by their racialised and gendered identities, alongside their migration status, which limits access to legal protections and social services (Tshabalala, 2017). Migrant women experience racialised exclusion in healthcare, with reports of discrimination and denial of services due to their foreign status (Vearey, 2014). Pregnant migrant women face additional challenges, with healthcare providers racialising them as “burdens” on the public system (Crush & Tevera, 2010). Migrant women in informal trading are racialised as “illegal traders” and face harassment from authorities and local competitors (Skinner & Haysom, 2016). Despite these challenges, informal economies often become sites of resilience and agency for migrant women (Rogan, 2016). Besides this, employers often racialise migrant women through

institutionalised organisational policies within an environment influenced by patriarchal norms and expectations. The experiences of migrant women are shaped by their identities, and within the South African context, Kimberlé Crenshaw's (1991) framework of intersectionality is critical to understanding the compounded marginalisation faced by Black migrant women in South Africa.

Migrant women face significant barriers to obtaining citizenship or legal status, reinforcing their racialised and precarious position in society (Neocosmos, 2010). Community integration efforts often exclude migrant women due to racialised xenophobia and patriarchal cultural norms (Crush & Ramachandran, 2014). South Africa's immigration policies have been critiqued for perpetuating racialised and gendered exclusions, with migrant women often categorised as "dependents" or "undesirable" (Fauvelle-Aymar & Segatti, 2012). Policies such as the Immigration Act of 2002 prioritise skilled migration while marginalising low-wage or informal workers, disproportionately affecting women (Landau, 2011). However, this treatment is not only a product of colonisation and the apartheid regime, but of White supremacy and separationist theories that differentiate the treatment between Black and White migrants (Mngomezulu & Dube, 2019; Sekati, 2022). Thus, this intersectional perspective highlights how these regimes uniquely marginalised Black migrant women, predominantly facing exploitation in the public sphere, and women encountering compounded oppression across both public and private domains.

2.4.3 Gender-Based Discrimination, Harassment, and Microinequities

The experiences of migrant men and women have been historically different in relation to workplace expectations, exploitation, violence, discrimination, and harassment. Migrant men, often seen as "breadwinners," have particularly benefited more when it comes to work opportunities, while their labour is perceived as more aligned with economic productivity (Connell, 1987; Kofman et al., 2000). Male migrants are less likely to encounter obstacles in their career advancement and are more likely to have their skills acknowledged. In contrast, migrants are targeted more and marginalised by societal perceptions of females and prejudice that leads to exploitation, discrimination, and harassment, yet migrant women's experiences were initially understudied. In contrast, a study conducted by Sinatti (2014) challenged the notion of men as a unitary category of social power. An intersectional perspective on masculinity revealed how gender identities are fluid and multifaceted, as breadwinning transnational migrants experience

and renegotiate their role as men within their families.

Gendered barriers such as patriarchal norms and expectations in workplaces and communities, as well as GBV and exploitation, significantly hamper inclusion for migrant women. Research focusing on gendered barriers in the workplace has indicated that gendered expectations and patriarchal norms have confined the career advancement of women, privileging masculine norms and perpetuating gender inequalities (Acker, 1990). Migrant women experience further marginalisation, enhanced by cultural stereotypes and prejudice because of their foreignness, intensifying their workplace exclusion (Rodriguez & Scurry, 2019; Semu, 2020). In patriarchal working environments, migrant women have often been stereotyped as less competent or skilled, poor, uneducated, and submissive due to ingrained gender and racial stereotypes (Hwang & Beauregard, 2021). On top of this, they have frequently been assigned to lower-paying and less prestigious roles, irrelevant to their qualifications and reflecting systemic barriers rooted in both gender and foreignness (Walsh & O'Shea, 2008). These adverse attitudes engender overt and subtle discrimination, as well as unwarranted barriers in the workplace.

Furthermore, migrant women, perceived as “different,” also experience unintentional, small-scale, hard-to-prove micro-inequities, often unrecognised by the perpetrator, such as being regularly interrupted, talked over in meetings, or receiving (inside) jokes about their identities compared to their male counterparts (Gino, 2016; Rowe, 2008). Research suggests that when women complain about micro-inequities, they can be excluded, yet when unaddressed, it impacts their workplace inclusion, including their recognition and promotion to leadership roles and salary increases (Kim & Meister, 2023; Lewiss et al., 2020). The result is that migrant women are more susceptible to discrimination at the workplace due to double and triple jeopardy, clearly identifying them as culturally “different” and reinforcing their workplace exclusion by being unable to access equal opportunities, leadership roles, professional networks, and participation in decision-making opportunities.

Migrant women frequently face additional burdens due to patriarchal expectations, such as the presumption that they will put their family and caregiving obligations ahead of their professional goals. Research has discussed that traditional gender norms play a role in shaping labour market

opportunities for migrant women who may be pushed into "feminised" industries, including domestic work or caregiving, where they are undervalued and exploited (Kofman & Raghuram, 2015). Similarly, Anthias (2012) emphasised how migrant women experience social norms that uphold their inferior status in social and professional hierarchies in addition to workplace discrimination. These gendered expectations reinforce exclusion by ignoring the structural injustices that hinder their capacity to successfully manage work and home responsibilities. Collectively, these studies demonstrate the widespread impact of patriarchal norms in establishing and preserving structural obstacles that jeopardise migrant women's inclusion in the workplace.

Additionally, the gendered aspect of migration is linked to unique vulnerabilities for migrant women, such as exposure to GBV and harassment during pre- and post-migration (Tan & Kuschminder, 2022). Gender-based discrimination and harassment are pervasive challenges for low-wage, migrant female workers with precarious migrant status, which often goes unreported or has become normalised in the Western context (Kristen et al., 2015; Spiliopoulou & Witcomb, 2023). Restrictive immigration laws that frequently link women's legal status to their spouses—a problem that male migrants encounter less frequently—exacerbate these hazards (Kofman, 2005). The structural and societal barriers that migrant women face illustrate the deeply gendered nature of migration in contrast to the relative privilege that men often experience in similar contexts. In contrast to the relative advantage that men frequently enjoy in similar contexts, the structural and societal obstacles that migrant women encounter highlight the profoundly gendered character of migration.

2.4.4 Structural and Institutional Discrimination

To better grasp the numerous intersections that Black migrant women occupy, it is necessary to contextualise certain parts of their experience in addition to comprehending the inclusion issues they face. The racialisation of migrant women is not just about perception. On the contrary, their racialisations play a key role in their experiences of institutional and structural discrimination. Pincus and Ehrlich (1994) described institutional discrimination as:

> The policies of the dominant (have most of the power in society) race/ethnic/gender institutions and the behaviour of individuals who control these institutions and implement policies that are intended to have a differential and/or harmful effect on minority (lack

power) ethnic/race/gender groups.

The reality is that institutional discrimination feeds into structural discrimination, as if many institutions, including organisations, banks, legal systems, and schools, systematically exclude a group, it reinforces structural inequality across society (Abdalla, 2006; Williams et al., 2011).

Previous studies have investigated the structural and institutional disadvantages of vulnerable groups like migrants, people of colour, ethnic minorities, and women (Asante et al., 2016; Folguera, 2014; Sethi, 2016), yet fewer studies have explored how additional factors (e.g., race, legal status, religion, class, or sexuality) shape institutional discrimination for migrant women. Migrant women continue to be marginalised in a variety of contexts due to structural and institutional discrimination that is ingrained in systems of privilege and power. As outsiders in both formal and informal social structures, these women often experience overlapping types of discrimination related to their gender, race, and migration status.

Most studies focus on Black migrant women in Western contexts like North America and Europe, particularly the USA, Canada, the UK, and France. These studies contextualise racial and ethnic identities in shaping African women's work lives in the USA (Showers, 2015; Waters, 2001), focus on particular professional settings such as the healthcare sector (Semu, 2020), compare migrant women with migrant men (Pierre, 2004), incorporate other identities such as religion (Baboolal, 2019), and only examine distinct groups of people such as refugees and asylum seekers (Bailey, 2012).

Research on institutional discrimination against Black migrant women in the Global South—Africa, the Middle East, Asia, or Latin America—is lacking. According to research by Adjai and Lazaridis (2013), institutional structures such as immigration laws and bureaucratic processes disproportionately affect Black migrant women in countries like South Africa, making it difficult for them to access social services, work, and education. These processes are not impartial but are rooted in historical patterns of racism and sexism, reinforcing the oppression of Black migrant women. Additionally, Black migrant women frequently face exclusion from political engagement and decision-making processes, which intensifies their marginalisation (Gatti et al., 2024). In the context of South Africa, for example, the merging of asylum seekers, refugees, and economic

migrants by government entities worsens their discrimination (Moyo & Zanker, 2020, 2022). This systemic exclusion is further aggravated by xenophobia and Afrophobia, which appear in societal attitudes and policies specifically targeting African migrants (Misago, 2016; Umeh et al., 2024).

Furthermore, Black migrant women are forced into low-paying, precarious professions by structural discrimination in the labour market, frequently with little legal protection or rights at work (Rodriguez & Scurry, 2019). This body of literature highlights that tackling the systemic obstacles encountered by Black migrant women necessitates not only legal changes but also a wider cultural shift towards inclusivity, recognising the interconnected systems of oppression that influence their experiences.

2.5 Migrant Women's Agency and Identity Negotiation

A large and growing body of literature has investigated female migration, their experiences in the host country, and the process of negotiating their identities in a new living environment (Bailey, 2012; Bastia & Piper, 2019; Haak-Saheem et al., 2022; Mulinari, 2015; Pio & Essers, 2014; Rodriguez & Scurry, 2019; Rugunanan, 2017; Syed & Pio, 2010). Unlike their male counterparts, female migrants are expected to navigate social and cultural expectations so that they are fully integrated into the host country and feel an utter sense of belonging. Migration, therefore, is not just a physical movement but a complex reconfiguration of self-perception and social positioning. Globalisation has "simultaneously intensified and normalised strangeness, raising normative and subjective questions of belonging and exclusion" (Anthias, 2008). Migrant women must actively adopt or altogether reject local identities, leading to new forms of belonging such as cosmopolitanism, transnationalism, and diasporic consciousness (Anthias, 2008).

Identity negotiation among Black migrant women is particularly nuanced due to the intersection of race, gender, and foreignness. In their analysis of the dynamic relationality of gender and foreignness of non-national academic staff within UK academia, Johansson and Śliwa (2016) described how the narratives of women academics provide examples of the combination of gender and foreignness that creates particular social locations. People of colour stated that race was insignificant in such a mixed organisational context, yet their experiences of foreignness varied across contexts. Perhaps the most compelling finding was that foreignness could function both as

a marker of discrimination and as a resource to be strategically deployed. This suggests that this is fully subject to the behaviour of Black migrant women, engaging them in constructing their own identities and becoming active agents leveraging their foreignness in ways that may either reinforce or challenge existing norms.

Previous studies of intersectionality and identity have demonstrated that immigrants of colour negotiate their identities at the intersection of several discriminable and stigmatisable categories of difference (Jaga et al., 2018; Netto et al., 2020; Semu, 2020). For instance, studies on Black Caribbean immigrants indicate how race and ethnicity intersect with their migration experience to shape their identities and adaptability (Kasinitz, 1992; Vickerman, 2001; Waters, 2001). Black Caribbean female scholars, immigrants of various minority ethnicities, shared their experiences documenting the racialised and gendered barriers to inclusion through institutionalised labour policies (Calliste, 1994; Iacovetta, 1992; Silvera, 1989).

Many migrant women take advantage of their racial identities and assimilate into a dominant cultural group or national culture through the process of passing, a form of assimilation and blending into the dominant gender, race, and other social roles, which eases integration into the society. While the passing narrative has been historically used in racial contexts - Black Americans passing as White in a segregated society (Baldwin, 1989; Johnson, 1927; Piper, 2022; Russell et al., 1993) - passing is also relevant to Black migrant women who strategically downplay or modify their racial, ethnic, or national identities in professional settings. Studies have also found that people of colour at the intersection of other identities, like lesbians and gays, construct “passing” to manage social stigma and resist any type of oppression and marginalisation (Kanuha, 1999). However, passing does have a psychological effect as it may lead to cognitive dissonance by allowing people to be caught in a lie or by believing it (Brownworth, 1996). It is also not considered an emancipatory strategy but a form of "internalised oppression" or self-hatred (Beard & Glickauf-Hughes, 1994; Harbeck, 2014; Piper, 2022).

The ingroup/outgroup distinction remains a key factor in workplace inclusion. DelCampo et al. (2011) investigated the perception of discrimination among both immigrant and native-born minority employees. Candidates who resembled the majority through native ethnic background,

religion, dress code, or accent were perceived as insiders (Almeida et al., 2017). On the contrary, within an organisational context, the lack of perceived similarity and discrimination towards Black migrant women leads to an ethnic penalty, embodied in lower occupational attainment, lower wages, and higher unemployment rates that cannot be explained by human capital and demographic characteristics (Rafferty, 2012). Åslund et al. (2014) further explained that hiring practices reflect these biases: on average, 6% of hires by native managers are immigrants, while the corresponding figure is 21% for immigrant managers. Consistent with the conceptualisation of immigrant identities as multiple and fluid (Hegde, 1998), research on Black immigrants suggests that racial identity is often tied to, or subordinated to, other identifications, reinforcing the identity of fluidity (Hall et al., 2015; Pierre, 2004; Waters, 2001).

Nevertheless, Black migrant women exercise their agentic identities and deploy different strategies in the workplace, such as job-hopping, career changes, adaptation, overcompensation, and network resources, enabling high-skilled migrant women to circumvent bias, overcome powerful barriers, combat mechanisms of discrimination, and improve their psychological well-being (Legrand et al., 2019; Phinney et al., 2001; Shih, 2006). Semu (2020) examined the pathways through which African migrant nurses navigated their careers and how they led their way through the intersections of their identities and the power structures of employment institutions. The findings illustrated that despite their experiences of structural, institutional, and interpersonal discrimination in institutional healthcare settings, they switched their career trajectories to nursing, proving that they actively reconstruct their careers to circumvent systemic barriers through resilience and active agency. However, some organisational studies have primarily focused on establishing organisational, innovative strategies that can address the complexities of a new, diverse work environment and workforce (Kougiannou, 2019; Linares, 2015). Bailey (2012) further highlighted the resistance and agency of asylum seekers and refugee women of African origin in the UK, whereby, through the establishment of their own non-government organisations, they asserted self-determination and self-empowerment, fighting against mainstream stereotypical notions of migrant victimhood.

Through life challenges and often traumatic experiences, migrants become empowered and resilient enough to adapt to their new conditions in a host country. The role of social and physical

ecosystems is crucial for individuals under stressful and uncertain circumstances, and it may lead to positive development under adversity and positive subjective well-being (Ungar, 2011). Several studies have investigated external and internal sources of resilience and coping strategies that migrants deploy in order to assimilate and integrate into the new environment in a different region, group, or context (Babatunde-Sowole et al., 2016; Legrand et al., 2019; Murray & Ali, 2017; Schweitzer et al., 2007; Sherwood & Liebling-Kalifani, 2012). Social networks and community institutions, including family, colleagues, church communities, ethnic communities, friends, and neighbours, serve as social networking platforms and social interaction activities (Babatunde-Sowole et al., 2016; Bhugra & Becker, 2005; Ncube, 2017; Schweitzer et al., 2007).

Although much research has focused on how migrants negotiate their identities, there is a need for greater attention to how host societies shape these processes. Studies have underlined that inclusive societal policies and diversity management strategies must be adaptive and flexible to ease migrant integration (Al Ariss et al., 2013). However, migrants' agency is frequently limited in environments where xenophobia and anti-foreigner attitudes are common, like South Africa, which increases their reliance on monocultural support networks (McAuliffe & Khadria, 2020).

Black migrant women frequently deploy their racial and ethnic identities to protect themselves from discriminatory attitudes, racism, and subordination. However, Black people may also utilise avoidance coping strategies and less painful problem-solving techniques to racially stressful moments, suggesting a need for an identity-oriented way to cope with racial discrimination (Hoggard et al., 2012). Showers (2015) investigated how African migrant women’s work lives are shaped in USA health-care settings by contextualising racial and ethnic identities. He found that they perceived White and Asian nurses as more privileged, with Whites at the top and Asian nurses in the middle, while Black African nurses faced compounded discrimination due to their race, foreignness, and gender. They navigated the challenges by deploying assimilation into Whiteness to gain upward mobility. To them, Whiteness meant success in the workplace, where they could be fully integrated into the White USA (Showers, 2015). This, however, draws attention to the paradox of identity negotiation: although strategic identity deployment can provide temporary inclusion, it frequently serves to strengthen rather than to undermine preexisting power systems.

2.6 Conceptualisation of the South African Context

2.6.1 Race, Gender, and Power Structures

Discriminatory patriarchal behaviours, the apartheid regime deeply rooted in the oppressive political system, and South African culture have created a gender and race hierarchy in society, which generates distinct workplaces for each subordinate group (Booysen & Nkomo, 2010; Msibi, 2009). Hegemonic masculinity, which is constructed within a patriarchal system and defined as "the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (Connell, 2005, p. 77), describes men as "independent, successful, unemotional, and strong" (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Morrell, 1998).

Harris (2001) blamed patriarchy, politics, and economics for turning migrant women into scapegoats in South Africa. In their research, Jaga et al. (2018) engaged with Black women professionals who negotiate race, gender, work, and family in South Africa and concluded that the legacy of patriarchal and racial discrimination persists. They reported that even though Black women professionals have acquired improved access to education and work opportunities because of equity legislation and have a higher possibility of having a tertiary qualification than Black males, they are still confronted with gender and race prejudices and struggle to break into male-dominated professional workplaces (Ntuli & Wittenberg, 2013).

Officially, according to the B-BBEE Amendment Act 46 of 2013:

> Black people is a generic term which means Africans, Coloureds, and Indians – (a) who are citizens of the Republic of South Africa by birth or descent; (b) who became citizens of the Republic of South Africa by naturalisation; (i) before April 27, 1994; or (ii) on or after April 27, 1994 and who would have been entitled to acquire citizenship by naturalisation prior to that date.

Broad-based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) means the viable economic empowerment of all Black people [including], in particular, women, workers, youth, people with disabilities, and people living in rural areas through diverse but integrated socio-economic strategies (Krüger, 2018). As Pincus (1996) reminded in his analysis of discrimination: "a

discussion of South African apartheid is another easy to illustrate institutional discrimination," stating clearly that institutional discrimination has been dominant in state-supported institutions of South Africa since apartheid. He further argued that institutional discrimination exists both in the public and private sectors by providing examples of a number of various areas of daily life, such as education, housing, employment, public transport, police, and justice systems in the USA. This view is supported by Özbilgin and Erbil (2021) who noted that the "#Blacklivesmatter movement lifted the veil of invisibility on 'others' who are subjected to violence and discrimination by the state, the institutions of employment, healthcare, the police, and prison services." The popular #Blacklivesmatter social movement formed in 2012 when an African American teenager was shot by the police, and brought together diverse groups that fought against xenophobia, racism, systemic, and institutional discrimination of African Americans and minority groups.

The entrenched racial and gender inequalities and post-apartheid legacy in South Africa are interconnected with subjugation, denigration, exclusion, and socio-economic divisions of the apartheid system. Heffernan (2015) asserted that psychological freedom is a precursor to political and economic freedom and that Black people must shake the post-slavery traumatic stress syndrome by modifying their self-perceptions and location in their home country. The internal oppressor that carries historical and trans-generational pain generates notions of feeling "less-than," which results in low self-esteem and self-hate and entirely forms the relationships between Black and White people (Alleyne, 2004). Therefore, the social identities of Black people become activated when they face oppressive threats or trauma in society, which triggers negative emotions and resistance (Branscombe et al., 1999).

The inability to "see" Black women's low status in the social hierarchy reinforces the status quo that relegates them to the margins of organisations (Bell et al., 2011). For Black women working in precarious visibility conditions, being ignored or excluded from opportunities to advance at work could negatively affect their well-being. Therefore, Black women in precarious visibility conditions may find that their current organisation is not supportive of their advancement, possibly leading to tenuous work arrangements, turnover intentions, premature departure, or stagnation in low-level occupations. It is interesting to note that in South Africa, gender and racial discrimination exist for both nationals and non-nationals, yet migration status intensifies the

exclusion and vulnerability of foreigners due to xenophobic attitudes by nationals.

For instance, the risk of sexual harassment within workplaces may be particularly high. Sexual harassment, functioning on a basis of racial inferiority, works together with perceptions of racial and gendered stereotypes. For example, subtypes of Black women entail features of "hyper sexualisation" and "fetishism" that could impact the nature of the sexual harassment towards them. Black women may be regarded as attractive, highly seductive, flirtatious, and promiscuous (Collins, 1998; Pratt, 2012; Reynolds-Dobbs et al., 2008; Townsend et al., 2010), as well as sexually deviant and lascivious (Cho, 1997; West, 2000). To examine how race and sex affect experiences of sexual harassment for non-White women, Berdahl and Moore (2006) carried out a quantitative study and tested the double jeopardy hypothesis among a random sample of union members. The results confirmed the association between racial and sexual harassment within the workplace, with the majority of women being of colour. Other studies have been consistent with these results, with Black women explicitly blaming the conjunction of gender and race bias for their harassment (Welsh et al., 2006).

2.6.2 Migrant Women, Labour Market Dynamics, and the Impact of Xenophobia

South Africa's labour market differs from the rest of African or other developing country economies as it is a fast-growing formal economy with a growing tertiary sector, an extreme skills shortage calling for skilled migration, and has high levels of unemployment rooted in the historical legacy of low education levels among South Africa's Black majority in need of unskilled migration. According to Crush and Williams (2002), it was only in 2001 - largely in response to perceptions of a massive brain drain and pressure from the private sector - that the African National Congress suddenly shifted its policy direction to actively seek skilled immigrants on an international scale. However, institutional elements influencing the employment of migrants remain inadequate due to the absence of specific government initiatives aimed at employing skilled foreigners, apart from a few limited programmes focused on bringing in highly skilled labour from overseas. These policies fail to consider those already residing in the country, such as skilled refugees.

Furthermore, migrants face expensive and time-consuming processes for certifying foreign

professional qualifications (particularly in the case of medical qualifications, despite extreme skills shortages in this sector). The most pressing issue, however, lies in the inefficiencies of the Department of Home Affairs. Due to limitations in capacity, the Department of Home Affairs experiences delays in processing documentation, impacting all categories of migrants, including skilled foreign workers, asylum seekers, as well as refugees (Adjai & Lazaridis, 2013; Polzer Ngwato, 2009; Umezurike & Isike, 2013). Globally, migration patterns have demonstrated gendered trends. Between 1965 and 1990, the Western world - primarily including the USA, the UK, and developing nations such as South Africa and Botswana - received a higher number of female migrants than male migrants (Chammartin, 2006). In post-apartheid South Africa, the flow of African migrant women increased significantly, largely due to the country's accommodative Constitution, promulgated in 1996 (Bhorat et al., 2005).

While much research has explored the experiences of migrant women in the Western world, far less attention has been given to understanding their realities in Africa. In particular, little effort has been made to examine how the intersections of gender, race, and migrant status shape marginalised experiences both in the workplace and in broader society. Racial discrimination, xenophobia, and intolerance were highlighted at the 2001 World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance in Durban, South Africa. The conference also raised awareness of the severity and scope of these issues against all forms of migrants, including refugees, undocumented and legal migrants, and other non-natives in Africa. It was made clear throughout this protest that female refugees are particularly vulnerable to xenophobic animosity, exploitation, and prejudice.

Xenophobia is a common phenomenon in countries that have adopted legal frameworks and migration policies for integrating cross-border migrants. The term xenophobia originates from two ancient Greek words: *xenos*, meaning either "stranger" or "guest," and *phobos*, meaning "fear" or "flight" (D'Albera, 2020). At its core, the hatred of foreigners denotes negative attitudes towards the "other" (Chikanda, 2017). In its most extreme form, xenophobia escalates into violence. Dodson and Crush (2004) defined xenophobic violence as the explicit targeting of foreign nationals for attacks, regardless of other material, political, cultural, or social factors that may also be at play. While xenophobic violence is often discussed in general terms, there is growing

evidence that women of foreign nationalities face specific and intensified forms of xenophobia. For instance, "women migrants in South Africa stated that they were the victims of xenophobic attitudes, received substandard medical treatment, were overcharged for service delivery, and in a few cases, were turned away from hospitals and clinics" (Sigsworth, 2010, p. 4). Despite these alarming realities, female migration remains vastly under-documented, with limited research exploring the unique struggles faced by migrant women.

Historically, women in migration studies have been viewed merely as dependents, often perceived as accompanying their male spouses rather than migrating as independent economic agents (Dodson & Crush, 2004). However, this perspective ignores the diverse roles that migrant women play in South Africa's economy. Migrant women enter South Africa in a range of statuses: documented and undocumented, skilled and unskilled, and as entrepreneurs engaged in cross-border trade (Williams, 2002). Recognising and addressing the unique vulnerabilities of migrant women is crucial in formulating policies that ensure their protection and integration into South African society.

2.6.3 Black Migrant Women: Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Workplace Challenges

Previous research on African migrants in South Africa has established that they are subjected to different forms and degrees of prejudice and discrimination. They are racialised as the "other," and experience exclusion in the labour market and within broader society, leading to the deskilling of their qualifications (Barn, 2008; Mangu, 2019; Ncube et al., 2019; Trimikliniotis et al., 2008). Although the new South Africa was initially built on a culture of tolerance, inclusiveness, democratic principles, and human rights, the reality is that only South Africans could leverage those benefits. Moreover, diversity, multiculturalism, ethnic, and social heterogeneity have been some of the features and challenges of modern South Africa, blending national and non-national elements. In this context, April (2009, p. 226) argued that "successful immigrant societies in South Africa can help create new forms of social solidarity and dampen the initial negative effects of diversity by constructing new, more-encompassing identities – a broader sense of we." He further highlighted that the introduction of foreign workers and immigrants into the South African workplace contributes to diversity and identity dynamics, which can foster communicative interaction, social integration, and solidarity among individuals. However, despite these potential

benefits, migrant workers - especially Black African migrants - continue to face systemic discrimination and exclusion.

The perennial problem of xenophobia towards Black Africans in South Africa is complex and multifaceted; the institutional side of xenophobia circumvents other explanations, including socio-cultural and structural, monopolising the negative attitude of the South African state, politicians, and civil servants towards Black foreigners and their unfavourable treatment. Additionally, the media has reinforced these prejudices by portraying foreigners in an overwhelmingly negative light. As Crush et al. (2008) noted, "several research studies have shown how the media has uncritically reproduced xenophobic language and statements, time and time again. The media has certainly been complicit in encouraging xenophobic attitudes among the population" (p. 42).

Given this context, it is evident that the South African government and related stakeholders must take further steps to address the repercussions of xenophobia. They should acknowledge the urgent need to protect these migrants, particularly Black migrant women, from all forms of discrimination and GBV, irrespective of their national affiliations (Akinola, 2017). However, while the government continues to legislate policies aimed at creating a more inclusive environment for Black women, the reality of power structures within organisations suggests otherwise. Economic privilege remains concentrated among White South Africans, thereby maintaining the status quo (Adhikari, 2005; Ndinda & Okeke-Uzodike, 2012; Seekings, 2008).

The Migrant Voices Project (2004-2005) carried out a qualitative study with migrant women, both temporarily and permanently living in South Africa, and explored, among other issues, their personal experiences as foreigners, gender-specific challenges, and their perceptions of the significance of migration within the SADC region. Surprisingly, many women concluded that their lives were "better" in the host country, while their social experiences contradicted their statements. In terms of gendered vulnerabilities, these women expressed that male migrants were equally, if not more, susceptible to hardship for complex reasons. However, the study failed to take into sufficient consideration the implications of a racialised analysis of contemporary cross-border female migration within workspaces and organisations in South Africa. On one hand, this omission discloses the "dual minority" status for foreign women working in these contexts, formed by both

their gender and foreignness (Kemp & Rickett, 2018). On the other hand, it is crucial to note that Black migrant women are not a numerical minority, as Africans form the majority of the South African population.

Black migrant women in South Africa are often depicted as "direct victims, proxies, criminals, amakwerekwere, foreigners, aliens, illegals, and fellow Africans" (Piper, 2022; Tagwirei, 2016), which reinforces their marginalisation and exclusion due to their intersectional identities. Importantly, the gendered construction of xenophobia and racial discrimination differentiates the experiences of migrant women from those of their male counterparts, making them more susceptible to hostility and violent attacks. Furthermore, research has pointed to "foreigner objectification" and gender-based harassment of non-national women due to their physical features and appearance. This objectification fuels social hierarchies and institutionalises ideologies of difference (Rodriguez & Scurry, 2019). Scholarship has also indicated that sexual harassment is particularly present in low-wage industries such as food service, retail, and manufacturing, where non-White women constitute a significant portion of the workforce (Tucker & Patrick, 2017).

Black migrant women actively negotiate their identities and socio-economic lives, playing active roles in South Africa to resolve gender-specific challenges posed by individual actors, social structures, and institutions (Mafukidze & Mbanda, 2008). They frequently possess less desirable, lower-paying jobs with poor working conditions, such as domestic helpers and factory workers, which offer little job security or benefits (Amott & Matthaei, 1996; Cox, 1994; Griffin, 2011; Nkomo & Stewart, 2006). Additionally, prominent ethnic hierarchies and discrimination in African contexts further marginalise Black migrant women, with many ethnic groups overly represented in the sector or viewed as ethnically subordinate (Griffin, 2011). The post-Apartheid context is salient as it reveals the lingering effects of racial and gender-based exclusion and discrimination. Black and Coloured South Africans and Black and White women endured systemic discrimination under Apartheid, which is one of the main areas of attention for workplace reform in South Africa (April, 2009).

Black migrant women not only struggle with persistent challenges that hamper bureaucratic processes regarding their documentation, but ultimately face a high level of deeply entrenched

institutionalised discrimination. This overrides the racial, social, economic, and political harmony and the African philosophy of ubuntu promoted by South African political leadership and academia (Agyeno, 2019). Amidst other issues, the Citizenship Rights in Africa Initiative (CRAI, 2009) argued that post-apartheid institutions of governments and state officials remain numb to stereotypical and discriminatory behaviours against foreigners, tolerating and even exacerbating xenophobic rhetoric. Migrants are named as “job stealers,” “aliens,” or “other” by reinforcing their exclusion. Misago (2016) argued that the main causes of discrimination and intolerance in South Africa live in “mutually reinforcing social and institutional configurations at local and national levels.” Additionally, they highlight that xenophobia is deeply embedded in South Africa’s historical approach to population mobility and political rhetoric.

Black migrant women in South Africa employ various survival strategies to navigate any type of challenges, xenophobia, economic hardships, and social exclusion. Research suggests that they negotiate their social and national identities through language practices, often shaping their interactions and opportunities in response to xenophobic hostility, cultural differences, and systemic injustices (Mai, 2011; Onwukwe, 2024; Onwukwe & Gibson, 2023; Pilane, 2015). A study on Zimbabwean migrant women in South Africa found that, regardless of their high education level, many migrant women teachers are rewarded with low salaries, which gives them no other option but to engage in commercial sex to supplement their income and survive (Chireshe, 2010). Another study showed that Black migrant women in South Africa are mostly engaged in the informal sector, engaging in domestic work, prostitution, informal trade, and small enterprises such as sewing and beer brewing (Dodson, 1998; Kahn et al., 2003; Todes & Posel, 1994).

Interestingly, Black migrant women in both the informal and formal labour markets occupy the lowest positions in the occupational hierarchy, enduring long working hours, low wages, and a lack of long-term security, such as health and pension benefits (Tsikata, 2009). They also experience sexual harassment and GBV in public spaces, such as on public transport, including road and rail, where taxi and bus drivers attempt to sexually abuse them (Sigsworth et al., 2008). Their cultural identity, such as their dress code, does not conceal their “otherness,” and as a result, they are subjected to frequent sexual harassment and abuse. Ultimately, the intersection of gender, ethnicity, and race continues to obstruct their full inclusion in both the workplace and South

African society.

2.7 THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.7.1 Conceptualisation of Inclusion

According to Wellner (2000), diversity represents "a multitude of individual differences and similarities that exist among people. Diversity can encompass many different human characteristics such as race, age, creed, national origin, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation." Gardenswartz and Rowe (1994) classified some of the human traits and characteristics that represent diversity in four different categories under the Four Layers of Diversity Model. The four layers of diversity include organisational, external, internal, and personality dimensions.

Organisational dimensions entail characteristics that fall under the control of the organisation wherein one is employed. The external dimensions refer to those characteristics that are linked to the life choices of an individual such as personal habits, recreational habits, religion, educational background, work experience, appearance, status, and marital status, whereas internal dimensions concern characteristics assigned at birth such as age, race, colour, ethnicity, gender, and physical ability. The broader definition of diversity entails national origin, age, religion, disability, sexual orientation, values, ethnic culture, education, language, lifestyle, beliefs, physical appearance, and economic status (Wentling & Palma-Rivas, 2000). The internal dimension of diversity engenders aggression, discrimination, and marginalisation of specific work groups and is explicitly germane to the production of inequalities within workplaces and inclusion at all levels. Hence, different types of inequalities may exist in professional contexts. As suggested by Smithson and Stokoe (2005), they are shaped by broader societal dynamics including gender roles, breadwinning, and the division of paid and unpaid labour.

A well-managed diverse environment fosters inclusion in a workplace, generating growth and development. While diversity focuses on representation, such as demographics, inclusion involves fostering a culture where employees of diverse backgrounds and identities have equal opportunities and are meaningfully involved to succeed and feel a sense of belonging. This study considers multiple definitions of inclusion. According to Miller et al. (2002), inclusion is a sense of belonging, feeling respected, valued, and seen for who you are, feeling a level of supportive

energy and commitment from leaders, colleagues, and others that enables peak performance. Robertson (2005) argued that inclusion refers to "the removal of obstacles to the full participation and contribution of employees in organisations" (p. 217), while Miller (1998) referred to inclusion as the extent to which diverse individuals "are allowed to participate and are enabled to contribute fully" (p. 151). In a similar direction, Lirio et al. (2008) described inclusion as "when individuals feel a sense of belonging, and inclusive behaviours such as eliciting and valuing contributions from all employees are part of the daily life in the organisation" (p. 443). Daya and April (2014) supported that inclusion is a shift in the organisational culture and is a process which engages each individual and makes him or her feel valued and essential to the success of the organisation.

Hope Pelled et al. (1999) argued that inclusion is "the degree to which an employee is accepted and treated as an insider by others in a work system" (p. 1014). Holvino et al. (2004) explicated that a multicultural, inclusive organisation is "one in which the diversity of knowledge and perspectives that members of different groups bring to the organisation has shaped its strategy, its work, its management and operating systems" (p. 249). Wasserman et al. (2008) argued that inclusion exists when "people of all social identity groups have the opportunity to be present, to have their voices heard and appreciated, and to engage in core activities on behalf of the collective" (p. 176). According to April et al. (2012), inclusion concerns empowering environments of difference, where people can be themselves, comfortably contributing their full selves and all how they differ from others, and respecting others without making it difficult for others to be their full selves. Finally, Ferdman and Deane (2014) defined inclusion as "in inclusive organisations and societies, people of all identities and many styles can be fully themselves while also contributing to the larger collective, as valued and full members" (p. 235).

Inclusion is particularly linked to historically excluded groups, as these groups have faced the utmost bias, stereotypical behaviours, and discrimination. Gender has always been grounds for marginalisation throughout history. Women have been greatly marginalised in most aspects of life. In the world of work globally, women are paid less than men. According to the United Nations Women (2018), the gender wage gap is estimated to be 23%, meaning that women earn 77% of what men earn, though these figures understate the real extent of gender pay gaps, particularly in developing countries where informal self-employment is prevalent. Similarly, women are

constrained from achieving the highest leadership positions, with only 5% of Fortune 500 Chief Executive Officers being women. Mor Barak et al. (2016) supported that some demographic groups, including women, racial minorities, and immigrants, have fewer opportunities and may experience exclusion from valued opportunities, including jobs, promotions, information networks, decision making, and human resource investments. Brockman (2001), Walby (1989), and Witz (1992) confirmed that, historically, women and minorities were legally excluded from several professional occupations. Walby (1989) highlighted the existence of the patriarchy in certain occupations, professions, and trades, and notwithstanding that, where women were included in the workplace, the elements of subjugation and marginalisation were very visible as their inclusion was achieved in unequal terms with men.

Research on inclusion in organisational and management studies emerged in the mid-2000s (Robertson, 2005), but had been analysed somewhat earlier within the social work (Mor Barak, 2000; Mor Barak & Cherin, 1998; Mor Barak et al., 1998) and social psychology fields. Mor Barak (2000) noted:

> Employee perception of inclusion-exclusion is conceptualised as a continuum of the degree to which individuals feel a part of critical organisational processes. These processes include access to information and resources, connectedness to supervisor and co-workers, and ability to participate in and influence the decision-making process (p. 52).

Mor Barak and Daya (2013) indicated:

> An exclusionary workplace is based on the perception that all workers need to conform to pre-established organisational values and norms (determined by its "mainstream"), the inclusive workplace is based on a pluralistic value frame that respects all cultural perspectives represented among its employees (p. 393).

Although inclusion is a fairly new research area, it is a salient construct because it encompasses significant historical content, trends, and challenges that can solely be identified through a cross-disciplinary lens. Additionally, inclusion is a complex and subtle idea, as sometimes it is not visible, yet it is significant to everyone, particularly to those who have been historically excluded (Ferdman & Deane, 2014; Winters, 2013). Since inclusion is not a single-level conceptualisation, this study adopts a compartmentalised structure including the macro-levels of country and society,

and the meso-level within organisations to investigate the inclusion challenges of the participants. Organisational practices are influenced by national and societal elements such as laws, state policies, and cultural influences, and intersect with individual outcomes and experiences, including sense of belonging, identity, agency, subjectivity, and well-being (Syed & Özbilgin, 2009). This contrasts with other studies (Cohen et al., 2004; Dickmann & Baruch, 2011; Iellatchitch et al., 2003), supporting that inclusion-exclusion is a one-dimensional aspect by focusing on skills, knowledge, and social networks that individuals accumulate to navigate their careers (Arthur et al., 1999).

On a societal level, inclusion entails the full participation of all individuals in social, economic, cultural, and political spheres, free from systemic barriers, marginalisation, and discrimination. It is recognised as a human right that emphasises human dignity, non-discrimination, and equality, and is thus fully aligned with human rights principles. Inclusion is both a process and a goal and serves as a pathway to reducing marginalisation and fostering social cohesion within society. Contextual and time factors influence the social inclusion of particular groups. Governments, regional authorities, and religious communities have legitimised and institutionalised the social exclusion of vulnerable groups, perpetuating forms of prejudice, systemic barriers, and biases. On the African terrain, contextual dynamics, factors, and power relations such as colonisation powers by the Western world have created forms of exclusion for some ethnic groups, legitimising their inferiority and privileging others (Mamdani, 2001; Michalopoulos & Papaioannou, 2011). As a result, South Africa built a legal system on the foundation of the remnants of colonisation and apartheid, denying people of colour their legal and cultural rights, their participation in political processes, and their marginalisation in all spheres of life.

Similarly, for migrant groups, their sense of acceptance, belonging, and identification with the majority of society are greatly affected by racial behaviours and attitudes. Being different because of physical and cultural attributes may be dissonant for the host society, creating a hostile environment and a vicious circle of alienation for migrants (Bobowik et al., 2014). Discrimination, rejection, and marginalisation have dire consequences for those who are exposed to them. "Even if it [experiencing discrimination] happened only once or twice in their lives, the psychological effects might be long-lasting and affecting individual feelings of belonging and trust in the place

where the everyday life is centred" (Crul & Schneider, 2009). Nevertheless, for Black migrant women, cultural displacement is possible, as their integration into Black-majority settings may come with numerous culturally related challenges leading to exclusion based on ethnicity or nationality. Further, microaggressions may perpetuate in subtle or overt forms of discrimination based on migration status, accent, language, or gender, creating challenges to feeling fully included.

Both workplace and societal inclusion must consider the intersectional identities of individuals, which shape their lived experiences. The extant tension between intersectionality and inclusion that individuals of multiple intersectional identities experience calls for a more tenacious and systematic approach. The main aim is to explore a wide range of diversity and inclusion elements without marginalising or privileging the existing marginalised or privileged groups, such as women, migrants, and White men, etc. Additionally, inclusion must address institutionalised and systemic barriers at both societal and country levels, achieve equality, and foster a sense of belonging for individuals of marginalised identities, such as Black migrant women.

2.7.2 Intersectionality as a Concept and Theoretical Framework

Every individual has multiple identities and can belong to more than one social category, for example, gender, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, class, and sexual orientation, and which, according to many sociologists, anthropologists, and scientists, are purely socially constructed and, by default, lay the foundation for multiple grounds of discrimination. Applying an intersectional approach, it addresses the complexity of the phenomenon that concerns the perception of the discriminative experience, considering the social, political, and historical context of the group (Aylward, 2010). Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw (1989), a pioneering Black feminist legal scholar and one of the founders of Critical Race Theory in the USA, introduced intersectionality in 1989, where she used the concept to denote the various ways in which race and gender interact to shape the multiple dimensions of Black women's employment experiences. Intersectionality examines how overlapping systems of oppression—such as racism, sexism, and classism—create unique experiences for individuals. Black women, having been in the centre of the intersectional analysis as "Black" and as "women," are exposed to discrimination because of the simultaneous presence of their race and gender and the intersectional systems of domination.

Intersectionality emerged as a particular approach in feminist theory and primarily Black feminism to analyse the complex origins of the multiple sources of women's oppression (Anthias & Ayres, 1983; Cole, 2009; Collins, 2022; Crenshaw, 1991; Nash, 2008). It was a mechanism through which to describe many social problems, but particularly racism and sexism, which intersected and created social injustice and emphasised the paucity of a just legal framework to address discrimination and inequalities. As an analytic framework in scholarship, intersectionality evolved to a multiple-axis theoretical tool moving beyond the single-axis framework of one identity to a more holistic and nuanced approach leveraged by numerous disciplines other than women's studies (i.e., sociology, psychology, etc.), which touch upon identities and inequalities (Lutz, 2016). This study employed the intersectionality framework to analyse the inclusion challenges of Black migrant women triggered at the intersection of their marginalised identities. It considers their gender, race, and foreignness collectively instead of separately, and the multiple forms of -isms that racial and ethnic minoritised female populations must navigate daily. Crenshaw's (1989) intersectionality framework captures the complexities of the intersectional identities, inequalities, and experiences associated with this study.

The intersectionality framework has been extensively used in research into various fields and countries (Groenmeyer, 2011; Holmes, 2002; Moolman, 2013; Richardson & Loubier, 2008; Smuts, 2011). Commencing in the social sciences in the USA, intersectionality scholarship created new paths of knowledge and discourse in the field of psychology (Cole, 2009; Holmes, 2002) and in professional settings (Booysen & Nkomo, 2010; Dlamini, 2013; Elu & Loubert, 2013; Groenmeyer, 2011; Ndinda & Okeke-Uzodike, 2012; Nillissen & Young, 2007). While the importance of intersectionality is being seen in the fields of feminist studies, public policy formulation, and the social sciences (Cole, 2009; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Holmes, 2002; Warner, 2008), there is a paucity of literature on management studies that employs intersectionality as a lens (Angu, 2023; Magan, 2020; Shao, 2021).

Several scholars have noted that applying intersectionality as a descriptor of multiple identities significantly entails the risk of remarginalising Black women and women of colour (Jibrin & Salem, 2015); notwithstanding, intersectionality remains a robust conceptual and methodological tool that not only makes use of various social categories and identities, but considers the constantly

fluid and alternating organisational, institutional, and sociocultural contexts with its historical, political, economic, and cultural processes (Brah & Phoenix, 2004; Choo & Ferree, 2010; Dhamoon, 2011). Previous studies have reported that intersectional identities are shaped by contextual dynamics, factors, and power relations and highlighted that those intersections and interlocking oppressions are time and context-contingent, rather than fixed and ahistorical (Hulko, 2009; Rodriguez & Scurry, 2019). In their study, Ali et al. (2017) recognised that the macro-contextual level of a country that includes its cultural values, politics, and legislative frameworks provides a more solid contextual understanding of the phenomenon in question.

However, certain scholars such as Prins (2006) split intersectionality into two categories: systemic and constructionist, differentiating the multiple positioning that constitutes everyday life from the power relations that are central to it. Prins (2006) asserted that systemic intersectionality treats power as unilateral and absolute, producing subjectivities and assuming that the human subject is "primarily constituted by systems of domination and marginalisation" while constructionist stresses how "gender, class, or ethnicity [...] simultaneously provide narrative and enabling resources" (p. 280). Intersectionality, nevertheless, is a manifestation of a dual approach as it both subsumes the structural power relations underpinning institutional and organisational practices, inducing the production of subject positions, and examines "how social actors make sense of, negotiate, and contest such processes" (Johansson & Śliwa, 2014).

Intersectionality is leveraged and applied by both scholars and practitioners to analyse any type of discrimination and subordination caused by multiple, interlocked, and interconnected identities. The notion of multiple identities is not at all new (Stirratt et al., 2008). Both social identity theory and identity theory elaborate on the concept of identity. Crenshaw (1989) claimed that race, gender, and other identity categories are most often treated in mainstream liberal discourse as vestiges of bias or domination, that is, as intrinsically negative frameworks in which social power works to exclude or marginalise those who are different. It can be used to create a truly inclusive and diverse environment and culture where intersectionality is acknowledged as a theoretical conceptual framework and political remedy to what is perhaps "the most pressing problem facing contemporary feminism – the long and painful legacy of its exclusions" (Davis, 2008). One should recall that intersectionality is a product of Black feminist thought; however, feminist theory has

overlooked the racial aspect, keeping the movement "White" and, consequently, its potential to broaden and deepen its analysis by addressing non-privileged women remains unrealised (Crenshaw, 1989).

Intersectionality has been central to the study of inequality, identity, and power relations (Cho et al., 2013), highlighting the inseparability of categories of social differences such as race, gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality, and nation, calling attention to the systemic power dynamics that arise as dimensions of social difference interact across individual, institutional, cultural, and societal spheres of influence (Collins, 2022; McCall, 2005; Yuval-Davis, 2011; Yuval-Davis et al., 2005). This study also draws upon Dhamoon's (2011) formulation that intersectionality analysis requires attention to the interactions between processes of differentiation and systems of domination. This requires recognition of the simultaneous interaction between systems of domination (e.g., racism, patriarchy, apartheid, and colonialism) and institutionalised processes (e.g., racialisation, gendering, and culturalisation; Dhamoon, 2011).

Although scholarship on intersectionality has flourished, its impact has been uneven across disciplines. In the field of work and organisations, for example, despite the recognition of the workplace as a critical site for the (re)production of intersectional inequalities (Acker, 2006; Acker & Sayce, 2012), intersectionality has not been fully utilised to explore structures of discrimination and systems of power and inequality (Rodriguez et al., 2016). In particular, intersectionality has gained momentum in management and organisation studies, where it has been used to understand the dynamics of inequality, oppression, subordination, and marginalisation that affect particular groups, not just Black women (Rodriguez et al., 2016; Rodriguez & Scurry, 2019). Nevertheless, despite its robust potential, intersectionality remains at the margins of dominant work and organisational narratives of equality and inclusion, even as global management and diversity initiatives abound (McBride et al., 2015; Mulinari & Selberg, 2013). An interest in intersectional frameworks has grown, but as Knapp (2005) argued, intersectionality often becomes a nomenclature without being concretised as "a formula merely to be mentioned, being largely stripped of the baggage of concretion, of context and history" and a "fast travelling concept" (p. 255).

In this study, intersectionality is viewed as a version of the African notion of wholeness, which intends to heal people by defining the relationship between the multiple aspects of Black migrant women 's lived experiences and their access to power and opportunities that affect their well-being and quality of life (Jamison, 2018). Migrant women of African descent have been given very little attention in African-centered psychology on the African continent. Wright (1984) justifiably instructed that "no stone should go unturned and that forward-thinking scholars must place all issues under their scope to be studied." Researchers do not have to reach a common accordance regarding a topic to lay a foundation for constructive understanding. Pointing to the spirit of Maat (i.e., truth, justice, balance, reciprocity) is to emphasise that African-centered psychologists must be able to engage in challenging discourses "without marginalising and othering African descent people who are members of their communities."

Intersectionality as a theoretical, analytical, and critical framework highlights the multiple layers of discrimination and marginalisation created at the intersection of numerous interlocking social identities, including gender, race, age, sexual orientation, disability, class, and religion. In this study, the intersection of gender (female), race (Black), and migration status (documented migrants) at a micro-level was explored to reveal systems of privilege and oppression at a macro-social institutional and structural level (Crenshaw, 1991). As in this study, real-world issues that cannot be seen encapsulate intersectional invisibility, which embodies the failure to recognise individuals with several inferior and stigmatised social identities such as Black migrant women (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008).

The intersectionality that was applied provides a more nuanced, complex, complete, and critical understanding of understudied groups and experiences, such as sexism, racism, and xenophobia against Black migrant women. It introduces the simultaneous impact of multiple identities on the self, seeking to ensure that the experiences of a person are considered from a holistic perspective and not just a single angle (Cole, 2009; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Holmes, 2002; Jean-Marie et al., 2009; Warner, 2008). The intersectional lens that the study used emphasised the systems of power and domination that formed how the participants identified and were perceived (Collins, 1998). Institutionalised systems of oppression, subordination, and discrimination forced the participants to negotiate and adapt their intersectional identities in the workplace and society, emphasising the

need for inclusive practices that account for structural inequities.

In the South African context, policymakers must re-evaluate the true causes of the phenomenon under study and proceed with adjusting, reshaping, and developing new policies. The Institute for Economic Justice researcher and social justice activist Zimbali Mncube noted, “the point of departure is to interrogate social and historical processes and the structures of power that intersect to reproduce socioeconomic exclusion. Historical processes such as apartheid and colonialism, for instance, continue to be reproduced by today’s economic policies.” Beyond providing context to present experiences, stepping back can help policymakers identify the root causes of issues, rather than addressing surface symptoms.

2.7.3 Identity Theory and Social Identity Theory

Identity theory serves as a theoretical lens and framework to analyse various sociological and social psychological issues. According to Burke and Tully (1977), it explains how individuals construct their sense of self based on the roles they occupy, their relationships, and social interactions. Identity theory focuses on social identity, personal identity, and role identity. Individuals are prone to behave in line with particular roles that verify their display identities to present their self-conceptions, ensure social categorisation, and find their place in multiple social settings (Burke, 2003; Stryker, 2001; Stryker & Burke, 2000). People have multiple identities as they belong to different networks of organised relationships. They may hold various identities having particular meaning and expectations which are internalised as identity (McCall & Simmons, 1978). The connection of social structure, expectations, and self-verification can be analysed with the application of identity theory.

Thus, individuals may choose to form their own identities even if, from their moment of birth, they mostly internalise and adjust to their “assigned” identities and behaviours that society and state agencies construct (Cornell & Hartmann, 2006). Social networks, self-identification through social interactions, and assertion and identity negotiation play a role in claiming “assertive identities.” Individuals choose to self-identify as part of a particular group or community and in terms of racial or non-racial categories or identities (Cornell & Hartmann, 2006). In other words, while state agencies or society may have the power to assign racial group identities, individuals also have the

agency to self-define either in terms of racial or non-racial categories or identities (Cornell & Hartmann, 2006). At the same time, studies have explored why individuals can control their identities and how they manage their multiple identities (Colic-Peisker, 2005; Magan, 2020; Phinney et al., 2001; Shao, 2021).

Identity control theory and identity change are interrelated. In certain circumstances, people present advantageous identities to ensure others get their meanings and, consequently, to prevent the negative identity impact of their chosen personal identity or emotional state (Burke, 2006). Individuals have several identities, and it is important to know how to confirm which ones adhere to identification standards. In order to confirm their identities, individuals typically use their environment or background to match the identity standard. However, these identities need to be confirmed by others, and the identity control hypothesis explains why individuals could misinterpret them, which can affect feelings. In addition, a change in identity standards is also plausible, as people's identities change as a result of situational changes. They may disengage from the social expectations of given roles and think of themselves apart from the people they were in previous roles (Stets & Serpe, 2016).

According to Tajfel and Turner's (1978) social identity theory, which was developed as a social psychology theory, people utilise their social group membership to establish their identity and self-worth by influencing their interactions and behaviour (Trepte & Loy, 2017). The three basic processes - social categorisation, social identification, and social comparison - form the foundation of the theory, which is used to explain behaviours between groups (Hogg et al., 2017; Tajfel, 1975). Social categorisation is the process of categorising individuals into groups according to shared traits. Social identification is a subjective process through which the internalisation of group membership acts as a key component of one's self-concept.

Finally, individuals engage in processes of social comparison whereby they assess their own group (the ingroup) against others (the outgroup), giving rise to intergroup bias and ingroup favouritism. By highlighting the negative aspects of an outgroup and maintaining a positive social identity through favourable comparisons with outgroups, they improve their self-image. Consequently, these social processes can be sufficient to generate intergroup discrimination and intergroup

conflict (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). They can even cause otherness, intergroup anxiety, threats, and stereotypes whereby ingroups ("us," the self) will construct one or more dominated outgroups ("them," other), stigmatising real or imagined differences (Branscombe et al., 1999; Stephan et al., 2000b; Zwingel, 2012). However, Tajfel (1975) demonstrated that social categorisation and negative intergroup stereotypes - essentially, prejudice - stem from people's fundamental need to create meaning and coherence in their perceptions of the world.

This framework has been pivotal in explaining how individuals' perceptions of themselves and others are shaped by group affiliations, and how these affiliations can influence behaviour and intergroup dynamics. In addition, it has been extensively used in various fields, including social psychology, organisational studies and behaviour, and intergroup relations (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). On an organisational level, social identity theory informs how people cope with the complexities of social settings, addressing phenomena such as diversity management, inclusion and exclusion, and sense of belonging. Research has indicated that social identities can influence decision-making processes, leadership, and group dynamics and cohesion, particularly in contexts where individuals face identity-based challenges (Hogg, 2015).

Therefore, social identity theory offers a valuable analytical framework to examine the inclusion challenges faced by Black migrant women by demonstrating how group membership and intergroup dynamics shape individual self-concepts and experiences of belonging. Regardless of the common racial identities shared with local Black population groups, the intersection of marginalised identities (for instance, race and foreignness) positions Black migrant women in a marginalised outgroup experiencing both ingroup exclusion and external discrimination, as they contend with xenophobic attitudes and institutional biases that undermine their sense of belonging. This study applies the social identity theory to investigate how ingroup favouritism, societal biases, and stereotypes interact to shape inclusion, intergroup relations, self-esteem, and contribute to their ongoing marginalisation.

2.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided a critical review of the literature on the intersection of race, gender, and migration status, with specific emphasis on the experiences of Black migrant women in South Africa. It illustrated how intersectional identities produce complex and layered forms of

marginalisation, shaped by both institutional structures and intra-racial dynamics. Key themes included racialisation, gender-based discrimination, structural and institutional exclusion, and the negotiation of identity within hostile socio-cultural and workplace environments. The chapter identified a notable gap in existing scholarship concerning highly educated Black migrant women in the Global South.

To address this, the chapter introduced intersectionality as the central theoretical framework, supported by the concepts of inclusion, identity theory, and social identity theory. Together, these frameworks enable a context-specific and multi-level understanding of how overlapping social categories shape experiences of inclusion and exclusion. This theoretical foundation informs the empirical analysis that follows and guides the development of a nuanced, intersectional approach to diversity and inclusion in South Africa. The next chapter outlines the methodology that was utilised to better understand the inclusion experiences of Black migrant women at the intersection of their identities, to add to the knowledge base.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The objective of the research is to assess how the intersection of gender, race, and migration status influences the inclusion of Black migrant women in South Africa at both the organisational and country levels. The study uses a research methodology to answer the research questions outlined in Chapter One above. By exploring the lived experiences, attitudes, and perceptions of Black migrant women, the study provides insights at both the macro (societal) and meso (organisational) levels within the South African context. This chapter maps the research approach and strategy employed, the research design, data collection methods, and research instruments. Finally, it discusses the data sampling techniques, the research criteria for ensuring validity and reliability, and the methods of data analysis.

3.1 Research Strategy and Approach

The research approach in this study is based on specific ontological and epistemological positions. According to McCall (2005), "methodology is a coherent set of ideas about the philosophy, methods, and data that underlie the research process and the production of knowledge" (p. 1774). Philosophical assumptions and positionings are a key component of any research and are utilised as a foundation to interpret a complex representation of a phenomenon under study (Linares, 2015). Among these assumptions are ontology and epistemology.

Ontology refers to our beliefs and perceptions about the nature of reality and the social world (Meem, 2020). The SAGE Online Dictionary of Social Research Methods (2006) describes ontology as "a concept concerned with the existence of, and relationship between, different aspects of society such as social actors, cultural norms and social structures." Similarly, Richards (2003) asserted that ontology relates to the assumptions we make about the nature of reality and what exists. In the same vein, Ormston et al. (2003) defined ontology as "the nature of the world and what we can know about it." Moreover, Ormston et al. (2014a) supported that ontology poses important queries regarding whether social reality is socially constructed and context-dependent or if it exists independently of human experience.

Conversely, epistemology is the "study of knowledge" and concerns the assumptions that are made about the scope or the nature of knowledge (Richards, 2003), or ways to explore the world (Ormston et al., 2003). According to Cohen et al. (2007), epistemology is about the assumptions that researchers make about the validity of knowledge and the way it is communicated. The question of what is (or should be) regarded as acceptable knowledge in a discipline is how epistemology is defined (Bryman, 2008). Within epistemological discourse, two dominant perspectives emerge: positivism and interpretivism. Bryman (2008) and Crotty (1998) described "in a total rejection of the positivist and objectivist traditions, opposing views of the world and knowledge then appeared known as interpretivism and constructionism." In opposition to the positivist and objectivist traditions, interpretivism and constructionism argue that knowledge is socially constructed through the subjective experiences of individuals within specific contexts (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The social reality is interpreted according to different perceptions and understandings of reality; hence, they cannot be captured or portrayed accurately (Bryman, 2008; Cohen et al., 2007; Crotty, 1998; Ormston et al., 2003; Ormston et al., 2014b).

My worldview follows the interpretivism and constructionism tradition, as the study uses my perception to interpret what my senses perceive in constructing meanings and interpretations based on the participants' experiences. As such, the research findings are influenced by my perspectives and values as I am actively engaged in the research and am not refraining from being included in the research process. The interpretivist paradigm posits that social reality is completely subjective and formed by our own experiences rather than an objective truth (Collis & Hussey, 2014). Furthermore, meaning is both a human construction and contingent upon contextual features (Cilesiz, 2011).

This research aims to comprehend the world from the participants' viewpoints by adopting a nomothetic and ideographic interpretive paradigm using subjective first-hand knowledge (Karnevio, 2007), which lays the philosophical foundation to conduct the research. Therefore, I attempt to comprehend human behaviour, the world's spiritual nature (Burrell & Morgan, 2019), and various individuals' interpretations of the world shaped by complex social, historical, and spiritual factors (Creswell, 2007).

As an idealist, I follow the realm of idealism to interpret experiences and environments wherein knowledge is a social and human construction shaped by ideas and experiences rather than objective facts.

Considering the philosophical underpinnings of this study, a qualitative, inductive approach was utilised, using a hermeneutic or interpretive phenomenological method (Langdridge, 2008; Laverty, 2003). A quantitative research method would be inappropriate for this study as the research strategy does not emphasise quantification in the collection and analysis of data (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Moreover, positivism underpins quantitative research where person and reality are separate, and objective reality exists beyond the human mind (Weber, 2004). The positivism paradigm does not address the deeper meanings and complexities of social phenomena associated with the phenomenon investigated (Blaikie, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

The research question can be answered by using a qualitative research method that explores the subjective perspectives and experiences of Black migrant women in South Africa. Unlike positivist approaches, which focus on causality and generalisability, qualitative research facilitates the construction or re-examination of the theoretical foundations of social sciences and the construction of meaning (Morse & Field, 1996). Creswell (2007) accentuated that qualitative research enables the researcher to understand the complexity of social issues, as it motivates participants to share their untold stories. Besides this, qualitative research methods have proven to be an efficient method of analysis in multicultural research as it foregrounds the individuals whose voices have often been unheard or whose experiences have been overlooked and neglected (Morales, 2008).

However, qualitative research presents a variety of limitations and weaknesses. It is a time-consuming process that can take up to several weeks or months to collect qualitative data considered to be less verifiable. Since qualitative research is generally open-ended, participants have more control over the content of the data collected, which may lead to biases (Mohajan, 2018). Another major limitation concerns reliability and validity, translated into difficulty in demonstrating the scientific rigour of the data collection process. The rigour of the research process establishes the trustworthiness of the study's results, making sure that the data collection and

analysis processes are trustworthy (Amankwaa, 2016; Morse & Field, 1996).

Furthermore, in qualitative research, it is difficult to examine causality and causal relationships since this type of research is based on perspectives, viewpoints, and judgements rather than results, and therefore, it is difficult to replicate (Mohajan, 2018). Lastly, qualitative research is a perspective-oriented research method and thus, is not statistically representative. The feedback from the participants cannot be measured. Nevertheless, transforming rich qualitative data into quantifiable measures limits the power and deep meaning of insights and does not limit the legitimacy of qualitative data (Ochieng, 2009).

3.1.1 Phenomenology

Phenomenology is one of the many qualitative research methodologies that seeks to explore the lived experiences of individuals and their perceptions of their environment, seeking to comprehend the essence of human experience (Creswell, 2007). Phenomenology studies "phenomena," be that how things appear, things as they appear in our experience, or how we experience things, thus the meanings things have in our experience. According to Patton (2002), a phenomenon can be an emotion, an entity, an organisation, a relationship, a programme, or a culture.

A succinct definition of phenomenology is that it is a theoretical viewpoint that advocates for the study of individuals' experiences because human behaviour is determined by the phenomena of experience, being subjective rather than objective, external, and a physically described reality (Cohen et al., 2007). Phenomenology is not only a methodology, but also an approach and a philosophical stream that guides the study of phenomena or experiences (Sloan & Bowe, 2014). Husserl, the father of phenomenology, developed his philosophy around the concept of a "life world" and the way of reaching true meaning by going deeper into reality (Langdridge, 2008; Sloan & Bowe, 2014; Van Manen, 2017), describing phenomenology as "a project of sober reflection on the lived experience of human existence - sober, in the sense that reflecting on experience must be thoughtful, and as much as possible, free from theoretical, prejudicial, and suppositional intoxications" (p. 12). Overall, he indicated that a phenomenological approach requires one to obtain an understanding of the participants' lived experiences. The true research question that phenomenologists ask is "what is the meaning of one's lived experience?" (Burns &

Grove, 2010, p. 76).

The purpose of phenomenological research is to expose the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experiences of a group of people or an individual regarding a particular phenomenon (Christensen et al., 2023). This research approach allows researchers to reveal the "essence of things" and provide insights into social phenomena (Creswell, 2015). This study follows a phenomenological approach as it revolves around the perspectives of the study objects and describes a phenomenon the way the study objects have experienced it (Valle, 1998). Therefore, the phenomenological approach examined the human experiences of Black migrant women in South Africa within society and workplaces through the descriptions provided by the participants involved in the study.

The purpose was to identify the "object" of human experience, present the "essence" of the phenomenon, and give voice to it (Creswell, 2007; Sloan & Bowe, 2014). The study objects were the only reliable source of information to elaborate on their experiences, which are shaped by the world and, in return, shape the world (Mapp, 2008). The phenomenological view of experience is not simple, but rather complex (Smith et al., 2021). It embodies concepts such as consciousness, embodiment, the natural attitude, and experience and perception (Munhall, 2012). The reality of Black migrant women is socially constructed. Within the means of the phenomenological method, the research reveals the "essence of things" and provides insights into the inclusion challenges they experience within an organisational and societal context (Creswell, 2015). The findings of the study consist of a collection of descriptions of meanings in the form of statements that represent the meaning that Black migrant women attribute to their related experiences (Smith et al., 2021). Even though several types of phenomenological methods exist, such as transcendental, existential, empirical, psychological, ethical, critical, and hermeneutic (Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 1990), transcendental (descriptive) and hermeneutic (interpretive) phenomenology are particularly important (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Lutrell, 2010). The following section explicates the differences between these two methods and the reasons that this study employed a hermeneutic phenomenological approach.

3.1.2 Descriptive Phenomenology

Edmond Husserl launched the historical movement of phenomenology and developed the so-called descriptive or transcendental phenomenological approach (Connelly, 2010). Essence is a core concept in Husserl's phenomenology, as he believed that the observer could transcend the phenomena and meanings under investigation to take a global view of the essences discovered. As a result of this, the meanings of the human experiences were objective (Smith et al., 2021). Husserl insisted that researchers must bracket their perceptions, reactions, and biases to participants' shared experiences (Moustakas, 1994). This type of phenomenology develops around the description of the phenomenon or essential structures and not the explication of the lived conscious experience (Dowling & Cooney, 2012).

Husserl, in his Ideas I (Book One, 1913), introduced two main ideas, both stemming from the Greek verb noéō (νοέω), which means to think, to intend, to perceive, and are the focus of descriptive phenomenology. Husserl utilised the nouns noema and the noesis of the experience, where noema is the what and noesis is the how it is experienced. In other words, the intentional process of consciousness is called noesis, and its ideal content or the object-as-it-is-intended is called noema. No matter the outcome of the process, descriptive phenomenology departs from these actions (Zalta, 2018).

Husserl (1931) borrowed the principle of intentionality from psychology and applied it to phenomenological inquiry to better understand human thought and experience in the most unbiased manner possible (Converse, 2012; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). According to Husserl, the concept of intentionality is the internal experience of consciousness, with these internal experiences being comprised of the noema (i.e., the phenomenon itself) and noesis (i.e., the perceived meaning). Thus, to understand the phenomenon objectively (i.e., the noema), the researcher intentionally remains objective in seeking to determine the perceived meaning (i.e., the noesis (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015; Polkinghorne, 2005).

Both descriptive and hermeneutic phenomenology focus on the exploration of the life world or the lived human experience. However, descriptive phenomenology is not as complex as hermeneutic phenomenology, which incorporates four life worlds instead: temporality, spatiality, corporeality,

and relationality (van Manen, 1997).

3.1.3 Hermeneutic Phenomenology

The root of the word hermeneutic is Greek and means "to interpret" (Dowling & Cooney, 2012). Hermeneutic phenomenology, also known as interpretive phenomenology (Langdridge, 2008; Laverty, 2003), focuses on the interpretation of texts and languages (Webb & Pollard, 2006). It was developed by the German philosopher Martin Heidegger, who challenged and followed Husserl's phenomenology. He advocated his own ontological approach that incorporated the study of "being in the world" (Dowling, 2007, p. 133). Heidegger's foundational question was "what is being?" (Dowling, 2007, p. 133). Heidegger focused on the fundamental concept of "dasein," which in German means "existence" or "being there."

According to him, humans were viewed as beings with a significantly different existence compared to other things, such as objects or animals. Heidegger adopted a three-part ontology consisting of beings, their beingness (or the being of beings), and being itself (Davis, 2014). His emphasis was on the dynamic and constantly changing nature of human existence. He argued that human beings are always in the process of becoming, changing the nature of the self, and that they are constantly shaping and reshaping their identities through their interactions with the world's happenings. Heidegger further believed that human beings do not exist separately from our world but are subsumed within it. Therefore, the main concept emphasised on what it means to exist in the world and not just things that exist in the world. Heidegger (1962) also advocated that human consciousness is not separate from the world and is a formation of historically lived experience. He further believed that understanding is not a way we know the world, but rather the way we are (Polkinghorne, 1983).

Interpretation, the attribution of making sense of and giving meaning to a phenomenon, is central to Heidegger's phenomenology and the process of understanding. This type of phenomenology supports the use of interpretation of the lived experience of individuals by exploring the meanings found concerning phenomena and cultural, social, and historical contexts (Munhall, 1989) (Dowling, 2007; Guignon, 2012; Quinney et al., 2016; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). In addition, Heidegger (1962) stressed that the historicality, an individual's background, history, and the

culture given from birth influences their understanding of the world and determines their reality (Koch, 1995).

One of the key assumptions of Hermeneutic phenomenology is that the researcher is not able to completely remove (bracket) him or herself from the phenomenon being studied and the process of essence-identification to conduct empirical research and identify empirical generalisations and causal relations in the study of the human lived experience (Dowling, 2007; Gadamer, 1989; Guignon, 2012; Sloan & Bowe, 2014). Gadamer and van Manen followed the works of Husserl and Heidegger and added a different approach to hermeneutic phenomenology. Gadamer developed a language-related approach around hermeneutic phenomenology, advocating that understanding can only come about through language. His philosophy is that language reveals being (or existence) within some historical and cultural contexts. In Gadamerian hermeneutics, understanding and language are inextricably linked (Laverty, 2003). He further supported that the task of hermeneutics is not to develop a procedure of understanding, but rather to clarify the interpretive conditions in which understanding takes place (Gadamer, 1996). Therefore, he instantly linked interpretation with understanding and language.

Similarly, van Manen has drawn upon and connected phenomenology and hermeneutics, developing the hermeneutic approach of phenomenology during the latter part of the 20th century (van Manen, 1997). According to van Manen, hermeneutic phenomenology is a human science that studies people and, following Gadamer's approach, he posits that language is the main way that leads to data to understand the phenomena. Van Manen's hermeneutic phenomenological research is used in various fields where it can promote knowledge and understanding in research practices in education, psychology, nursing, and pedagogy (Dangal & Joshi, 2020; Sloan & Bowe, 2014). Van Manen (2017) stated that phenomenology formatively informs, reforms, transforms, performs, and pre-forms the relation between being and practice, meaning that it can be both leveraged as a philosophy and a methodology.

3.2 Methodology Appropriateness

Hermeneutic phenomenology, as defined by van Manen (1997), is a human science that studies individuals and their lived experiences. In alignment with this perspective, this study investigates

a particular phenomenon: the lived experiences of Black migrant women in South Africa and their inclusion challenges at both the organisational and national levels. Over time, van Manen's hermeneutic phenomenology has evolved from a philosophical stance to a methodology and has been applied in disciplines such as pedagogy, nursing, and psychology to practically demystify complex social phenomena. As a result, a hermeneutic phenomenological approach was deployed to investigate the social phenomenon that unfolds within the broader framework of Black Social Psychology.

The overarching goal of this study is the knowledge construction and reconstruction process based on participants' experiences by interpreting their meanings, analysing the text, and exploring more authentic perspectives (Langdridge, 2008). Hermeneutic phenomenology allows for the use of an analytical method that is not rigid and formalised but rather attached to the context of the phenomenon (Langdridge, 2008). In addition, this methodology is suitable for examining the meanings of the participants through interpretation and less essence as opposed to descriptive phenomenology (Sloan & Bowe, 2014). The phenomenological focus throughout the analysis has a dual purpose: (1) to seek the realities from individuals' narratives of their experiences and feelings, and (2) to produce in-depth descriptions of the phenomenon (Dangal & Joshi, 2020).

This research is viewed as an opportunity for the researcher to engage in an ongoing dialogue with the study participants to examine the text, to critically reflect on the content, and extract meaningful themes (van Manen, 1997). During this process, a "fusion of horizons" (Gadamer, 1989) occurs wherein the researcher and participants successfully collaboratively engage in conversations to explore and develop their understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Lauterbach, 2018). Koch (1995) stated:

> Hermeneutics invites its participants into an ongoing conversation… understanding occurs through a fusion of horizons, which is a dialectic between the pre-understandings of the research process, the interpretive framework, and the sources of information. The implication for hermeneutic inquiry is that research participants are also giving their self-interpreted constructions of their situation (p. 835).

A key aspect of hermeneutics is the so-called *hermeneutic circle,* as the researcher moves between

parts of the text and the whole of the text to increase the depth of engagement and understanding of texts (Annells, 1996; Langdridge, 2008; Polkinghorne, 1983). This understanding process assists the researcher in entering a hermeneutic circle of extraction and interpretation together with the blending of meanings and constitutionality (Koch, 1995; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). Through this recursive engagement, the researcher gains an evolving understanding of the phenomenon, allowing for an enriched and nuanced interpretation.

Lastly, the researcher realised that it would be impossible to completely bracket/remove themself from the ongoing conversations with the study participants; therefore, the researcher deliberately chose to use hermeneutic phenomenology. In descriptive phenomenology, bracketing is required, and through the process of reduction, preconceived notions are set aside or bracketed/epoché. However, in hermeneutic phenomenology, researchers assume their personal beliefs, biases, prior knowledge, prior research, and personal experiences cannot be fully bracketed, as the researcher is the primary analytic tool (Gadamer, 1989; Laverty, 2003; Van Manen, 2017).

The hermeneutic journey facilitated a deeper exploration of in-depth meanings and emotions, producing an interpretive analysis complemented by textual interpretations (Bowleg, 2017). More significantly, this method permitted the identification of new knowledge through data generation and interpretation. Throughout the process, the researcher worked reflexively with the data to discern patterns and themes across the phenomenon being studied to understand the lived experiences of the participants in context. Through this interpretative process, new insights emerged, shedding light on the challenges and complexities faced by Black migrant women as they navigate inclusion in the South African context.

3.3 ENSURING RIGOUR AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

In qualitative research, validity and reliability become ambiguous. Reliability is ensured when findings are consistent over time and can be replicated under similar conditions (Golafshani, 2003). Validity, on the other hand, is an effort to evaluate the precision of the study’s findings and ensure that the research measures what it intends to measure (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1995).

Maxwell (2012) described validity as “the correctness or credibility of a description, conclusion,

explanation, interpretation, or other sort of account" (p. 122). He stressed that validity is a relative, evidence-based concept that is dependent on how the researcher's conclusions relate to reality and not the methods used (Brinberg & McGrath, 1985; Maxwell, 2012).

A critical component of validity is generalisation, encompassing both internal and external aspects. Polit and Beck (2008) argued that generalisation "refers to extending research results, conclusions, or other accounts that are based on a study of particular individuals, settings, times, or institutions to other individuals, settings, times, or institutions than those directly studied" (p. 10). Simplistically, statistician Judith Singer believed that generalisation of qualitative research does apply, as there is no evident reason not to believe that the results can be applied more generally. Regardless of these arguments, scholarship supports that validity and reliability are particularly linked to quantitative research, and, therefore, it being a contentious issue, should not be applied in qualitative research (Golafshani, 2003; Morse et al., 2002). Contrarily, Fink (2002) argued that the criteria of validity and reliability in qualitative research demonstrate reality, truth, and trustworthiness.

Given the nature of the present study, it was imperative to ensure the trustworthiness of the qualitative research process. Thus, addressing issues of rigour and validity of both the data analysis process and the results had to be addressed. Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed that "internal validity should be replaced by that of credibility, external validity by transferability, reliability by dependability, and objectivity by confirmability" (p. 3). Therefore, Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed the "trustworthiness" model, which contains four vital criteria: credibility (internal validity), transferability (external validity), dependability (reliability), and confirmability (objectivity). Rigour and trustworthiness were addressed throughout, utilising the concepts of credibility, confirmability, dependability, transferability, and authenticity (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Shenton, 2004).

Credibility refers to the true value of the findings and must be plausible to the participants who can assure whether the researcher interpreted their results in an appropriate manner (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Confirmability is linked to the interpretation process and must be grounded in the data collected and not in the researcher's subjectivity. Dependability concerns the aspect of consistency and requires open and transparent descriptions of the entire research process recorded throughout the study. As a result, the transparency of the study was achieved via an “audit trail” filled with notes on research decisions, team meetings, reflective thoughts, sampling, details about the data management, and the emergence of findings (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Transferability refers to the aspect of applicability and the degree to which the research results can be transferred to other settings, contexts, or circumstances with other participants (Morris & Burkett, 2011). To achieve this, the researcher must describe not only the experiences of the participants, but their context as well, so that the experiences become meaningful to outsiders and readers (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Sim & Sharp, 1998). Thus, a rich account of data was provided that included a description of the sample, sampling strategy, and size, the setting and challenges of the interviewing process, socio-demographic data of the participants, inclusion and exclusion criteria, changes in interview questions, and excerpts from the interview guide. The so-called transferability judgment gave the reader the opportunity to assess whether the findings were transferable to their own setting. Lastly, the issue of authenticity was addressed by interacting with the participants through both verbal and non-verbal communication (Malgorzata & Dariusz, 2018).

The following techniques were also adopted to ensure the rigour of inquiry: prolonged engagement in the field, reflexive journal, use of peer debriefing, member checking, interview technique, and establishing the authority of the researcher and structural coherence (Anney, 2014). Furthermore, the flexibility and adaptability of open-ended questions and probes permitted participants to utilise their own wording, which increased the validity of the study and allowed the researcher to pose additional questions to clarify and understand the phenomenon, which enhanced the trustworthiness of the study. The researcher also kept a reflexive journal, notes, and memos throughout all stages of data collection and analysis to ensure the trustworthiness of the research (Silverman, 2017).

Moreover, probing permitted participants to utilise their own wording, which not only increased the credibility of the research but also allowed the researcher to pose additional questions to clarify

and understand the phenomenon which enhanced the trustworthiness of the study. The diversity of participants' profiles and the use of semi-structured interviews added to the required richness of the data.

3.4 RESEARCH ETHICS

The proposed study underwent an ethics review before the data collection process, and ethical clearance was granted by the Graduate School of Business Faculty Research Ethics Committee. The research was therefore guided by an ethical approach based on integrity, quality, and transparency, and conducted with a high level of responsibility and social sensitivity. Furthermore, informed consent was obtained from each participant by providing them with the purpose and objectives of the research. The full anonymity of the participants was safeguarded through the option of confidentiality of their statements and the right to take a pause or withdraw at any given moment without prejudice.

Participation in the study was voluntary, and no financial or other incentive was offered to the participants. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and secured in file records, maintaining the confidentiality of the participants and therefore, their self-respect and self-esteem. The principle of anonymity was guaranteed by either changing names or other information that would expose the identity of a participant. It was crucial to comprehend that the nature of the study was sensitive and the race of the respondents in this research was not random. In addition, most of the sub-Saharan migrants in Africa, and particularly in South Africa, use English, French, and Portuguese as business languages in their countries of origin and are conversant in English (Ncube et al., 2019). Therefore, the interviews were conducted in English.

3.5 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design provides an appropriate framework for a study, and entails various interrelated decisions as a blueprint for data collection, measurement, and data analysis (Bougie & Sekaran, 2019). The research design process entailed the decision to be made about the research approach, which has been extensively detailed in the previous section. The study sought to draw meaning from experiences through narrative subject materials and employed a cross-sectional, hermeneutic phenomenological design in aiming to understand the lived experiences of Black migrant women

in urban settings in South Africa, conducted at one point in time.

For such a design, there is no time dimension, as all data are gathered and mostly refer to the time at or around the time of the data collection. Creswell et al. (2007) pointed out the significance of a mixed research design by stating that it focuses:

> On collecting, analysing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or series of studies. Its central premise is that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone.

However, this study employed a cross-sectional, interpretive design following the researcher's theoretical perspective and described a population of interest by recording information but without manipulating variables (Allen, 2017). The main disadvantage of a cross-sectional design is that it does not help to determine cause and effect because both are examined at the same time (Kesmodel, 2018). Under certain circumstances, validity does occur in a cross-sectional design when studying potentially causal associations. For example, if the exposure is assumed to be stable over time, a cross-sectional design may be valid. Considering the exploratory nature of this study, the researcher does not expect this limitation to severely affect the study. Lastly, data collection in a phenomenological study is time-consuming; therefore, the researcher must ensure that all useful information is captured by suitable means. The type of research, alongside the diversity of the sample, assures that the narratives of the migrant women shed light and expose crucial inclusion issues in South Africa.

3.6 Data Collection Methods and Instruments

Maxwell (2012) strongly advocated for a creative approach to data collection, which may provide novel and inspiring insights throughout the research process. Thus, the researcher must be fully immersed in the study's context; a process, culture, or specific situation directly engaging with the participants (Weinreich, 2009). In this direction, the researcher becomes the main instrument of collecting data, and results may differ from other individuals depending on who conducts the study. As Boeije (2009) suggested, qualitative data are not accurate representations of lived experiences; rather, they capture people's experiences and their subjective understandings. By studying these narratives, social scientists can gain deeper insights into the complexities of the

social world. Therefore, qualitative research aims to promote better self-understanding, improve understanding of human attitudes, and provide insights into human behaviour.

Empirical data in qualitative research can be collected in various ways, including inviting participants to interviews or focus groups, participant observation, video recordings, photos, or requesting organisations to share confidential materials. The end result is a compilation of data in the form of the participants' stories, direct quotes, the researcher's observational notes, visual materials, and case studies (Sandelowski & Barroso, 2002). van Manen (1997) suggested amongst the variety of data gathering approaches, he favoured interviewing individuals when gathering their reflective recollections. He stated that reflective interview transcripts require interpretive analysis by the researcher in order to produce a human science (phenomenological) description of the experience of the interviewee (van Manen, 1997).

For this study, in-depth interviews fulfilled the project's purposes to address the research questions, while adapting to practical possibilities and limitations. Open and deep interviewing of individuals is a very typical and effective data gathering technique in diverse qualitative research methodologies. Furthermore, to give people the opportunity to think deeply about the phenomenon being studied, phenomenological inquiry particularly requires close interaction with a limited number of participants (Creswell, 2007).

3.6.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

The data collection took place by means of semi-structured measuring instruments that were tailored to the research subject and refined as the research progressed. Because of the simultaneous, structured, and free-flowing nature of semi-structured interviews, this type of interview enabled the researcher to choose the topic, research participants, and interview questions in advance (Collis & Hussey, 2014), within the interpretivist paradigm. In phenomenological research, in-depth interviews are one of the most commonly used techniques designed to allow participants to express themselves ordinarily and naturally. The researcher conducts in-depth interviews with the people who have directly experienced the phenomenon to explore the experience of the phenomenon (Patton, 2002). It is usually conducted face-to-face and involves one interviewer and one participant (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Semi-structured interviews in hermeneutics enable the researcher to "apply the hermeneutic approach of phenomenology wherein language, such as the language of interview, reveals being (or existence) within some historical and cultural contexts, understood by participant and researcher and through language" (Gadamer, 1989; Langdridge, 2008; van Manen, 1997). This type of interview helped the researcher to comprehend the personal perspectives, feelings, viewpoints, and experiences of the individuals. In detail, the main source of gathering the data was one-on-one in-depth interviews using semi-structured open-ended questions. The semi-structured interview is frequently carried out in a face-to-face setting, which enables the researcher to establish rapport with the participants, seek new insights by triggering their memories and reflections to revisit experiences (Crotty, 1998), pose questions, and evaluate phenomena from various perspectives. The researcher has further access to the participants' non-verbal cues, such as gestures and facial expressions.

Therefore, the data was collected by conducting in-person (two interviews) and online (18 interviews) interviews by means of face-to-face technology (Zoom and MS Teams) over a period of 12 months (March 2022-April 2023) and a second period of one month (March 2024, three interviews). In the beginning, the duration of the interviews was set between 60 and 90 minutes; however, the researcher decided to update the given time to a maximum duration of 75 minutes, taking into account the participants' busy lifestyles and personal responsibilities. However, some interviews ended up being longer as in some cases, participants talked more than others, which significantly varied the recording time of the interview. Lastly, the researcher's goal was to create a well-organised, authentic, and succinct interview process by using a notebook and pen, but she quickly realised that it was very hard to take down notes as the interview process went on, as her attention could immediately shift from the interviewees to the notes.

Maxwell (2012) underscored that interview questions must be context-specific, focused, and diverse, and must not be derived from the research questions; on the contrary, interviews should provide all the data to respond to them. Regarding hermeneutic phenomenology methods, Van Manen (2017) strongly recommended conversational interviewing regarding the experience, while aiming to explore and enhance the understanding of the phenomena. In this direction, the researcher used an interview protocol with a set of semi-structured interview questions to stimulate

conversational dialogue as well as probing questions to draw out more information on the issues that were mentioned by various participants, as per the philosophy of hermeneutic phenomenology. However, as per the semi-structured interview method and the philosophy of phenomenology (Laverty, 2003), unscheduled prompts were also utilised, and encouraged the interviewees to elaborate on relevant points even when unplanned.

Prior to the actual interviewing meeting, the protocol was emailed to the participants along with the informed consent, which they had to complete and return in advance of the interview. Each participant was given a pseudonym to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of those involved. In addition, any names of organisations, family members, and places would be hidden to protect the participants' identities. Interviewees were informed that they were able to skip any questions that could create uneasiness during the process or could remove themselves from the study at any point.

3.6.1.1 In-person Interviews

For the in-person interviews, finding a private, quiet place was indispensable as the recording process had to take place. The face-to-face meetings took place over the weekend, as it was the only time that interviewees could make time to participate in the study. Once again, they were given explanations and information regarding the purpose of the study, the benefits, and the interview protocol, and were invited to ask questions or raise concerns before the start of the interview. As the physical location of the interview was a public place, the flow was interrupted a couple of times, which did not affect the quality to a great extent, although participants had to readjust and regather their thoughts.

One of the participants had to take a couple of breaks as she often felt overwhelmed; therefore, it was necessary to continue to provide a safe environment, creating trust and openness throughout the interview. As a facilitator, the researcher had to assist the process of remembering and articulating and show respect for what the interviewee had to say without judging or overreacting. The goal of the questions being asked was not to simply elicit answers to specific questions but to offer a space for participants to converse about something in their own words. Boeije (2009) supported that the purpose of an interview is to see a slice of the social world from the participant's

perspective and on their own conditions. Detailed and rich information is mostly obtained in a conversation in which both partners genuinely enjoy participating and feel respected by the other person.

The interviews were recorded on the researcher's phone and transcribed verbatim after each interview. Participants were asked to discuss their lived inclusion experiences as Black migrant women in South Africa. Each interview was initiated by requesting basic sociodemographic information such as country of origin, number of years living in South Africa, age, education, occupation, etc., and commenced the main body of the interview process by asking, "Has your migrant status ever led to someone making certain assumptions or drawing conclusions about you? If so, please give me an example." Probing was also part of the process to elicit further rich descriptions and information based on the participants' responses.

3.6.1.2 Online Interviews

The online interviews followed a similar pattern. They were conducted via MS Teams or Zoom in the participants' preferred location and the researcher's home office, where no one else was allowed to be present in order to protect the participants' identity. Similarly to face-to-face questions, the first section entailed questions about sociodemographic information, and afterwards, the researcher moved on to the main questions by asking the primary question of "has your migrant status ever led to someone making certain assumptions or drawing conclusions about you? If so, please give me an example." After data collection, the interviews were transcribed by means of a script platform of each application, and then were subsequently reviewed. Participants had to relive their experiences, and, in many cases, relive their trauma with little benefit to themselves. However, they remained willing to respond to all questions and did not hold back from asking for clarifications whenever it was needed. The interviews were recorded on MS Teams and Zoom, but also on the voice recorder app on the researcher's laptop as a backup, and transcribed verbatim after each interview.

In both types of interviews, the interview process was concluded by asking for recommendations and advice or suggestions to consider for other migrant women who are keen to migrate to South Africa, and the researcher immediately conducted reflexive journaling by taking field notes that

would assist in the process of reflection and interpretation. Crist and Tanner (2003) alert that "field notes often denote events that are observed, such as vocal intonations and physical gestures, which might not be clear from audio-recordings." Thus, such features are useful because they advance the data collection and analysis and enable a deeper consideration of the meaning related to the narratives expressed. Throughout the interview process, the researcher recorded the responses and thoughts about the phenomenon linked to the experiences visited during the interviews with the participants' consent. Hence, the interviews were transcribed verbatim with identifying features removed.

3.6.2 Methodological Challenges during the Interview Process

As a doctoral student, junior researcher, and emerging scholar with an educational background primarily in statistics and quantitative research, conducting qualitative research, including the interview process, was highly challenging and often unpredictable. Some of the challenges that I had to deal with during the data collection process were unforeseen problems such as technical issues or delays, participants' being on work or family duty, their reactions/responses to certain situations or memories of the past, or the postponing and rescheduling of the interview appointment due to the participants' personal or professional responsibility. The research fatigue that emerged throughout the data collection process, starting from the recruitment point to the actual interview meetings, made me realise that the qualitative process is indeed a time-consuming process where I had to mindfully leverage my organisational, time management, communication, and adaptability skills. In addition, I had to thoroughly explain the objectives and mandate of my research, the theoretical and practical contributions, as well as the significance of participating in such a study. No monetary incentive or gifts were provided to participants to participate in this study.

It must be further pointed out that inviting individuals to participate in the study was by itself difficult, as participants do not often give their trust or permission to a stranger to explore their personal and professional lives, aspects of their lives, deepest thoughts, and emotions. As a researcher, I had to gain their trust if I wanted to achieve the desired outcomes of the interview (Quinney et al., 2016). Some of the participants were sceptical about participating in the research. My approach to that was to embrace their fear with empathy, compassion, and patience that were

needed to be activated in a qualitative study. Clarifying their questions and resolving any doubts on the phone and prior to the interview was a way to tackle this issue. Following that, I had to build rapport with the participants, ensuring that, as conversational partners, we got along and had a genuine interest in asking, answering, and listening during the interview (Boeije, 2009).

A qualitative interview takes place in a reciprocal relationship where caring, professionalism, and mindfulness of the environment are essential elements of generating and interpreting the text or data. Participants need to be interviewed within an environment of safety, trust, and established rapport, and engage during interviews without having to like or sympathise with each other (Boeije, 2009). Moreover, what makes interviewing more demanding is that researchers have to decide which questions to ask and when, how to shape them, and the order they should be posed. Therefore, at times, I had to skip specific questions as they were already covered by the participant, alternate the order of the questions, and skip other questions that were not applicable to the participants' experience. The given answers were evaluated as sufficient or not, and following that, I decided to use probing and prompts to obtain further clarity. Probing refers to verbal or non-verbal behaviour of the interviewer when the interviewee's response to the question is not relevant, clear, or complete, and can consist of posing questions, keeping silent, or giving non-specified encouragement ("uh," "yes," "yeah"), whereas prompts refer to issues that the interviewer directs attention to (Ritchie et al., 2003).

Some of the questions caused awkwardness, bringing up traumatic memories and life experiences; therefore, I used my judgement to decide whether to probe or simply abandon this question. In the summary and findings, I have elaborated further about the participants' individual experience, their involvement in my study, and their reactions when discussing their lived experiences. My research journal included all the necessary information and observations about each informant as well as my research journey, including my emotions, feelings, and experiences. It must be pointed out that the majority of the experiences shared were quite intense, where I often found myself highly triggered, distressed, and overwhelmed. Consequently, upon the completion of the interviews, I needed some time to unwind, destress, and let go of the shared experiences.

3.6.3 Research Participants, Sampling Strategy, and Setting

3.6.3.1 Research Participants

The research participants of the study were Black migrant women from different racial and ethnic backgrounds originally from Sub-Saharan African countries: Botswana, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. The participants were highly educated with a completed bachelor's degree acquired in South Africa, their home countries, or elsewhere. Half of the participants had obtained advanced degrees (i.e., Honours, Master's, or PhD), while a few pursued a diploma as their highest level of education, supplemented by short courses completed in different universities worldwide. The participants had lived in South Africa for a period of between six months and 33 years before the fieldwork. They migrated as economic migrants, accompanying family members of economic migrants, refugees/asylum seekers, or students. Their ages ranged from 18 to 49 years old, and they resided in urban areas such as Cape Town, Pretoria, and Johannesburg.

The participants were working professionals in diverse roles, including office manager, customer success manager, administrative officer, head of department, operations manager, PhD research fellow, and lecturer. They were employed in various industries, including non-profit, non-governmental organisations, finance and banking, accountancy, oil and gas, academia, and the pharmaceutical industry. Two of the participants were interns, and one was self-employed as a business owner.

Initially, all participants entered South Africa on a study permit, refugee visa, or visitor's visa. The majority transitioned into permanent residency, spousal visas, relative visas, citizenship through naturalisation, work visas, or asylum seeker visas. Individuals who were undocumented, unskilled, had a low level of education, and were born in South Africa were excluded from the study.

3.6.3.2 Inclusion Criteria

All participants were required to meet the following criteria:

- be international migrants who entered South Africa on a voluntary or involuntary basis and with legal status;
- self-identity as Black migrant women;

- have resided in the country ranging from three to 40 years;
- be between 18 and 50 years old;
- be employed (either full-time or part-time) or have previous employment experience but are now self-employed;
- have proficiency in English, including the ability to read, write, and speak the language;
- be available for participation in the interviewing process, whether through face-to-face meetings, Microsoft Teams, or Zoom; and
- be willing to respond to semi-structured interview questions, with the option to refrain from answering any question that causes discomfort due to sensitive content.

3.6.3.3 Sampling Strategy and Recruitment

According to the needs of the study, the sample in qualitative research is intentionally selected and commonly referred to as *purposive sampling or purposeful selection* (Boeije, 2009). Two main types of purposive sampling exist: *judgemental sampling and quota sampling*. In this research, a purposive, judgemental sampling strategy was utilised to recruit 23 participants based exclusively on the researcher's judgement to identify individuals who best represented the target population and could provide rich, relevant insights for the study.

This type of sampling strategy aligns with hermeneutic phenomenology because participants are likely familiar with the topic, as they have experienced the phenomenon of interest. They were selected because of their particular lived experiences and because they were prepared to share their personal stories. The purpose was to elicit authentic responses and gain a deeper understanding of the research questions. Sowell (2001) suggested that when the information collected from participants is pertinent to the research questions, a sample is purposive. This sampling strategy fosters the study's credibility and provides all the information on the phenomenon under investigation extracted by the selected participants (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002).

The researcher leveraged their personal network to identify participants willing to take part in the study, and thereafter, followed up with social media and online international groups platforms to recruit Black migrant women and elaborate on the study's objectives. Additionally, considering that data collection is a time-consuming process, the researcher also approached diverse non-

governmental organisations that work with migrants. This required the completion of a formal process, which involved submitting a research inquiry that included the study's summary, logistics (interviews' proposed dates and duration), inclusion criteria of the participants, informed consent protocols, trauma debriefing measures, estimated publication timelines, and dissemination plans, and the researcher's affiliation. The research proposal, as well as ethical clearance certificates, were also included and were indispensable to ensure compliance, credibility, and a positive outcome.

The organisation expressed interest in the research scope, and subsequent agreements were made on key logistics, such as the number of participants, time and place of the interview appointments, a research report to be made available after the completion of the study, and proper accreditation in the publication. Research institutions often collaborate with organisations that see value in studies addressing critical social issues (Boeije, 2009). Although many qualitative researchers in the field support that access to organisations must be renegotiated at different levels, it was very fortunate that an organisation was responsive, showing genuine interest in the research topic as it aligned with their mandate and mission (Lofland & Lofland, 1995).

Moreover, snowball sampling, known as the networking method, was employed as an additional strategy. According to Bowles and Alston (2013), snowballing is ideal to access suitable, hard-to-reach participants for the intended research. In detail, one participant would locate "fellow citizens and relatives, or even random foreigners from other regions" who would then be approached by the researcher. The usefulness of this method lies in that it is primarily used when study populations are hard-to-reach or when sensitive topics or taboo content are involved. In this direction, the present research, in looking into the intersection of migrant status, gender, and race, touches upon highly sensitive topics regarding xenophobic attitudes, sexual harassment, and female discrimination and racism.

However, Atkinson and Flint (2001) cautioned that even though snowball sampling is often seen as a convenient way to recruit participants, an adequate and representative sample requires attention.

3.6.3.4 Sample Size

The study sample needs to accurately represent the subject being studied and be thoroughly examined. However, working out the composition and size of a research sample is a complex process. It is often challenging to define the number of participants in advance. A reasonable estimate of 25 participants was proposed to be able to develop the theoretical framework (Morse et al., 2002). The ultimate sample comprised 23 Black migrant women. They responded to recruitment invitations, were keen to share their lived experiences, spoke fluent English, and were available for face-to-face or online interviews. The respondents for this hermeneutic phenomenological inquiry who were included were self-identified as highly educated, international migrant women of sub-Saharan African origin and Black racial identity. They lived in urban settings and held different professional roles across different industries. The sample was diverse to deliver a wider overview of the phenomenon and create a rich exploration of their lived experiences in South Africa until saturation was reached. The detailed profiles of participants are presented in Table 1 and Table 2 in Chapter Four below.

A study is considered credible when it involves enough people to gain meaningful insight into a topic, but not so many as to lose sight of the essence of the topic. The number of interviewees in a phenomenological study usually ranges between 10 and 12 (Dukes, 1984). Nevertheless, this number can fluctuate because of the varied experiences of each participant, the richness of the data, and the saturation point. Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) suggested that "although the idea of saturation is helpful at the conceptual level, it provides little practical guidance for estimating sample sizes for robust research prior to data collection" (p. 59). While 23 participants may seem relatively small, in phenomenology, “it is often the single, unique statement that generates new understanding. The collective statements are often already explored and hence usually a part of the researcher’s pre-understanding” (Osteraker, 2002, p. 4).

Guidelines for sample sizes in phenomenological research have been offered by several academics. According to Creswell (2007) and Polkinghorne (1983), five to 25 participants is an adequate sample size, while Morse et al. (2002) suggests a minimum of six participants. Further suggestions for qualitative sample sizes were provided by Charmaz (2014, p. 114), who suggested that “25 (participants are) adequate for smaller projects,” while Green and Thorogood (2009, p.120) stated

that “the experience of most qualitative researchers (emphasis added) is that in interview studies little that is ‘new’ comes out of transcripts after you have interviewed 20 or so people.” The purpose of hermeneutic phenomenology is about understanding the meaning of lived experiences in relation to a particular phenomenon (Laverty, 2003); thus, participant selection depends on the focus of the study, their willingness to share, and the diversity to support rich and unique stories of the particular experience (Polkinghorne, 2005; van Manen, 1997). In this vein, gathering data from 23 participants seems an acceptable number in phenomenological research.

Finally, it’s worthwhile to note that research involving Black sampling groups is expected to make use of a White comparison or control group to demonstrate the validity of their research (Cokley et al., 2014). Conversely, research involving White samples is never expected to include a Black comparison or control group. Scholars in Black psychology state that “Whites or Europeans are no longer the standard by which the psychology of people is judged,” opposing this hegemonic and problematic stance. Similarly, the present research aligns with the history and ongoing reality of this dynamic by focusing exclusively on participants of African descent, recognising their experiences as valid and meaningful in their own right.

3.6.3.5 Reflexivity

Reflexivity is another aspect of validity and, according to Langdridge (2008), it refers to the process in which “researchers are conscious of and reflective about how their questions, methods and subject position might impact on the data or the psychological knowledge produced in a study.” Corbin and Strauss (2008) supported the idea that to acknowledge their influence on research processes, researchers are required to adopt reflexivity. Through reflexivity, the researcher can mitigate the effect of their own “biases, beliefs, and experiences” on the research by positioning themselves in the study.

This idea was further confirmed by Dowling (2007) who believed that the researcher is an integral part of the research project, process, and outcomes. Reflexivity is a crucial part of hermeneutic phenomenology, as in all interpretative methodologies. It is another aspect of validity and makes the researcher empathise or use relevant prior experience to analyse the data, interpret meanings, and add value to the interpretations based on their consciousness through a retrospective process

(Sloan & Bowe, 2014). Throughout this process, the researcher adopts a constant internal dialogue that keeps asking how the researcher knows what they know (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004).

The absence of the bracketing principle lives in the core of reflexivity. Bracketing out biases, presuppositions, and subjective conceptions is not used in hermeneutic phenomenological inquiry as the researcher can't remove themself from the entire research process. In contrast to the descriptive phenomenology, which requires bracketing off the researcher's assumptions on the data collection process and the structure of the data, hermeneutic phenomenology cannot enable the so-called "epoché process" or "bracketing" act that sets aside the researcher's subjectivities and prejudgements (Moustakas, 1994). Gadamer, Heidegger, and van Manen were advocates of non-bracketing and of bracketing not being warranted in the research process. They all disagreed with the need for researchers bracketing presumptions and disregard prior experience with a phenomenon.

For the present study, reflexivity was attained through reflexive journaling and memo writing throughout the research, with the researcher taking notes about themself and the method of study. According to van Manen (1997), writing is the driving force behind a person's reflective attitude in which they write their thoughts in a deeply collective way. The researcher recorded their thoughts, feelings, and significant details about the lived experiences of Black migrant women before and after the participants' interviews. The process was an ongoing conversation about the experience, being present, and aiming to interpret the shared experiences while questioning how those interpretations came about. The research journal proved an indispensable tool to process feelings and fully comprehend the participants' lived stories, being engaged in a hermeneutic circle, moving back and forth between the parts and the whole of the text (Heidegger, 1962). All the notes were added immediately at the end of each interview or during the editing and revision of each transcript.

Memo writing is a key component of qualitative analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Memos are valuable analytic techniques as they constitute reflections on research methods, theory, or goals. They function as facilitators of the researcher's thinking about relationships with their data and make their ideas and analyses visible and retrievable (Van Maanen, 1979). Maxwell (2012) added

that while the researcher conducts the data analysis, they should frequently write memos to stimulate and capture their ideas about the data. Since the beginning of the data analysis, the researcher quickly realised that analysis is a time-consuming, energy-demanding, and attention-oriented process with an overload of information stemming from fieldwork, and would face challenges of how to keep track of ideas, thoughts, solutions, evaluations, and relevant impressions. Memos were a way to reflect on thoughts and emotions, the whole experience, the participants' feelings and reactions, emerging themes and patterns, and generic impressions.

For the present study, memo writing took place after listening to the audio recordings and reflecting on post-interview discussions, to take down any type of notes: observational, methodological, or theoretical. The memos played a crucial role in the research to make connections amongst the participants' shared experiences and critically think of when or whether to use probes throughout the interview, creating additional insights and more thoughtful responses. Memos also assisted in linking the researcher's thinking to the monitoring and development of the research project in ensuring research quality, and finally, in writing the findings.

In the following section, an elaboration of the emotional dimensions of the research is provided, and how it helped to understand the participants' emotions and their entire life experience, analyse the interview data, and ultimately present the findings and discussion.

3.7 EMOTIONAL ASPECT OF THE RESEARCH

As discussed earlier, memos assisted in capturing the researcher's own feelings as the emotional aftermath of the interviews proved heavy and were utilised as a means to process the events that occurred in the participants' lives. The emotional and personalised aspect of the data collection and analysis paved the way for a deeper understanding of the participants' lived experiences, their way of thinking and acting, and their personal lifestyles.

According to Van Krieken (1998, cited in Perry et al., 2004), it is inevitable for researchers to get emotionally engaged with their subject of study since they are human beings who study the social world. Nevertheless, there is a lack of discussion of the emotional dimension or impact of research within scholarly writing. Although the research topic is sensitive in addressing issues of

xenophobia, sexism, racism, and uncovering stories of vulnerability, traumatic experiences, and difficult life moments, I did not expect that the participants' interviews would affect me to such a great extent. The most difficult part was both during and after the interviews, but also the acceptance of the emotional connection to the participants and the lack of guilt I had to come to terms with as a researcher. I quickly noticed that I was too critical of myself, as it had been recognised that the emotions of a researcher are an exceptional source of insight to be valued, examined, and used in research (Bourne, 2005; Hubbard et al., 2001; Johnson, 2009). I was simply a human researcher attempting to make sense of and cope with the research experience, with the main aim to enrich the research project and enhance interpretation and understanding.

All human beings can be emotional depending on the experiences and circumstances that they are exposed to. The same applies to qualitative researchers who cannot be distant, disembodied, and objective scientists or dispassionate observers. My highs and lows were very frequent throughout the process of undertaking this research. On one hand, I could feel a high level of excitement and euphoria considering the impactful research and goals I was trying to achieve and, on the other hand, there were times that I felt I was privileged, guilty, and frustrated as I had to force participants to relive traumatic past experiences exposing them to uneasiness and stressful situations (Bourne, 2005; Hubbard et al., 2001). I felt strongly that I could not refrain from being emotional; therefore, it was not feasible to remove my past experiences or any emotional connection to the topic.

Overall, the use of emotions throughout my research journey was very beneficial to both the participants and the study. Having been authentic to myself, the participants, and the research project not only contributed to the overall content of the interviews but also made me empathise with the participants' experiences and vulnerability. Somehow it resonated with me as a researcher, which had me also choosing the research topic, and was extended to the data collection, analysis, and writing up of the findings and results. Hubbard et al. (2001) acknowledged that "knowledge is not something objective and removed from our bodies, experiences and emotions but is created through our experiences of the world as a sensuous and affective activity" (p. 126) because we can sense and relate to our physical, natural, or social worlds through emotion.

The knowledge acquired hitherto was subjective, tied to my personal and professional journey,

and fully aligned to the theoretical underpinnings and perspectives of my research. By applying my knowledge to the theoretical context, I could justify all my thoughts and obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the experiences of these women throughout the research process. Besides this, I would be able to be completely engaged with the participants and gain greater insights into their lives and their worldviews. By having utilised this approach, it seemed that my role as researcher was counterbalanced by the role of participant, thereby creating an atmosphere in which participants felt as though they could express their opinions freely from a position of neutrality with me and thus not be subject to judgment or reprisal (Johnson, 2009).

Moreover, the interviews were often accompanied by very emotional responses from the participants. As my research investigated highly sensitive topics, namely xenophobia, female discrimination, and institutional racism, many of the women shared very personal stories and incidents that involved violence evoked a high level of trauma. Violence against women "is the most pervasive violation of human rights in the world today" (Akhtar & Metraux, 2013) and my research further confirmed that gender-related issues such as sexual harassment and abuse continue to be a universal, societal problem that undermines women's lives and attacks their rights and dignity (Akhtar & Metraux, 2013). Several Black migrant women participants reported that they had experienced this either in the workplace or their country of origin. In most cases, the harasser came from their family environment or their workplace. The majority of women did not report these incidents or decided to address the issue and privately confronted the harasser. The migrant women who reported the incident to the police expressed dissatisfaction with the way the cases of GBV were handled by the relevant institutions, and specifically the police.

In addition, it was inspiring to notice that migrant women showed a great level of empathy and compassion for family members, friends, colleagues, or clients who had previously experienced a form of GBV including IPV, workplace sexual harassment, and sexual assault at the Department of Home Affairs, or were susceptible to sex trafficking and job interview scams. Their emotional strain during the interview was evident from their voice, facial expressions, and words used to describe the traumatic experiences. Mainly Black migrant women under refugee status or those who resided in a township when they initially immigrated into South Africa were particularly reactive to specific questions, and at times were overwhelmed when speaking about unpleasant

memories from the past. Black migrant women who held the role of a mother conveyed negative emotions such as anxiety and distress when discussing their children's experience and plans, yet they remained hopeful to create the best life for their children, as to them, children are inherited migrants; therefore, they would encounter similar issues.

Moreover, Black migrant women extensively spoke about xenophobic sentiments and attacks that they received from South Africans at an organisational level. They discussed their experiences very vividly, while some participants regarded several questions as too tough or too personal to elaborate on. Certain reactions included the wordings *"good question," "that's a tough one," "I feel that's such a personal question,"* and *"that's a tough line here."* However, they allowed themselves to be vulnerable and at the same time, honest and collaborative by agreeing to narrate their stories through their intersectional identity in line with their personal relationships, coping with obstacles at work, and living in a country where most of the population is Black. Their high level of understanding of the study's significance, contribution, and value resulted in them responding to each question and, at times, adding extra information that would assist in shaping the research.

One of the questions I asked at the beginning of the interview, which described the women's experience before they immigrated to South Africa, was *"Would you like to give me a short description about the place where you grew up and what it was like for you to grow up there?"* A few participants reminisced about their lives in their previous place of residence and were delighted to share that they had a normal upbringing, as well as a pleasant childhood and family memories. On the contrary, some women stated that they were raised by their grandparents or other siblings, which made them display negative feelings such as disappointment and bitterness. Overall, it was impressive to see the diligence in some participants who had taken the time to print out the interview protocol, taken down notes, and appeared stressed about missing out key points from their narratives.

Besides this, for many, being educationally and professionally well-equipped and skilled made them regard themselves as privileged, fortunate women compared to unskilled and/or undocumented Black migrant women who are exposed to hazards and risks in the host country and

are prone to exploitation by both employers and landlords. This filled them with disappointment and negative thoughts as they felt unable to support themselves despite the understanding of the vulnerability of their intersectional position. To conclude, most participants had never previously articulated or reflected on their experiences and positionality as Black migrant women. Many expressed surprise at the extent to which this intersectional identity had shaped their behaviours, influenced the perceptions of others, and profoundly impacted their lives in South Africa. For some, the process of sharing their stories was described as therapeutic—one participant remarked, *"we're really diving deep into my psychosis here."* These conversations prompted a re-evaluation of past experiences of discrimination and disadvantage that had previously gone unnoticed or unacknowledged in the moment.

3.8 The Role of the Researcher

The researcher is the primary analytic tool in a study (Lauterbach, 2018). The researcher's role is the role of the facilitator in being responsible for creating a platform where informants are able to share their lived experiences and for coordinating the entire research process. The researcher must be able to approach participants, engage them in the interview process, and encourage them to relive the phenomenon being studied. Finally, the researcher must be able to interpret the participants' meanings and identify themes and patterns to meet the overall research goal and its objectives.

In this section, I am writing about my positionality as a researcher and the impact on the research process. My position as a White, middle-class migrant woman may significantly differ from the participants. I migrated from Europe to Africa in 2017, initially to East Africa (Tanzania), where I lived for about two years, and afterwards moved to South Africa, where I've been residing for the past six years. During this period, I engaged in international development and community work by running a wide array of social development projects for marginalised and under-resourced groups. I collaborated and discussed with various non-government and non-profit organisations, civil society organisations, community leaders, and social enterprises about the complexities of the South African society, diversity, inclusion, and equality issues for vulnerable groups, including females, migrants, and children, and eventually, strategies to tackle societal challenges.

My encounter with some undocumented migrant women of sub-Saharan Africa residing in South Africa and my witnessing of their lived experiences of discrimination and stigmatisation were the main reasons I decided to investigate their lived experiences. I began to read the literature that reported the difficulties and obstacles that migrant women have to overcome in their host country. As I explored my racial and gender identity within the context of South Africa and the world, I began to realise that I can identify more with highly educated professional migrant women. Primarily, I identify as a world citizen; an inquisitive woman; a White migrant woman; an advocate of other women. As a migrant woman, I have personally encountered discrimination, gender-based harassment, and inequality both in the labour market and in broader society. Despite sharing similar educational and professional backgrounds with others, migrant women remain disproportionately affected—an outcome that seems inevitable given the structural forces shaping our interconnected world. The historical context of South Africa further influenced my decision to incorporate race into my research inquiry, alongside a personal curiosity about identity and the question of "who I am."

Questions that crossed my mind are how the experiences of migrant women were shaped and what type of issues they faced in their interactions with other individuals. Initially, the identities of gender and foreignness formed my questions. However, I realised that the interplay of gender, race, and foreignness could be more salient in South Africa in contemplating how I can approach highly educated professional working Black migrant women, as I had only encountered one in my life. The moment of realisation and the collection of reading materials motivated me to make their voices heard, examine their inclusion challenges in South Africa, and investigate the intersection of their identities. At the same time, I was fully aware of my positionality, which I leveraged to separate myself from my perspectives on Black migrant women's experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2016). This was crucial to unbiasedly interpret the data.

3.9 DATA ANALYSIS METHODS

Data analysis is "a systematic search for meaning" from the data that has been collected and constitutes a salient step in the research process of a study (Flick, 2022). Bogdan and Biklen (1998) define data analysis as follows:

> Data analysis is the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview

> transcripts, field notes and other materials that you accumulate to increase your own understanding of them and to enable you to present what you have discovered to others. Analysis involves working with data, organizing them, breaking them into manageable units, synthesising them, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others (p. 153).

The method that is used depends on the research paradigm as well as whether the data is quantitative or qualitative (Collis & Hussey, 2014). Jorgensen (1989) assigned a plausible definition to qualitative data analysis:

> Analysis is a breaking up, separating, or disassembling of research materials into pieces, parts, elements, or units. With facts broken down into manageable pieces, the researcher sorts and sifts them, searching for types, classes, sequences, processes, patterns, or wholes. The aim of this process is to assemble or reconstruct the data in a meaningful or comprehensible fashion (p. 107).

Data analysis in qualitative research differs from quantitative research methods as it is more of a dynamic and creative process of inductive reasoning, thinking, and theorising. Despite the data analysis method used, Collis and Hussey (2014) underlined the key steps to analysing data: reducing, restructuring, and detextualising the data. Data reduction refers to finding a systematic way of selecting data, often done through coding, restructuring data into major categories and themes, and detextualising data by summarising it into network diagrams. Qualitative data analysis demands the researcher's interpretive skills. As a novice and inexperienced researcher, the data analysis process was time-consuming, and a considerable amount of time was spent reading relevant materials and receiving training to avoid ending up with unanalysed data or misleading interpretations that would lead to erroneous findings.

In qualitative data analysis, mainly unstructured text-based data are extracted from interview transcripts, observation notes, diary entries, multimedia, or other non-textual materials that the researcher accumulates to understand the phenomenon (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). The process of analysing qualitative data predominantly involves coding or categorising the data. Coding involves subdividing the huge amount of raw information or data and subsequently assigning it into categories. Similarly, phenomenological data analysis entails (Moustakas, 1994): (a)

Phenomenological reduction, (b) Imaginative variation, and (c) Synthesis. This procedure involves the following steps: (1) Horizontalise the data (listing all relevant expressions), (2) Transform the data into statements, (3) Create of individual textural description, (4) Elaborate on the individual textural description, and (5) Identify similarities in the textures of participants.

As the research took on a hermeneutic phenomenological approach, the process of data analysis evolved within this context. The co-construction of the data with the informants after having been involved in a hermeneutic circle of understanding was essential. This approach demands that the researcher and participants work together to explore the phenomenon being studied by using imagination, the hermeneutic circle, and attention to language and writing. According to Heidegger, the hermeneutic circle is the process that explains "how what is understood forms the basis for grasping that which still remains to be understood" (Bontekoe, 1996, p. 2). Understanding a phenomenon is circular and iterative, as in a hermeneutic circle, the researcher moves between parts (data) and whole (evolving understanding of the phenomenon), giving meaning to each other. The past, present, and future understanding of the phenomenon coexist in a fusion of horizons using the hermeneutic circle (Van Manen, 2017). It is within this circle that the research not only questioned prior knowledge and made progress towards sense and meaning but also expanded it into new horizons of meaning.

Consequently, to analyse the data collected, several stages were followed: The data were elicited through interview transcriptions, and thereafter, the data analysis utilised coding to reduce the set of data into smaller, meaningful parts, which were then given a descriptive title or code. The codes were then grouped according to similarity, and themes were identified and documented. The categories were then created, coded, and collated, and patterns were identified and meaning derived from the data.

3.9.1 Data Analysis and Transcription

Data analysis can be conducted manually or with the aid of computer software. Nevertheless, in qualitative data analysis, the use of computer software is somewhat limited due to the nature of the data: unstructured and rich data. Despite this, software can enhance the efficiency and manageability of data organisation, reduction, and storage. In this study, all interviews were

transcribed using Otter, a voice-to-text transcription software, transcribing all audio and video recordings from Zoom and MS Teams meetings into Word files with high accuracy.

Following, the researcher listened to the interview recordings again to revise the transcripts and, more importantly, to familiarise themselves with the transcripts and immerse themselves in the data, making comments and documenting thoughts and feelings. The next phase of analysis involved the use of NVivo12 software. All interviews were imported into NVivo12 to conduct a preliminary analysis and proceed with coding, categorisation, and pattern identification.

As the software was initially unfamiliar, the researcher completed an online course titled "Thematic Analysis with NVivo12." The goal was to learn how to use the software package, deepen their understanding of thematic analysis, and apply this knowledge to future research projects as an emerging scholar. The software was valuable for marking, organising, and sorting data in categories and retrieving coded themes. The emerging themes from participant experiences were then compared with additional data sources such as observations, field notes, interview transcripts, and prior literature to obtain reliability and accuracy (Armstrong et al., 1997). Initially, an open coding process was conducted, the so-called "initial coding" process, where first-impression phrases were assigned to segments of the data (Saldaña, 2021).

A list of codes was developed, identified as a "coding scheme," which was structured into three levels of analysis: macro, meso, and micro. Relationships between key categories started to emerge, and a fourth level, initially labelled "Strategies of Black migrant women," was added to the scheme. The analysis remained grounded in the authenticity of the participants' statements without imposing any interpretations on them. The process involved multiple phases of recoding, renaming, and refining, resulting in several hundred codes. The second phase involved focused coding, also referred to as "axial coding," which was applied to determine which elements in the research were dominant to group them and establish connections between categories (Boeije, 2009; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Axial coding helped streamline and reorganise the dataset to select the most representative codes, distinguishing and describing primary categories, and making distinctions between main categories and subcategories. The final phase entailed identifying similarities among themes and clustering codes into more general and abstract second-order

themes until saturation of data was reached. The emerging themes were continuously refined and reshaped as more data were examined, ensuring that the final coding framework accurately responded to the research questions.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research was to answer the main research question of "*How do inclusion challenges emerge at the intersection of marginalised identities of Black migrant women in a Black majority setting?"* The methodology utilised for answering the research question was hermeneutic phenomenology so that a better understanding of their lived experiences could be obtained to present something "meaningful and thematic" through their lifeworld and perspectives (van Manen, 1997). The participants narrated how the interplay of two or more identities and individual identities played out and affected their experiences in the workplace. Their intersectional identities played a critical role in the types of barriers they encountered while navigating workplace inclusion. These barriers are unique and only experienced by those whose lives are at the marginalised intersection of their race and gender. These barriers can impact the participants by shaping their resilience, adaptability, and growth mindset.

In total, 23 participants were interviewed. Twenty interviews were conducted between March 2022 and April 2023, and three were conducted in March 2024. Data saturation was achieved after 20 interviews. Nevertheless, three additional interviews were conducted to establish that no new themes would emerge. The first section shares the demographic characteristics of the participants, followed by the themes and emerging research sub-questions. The analysis of the data of the lived experiences of Black migrant women in South Africa was divided into the research sub-questions: (a) Intersections of gender, race, and foreignness at the macro-level, (b) Intersections of gender, race, and foreignness at the meso-level, (c) Intersections of gender, race, and foreignness at micro-level, and (d) Overcoming inclusion challenges.

4.2 SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC DATA

The profiles of the participants, including their demographic characteristics, are presented in Table 1 and Table 2 below. The 23 participants were women of sub-Saharan origin, Black race, documented migrant status, and over 18 years old working in various industries and positions in South Africa with a high educational level (i.e., acquired a university or college degree). Pseudonyms were assigned to all the participants for confidentiality purposes, except one

participant who did not oppose using her real name in the study. Nevertheless, pseudonyms were applied to all the participants for uniformity purposes. The following tables present a summary of the participants' demographics, including pseudonyms, age range, country of origin, marital status, current position and industry, level of education, time living in South Africa, and visa status.

Table 1. Sociodemographic Data of the Study Participants (1).

PSEUDONYM	COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	ETHNIC BACKGROUND	YEARS IN SOUTH AFRICA	VISA ON ARRIVAL	CURRENT VISA
Kim	Kenya	Luo/Luhya	7	Study Visa	Spousal Visa
Anna	Botswana	Dembele	4	Study Visa	Study Visa
Christina	Kenya/Uganda	Kamba/Mganda/Buganda	33	Family Unification	Naturalised
Elena	Zimbabwe	Dembele	18	Study Visa	Permanent Residence
Evelyn	Burundi	Tutsi/Hutu/Congolese	26	Refugee Visa	Permanent Residence
Feefee	Zambia	Black African	6 months	Visitor's Visa	Visitor's Visa
Georgia	Zimbabwe	African	19	Study Visa	Permanent Residence
Grace	Zimbabwe	African	16	No visa	Refugee Visa
Lauren	Zimbabwe	African	16	Study Visa	Work Visa
Jasmine	DRC	-	10	Refugee Visa	Refugee Visa
Jenny	Zimbabwe	Black African	20	Study Visa	Permanent Residence
Karen	DRC	Bantu	15	Refugee Visa	Permanent Residence
Kayla	Tanzania	-	32	Permanent Residence	Permanent Residence
Kelli	DRC	Songei	9	Visitor's Visa	Permanent Residence
Yvette	DRC	Congolese	23	Refugee Visa	Citizenship
Lizi	Zimbabwe	Shona	19	Study Visa	Permanent Residence
Maria	Zimbabwe	African	12	Visitor's Visa	Permanent Residence
Morgan	Tanzania	Haya	32	Permanent Residence	Permanent Residence
Nicole	Rwanda	Hutu	22	Refugee Visa	Permanent Residence
Valeria	Zimbabwe	Dembele-African	13	Visitor's Visa	Visitor's Visa
Vivian	Zimbabwe	African	19	Study Visa	Relative’s Visa
Sarah	Zimbabwe	Black African	21	Study Visa	Permanent Residence
Zizi	DRC	Bantu	12	Refugee Visa	Asylum seeker

Table 2. Sociodemographic Data of the Study Participants (2).

PSEUDONYM	AGE RANGE (YEARS)	MARITAL STATUS	HOUSEHOLD PRIMARY POSITION	HIGHEST QUALIFICATION	CURRENT POSITION	CURRENT INDUSTRY
Kim	30- 39	Married	Breadwinner, wife	PhD degree	Lecturer	Academia
Anna	30-39	Single	Breadwinner	Master's degree	Ph.D. Research Fellow	Academia
Christina	30-39	In a partnership	Breadwinner, mother	Master's degree	Quality Assurance Programs Specialist	Public Health non-governmental organisation
Elena	30- 39	Single	Breadwinner	Bachelor's degree	Chartered Global Management Accountant	Accounting services
Evelyn	30- 39	Married	Wife, mother	Master's degree	Full-time Ph.D. student	Academia
Feefee	18- 29	Single	Mother	Bachelor's degree	Intern	Non-profit
Georgia	30-39	Married	Breadwinner, mother, wife	Master's degree	Customer Success Manager	Oil and gas
Grace	40-49	Married	Breadwinner, mother, wife	Bachelor's degree	Skills Training Manager	Non-profit
Lauren	40-49	Married	Breadwinner, mother, wife	Honours degree	Head of Marketing	Small private company
Jasmine	30- 39	Single	Breadwinner	Bachelor's degree	Counsellor	Government
Jenny	30- 39	Married	Wife, mother	Honours degree	Head of a Risk team	Banking sector
Karen	18- 29	Married	Breadwinner, mother, wife	Bachelor of Commerce	Administrator	Non-profit
Kayla	30- 39	Single	Living alone	Bachelor of Laws	Attorney	Law firm
Kelli	30-39	Single	Breadwinner	Bachelor's degree	Proposal Officer	Renewable energy consultancy company
Yvette	30- 39	Single	Breadwinner	Bachelor's degree	Social Manager	Financial services
Lizi	30- 39	Single	Breadwinner	Postdoctoral degree	Regional Operations Manager	Pharmaceutical industry
Maria	30- 39	Married	Breadwinner, mother	Honours degree	Manager	Non-profit
Morgan	30- 39	Single	Not the main breadwinner	Master's degree	Quantity Surveyor	Public services
Nicole	30-39	In a partnership	Breadwinner, mother	Honours degree	Office Manager and Personal Assistant to the CEO	Private sector
Valeria	18- 29	Single	Other	Bachelor's degree	Unpaid intern	Non-profit
Vivian	30- 39	Married	Wife, mother	Master of Science	Self employed	Sole proprietorship
Sarah	30- 39	Single	Breadwinner	Advanced diploma	Admin Operations manager	Oil and gas
Zizi	30-39	Single	Breadwinner	Three-year Diploma	Supervisor	Technology and E-commerce

4.3 Data Analysis

The data provided insights into the lived experiences of 23 Black migrant women and their inclusion challenges in South Africa. In this section, the main themes and sub-themes emerging from the data analysis are presented, providing relevant quotes and statements from the participants to support each theme and sub-theme. The data analysis process included an analysis of the interview transcripts, followed by the coding of the data utilising Microsoft Word as well as NVivo. The process entailed line-by-line coding, open, and axial coding, and assigning codes to text fragments that were relevant to the research questions. The main themes are presented below. Moreover, discrepant cases are presented to achieve the research criteria and validity of the study.

4.4 Research Sub-Question One: Intersections of Gender, Race, and Foreignness at the Macro-Level

The first research question is addressed by the themes outlined below that emerged from the analysis of the interviews. Three main themes were identified:

1. Department of Home Affairs: gatekeeping and institutionalised xenophobia;
2. The racialisation of Black migrant women: institutional indifference and Afrophobia; and
3. Accessing social welfare and education: marginalisation through foreignness.

4.4.1 Department of Home Affairs: Gatekeeping and Institutionalised Xenophobia

All the participants' experiences at the macro level revealed that the identity of foreignness functioned as the primary axis of exclusion, which was manifested through the institutionalised barriers to their inclusion. Race and gender operated as compounding, yet secondary dimensions. Institutionalised xenophobia, deeply embedded in the women's experiences, was manifested through bureaucratic barriers, including the identification of documentation, discrimination, and negative attitudes from representatives of the South African system. Participants shared how powerful foreignness, and structural barriers affected their self-worth, agency, and life purpose. Immigration and residency processes were a recurring source of frustration. Most participants referred to *"issues"* (Sarah), *"long process of visa application and processing"* (Vivian), or *"a long journey"* (Georgia). Jenny expressed her frustration about the disjunction between adherence to legal requirements and the attainment of fair treatment, reinforcing the perception that institutional processes are indifferent to merit:

> *When I was trying to apply for my permanent residency, that was really [...] PR [permanent residency] supposed to be like a quick process, but it took like three years for me to get mine [...] everything was legit. I had worked for [local bank, name supplied] five years at a work permit, but you know that didn't matter, right?*

Vivian also spoke about the paradox of the system's legitimacy, revealing tension between trust in legal procedures and the lived uncertainty: *"As long as I present myself with the right paperwork to the right authority, the system works"*, yet she acknowledged that *"I've been complaining that I've been waiting for 2 1/2 years for this permit to go through."*

Sarah described a demoralising circle of administrative repetition. She said that *"Now I am a permanent resident, but it was quite a journey to get there,"* and explained how the bureaucratic procedures hindered her inclusion:

> *[It] took months of back and forth with these applications. What they were saying is that my company wasn't registered for the organizations for [a] critical permit […] they kept resubmitting, I had to resubmit, and on the third time, I think then they gone through another agent and I had to submit a lot of stuff and then eventually it came through.*

Vivian pointed to being *"discriminated against as self-employed"* since *"Home Affairs has taken such a long time to process my permanent residency. I don't have an ID, a South African identity document."* Other participants emphasized the emotional toll they had to endure. Georgia, for instance, had to resort to *"constant praying"* because *"the journey to get from study permit to permanent resident permit has been a long one."* Zizi's account reinforced this temporal exclusion: *"It's also still a challenge because it takes so many years for them to approve so many things that they want from you."* Other participants, Kelli, for example, considered herself lucky because *"my visa literally came actually, before COVID."* She acknowledged both timing and financial strain, referring to a *"lengthy list of what you need to, and the cost is really high."* She reflected that the process reinforced a persistent sense of difference: *"When it comes to paperwork… [I] actually feel I am a migrant… I am a foreigner…it's not really easy."*

Nevertheless, some participants supported that the documentation challenges *"are also not unique to like Black women"* (Anna), speaking about her White colleagues *"going back to Europe because their visa status was not renewed"* (Anna), suggesting that while foreignness is the primary

exclusionary marker, racialisation may shape the form, intensity, or interpretation of these barriers.

Participants' accounts pointed to the authorities' knowledge, capacity, and professionalism. Jasmine blatantly impeached public officials, including the police, the traffic department, and the Department of Home Affairs, for *"not knowing our paper and how it's working, they have no clue about refugee papers."* Elena also believed that Home Affairs was *"the worst department."* She questioned their transparency, heightening the sense of systemic hostility as *"they would lose your information and you'd be suspicious [...] just so you couldn't get ahead."* Grace extended this critique to the education sector and law enforcement: *"Schools, universities… they don't have knowledge, they don't understand documentation. Very few people understand the difference between migrants, refugees, asylum seekers […] even the police themselves."* Georgia raised concerns, for example, for the *"inconsistent information at the Department of Home Affairs,"* which *"can be extremely frustrating, because it also depends who's behind the till and what's going on."* Finally, Nicole said that *"most banks never used to recognise the refugee documentation which allows you to work and live in South Africa."*

The type of documentation was discussed by the majority of participants as an additional challenge or limitation embodied in their foreignness, resulting in exclusion from certain opportunities, discriminatory treatment, and co-dependency on other individuals. For instance, Nicole noticed *"a big difference"* between the South African and refugee Home Affairs, as in the former *"they observe the law, you can queue, you can get your things done quicker,"* whereas in the latter *"it will take hours, sometimes days."* She pointed to the refugee identity document as *"a really cheaply made brown book,"* reinforcing the symbolic devaluation of refugee identity. Similarly, Zizi expressed her resentment for her dehumanisation, considering *"the big size of the asylum seeker documents."* She also recalled that *"when you take that thing (refugee documentation), everybody wondering[is] what is this document?[…], they're not even educated of the document itself."* She explicitly spoke about *"discrimination,"* noting:

> *We [are] all in a certain way discriminated in so many places when we present our documents [...] People don't understand what is that and the minute they just see refugees like [...] I can just behave anyhow because at the end of the day, you are [a] refugee.*

The stigma attached to their documentation led the women to navigate exclusion in different ways.

Yvette, as an ex-asylum seeker, discussed how she managed the visibility of her legal status. She used to *“find all sorts of excuses to hide the fact that you're actually a refugee and you don’t have the paper”* in the event of traveling opportunities.

Documentation complexities were also mentioned by the women. The following excerpt by Karen illustrates the multilayered obstacles for foreigners and their effect on family life and relationships:

> *I've got a permanent residency. My husband is an asylum seeker. So, because we've got different documents […] I can't have a legal civil marriage with him to acknowledge that we are actually married because it's a process. I went to Home Affairs and told me that I cannot do that because he's not a recognised refugee yet. That's another barrier*.

For Vivian, an additional layer of complexity was that her son was South African. She noted that *“I am at the mercy of my husband”* because should her marriage be dissolved, she would have to return to her home country, but her son would have to stay here. This illustrates how gendered dependency compounds the vulnerability created by documentation regimes.

Nevertheless, a few participants reported the perks upon obtaining permanent residency. Their narratives showed a sense of legitimacy and belonging by being part of the system. Having worked for the same company for almost 10 years, Georgia felt that she was valued, which validated her emotions and feelings of belonging:

> *As you move from a work to a critical skills, it almost gives a bit of status, like, ‘Oh, you are valuable!’ and you can start working for companies that put you into a proper benchmark of salaries and benefits, and everything is fair. And then once you are a permanent resident, I find you now like properly in the system, you are acknowledged as a contributing member, and yes! You then get an ID book, you can buy property, and some of those other things that you also need in life.*

In a similar vein, Jenny summarised it as *“being a permanent resident is very different in that you don't have to apply for stuff;”* and Sarah confirmed, *“when I started [working] here [current workplace], I had my permanent residency, so I started here in 2019, so I didn't really have issues from that perspective.”* These accounts indicate that while legal status cannot eliminate all forms of exclusion, it can significantly reduce institutional gatekeeping and foster a conditional sense of

belonging.

4.4.2 The Racialisation of Black Migrant Women: Institutional Indifference and Afrophobia

The second theme was widespread throughout the lived experiences of Black migrant women on a macro-level. The majority of the participants reported that their identities (foreignness, race, and gender) or the intersection of these identities served as a source of interpersonal discrimination, differential treatment, and bullying by representatives of state institutions such as the Department of Home Affairs, the police, the traffic department, airport migration control, and public healthcare facilities. Their experiences often shaped how participants navigated such spaces, influencing both their responses and their perceptions of belonging.

The women shared that their identities were turned into sites under interrogation in institutional settings. Georgia described how her foreignness ignited conversations at the police station, yet she had to tolerate uncomfortable conversations because the official held control over her documentation:

> *When you go to certify documents, you get the whole 'Oh, you're not from here.' Like, you know, the 'chit chat' while you're trying to certify qubits. It's like, 'Oh, you're not from here?' And I'm like, 'Yes, I know that.' And then it's a little bit of 'what are you doing?' […] I don't feel like really having this conversation with you. But because you're holding all my documents […] I literally have to entertain this not-so-great conversation. And then it's always 'lots of you people here,' [...] then you're like, 'oh, okay, not sure how to take that comment.'*

Intra-racial solidarity was absent in institutional settings as well. Karen recounted a similar experience at the police station, but she talked about *"Black to Black"* hostility, and how she responded to Black South Africans' negative treatment:

> *I feel that I get this from Black to Black […] White people are more friendly [...] but they might not assist you, but a Black person is harsher, especially Black, [a] South African is [typically] very harsh. You have to beg, like literally beg them [for assistance]. 'Why don't you do it in your country?' … 'No, but I've stayed here for long [time]…' Literally, I don't know my country very well, because I've been here for a very long time.*

Racial in-group bias was evident in Kayla's account. She narrated how institutional actors, in her case, the police, deprioritised her case, positioning her outside the circle of concern:

I feel like we're not really taken seriously. [...] I mean, we went to the police station to open up a case. The guy was very nonchalant about it, but you could see that when someone else of his own race came for some petty theft crime that happened in his car, he took it completely differently. He took it more seriously than us…And my point was that like I wanted the detective to come to the house that day because everything was open, and I was like, 'What if there's these guys come back again?' He didn't seem to care at all. So when it came to his own people, that was dealing with a laptop that could sell out of a car, he was more concerned about getting the guy's details and him narrating the story and trying to solve that situation.

Similarly, Morgan believed that foreignness was more salient than her race, which served as a barrier to her inclusive treatment by the airport migration authorities:

Umm, I find that even though they're Black and they are on the other side of the counter, the minute […] you produce my South African ID even though it states non-South African citizen, then there's a bit of also, 'she must be a permanent resident'... The way they interact with you, especially when you're leaving or entering, is very hostile… rude.

Nevertheless, some participants perceived their discrimination was tied to race as opposed to foreignness. Maria reflected:

You'd be the last one as a Black person to really receive proper treatment, especially if you're dressed ordinarily and you're just in your corner. If someone else of colour comes in, then they usually get first treatment or preferential treatment."

Nicole spoke about the racialisation of refugee services. She highlighted the absence of White refugees in specific institutional settings:

Since I'm the refugee, [I] always had to go to Home Affairs. There's two refugee centers…the one for South Africans…the one for refugees from other countries. But not once did I ever meet a White refugee at a Home Affairs for Black people. So, we always used to be like, 'Oh, I don't know, maybe there aren't any White refugees in South Africa.' And the discrimination that you would face there! Yeah. Home Affairs is a whole other case.

Finally, Grace narrated her encounters with the Department of Home Affairs and public healthcare

facilities, both of which were characterised by profound feelings of fear, humiliation, and distress.

> *Especially before COVID the way we had to go and stand under the bridge, even if it's raining, you go in this day… sometimes you wake up at 4 am to go and stand because they only assisting 20 people [...] and you go into this building that almost looked like a dungeon… just evokes feelings of fear [...] not pleasant [...] uncomfortable, and you sit there and no one is talking to you…giving you any instructions, and the place gives you just the creeps […] It feels like you're in court or you've committed a crime [...] every time you go to these offices the way you [are] treated, the way you [are] spoken to, even by the security guard… almost like, you don't matter, we are doing you a favour […] I don't know if it's intentional, if it's set up to make you feel like that… It's the worst experience ever.*

She continued to describe her childbirth experience in a public hospital:

> *The moment they realised that I was not South African, then the tone changed, the conversation changed to being rude, being mean. [...]I was the only migrant that I was given that bed [the top of the bunk bed] [...] And I was struggling to breastfeed. [...] But that experience as well left me so traumatised…I felt like it was intentional because then they would come and start shouting […] the support that's been given to the other women [was] very different to what I'm experiencing [..]I also didn't have a voice to speak up for myself. Only the following day […] my sister went to speak to the assistant [in] charge [...] It left me so, so heartbroken… knowing that I'm being treated in this way, just because you know, of where I'm coming from. I'm not being treated like this because I've done anything wrong. It's just because of who I am.*

Similarly, Yvette encapsulated the unfair treatment at the Department of Home Affairs, recalling that:

> *All my Home Affairs experience is bad. We literally had to go and sleep in front of the building the day before just to make sure you're in front of the queue the next day, and then you get into the building [and] the staff [are] very dismissive, and you'll seldom get someone who actually wants to help.*

These narratives collectively reveal how the racialisation of Black migrant women is reproduced not only through overt acts of hostility but also through the mundane, repetitive

interactions that mark them as outsiders.

4.4.3 Accessing Social Welfare and Education: Marginalisation through Foreignness

Access to social welfare services emerged as another theme where the invisible yet powerful identity of foreignness influenced the participants' inclusion experiences, reinforcing their positioning as "outsiders" and underscoring the structural privilege of South African citizens. Nearly half of the participants shared feelings of frustration or resentment stemming from their inability to access social support, in the form of bursaries, funding, and healthcare in the place where they legally resided, because of the citizenship requirement. They referred to *"blockages"* (Feefee) or being *"less privileged"* (Lizi) upon looking for financial support, because *"you have to be a South African citizen"* (Feefee, Lizi, Elena) or *"South Africans are prioritised"* (Karen). Grace shared a similar frustration at the nexus of her financial restraints and citizenship status, emphasising the loss of opportunity despite her contribution to the national economy:

> *There [are] so many opportunities within South Africa. I mean, even now, I've been wanting to study further, I cannot afford to pay [...] to do my honours, or anything else, but there are opportunities that are available, and they're only available to people that are citizens. So, that's one area where I feel like if they could also be, you know, like many organisations that give scholarships to people who are migrants, that would be beneficial, as well to us in terms of growth, and in the end of the day, we are contributing to the economy of South Africa.*

Participants added that inequalities in tuition fees or entrance requirements were manifested as perceived institutional magnifiers of their marginalization. Elena shared that foreign students were financially and administratively segregated compared to their South African peers:

> *When I was at [University, name supplied], we were actually split in a separate group [...] one of the first things they ask you is, 'Have you paid for foreigners?' You'd be required to pay upfront like your full-time fees. [...] People who are South Africans were allowed to pay like monthly instalments every single month. [...] they just actually make you feel marginalised.*

Valeria echoed this disparity, noting that *"obviously, as a foreigner, you pay foreign fees more than the normal fees."* Elena further mentioned that *"the standard is definitely higher as well in*

an educational system for foreigners because you needed more points than a local person." Jasmine experienced the same issue, which made her feel like an *"outsider."* Because of her inability to access educational funding, Zizi utilised her personal resources, resulting in financial debt that hindered her ability to apply for a work visa:

> *I still owe my school a little bit of money because [...] for event management, I had to pay quite a big amount of money. So, right now I'm still owing them in order for them to release my diploma. So, with that diploma being there, I can't apply for the work visa.*

Finally, government financial support, such as unemployment grants, was deemed a *"certain privilege"* (Nicole), reserved only for South African citizens. Only two participants, Kim and Karen, reported that they managed to secure funding. Both cases involved non-South African national financial assistance or private South African sponsorship, further underscoring the rarity of accessible institutional support for Black migrant women.

4.5 Research Sub-Question Two: Intersections of Gender, Race, and Foreignness at the Meso-Level

Patterns from the data showed various ways in which inclusion was manifested at the organisational level. The participants narrated how the interplay of gender, race, and foreignness shaped their experiences at the workplace. Three main themes emerged: (1) Employment barriers and workplace opportunities; (2) The interplay of identities and organisational culture; and (3) Intersections affecting power dynamics: organisational and workgroup inclusion.

4.5.1 Employment Barriers and Workplace Opportunities

The most discussed theme was access to equal opportunities, illustrated as a lack of access to employment opportunities and the labour market, pay disparities, career progression and growth, and professional development. In spite of that, many organisations had in place diversity management and inclusion policies and were compliant with national labour migration legislation, the women's accounts suggested that these frameworks did not always translate into equitable treatment or advancement.

4.5.1.1 Gendered Racism and Exclusionary Foreignness: Prominent in Promotions, Career Growth, and Labour Market Access

Migration status was discussed as the most persistent asset for inclusion/exclusion, influencing promotions, wage equality, and benefits. Grace reported:

> *Migration status is the highest [challenge] because there [are] so many challenges, especially with getting promotions and salaries [...] opportunities even for growth. I've been here [at the organisation] for four years. I've been looking for an opportunity [...] the moment people see that you are not South African, they're not interested, even though you're skilled for the position.*

Many of the participants vividly recollected that foreignness persistently impacted the barriers they encountered in the labour market. Maria's employer was not willing to hire and retain her. She recalled:

> *Every time I did mention that I was a foreigner and needed assistance with doing my applications, it was something that the employer needed to really think about, and most of the people said 'no' because they didn't want to go through all the paperwork.*

Similarly, Elena recalled that accessing the labour market was *"really tough"* and described the emotional toll that made her consider moving to another country:

> *Even when you get access [to the labour market] [...] you just get passed on opportunities where you can see you are more skilled than the person that they [are] promoting [...] I had to tell her [my manager] what she needed to do to go into the meeting. So, that was really emotionally challenging on so many levels [...] at that point you just feel like, isn't just that maybe we just go [and] start [somewhere else]?*

Others, like Karen, reported that they were excluded from employment within their professional field, highlighting the inability to access professional opportunities. She explained:

> *When it comes to searching for employment within my field, I feel that I'm always discriminated [...] the fact that it [migrant document]'s still reflects that I'm a migrant, [I do] not even [have] the chance to work in that field [...].*

Foreignness intersected with institutional policies, excluding women from workplace benefits. Vivian said:

> *They [organisation] do not accommodate people who are on a visa [...] I was unable to*

benefit from working in that environment. I didn't have access to health cover [...] a company vehicle, because of my migrant status….

Literally, the fact that I did not have a South African identity document led me being excluded from all these functions […] that make your life a little bit easier so you can be more productive at work.

The women also discussed their experiences of how foreignness created a barrier in recruitment and selection decisions. Kim recounted her achievement of scoring the highest, yet she was excluded as a candidate:

I went through the selection process, which included me giving a presentation, and then there was a very, very, very hectic interview [...] I scored the highest of all the candidates, but despite scoring the highest of all the candidates [...]but because I was a foreigner, I didn't get the job… they decided… to give the job to a female, Black, South African.

The preference for South African citizenship was evident in the participants' accounts. Foreignness was a hurdle for Grace, who noted that wage disparities were rationalised through citizenship:

There was a job opening within her department, and conversations [were] happening between senior managers, and one of the statements that was made was, 'Oh! The person that we want to hire is a South African and therefore should be getting more money. [...] they hired the person who was less qualified than me, but the person was given more money just because being South African and myself, because of who I am, it means I'm being disqualified.

Lauren also shared about being overlooked in favour of less qualified, South African colleagues, when the recruiter blatantly said that *"you might be qualified, but we would rather put forward someone who actually is a South African citizen."* In Nicole's case, being qualified with a higher educational degree than her colleagues came with *"having to settle and do lower tasks,"* which was *"frustrating"* to her. A few participants, however, identified supportive organisational practices. Karen described how her workplace accommodated her needs when renewing her migrant documentation:

The good thing about the organisation is that they do understand that you need to get your thing sorted and if you ask for leave, it won't be an issue […] Even if you don't have any

leave, they'll give you the leave, because they want you to sort out your document issued.

Similarly, Jenny revealed that her promotion and salary increase were driven primarily by organisational compliance requirements rather than recognition of her merit, underscoring the persistence of indirect discrimination:

That promotion itself only came [when] I had asked for it on several occasions. My colleague [...] came after me and was promoted before me, I think [referring to the Black South African colleague]. I would always ask about this promotion and never getting a response, and then the one time they decided they [are] promoting me [...] they called me into a room. It was the two of them [the Indian guy and the Black guy], and they said, 'We're promoting you and increasing your salary. Don't think this is because you deserve it, but it's because we can't have someone earning as little as you're earning in our team.' [It] was very cruel and unjust [...] I always sensed it was because I was a foreigner, and it was even worse because I'm a female.

For others, intersectional identities operated as cumulative barriers, reinforcing structural preferences for White South African men in senior roles despite equivalent or superior competence. Yvette described losing out to a candidate whose gender, race, and foreignness placed her in a disadvantaged position as a Black migrant woman:

I remember having been 'passed over' positions and promotions, not because I did not qualify or was not already doing the job, but because I was a Black immigrant. The role was always given to an RSA [Republic of South Africa] White male.

The intersection of identity and perceived competence also operated as a barrier. Kim recounted that, as a Black migrant woman, people would get shocked because *"she's very good with statistical analysis."* She recalled being interrogated by a White doctor she was assigned to train, who questioned her expertise by asking, "*Who trained you?"* and *"Where did you learn how to do this?"*

Only a few participants reported that Blackness was a location for exclusion from career progress. Kayla explained:

At this stage of my career, I should be like a senior associate, but I'm just like an associate

[…] the fact that I haven't gotten that promotion […] I didn't think they want the most senior person to be a person of colour.

Lauren echoed this sentiment, describing the moment she discovered that White colleagues earned a higher salary compared to their Black peers:

I remember finding out in my position that somebody else had the similar position and they were paid [...] like four times more. I think that really, really made me very upset because in terms of performance, I've performed, probably more than the person who was there before me, but yet I wasn't compensated the same because of my skin colour [...] everybody who is Black in the company was paid differently to everybody who is White.

Grace noted that senior positions within her organisation were mostly White dominated, *"I'm quite comfortable having conversations with White people as well, because a lot of our employers and our training providers… they are White people."* In a similar manner, Zizi shared that she was promoted to team leader after three years as an agent, supervising predominantly White staff. She gratefully said that she *"was also given an opportunity,"* so she didn't want to be *"selfish."* Nevertheless, she acknowledged the persistence of racial dynamics, emphasising that *"racism is still there. We still feel it. But it's not that visible."*

4.5.1.2 Gendered Violence: Navigating Female Vulnerability and Workplace Harassment

Participants were also asked whether they had ever experienced GBV or sexual harassment. The women indicated that they experienced incidents of gender-based harassment, usually targeted in the same ways as other women. However, these incidents intersected with their foreignness in shaping their responses. Six out of the 23 participants shared experiences of harassment, five of which happened in the workplace. Most of the women were sceptical about whether their experiences could be classified as "sexual harassment." Christina, for example, said that her perpetrator was her senior, yet she hesitated to classify it as *"name-calling"* or *"not like rape."* Lizi also reported with uncertainty that, *"maybe it's sexual harassment,"* referring to the physical harassment that occurred twice in two different companies*, "where a guy would come to me and talk to me, holding my shoulders and too close to me."* Other women received objectifying, demeaning remarks based on their appearance, like Kim, who said that *"it's not sexual harassment, but things are overly sexualised. People [are] calling you these pet names because of hair not fixed or when I dress up."* She further described how gendered power relations shaped perceptions

of their competence or favouritism in the workplace. She reflected:

> *They [colleagues] thought that my former line manager was actually in love with me [...] because he was so fond of me… they could see that I was getting a lot of favours [...] and they said, 'Did you really leave this job? Because this man was interested in having an affair with you! [...] that really shocked me… I realised that this guy, sometimes I attend meetings, and he's like, 'Hi, darling, my sweetheart!' And I just brushed it away.*

For some, strict organisational policies on reporting incidents, performance evaluation, or conflict, protected them. Zizi explained that she felt protected from harassment because of her company's zero-tolerance stance:

> *The company is really strict when it comes to harassment [...] If you feel like something is wrong with you, you definitely have to put it forward [...] I am really comfortable at my workplace, because I know there are procedures, rules that people have to follow; otherwise… if there is something wrong, I will literally say it. I wouldn't keep it.*

Others shared experiences of harassment but chose not to report them. Jenny, for instance, said that instead of reporting her *"uncomfortable experience,"* she *"stood up for herself,"* whilst Lizi chose to confront her perpetrators. Contrastingly, Elena found herself reporting her incident even though she *"quickly realised that [this] is not the kind of company that would take her seriously even from reporting it.*" None of the participants reported the incidents to their organisation. On the contrary, they decided to confront their perpetrators and stood up for themselves, reflecting both individual coping strategies and a lack of organisational trust.

4.5.2 The Interplay of Identities in Organisational Environments

Most participants reported that organisational context and culture played a vital role in shaping their lived experiences at work. They described how the triple intersection of gender, race, and foreignness, the interplay of their identities, or each identity in isolation, manifested in their organisations and influenced their inclusion depending on the organisational structure, norms, and job specifics. The degree to which the women experienced marginalisation or belonging was closely tied to the culture, scope, and nature of their organisation, influencing both formal opportunities and informal workplace dynamics.

4.5.2.1 Black Migrant Women's identities Intersecting with Organisational Culture

For some participants, the ethos of the organisation and the mindset of colleagues were essential for positioning oneself in the workplace. For Anna, her foreignness did not constitute a barrier as she worked in an *"open-minded"* workplace where *"people are just allowed to be,"* whilst Christina attributed her inclusion to the shared migrant experiences of her colleagues, explaining that their *"different mindset"* meant her foreignness was viewed positively. On the contrary, Elena recounted how the interplay of recruitment processes, organisational culture, and foreignness in certain business environments created barriers, prompting her to display strategic agency in removing her citizenship:

> *Just even with the interview process… It got to a point where I removed my citizenship or where I came from [...] Then they [business owners] don't call you back, and immediately when they might find out that you actually come from another country… Some would entertain the idea and interview and the issues. So, it was really, really tough getting into the job market space. And when I did, I found that I work for smaller businesses that were not as strict and a little bit more open to exploring, rather than more structured businesses or [a] corporate environment, and so on.*

Some participants described organisational cultures with a particular gendered character; their workplace was an environment where gender, as an abstract category, did not constitute a basis for differentiation. They felt that their gender was conducive to their inclusion primarily because of the culture and field of work. Jasmine shared that the equality-driven mission of her workplace prevented gender-based discrimination and violence. She said that *"our name is gender-based equality [name of workplace], so we [are] fighting against discrimination, against gender based-violence [...] equality for everyone."* Others stated that their workplace was *"ridiculously female-dominated"* (Lizi) or *"a women-only company"* (Lauren). Sarah also reported that her gender had no effect, even if *"the environment was more of [a] male-dominated environment."*

Several participants explained that the organisational nature and mission opposed discrimination based on any of the three identities or their intersections. They invoked their identities notably to state their insignificance in an organisational context. Karen confidently stated:

> *There's no such thing as discrimination and no room to feel that you're being discriminated.*

Our organisation is full with 90% of migrants from the X department, it's a diverse work environment… we deal with migrants [...] refugees. So, since our motto or aim is to integrate, to welcome people into our organisation [...] we always start within ourselves before we spread out or before we assist clients from outside.

Similarly, Maria admitted that her organisation was a safe place to embody and express her Blackness:

It is the best space for one to actually exercise their Blackness, to dress in a way that is comfortable and that also tells a story of their race, their Africanness. I think every other person has got a migrant status, and we deal with migrants [...] it's very homely. It's not something that anyone would look at you cross-eyed or anything like that.

Kim echoed this sentiment, revealing that her workplace protected foreigners, where they were *"well taken care of."*

Nevertheless, the organisational culture, which prioritised compliance with South Africa's Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) Act, laid the foundation for exclusion. The identity of foreignness proved to shape the challenges to participants' inclusion under this theme. Lizi explained how her foreignness undermined the company's B-BBEE score, leading to her exclusion from a senior management role:

[You] can't be given the role because of [the] BBBEE status, and they prefer the South Africans to get the BBBEE status [...]. I've seen a lot of Black South Africans joining the company, but in my case, [it] doesn't look like that's gonna be happening. I just was not given a clear answer as to why I can't be given that role," even though she *"has just proven myself to be worthy of that role.*

Vivian also recounted receiving *"a low score"* as a Black yet non-citizen, and Jenny became a witness to conversations about prioritising *"Black people that are local and not necessarily Black foreigners."*

In other cases, participants' accounts reflected more complex intersections of inclusion and exclusion. While Blackness held the potential to serve as an inclusive asset, foreignness functioned as a barrier. Kayla described how her director *"consistently asked her for six years to drop her Tanzanian citizenship"* and become a *"fully fledged South African*" to improve the company's B-

BBEE standing. However, she chose to retain her Tanzanian citizenship, regardless of the potential professional benefits. Only Morgan explained how the intersection of her race and foreignness favoured her in being employed *"from White management"* who *"would rather employ in certain positions Black foreigners than say Black South Africans because we sort of don't always push the whole racism card, and we're always trying to conform and keep out of trouble."*

For other participants like Vivian, the organisational structure undermined her inclusion. She attributed her eventual exclusion to procedural requirements, such as a security clearance she could not obtain without an employee number, which in turn prevented her from securing a new contract.

> *It's not intentional [discrimination]. It's just the structure under which I was operating. I didn't fit under that structure, so they made it work, and it worked fine up to a point where [...] the hiring system had changed, and then everyone had to do a background check, security clearance [...] I didn't qualify for a security clearance because I didn't have an employee number [...], then I could not qualify for a new contract.*

4.5.2.2 Diversity and Inclusion Policies as Intersectional Mechanisms of Inclusion

Diversity and inclusion policies were among the most discussed mechanisms that facilitated the inclusion of Black migrant women in the workplace. Foreignness was often acknowledged and respected by organisations. Georgia reckoned the implementation of diversity policy in her organisation, valuing employees from different countries and with various documentation statuses:

> *It's an organisation that does appreciate foreigners for different reasons [...] we had foreigners that were on working permits, critical skills permits, different languages [...], and supporting different geographies of the world.*

Zizi also explained how her organisation's diversity policy cultivated an inclusive workplace culture, noting the sense of equality among employees despite their background:

> *Most of these people (ex-classmates) that studied with me are also in my workplace right now, and it is a situation where we ended up meeting again, and one of them is actually my fellow supervisor on the English side [...] it is what it is now. So, here we are together, regardless of our position. That's cool! We are in the same position here now.*

For some, diversity and inclusion policies translated into tangible professional opportunities.

Valeria reflected on her organisation's diversity policy, reporting that her foreignness was valued during selection processes:

> *I got the X position because I was a foreigner [...] they promote diversity and wanting to give different people different experiences, and they try to incorporate different countries [...] when they were interviewing me, I had to specifically say 'No, I'm not from South Africa.' I sound very South African, but I'm not South African. And then they were like, 'Ok, because we don't want to only give opportunities to South Africans, we want to diversify,' which I really liked.*

However, participants' accounts revealed how diversity policies could still be undermined by interpersonal interactions at the micro-level. Georgia recalled her experience with the HR personnel, highlighting the immigration consultant's dismissive attitude:

> *One of the benefits [of] working for [a] multinational company such as the one I'm working for… so they will have an immigration consultant that helps you with the processes [...] As much as you suspect that HR would be supportive, she almost like had an issue with all the foreigners that were at the office, and it was an 'Urg! You guys and all the documents you always need… I'm so busy, and you guys take up so much of my time with this stuff!' And you know you really feel like 'Wow!' and she would even delay stuff where you know time's running, you are stressed out, you really need things to go on time.*

These accounts suggest that while organisational diversity policies can create formal spaces for inclusion, their effectiveness in supporting Black migrant women depends heavily on the commitment of individual actors within the organisation to uphold inclusive principles in practice.

4.5.3 Intersections Affecting Power Dynamics, Belonging, and Everyday Interactions

The identities of the Black migrant women played a crucial role in shaping how they were perceived and treated by others, and how they perceived themselves within organisational and workgroup settings. The participants shared inclusion and exclusion challenges mediated by their identities (gender, race, and foreignness) in relation to colleagues, managers/supervisors, and power structures.

4.5.3.1 Anti-Black Racism and Xenophobia: Belonging and Power Relations

For most participants, workgroup dynamics, daily peer interactions, and managerial behaviours either facilitated or fractured Black migrant women's inclusion. Foreignness emerged as the most salient identity impacting their inclusion experience, overriding race and gender. Several participants shared feelings of isolation, alienation, or conditional belonging. Jenny, for example, *"always felt out of place"* and *"was isolated"* at the local bank, and described how her foreignness played a role in that, along racial and linguistic lines:

> *They [colleagues] spoke the same language and they would huddle together, but I was sort of like the odd one out [...] they would all huddle and talk and they were buddies, and so I definitely felt like an outsider [...] the Indians would huddle, they were friends and the Blacks would huddle, they were friends. We didn't have other races or just Black and Indians, when I was at the bank. So I was alone.*

Her acceptance only came when her humanitarian fundraiser humanised her to colleagues:

> *I was a foreign entity, but I noticed that when I started this outreach [...] I was fundraising, there were these xenophobic attacks that happened… I think it was in 2008… [I was] fundraising for the Zimbabweans. And then this guy… my boss… who was xenophobic and whatever, I don't know how he picked it up [...] He was like 'ohh, this is really good! And this is… we need to help or we need to…' So, it was funny that my lived experience of this person was, you know, xenophobic and oppressive, but now when there was a charity thing [...] And then he was like, 'why don't you do it like and form it as a part of the team, right, like a corporate social something? [...] we need to have like a corporate social responsibility champion. Do you wanna do that?' And I was like, 'Yes, sure!'… That was my first ever experience of actually connecting with my colleagues and being included [...] I feel like that's when I was humanised to my team.*

Language became an additional marker of workplace exclusion for some participants. Nicole recounted how Black South Africans excluded her, noting that *"I guess sometimes they want to be in the group, and I'm okay with that. Sometimes, they don't always talk to me, especially the Black South Africans. Sometimes they have their own clique, and they'll go into their language,"* while Lizi frustratingly commented that *"it just felt personal"* when her former colleagues would speak in *"their local language,"* despite her presence, evoking feelings of outsideness. Yvette spoke

about *“subtle but still aggressive xenophobia*”, referring to dismissive attitudes when her foreignness surfaced. She described how she was humiliated by her White male senior colleague:

> *I was giving my recommendations on a problem, and one of the colleagues in the meeting, a senior PM [project manager, who is a] White male, tried to undermine my recommendations by mentioning that I was coming all the way from the DRC [Democratic Republic of Congo]”. [...] He wanted to, perhaps, remind the team that I was not South African by birth and, perhaps, my opinion shouldn’t matter. [...] It was kind of embarrassing, it resurrected that feeling of [being a] “sub-citizen” I had [experienced] as a refugee in my early years in RSA [Republic of South Africa]. [...] To get people to rally up with him, he had to make that comment, just to highlight the fact that I am a foreigner.*

Similar dynamics led the women to alienate and avoid “standing out,” like Nicole, who felt pressured as *“the only foreigner in her current organisation”* who *“did not always fit in.”* Christina described it as *“a normal feeling of isolation,”* which was exacerbated by COVID-19 due to the lack of interaction with her teammates. Whilst Evelyn felt that there was a *“subtle, under-the-ground intimidation”* by her colleagues who *“would try to undermine her and make her feel small.”*

Grace chose not to nurture her workplace relationships because she had that feeling that *“you really did not include me, you always saw me as an outsider.”* Despite her career progression from *“cleaner”* to *“Lead Project Coordinator,”* and her skills development, she *“always felt left out”* (Grace). Maria, *“the only Black nurse”* in an Afrikaans private healthcare setting, discussed the intra-racial condescension, being undermined by *“fellow sisters and brothers,”* and explained in detail:

> *It was weird…I was like the only Black person who was working as a nurse, whereas the others… Black South African workers that were they were just either they would be working or employed as cleaners... Everyone else who was a nurse or receptionist or admin or doctor was either White or Coloured, and maybe some Muslims… people want to understand, um, how I got the job that I have now. They want to know what I did to be able to be a manager and what I had to do, and it's not really coming from a space of wanting to grow and be better for themselves. It's actually coming more from a condescending space. And sometimes it's sad that it is from fellow sisters and fellow brothers.*

Nevertheless, moments of inclusion also occurred. Maria shared her experience when her colleagues surprised her with a baby shower, making her feel *"part of a family."*

> *They (organisation staff, clients, and colleagues) threw an unexpected baby shower, and in that moment, I realised that I was now a part of the family. Before because I was still very new to the place, you're not quite sure what people think of you [...] throughout those months, I've been reminded of [the ex-colleague], but I never thought and reached the space where I connected so much with the women, the staff [...] to be able to celebrate with me.*

Similarly, Feefee and Sarah reported that their belonging and inclusion evolved around participation in decision-making and performance recognition, emphasizing the critical role that organisational and fair policies play in fostering belonging.

Feefee shared:

> *I think most of my job has been a positive experience because I do feel like a part of the team. So, even in any decisions, I have things that I decide on my own first [...] when it comes to responsibilities in the workplace, I feel very included and also the decision making because even when not considering in meetings as well, you know I have a chance to speak?*

Sarah summarised her inclusion experience below:

> *If I'm in a meeting and I need to proceed and show ideas that's been accepted [...] So, I think what's been fortunate for me is because of the quality of work, I've had opportunities where I'm included in special projects, and that those are mixed projects of male and female.*

Education, smartness, and being better than others were additional associations with the participants' identities of foreignness and race. Their professional competence was a significant marker that could elicit hostile sentiments. Morgan, who highlighted South Africans' *"hostility"* or *"jealousy type of thing"*, was perceived as a *"better Black."* She recalled her professional experience:

> *The director would mention that 'This is our new Quantity Surveyor and she's from Tanzania,' you know, and everyone is like, 'oh, OK! So, she's not South African.' She's a Black, but a 'better Black' [be]cause she's educated and she speaks differently.*

Georgia corroborated Maria's perspective, highlighting the perception of the "overachiever" migrant:

> *There's something around them (people) seeing a migrant worker. You've got to be a foreigner because of how you keep pushing. You are very ambitious, constantly trying to upskill yourself, overachieve. The moment I mentioned that I was doing a Master's degree, they (organisational leaders) actually commented to say 'Oh yeah! Zimbabweans study a lot.' […] you have to be a foreigner because you are working extremely hard, you [are] continuing to study.*

Finally, according to Vivian, reactions revolved around education and training, discussing her English fluency as a conflation of racialised and classed perceptions. She shared: *"Of course, you're going to speak English well. And then another reaction will be, 'Oh, gosh, you're so White! You speak so White, like a White."*

4.5.3.2 Gendered and Racialised Microaggressions and Micro-Inequities

Gender was not a common denominator for the Black migrant women, yet half of them shared experiences where gender operated as an axis of exclusion, impacting their professional contributions, value, and interaction with male and female counterparts. Georgia, as "*the only female on the leadership team with the personal assistant of the CEM Manager,"* stated that gender dynamics predetermined the outcome of decision-making processes during meetings:

> *It was like 'boys club' thing, so they would go out and smoke and have conversations, and by the time you get into the meeting, you'd really feel that they talking about a topic asking for input, but the decision has been already made [...] There wasn't quite an inclusive situation going on here.*

Participants were questioned about their competence and capabilities as working professionals in their organisations. Elena spoke about this dynamic, which ignited curiosity and conversations in male-dominated boardrooms:

> *It's just, generally, tougher to sit in a boardroom. Boardrooms in South Africa predominantly like […] males and also White males, especially in Cape Town. So, when you do walk into a meeting, there's a question […] around: 'Are you capable?' [To answer this question…], everyone wants to know a little bit more about you. 'How did you get here?' and so on questions. No one really questions a male figure when it comes to that.*

Several women further discussed how gender shaped the way they were perceived and treated by

male colleagues, which was manifested in several ways, such as being corrected, interrupted, or judged. Anna, in particular, reflected on both her race and gender as she narrated an incident regarding a male colleague's intervention during a meeting:

> *I kind of made a statement…which was the correct statement, and he was like, 'No, we don't say that, this [is] how we say this.' Like in front of a client! And in my mind, I'm like, 'Oh, you know,' so I had to pause [...] I'm managing the project. And he was there to kind of like support and explain to the client [...], and then he was like, 'I need to chip in. We don't say it. This is how we say it.' So in my mind, I'm like [whether] I was right or wrong, you don't do that… but if this was a male colleague [...] I don't know, it's like in a subtle way [...] and it's like something that you think afterwards to say, 'No, that wasn't right.' And then when you think about it… Is it because of my race? Is it because of my gender?*

Similarly, Kim described how her male colleagues often required her to continually prove herself:

> *When I worked with male professors, they really struggled to just take instruction from me, particularly when I was a postdoc. Now, when I got this job, they're like, 'Okay, fine, you're like, good enough.' But you have to really, really prove yourself.*

Another instance was shared by Jenny, recalling *"jokes"* about her foreignness. She reported: *"If I were late, the team would joke [that] I was at the border trying to get in."*

The intersection of gender and authority introduced additional complexity. For example, Anna, as a female supervisor, shared that the male personnel who covered her supervisory role during her absence were taken more seriously:

> *I noticed that when I was on leave, a male personnel took over, you know, but I realised that sort of like the level of respect that he was accorded is not necessarily the same [...] I kind of have to assert or be assertive to get that kind of respect.*

Grace, an African female and Project Facilitator, recounted that male clients demanded superiority during her training sessions, compelling her to breach her own cultural norms by making direct eye contact:

> *You get a sense of it when you stand in a room and you're about to start teaching, there are always those men, also that are coming from maybe fairly traditional backgrounds. They want to make their position seen, even though they are the clients [...] but they still want their position as a man to be seen, to be noted, even though it's not your norm, 'I'm not your*

wife, I'm your teacher!' but they still want to enforce that 'I'm superior to you' and she had to *look them (male clients) in the eye, which is against my cultural belief.*

Some women also highlighted the impact of gender roles, associations, and stereotypes. Kim described how her appearance was used to undermine her professional identity:

> *If I come to work in […] a very short dress and boots, […] it's all about your appearance and how sexy you look today […] they see you first as a woman, and before they see you as a professional person […]. If a man walks in, they will see the professor [...] When I came, I was single, so I didn't have a ring on my finger. Then I got engaged, and I got this beautiful ring, and one day, I was presenting at a big meeting at X university. And they say: 'Oh, wow! Now she's got a big ring' […] I feel like we're judged [...]We are women of colour, we get judged a lot based on… things that people believe should be done by women, feminine tasks.*

Beyond gender, racialised dynamics maintained structural inequalities. Yvette found that competence alone was inadequate for advancement in White male-dominated settings. She shared that a White male colleague was *"absolutely shit at his work,"* but *"the 'managerial click' would rather keep him on as opposed to replacing him with someone's [who] qualified and competent."*

4.5.3.3 The Role of Managers in Fostering Inclusion for Black Migrant Women

The participants narrated how their relationship with managers/supervisors shaped experiences of inclusion or exclusion and how identities affected this dynamic. For some women, managers created opportunities, challenging biases. For instance, Georgia recalled that her colleagues subscribed to the gendered norm of the female as a mother, which *"automatically"* disadvantaged her for a leadership opportunity. She recounted how her foreign-born manager offered her the opportunity to participate-*"an aha moment around inclusion:"*

> *There was an opportunity that had presented itself to a leadership team, and there was a conversation around, you know, 'Could we present this opportunity for Georgia?' and then there were people in the room going on… 'I don't think so, cause she's a new mom. I don't know if she travel[s]' [...] assumptions were made around 'can she be included on this project and stuff?' And what I really appreciated was that the line manager that I had, and maybe what helped was that he was a foreigner from Colombia […] 'I'm willing to ask the*

questions before we say she can't do it' [...] I liked the fact that he didn't go with whatever was going on in the room [...] And then even when he asked, he was like, 'Georgia's got paperwork to travel, got capacity to go on this project in this assignment. And she set herself up in a way that she is actually available to go for it.'"

However, some participants shared negative experiences, like Jenny, who recalled a *"destroying experience"* with an *"individual, key part of the team",* both xenophobic and misogynistic. She explained:

> *Literally like people would say to me, 'What is it with you and this guy?... He's particularly mean to you,' and I always felt like it was because [...] I thought he was, you know, xenophobic, besides being like a bit misogynist, but I think I always felt [...] he made a lot of joke about my Zimbabweanness and foreignness and make random statements about foreigners.*

Zizi emphasised her manager's *"ignorance"* and preferential treatment towards other employees, expressing a sense of discomfort. Kim discussed her sabotage by a Black male supervisor, aimed at obstructing her academic career progression:

> *We were supposed to meet for an hour to discuss the paper. We never talked about the paper [...] we're just having a candid conversation [...] I used to call him 'Prof.' And then I was calling him by his first name [...] that was just really to assert authority and tell him, 'Look, I made it here without you.' I think it was just anger because I didn't go and work with him, but I told him [that] we worked well together. But he had made it to be a professor, but he was trying to sabotage my path to become a professor [...] these days, no one can bully me [...] we have to be professional about certain things, because he's a White male and I'm a woman of colour from Kenya… I don't deserve that kind of discrimination.*

Yet, Kim also shared positive experiences with diverse supervisors and professors, both White and Black, male and female:

> *I'm surprised that I've received overwhelming support. So in terms of rising… I came here as a postdoctoral fellow and then… I had a male, white male supervisor for my postdoc, and we got along fairly well, which is quite a stressful position [...] And then from there, I worked for [a] Black South African male, which is very different from working for [a] White*

South African male [...] I found that the people of colour are way more supportive [...] right now, my line manager is a woman of colour… an Indian lady [...] she's really very sensitive to my issues, maybe because I'm female, and I'm also a person of colour, but also she understands that I'm a foreigner.

In Elena's case, intersections of foreignness, race, and language shaped her experience of exclusion. Discriminatory treatment from a White male manager was evident in her words:

We were supposed to start drafting financial statements for that time of the year… Then we [are]sitting in the meeting, the guy [male manager] just switches to Afrikaans, and immediately, obviously me being foreign, I put my hand up, 'can I politely ask' [...] 'could we just stick to the English?' Me, being from Zimbabwe, I don't understand Afrikaans, but he did not see that. [...] He was like, 'Well, you should have thought about that before you migrated to South Africa… then you need to learn Afrikaans'….

And then he just carried on Afrikaans, the whole meeting.

Finally, Evelyn elaborated on the condescending treatment she received from an Indian female supervisor, rooted in both racial and religious hierarchies.

She knew she was working firstly with all Black employees, but then some of us were Black African, and I get it… It also goes back to, unfortunately, religion as well, because we both are from the same religion, but because of issues of race... So you find that because someone is Indian, they assume that they are better and they know more and they are holier… And then the Black Muslim… The work environment was really terrible. She was not helpful. She was very condescending… to a point which you could see that she is like this because she knows that 'you guys are literally trying to build up your CVs'...and mostly because she assumed a lot because not all of us were Black immigrants. I was the only one, but because the other ones were Black, and for her, assuming that they were immigrants or refugees, that's why she treated us the way she treated us…that was my worst working experience.

These accounts underscore that while some managers fostered empowerment and belonging for Black migrant women, others perpetuated exclusionary practices that reinforced structural inequalities, often mediated through the intersectional dynamics of gender, race, and foreignness.

4.6 RESEARCH SUB-QUESTION THREE: INTERSECTIONS OF GENDER, RACE, AND FOREIGNNESS AT THE MICRO-LEVEL

This theme captures how intersectional identities shaped the participants' inclusion experiences on the societal level. The visible and audible identities, like language, accent, and appearance, had a powerful influence on social interactions and mediated how they were perceived and treated. For most women, the intersection of race and foreignness influenced power dynamics with colleagues, peers, and the wider public, reinforcing their otherness.

4.6.1 'I'm Black but I don't Speak your Language:' Otherness and Linguistic Exclusion

While aware of their racial identity, almost all Black migrant women articulated discrimination rooted in foreignness, originating from stereotypes associated with race, expectations of speaking indigenous South African languages, or detecting nativeness/foreignness in speech. The participants revealed that language operated as a barrier to the public, contributing to a lack of belonging. Lauren noted:

> *People expect you, because you're Black, to answer back in Zulu. When you're not able to [answer back], then they get upset […] [they] expect you to understand what they saying, and be upset that probably saying 'What are you guys doing? Why are you not understanding my language?' Which I think in a way, yes, I should be able to speak their language or understand at least, but I don't. So, I don't think I should be discriminated against just because I'm Black, I don't speak your language.*

For Kayla, foreignness emerged as an axis for negative treatment. She discussed how assumptions about language fluency shifted others' attitudes:

> *People assume that I can speak the language, that they would assume that I'm a local and not a foreigner… And then those times, once they find out that you are a foreigner, then you can really see attitudes change.*

Similarly, Morgan shared that the lack of language proficiency could trigger hostility by Black South Africans, noting:

> *So sometimes if someone wants to know if you're an […]'actual' South African, they will try to speak to you in their language to see that if you are not a South African [to decide] whether [to]attack you or not.*

Several participants navigated negative treatment in multiple ways, but primarily with remorse or avoidance. Yvette, for instance, feeling as *"a Black sheep in a conversation,"* would *"apologise for being unable to engage in Afrikaans or Zulu or any native language,"* and Nicole *"played dumb"* to avoid confrontation and challenge assumptions, noting that, *"there's so many different nationalities living in South Africa and it's not right to assume, especially among Black South Africans."* Having said that, Anna, part of a minority group, was often *"mistaken for [a] foreigner either from South Africa or from Zim[babwe],"* because of her linguistic background, enabling her to fit in:

> *So the language that I speak, Ndebele, I'm proficient. It's almost similar to the languages that are spoken in South Africa […] I fit in here. People are actually surprised when they find out that I'm actually not South African.*

A few participants supported that English fluency or accent ignited curiosity and conversations, laying a foundation for inclusion. Maria stated that *"they would ask whether I'm here for my studies. [If] that's why I'm here. Or that my English was good."* Christina, despite her South African citizenship, reported a lack of belonging rooted in her accent and English fluency:

> *I think that, as much as I even have South African citizenship, I don't feel South African. I don't feel really part of the Black population because… when people ask me where I'm from … […] because I don't have the energy to explain everything to him now…I wouldn't need to always have to mention that [...] My mom is from Kenya. My dad is from Uganda [...] But I have to do that all the time because apparently, in their mind, they can pick up that I have an accent or [that] English is too good.*

These accounts highlighted how language functioned as both a barrier and a bridge to inclusion, intersecting with race and foreignness to position women as insiders, outsiders, or conditional members of social spaces.

4.6.2 Anti-Foreigner and Anti-Black Intolerance and Discrimination

Foreignness operated as a salient identity in shaping how the participants were perceived, treated, and valued. Most women reported that their identities reflected negative reactions, especially by Black South Africans. Negative treatment was manifested in name-calling; *"makwerekwere,"* a

xenophobic, derogatory term, was extensively traumatic for the women up to their adulthood, like Evelyn, who recalled that in primary school *"the kids are singing the song, 'hambani makwere kwere hambani' […] 'go makwere kwere. You need to go back.'"* On a similar note, Christina recalled that the term was used in public transport, expressing her aversion to the label: *"Taking public transport, and not speaking … it would be then they sort of… There's a term called 'makwere' which means foreigner, which I really don't like."* Other pejorative or demeaning labels tied to the participants' gender, race and foreignness included *"noir recherche"* (referring to a rare Black pigmentation; Karen), *"darling"* (Kim), *"dear"* (Lizi), *"the Zim girl"* (Valeria), *"the Black mamba"* (Nicole), or recalling that *"they're calling us names as women"* (Jasmine). The women also discussed how they were teased, were the target of several jokes, or judged. Christina reflected that *"as a child, it would be that 'where are you from?' you can't speak the language and then, now because of that, I was made fun of and thought of less."*

Perceptions of foreignness were associated with competence, work ethic, and demeanour. For instance, participants were judged for *"working too hard"*(Nicole), *"being too smart"* (Nicole), or *"always showing curiosity"* (Georgia). Grace shared that *"initially there is always a perception of what kind of person you are as a migrant,"* as she recounted being evaluated based on appearance:

> *People looked at me and the way that I was dressed. Nothing really fancy… dress, sandals, but it was interesting that there was a perception or there was a thought that I would look different, or they could easily spot that I wasn't South African. And at the end of the party, it was nice [...] everything was fun. One of the ladies made a comment and say, 'Ah! You definitely look like one of us! And we are definitely going to invite you to two more parties!' So, it was a case of you know, you've spent time with me… you've gotten to know me. So, that judgment has been removed, because you got to know the person that I am, but initially, there is always a perception of what kind of person you are as a migrant.*

Others, like Anna and Jasmine, approached jokes with a sense of humour. Anna shared that *"somebody will talk to me […if] I'm South African and joke […]. Then they'll be surprised when I remove my ID. 'Oh! Actually, you are not South African,"* and Jasmine said that *"when they notice that you are good when it comes to calculations, everyone will start to make fun with you"*

(Jasmine). For Valeria, her identity ignited extreme curiosity, receiving questions*, "'Why are you here? Why not just going to high school in your country?'"* and had to *"start unpacking why you're in the country to strangers."*

For some women, Blackness enabled strategic passing. For instance, Nicole revealed that her dark pigmentation allowed her to pass as South African from Limpopo:

> *If you're a foreigner in South Africa, you'll definitely come across… prejudice; you come across people who will judge you also. It's different when you're a refugee or a migrant from an African country, because immediately you can pick up. I mean, I'm darker than most South Africans here. So you can see the different features…Although sometimes I can pass, sometimes people are confusing me…from this…oh, what's this province? They [are] close to [the] Zimbabwe border. [Probe: Limpopo]. So, most of them are a lot more darker.*

In a similar vein, Elena recounted how she leveraged Blackness and her resemblance to Tswana, Coloured, or Xhosa groups to achieve inclusion and her professional goals:

> *At times, I get mistaken for a local because I look like… I actually look like I'm Tswana, or I look like a Coloured or like a Xhosa. So people are just mistaking you for that, and sometimes, yeah, I just go with it because I need to network [...] to get things [...] get a work project or something. So, where I could use it to my advantage.*

4.6.3 Impact of Racialised Xenophobia on Personal Identity and Mental/Emotional Well-Being

Participants shared how the impact of their intersectional identities affected their self-worth, self-perceptions, belonging, and emotional well-being. Despite sharing the racial sameness, participants reported that foreignness positioned them as outsiders in South African society, highlighting recurring feelings of alienation and otherness. In the context of xenophobic violence, Nicole pointed to her sense of alienation by the Black population, regardless of holding legal citizenship:

> *We might all be Black, but they're Black South Africans and you're Black from another country, and so, it's different… Sometimes you're almost like an alien, but it's like we look the same [...] when xenophobia happens… when townships start fighting foreigners, you immediately understand you are [a] foreigner, regardless of whether you've got your ID,*

you've got your papers.

The emotional and mental toll was also evident in Evelyn's account. She described the constant vigilance as a foreigner:

> *I think you always feel like an outsider here in South Africa, really. You never [feel] comfortable [...] that's where the paranoia comes in… because you know, at the end of the day, no matter what you do, you will never be enough. You'll never be an insider and people, no matter who they are, [it] will always somehow comes up.*

Kim shared that foreignness was rooted in her professional background, shaping people's perceptions of her identity: "*They don't want to say that I'm a Kenyan first, you know, because that's my identity as a Black woman. They want to see where I was trained,"* by saying *"she was trained at Harvard."*

Furthermore, participants described internalising negative treatment. Karen noted that her self-worth was eroded when she was in need of assistance:

> *I always feel that I'm an outsider, because when you're in need of something, you are reduced, or you have to reduce yourself to a certain level [...] that's why I always tell my husband. I used to be an A student, but the manner in which I'm treated I'm treated like I've been a failure all my life.*

Intra-racial dynamics impacted how the women perceived themselves. Morgan reported feeling *"different,"* noting that *"certain hardships and struggles differentiated her from the Black South Africans because she could not relate."* Participants also highlighted how their identity was perceived at a social event. Kim, being "*the only Black person,"* shared how she became hyper-visible, attracting scrutiny and attention:

> *I was the only Black person [at] that party. Oh! And I got so much attention. They like, first of all, my dressing, 'you're so smart,' and then they were surprised… like 'so, where do you work?' I say [University name]. 'What are you?' 'I'm a lecturer.' 'Oh, wow! So how's your experience been?' And I felt like the entire party was like an interview. [...] I just I stood out like a sore thumb.*

She also reflected on the intersection of race and gender in shaping her sense of self and belonging:

> *When I'm with my friend, she's White, I never feel like… I've got a lot of White friends and a close colleague of mine, who is in the office with me now. He's White. And he never makes*

me feel Black [...] That's [when] you realise that you're Black, but the way they also put it is like… It's a very inferior race, in addition to being a woman (Kim).

Finally, some women discussed their experiences in interracial contexts. Maria highlighted her positional visibility in social settings:

When I used to enter many places out, I also had my friend who was also White, so that made it easier to integrate into the space. Otherwise, prior to that, if I was going on my own, it would seem like I'm in the wrong place [...] And it's ok to be in a place as long as I've got a friend who's White or Coloured. But the moment it's just me. Then again, the treatment is slightly different. Less smiles, that kind of thing. 'Oh, what are you doing here?'- kind of questions.

Morgan reflected on her complex sense of belonging, shaped by xenophobic attitudes and racialised spaces:

When you [are] constantly reading the newspaper… foreigners are here to take our jobs, there are no jobs for South Africans [...] I've grown up here to [a] certain extent, [but] it still doesn't feel like home… I'm more at ease in the White suburbs and even though there is that barrier with White people looking at you funny because you're Black […] I would be uncomfortable if I was to live in the townships… because I just don't fit in. And they're [Black South Africans] very, very hostile. Some of them towards foreign Black females, and they make it known cause of that preconceived idea.

Collectively, these narratives revealed how the intersections of gender, race, and foreignness shaped micro-level experiences of inclusion and exclusion, producing a persistent negotiation between visibility, safety, authenticity, and belonging.

4.7 RESEARCH SUB-QUESTION FOUR: HOW TO OVERCOME INCLUSION CHALLENGES

The fourth research question is addressed by the data shared by the participants regarding the mechanisms employed to overcome inclusion challenges experienced at all levels (macro, meso, and micro levels). The data identified external and internal coping strategies shaped by the intersectional identities of gender, race, and foreignness. These strategies not only mitigated immediate challenges but also influenced participants' longer-term trajectories of integration,

belonging, and professional advancement.

4.7.1 External Sources of Support

The participants discussed various external sources of support, contributing to overcoming inclusion challenges. These included family, friends, church, compatriot communities, and supportive working relationships. External sources of support played a crucial role in mitigating exclusion, reinforcing belonging, and facilitating access to opportunities.

4.7.1.1 Community Support Systems and Networks

Family and friends emerged as the most significant sources of support for most women. Christina recalled that she managed to *"break to certain ceilings"* because of her family's encouragement of her educational journey. Yvette referred to *"a strong family structure"* and *"people that love you unconditionally who help you, believe in you, and motivate you,"* highlighting her mother's prominent presence. Jasmine recounted how her mother and aunt assisted her financially following her father's death. She also joined her aunt's refugee papers to maintain legal residency:

> *During my life in South Africa, my father passed away. [He] used to pay for me [...] I didn't have anybody to pay for me. So, my mother [and] my auntie decided to take me as their own, and then [I] had to join her [refugee] paper.*

Friendship networks became a way to cope with mental stress and discomfort. Elena described how humour and solidarity shared with friends acted as a coping mechanism in stressful bureaucratic contexts:

> *We make jokes about Home Affairs a lot [...] in terms of burning the place [...] putting it down to the ground, [...] but I mean, we never do it. [...] there was some time where me and my friends all finished, same time off the bus, we were going through this experience together. We would meet about 'what are we going to do about the situation?' You need mental support, like that kind of stuff.*

Several women discussed how the church served as a solid support system and social networking platform. The church played a central role in impacting their inclusion, integration, resilience, and identity affirmation. Grace, Lauren, and Kim supported that diversity, unity, and the absence of judgement within their religious community fostered meaningful connections. For Yvette, pastoral

support would *"motivate you and help you overcome all the challenges,"* serving as *"free therapy,"* which made her feel *"empowered"* and that *"things can be better."* The women also mentioned additional networks, including compatriots, and less, colleagues, and neighbours. Shared identity, mutual assistance, and understanding were the backbone of their connection with fellow migrants. Most participants, like Morgan, Jenny, and Lizi, gravitated towards and identified with fellow foreigners through language, accent, and similar experiences.

Morgan described how she related more to the foreign community, bolstering her inclusion:

> *In my social level [I'm included] with my foreign community. That's where I would feel like that they can relate to me and the experiences that I've had compared to and foreign community, not just general friends. That's where I would feel more included.*

Lizi echoed this sentiment, noting that *"I tend to gravitate towards foreigners just because of the common ground we have."* Similarly, Kayla said, *"I don't know, actually, how that happened, where I just had more foreigner friends. It's not that that was my sole purpose because I do have a lot of best friends who are not foreigners."* The selection of networks and relationships was founded based on racial and cultural affinities. Anna, for instance, gravitated towards White Europeans because of their "*conscious"* mindset about race. She explained:

> *Because I've experienced racism living in South Africa, I gravitate more towards White Europeans because I think they are more conscious about… or in my experience… or maybe because I also lived in Europe and I had friends, they are more conscious around… It's easy to relate in a way. And I think they are more open-minded than… like I would gravitate towards… a South African White colleague.*

On the contrary, Feefee gravitated towards Black African friends because they shared a similar cultural mentality, noting: "*They'll understand if someone passes a comment about maybe my hair… they'll understand why I feel offended by it compared to someone who is not a person of colour."* Finally, Vivian recounted:

> *I tend to relate to people who are like me […] I mean, people who are curious about things… If there's something going on, they put their hand up and they say, 'Oh, I've arrived early. Do you need some help?' Setting up people who will come up to you and say, 'Hi, my name is... What's your name? Ah, ok! What brings you here? Ok oh! That's interesting."*

And then it starts a whole conversation.

Her approach was more values-based, gravitating towards individuals who were curious, proactive, and open to conversation, regardless of nationality.

4.7.1.2 Relationships with Management and Managerial Dynamics

For many women, relationships with their managers reinforced workplace inclusion. It was manifested in encouraging career progression, fostering trust, and validating competence. For example, Zizi elaborated on her manager's supportive attitude regarding her promotion to a leadership position:

> *It was my manager who really picked me [...] 'you have the skills that it takes for you to be a leader. I think you should try this interview.' So, she encouraged me in a sense that I had to apply for it.*

Similarly, Kim credited her *"very brave boss"* who *"fought for her and created those opportunities,"* despite her foreignness:

> *She knew there was going to be [an] opportunity, a permanent post. She knew I was a foreigner, but she still encouraged me and told me [to] try for the position [...] she liked how I was working. And she went for it.*

Yvette reflected: *"In the workplace, I was fortunate that I would have at least one person who's led for me [...] always came to the rescue [...] always kind of helped me."*

Kim described her overall experience, managed by different supervisors, including two males and a female, as positive because of *"their overwhelming support."* Continuous managerial trust became the foundation of these relationships, noting, *"My line managers always really believed in my competencies."* Nicole referred to *"building a good rapport"* with her manager based on *"trust and respect"* to the point where she *"would have to go speak on her behalf at conferences."* Other participants praised their managers, like Evelyn, describing her as *"amazing and understanding"* by *"wanting everyone's viewpoints on things,"* and Georgia, being appreciative of her manager's willingness *"to ask the questions and find out from her if she'd be available [and] interested in this opportunity."*

4.7.2 Internal Coping Strategies

Internal coping strategies were related to the participants' actions or state of mind and were the

most prominent theme. Internal responses and mechanisms included resilience, overcompensation, self-advocacy, adaptation, manoeuvring, evading/disclosing foreignness, keeping quiet, and leveraging personality traits.

4.7.2.1 Building Resilience and Perseverance

For most women, resilience and perseverance were the most significant mechanisms. Elena described being emotionally overwhelmed in institutional contexts, highlighting perseverance as a key coping tool:

> *"Home Affairs was such a terrible experience! I was emotionally drained because you had to revamp, even when they tell you they lost your documents, file your application again. Perseverance was really important."*

Kim also emphasised perseverance as a crucial way of coping with repeated employment rejections:

> M*y biggest obstacle at work was trying to look for a job [...] I didn't get the permanent post [...] But the only way to cope with the obstacle is to just try again [...] you just have to keep trying [...] there [are] also South Africans who apply for jobs, and [if] they don't get them… then you have to keep trying.*

Sarah recounted how her visa application was rejected, taking a toll on her emotional well-being, even if the errors were made by Home Affairs:

> *I had to jump through a lot of hoops to get the visa, and I remember the critical skills was rejected twice, and then accepted on the third time, but what was frustrating about that was the error was on [the] Home Affairs side, but each time I had to carry on submitting.*

Other participants described microaggressions and how they developed resilience against them. Feefee elaborated on her resilience against intrusive remarks about her hair or cultural clothing:

> *You just have to be strong because you're going to deal with maybe comments about your hair [...] and people touching your hair because it's different from their own, or you wear something and someone and say, 'Oh wow, this is nice, where is it from?' Because it's something cultural, something different than what they're used to.*

Valeria spoke of remaining professional after experiencing racism at the workplace:

> *Somebody was racist to me at work, I couldn't go and cry at home or take leave. I just had*

> *to be like, 'ok, cool! Anyways, can I have my next client?' You have to put a brave face on. You have to very, very unhealthily shove it under the rug.*

Several participants highlighted faith as a strategy for fostering resilience and perseverance. Jenny found empowerment in prayers, noting that her religious identity is the core of her resilience: *"I think my identity comes a lot from my faith,"* knowing that each Sunday, *"she would get refreshed to face the new week."* Similarly, Kelli resorted to prayer when encountering organisational barriers, because *"if you complain, you lose your job,"* whilst Georgia referred to a *"constant praying"* when dealing with immigration bureaucratic challenges.

4.7.2.2 Overcompensation, Hard Work, and Education

Resilience and proactiveness were associated with hard work and overcompensation for the participants. Elena explained that she could not *"sit on my matric"* compared to her team members. She had had to *"study more [...] get more professional qualification certification [...] and to shine more. I had to gain more education to back it up,"* to counteract being underestimated.

Whether hard work resulted from studying, working extra hours, or upskilling, all the women supported that they had to prove themselves. Jenny, for example, emphasised exceptional work results, noting: "*I had to work extra hours [...] from 2006 to 2015, I would work insane extra hours [...] always made sure that my work was above board [...] excellent."* Nicole similarly stated that she would *"go the extra mile" by "staying out late," "finishing work over the weekend,"* or *"working in December"* compared to her South African colleagues having a *"lazy mentality."* She noted that this drive stemmed from her foreignness: *"You're going to do it [...] you want to keep your job."*

Morgan described how she battled against gender stereotypes as a Black female migrant manager supervising older men. She also supported that she had to prove herself:

> *We're always constantly requesting things, correcting things, having meetings, and trying to work [...] they are older and male. Having to report out to you is a lot of friction and challenges [...] we're always battling that gender stereotype and trying to prove yourself [...] especially as a Black, as a female, as a foreigner [...] whatever you do, you must make*

sure that you [are] exceptional.

Finally, Grace described the compounded challenge as a Black migrant woman, referring to documentation requirements and gendered issues: *"I had to send much more CVs [Curriculum Vitae], because of the element of documentation on top of the challenges [referring to the gender identity] that they [South African Black women] face."*

4.7.2.3 Self-Advocacy

Several participants mentioned that they spoke up and stood up for themselves to cope with interpersonal discrimination and unfair treatment at work and institutions. Kim navigated her professor's *"bullying"* by standing up to him, who was surprised by her attitude. Morgan described how she defended herself against her director's undermining, but being conscious of her conduct:

> *The way in which I responded to him, [he] didn't appreciate. So, I had to defend myself because I felt that I was being undermined; they [directors] weren't taking [me] seriously [...] you always have to be conscious of how you conduct yourself.*

Nicole spoke of being assertive yet mindful, considering the potential consequences of job insecurity:

> *Sometimes it [is] also, how desperate are you to keep your job? So, when you speak up, you always have to be mindful because not everybody will receive it in a… how you're trying to express yourself [...] So, you have to always be mindful and not overshow that I can do this.*

Confidence, assertiveness, and self-acceptance were deployed as core strategies of self-advocacy. The women leveraged or cultivated these mechanisms throughout their lived experience, noting that they were in tune with and embracing their identity. Anna and Nicole employed assertiveness at the workplace, whilst Jenny stated that she *"built the confidence within her"* and *"held her head high."*

4.7.2.4 Adaptation and Acculturation

More than half of the participants identified adaptation and acculturation as key strategies. Anna recounted how her linguistic ability enabled her to pass as a South African, facilitating her integration:

I'm actually mistaken for a South African [...] because I'm part of the minority groups [...] the language that I speak, Ndebele, I'm proficient [...] So, in South Africa, actually, I fit in here. People are actually surprised when they find out that I'm actually not South African.

Others shared experiences of acculturation, incorporating new cultural elements into their lives. Grace spoke about culinary additions:

We've added smells that we've never eaten, because it's part of the South African culture or the Indian culture, for example, beryani I will make for my kids [...] roti because this is where we are living, and this is part of the culture that my kids are experiencing at the moment.

Lastly, Maria recognized the value of learning local languages as fundamental to integration and earning the locals' respect:

It was very important that I understood the cultures and the norms to be able to be integrated. That also took some time, and then the language also…It's hard when you want to integrate but you don't know the language of the area….

And people respect you when you know the language, but then it's difficult to learn as well.

4.7.2.5 Manoeuvring and Navigating Career Paths

For some participants, career shifts were inevitable. Elena, for instance, transitioned into a business owner due to foreign restrictions:

My strategy had to change in terms of how to develop my career. I would have wanted to go and work for a bank [...]. I changed my career path because I could not get into that market because of the restrictions.

Georgia similarly followed a career path irrelevant to her educational background due to visa rejections. She described:

I remember being extremely devastated when I'd finished my science degree and at that time my heart was just set on 'I wanna be a biochemist or a biotechnologist' [...] work in the pharmaceutical sector, and I remember spending days and months looking for roles and that everybody would close a door on me because I was on a study permit and they wanted somebody with work experience and you thinking 'Where would I have gotten it from?' You know, I'm trying to get the work experience […] So challenging… and maybe also, one of the reasons I did a career change.

Others, like Evelyn, Yvette, and Jenny, moved across jobs, whilst Kayla spoke of being ready to quit because of reaching a career *"ceiling."* She narrated: *"When I think that when I've reached the ceiling and I can't go higher than my position right now, it's just sort of time to leave, and unfortunately, that is one of the reasons why."* Jenny stated that the absence of options urged her to embark on her PhD journey, noting that *"she was really stuck with almost nothing [referring to a work permit or a job offer]."* For Karen, emigration was a considered option, based on South Africa's approach towards migrants:

> *Myself and my husband are thinking of ways that we could leave the country, but we want to be sure first, because we are looking at South Africa in 10 years' time [...] especially for us migrants, it's not going to be the same. It's the best time to start thinking ahead, or making plans to migrate somewhere else, and ask around, 'What can we do to leave South Africa? What can we do to better our lives?'*

4.7.2.6 Evading or Disclosing Foreignness; Keeping Quiet

Participants selected to evade or disclose their foreignness depending on the context. This strategy included avoiding locations and encounters, disclosing foreignness, and keeping quiet. Vivian, for example, avoided certain places or interactions during periods of xenophobic violence. She said that *"Ever since the very first kind of xenophobic unrest, I try and avoid going to certain places, and if I am in those places, I try not to talk too much."* Christina described that her invisibility meant blending in, yet foreignness and speech could cause hostility in certain settings:

> *I love to speak to people, but when I'm reading a situation like that [xenophobic], I will actually keep quiet because my features… I'm not so distinct in terms [of] where I come from. So, I can get away with it and not get that much attention.*

Other participants opted for disclosing foreignness, like Grace, who firmly believed that disclosing her refugee status would remove negative assumptions:

> *If somebody doesn't ask out in the workplace, I would immediately tell them that 'you know, what? Yes! I'm a refugee! And I'm proud of it.' I think it removes a lot of negative feelings […] not so much race, and gender, but migration status.*

Finally, Feefee said that she limited emotional expression at the workplace to avoid being perceived as a *"typical emotional"* woman:

I feel like it’s very hard to express emotion because you don't want to be seen like that typical emotional type of person [...] you always feel like, ‘Ok, I have to be my strongest self, my best self’ [...] even if I say something you know it's just going to make it worse [...] so I keep quiet.

4.7.2.7 Leveraging Personality Traits

Finally, the women leveraged their character, personality traits, and behavioural patterns to drive inclusion. Christina described how she practiced compassion towards people’s ignorance:

T*rying to understand where they're coming from [...] have that kind of mindset to treat people that way, because I think a lot of things are a lot of conflict or activism is because of ignorance….*

I'm now trying to kind of see where the other person is coming from, not to say you're going to accept their behaviour [...] just thinking about now where this person is living, the kind of things that they're dealing with, the kind of things that they were taught about foreigners [...] It needs a lot of work and maturity [...] it's just the kind of person that I am [...] I'm the greatest thinker.

Evelyn shared that inclusion often depended on the personal attitudes of individuals encountered:

It really did depend on the individual, really, because one aspect has really included […] and other places you're just giving instructions based on the person, and they live on basically of whether they were racist or not really.

Feefee remained aware of her surroundings while she remained conscious of being different, embracing her spontaneity, while Georgia narrated how she used her extrovert personality and curiosity to build rapport with colleagues and create a warm ambiance:

My personality helps a lot in the sense that I'm a little bit more on the extrovert side [...] It's the whole [thing being] really curious around everybody and their situation [...] even with the roles that I've had at work [...] I am that person at work, who when I have global connects with my stakeholders, I don't just start the phone call with, ‘Okay, so about that report that I need?’ [...] I usually go ‘So, where are you guys sitting?’ and they'll be like, ‘Oh, we're sitting in [the] Czech Republic’ or ‘in Poland, Krakow.’ [...] just a 10-minute icebreaker on just what is happening and warming up everybody. [...] I always try and

make it personable.

This section demonstrated that strategies for overcoming inclusion challenges were deeply embedded in participants' intersectional realities. External supports, especially family, faith-based, and managerial, emerged as crucial factors, while internal strategies reflected a blend of resilience, adaptation, and strategic navigation of identity. Together, these mechanisms reveal the active agency exercised by Black migrant women in South Africa, as they engaged in both reactive coping and proactive self-positioning to resist exclusion and create spaces of belonging.

4.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the findings of the study using thematic analysis, structured around the four research sub-questions, each addressing how inclusion challenges emerge at the intersection of race, gender, and migration status across macro, meso, and micro levels. Key themes included institutional xenophobia, racialised and gendered workplace discrimination, and socio-cultural exclusion. Despite these barriers, participants demonstrated resilience and strategic agency, supported by external networks and, in some cases, inclusive organisational practices. These findings underscore the significance of an intersectional, context-specific framework for understanding and addressing the systemic exclusion of Black migrant women. The following chapter builds on these insights by critically engaging with the findings and offering recommendations to guide future research and practice.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This study examined the lived experiences of Black migrant women and their inclusion challenges that emerged at the intersection of marginalised identities in a Black majority context. The study shed light on their inclusion-related experiences at the intersection of gender, race, and migration status and by deploying a micro-, meso-, and macro-level framework. This study was guided by the main research question: *How do inclusion challenges emerge at the intersection of marginalised identities of Black migrant women in a Black majority setting?*

Four sub-questions were also considered in how Black migrant women in South Africa:

- experience inclusion at the macro-level;
- experience inclusion challenges at the meso-level;
- experience inclusion challenges at the micro-level; and
- overcome inclusion challenges?

A hermeneutic phenomenological approach was deployed in order to capture inclusion challenges that emerged at the intersection of marginalised identities of gender, race, and foreignness and involved interviews with professional, highly educated working Black migrant women of sub-Saharan African origin in South Africa. This study utilised intersectionality as a theoretical lens coupled with conceptualised inclusion to:

- investigate how the intersection of gender, race, and migration status is shaped within an institutional context and how it affects the inclusion of Black migrant women in South Africa;
- identify organisational- and country-level influences affecting inclusion, and analyse patterns of their interrelations across levels;
- determine whether the intersectionality framework fosters inclusive workplace environments for migrant women within the South African context;
- achieve a broader conceptualisation of inclusion by considering a specific migrant group across micro-, meso- and macro-environments; and

- construct a realistic and holistic theoretical framework that embeds intersectional identities and advances greater inclusion for marginalised groups.

The intersectionality framework, along with identity and inclusion theories, was utilised to gain insights into the multilayered complexities of the inclusion challenges faced by Black migrant women in a Black majority context. As such, the findings from this study provided an analysis of the intersectional identities of 23 participants at a country, organisational, and societal level in South Africa. The main study findings emphasise how inclusion is further problematised by the intersectional identities of gender, race, and foreignness, which shape people's attitudes, beliefs, cognitive behaviours, and individual agencies. Eleven main themes emerged from the data analysis:

1. Department of Home Affairs: gatekeeping and institutionalised xenophobia.
2. The racialisation of Black migrant women: institutional indifference and Afrophobia.
3. Accessing social welfare and education: marginalisation through foreignness.
4. Employment barriers and workplace opportunities:
    - Gendered racism and exclusionary foreignness: prominent in promotions, career growth, and work opportunities; and
    - Gendered violence: navigating female vulnerability and workplace harassment.
5. The interplay of identities in organisational environments:
    - Black migrant women's identities intersecting with organisational culture; and
    - Diversity and inclusion policies as intersectional mechanisms of inclusion.
6. Intersections affecting power dynamics, belonging, and everyday interactions:
    - Anti-Black racism and xenophobia: belonging and power relations;
    - Gendered and racialised microaggressions and micro-inequities; and
    - The role of managers in fostering inclusion for Black migrant women
7. 'I'm Black but I don't speak your language:' otherness and linguistic exclusion.
8. Anti-foreigner and anti-Black intolerance and discrimination.
9. Impact of racialised xenophobia on personal identity and mental/emotional well-being.
10. External sources of support:
    - Community support systems and networks; and
    - Relationships with management and managerial dynamics;

11. Internal coping strategies:
    - Building resilience and perseverance;
    - Overcompensation, hard work, and education
    - Self-advocacy;
    - Adaptation and acculturation;
    - Manoeuvring and navigating career paths;
    - Evading or disclosing foreignness; keeping quiet, and
    - Leveraging personality traits.

In the following section, the findings from the previous chapter are presented, and the themes identified will be linked to the existing literature.

5.2 DISCUSSION

The findings corroborated the premise that Black migrant women in South Africa experience inclusion challenges. The analysis of the data followed the relational framework, compartmentalising them at the macro-levels of country and society and the meso-level within organisations. Black migrant women spoke about their inclusion experiences at the intersection of two or more marginalised identities of gender, race, and migration status. Findings from this study corroborate and expand on previous research presented in the literature review above. The findings demonstrated that the intersection of identities (gender, race, and foreignness) influenced the inclusion experiences of the women, highlighting systemic and interpersonal barriers to inclusion. The following sections provide a summary of the major themes and discuss the answer to the main research question.

5.2.1 Accessing State and Institutional Structures: Structural Marginalisation

5.2.1.1 Foreignness and Institutional Barriers: Institutionalised Xenophobia

The findings underscore the dominance of foreignness over race and gender as a primary marker of exclusion for Black migrant women. Participants' accounts highlight that their foreignness was the primary axis of their exclusion. They further discussed how foreignness, rather than race or gender alone, structured their interactions with South African systems, influencing their inclusion, agency, and self-perception. The participants revealed how their identity as foreigners subjected them to institutionalised xenophobia, particularly through South Africa's bureaucratic systems,

such as immigration and labour policies. Without taking away the research purpose, the objectives, and the usefulness of the intersectionality conceptual framework, the researcher contends that the domain of foreignness as a stand-alone and per the participants' lived experiences constitutes a core marker of their marginalisation, discrimination, and exclusion on an institutional level (Kaufman, 2012; Walsh, 2014).

The stories illustrate how the need for documentation acted as a gatekeeper and a sign of exclusion, with issues ranging from lengthy processing delays to a lack of expertise and professionalism in official institutions. Even though the participants acknowledged the value of legal status, they explained that the entire procedure had been daunting, discriminatory, and exclusionary. Firstly, bureaucratic delays and struggles with attaining documentation hampered the participants' inclusion (Kulkarni et al., 2016). In the participants' stories, it was evident that their frustration with obtaining documentation at the Department of Home Affairs was exorbitant. Kelli summed it up as *"when it comes to paperwork… [I] actually feel I am a migrant… I am a foreigner… it's not really easy,"* linking foreignness directly to legal status and documentation. Second, long queues, prolonged waiting time to have applications processed, suspicion of having documentation papers lost on purpose, conflation of different types of migrants such as refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants, and dehumanisation and discrimination not only served as exclusionary tools but also as violations of the women's human rights. The findings support that South African institutions fail to acknowledge the legitimate contributions of migrant workers; therefore, foreignness becomes a tool for systemic exclusion. Jenny's frustration over the three-year wait for her permanent residency, despite her consistent work history, illustrates how foreignness overshadows professional merit. Similarly, Vivian's reliance on paperwork to validate her identity and agency revealed the burdens placed on migrants to prove their legitimacy repeatedly.

The participants also associated their identity as foreign nationals with documentation complexities, the benefits or detriments of legal status, and most importantly, their value as human beings. In the findings, for example, some women stressed how the refugee or asylum seeker status limited their mobility, stigmatising and diminishing them, and how it technically and emotionally complicated their relationship with family members. Notably, Black migrant women on refugee or ex-asylum seeker status spoke about the concept of freedom not only in the host nation (in South

Africa). The notion of freedom was debated regarding limitations on movement and traveling as well as the absence of citizenship rights, yet in contrast with other studies on intersectionality and identity (re)construction (Colic-Peisker, 2005; Magan, 2020), they did not discuss significant identity changes but continued to carry their own identities as Black migrant women.

From the findings, it was evident that for some women, the intersection of gender and foreignness was utilised politically to control them and turn them into outsiders and scapegoats in a context where the social systems of patriarchy and racism intersect (American Anthropological Association, 2019; Dlamini, 2013; Harris, 2001). For example, Vivian's statement that she felt "*at the mercy of my husband"* due to her dependence on his documentation reflects the compounded vulnerability of migrant women who face both systemic exclusion and interpersonal biases. Karen's account of being unable to legally marry her husband due to differing documentation statuses further illustrates the intersectional barriers that shape their lives. Their foreignness enhanced the institutionalisation and politicisation of gender and emerged as an additional marker of the differences between South Africans and foreigners (Rodriguez & Scurry, 2019). Interestingly, some participants contrasted their experiences with those of White migrants, noting that foreignness, while a barrier for all, was particularly weaponised against Black migrants. This was evident in Anna's observation that even White migrants faced challenges with visa renewals, but Black migrant women carried the additional burden of racial and gender biases. As the literature suggests, it is claimed that while South Africa has seen a notable increase in immigration from both Africa and Europe, White immigrants appear to face fewer challenges than Black African migrants (Kellett, 2002).

Research has also indicated that foreign women are subjected to strict regulatory frameworks considering their non-national status, keeping them at the margins of social, political, and organisational spheres and creating divisions between nationals and foreigners to prioritise the hiring and advancement of the local labour force (Abdalla, 2006; Rodriguez & Scurry, 2019; Williams et al., 2011). However, it is the intersectional identities as Black migrant women that shape their subjective position, social location, and experiences in the context of South Africa where distinctions based on prejudice and institutional regimes emerge as a result of "embodied intersectionality" (Mirza, 2013) amongst visible (gender and race) and invisible identities

(foreignness) and systems of domination (Ali et al., 2017; Barn, 2008; Dhamoon, 2011; Mangu, 2019; Ncube et al., 2019; Trimikliniotis et al., 2008). It is imperative to stress that the South African government has deliberately collapsed the distinction between refugees and migrants to justify the exclusion of all migrant groups (Moyo & Zanker, 2020).

Additionally, the literature has highlighted how institutional factors, including incapacity and inefficiency of government officials, result in delays in processing documentation, impacting skilled foreign workers (Adjai & Lazaridis, 2013; Polzer Ngwato, 2009; Umezurike & Isike, 2013). A common source that deteriorated the participants' lived experiences was the authorities' inconsistency, lack of professionalism, knowledge, and capacity, which was evident in their accounts (Moyo & Zanker, 2020). Interactions with organisations, such as the Department of Home Affairs, were perceived as dehumanising, ineffective, inconsistent, and occasionally blatantly disrespectful of their migrant rights. Zizi's experience of presenting refugee documents illustrates the stigma associated with foreignness, frequently exacerbated by institutional ignorance, while Jasmine's critique of authorities for *"not knowing our paper and how it's working"* highlights systemic inefficiency. These results are consistent with previous research on the marginalisation of migrants through bureaucracy (Trimikliniotis et al., 2008).

At this point, it's crucial to mention that the White Paper on International Migration highlights the significance of institutional actors' training, including the police, as essential to tackle evolving xenophobic attitudes and behaviours, yet it does not mention institutional racism. This study proves that institutional racism is not only the outcome of a racialised process at the intersection of marginalised identities (race and foreignness), but also a threat to South Africans, provoking negative intergroup relations to boost their esteem (Branscombe et al., 1999; Stephan et al., 2000a). As the literature suggests, this leads to the urgency of the South African state to prioritise a more inclusive model of belonging for Black African immigrants to reduce intergroup anxiety (Umezurike & Isike, 2013).

According to the participants, navigating these barriers took a toll on their emotional and psychological well-being. Georgia's statement that her journey required *"constant praying,"* exemplifies the fatigue and powerlessness many migrants experience. Nevertheless, for some

participants, the turning point was the transition to permanent residency, providing them with validation and acknowledgement within the system. As Georgia pointed out, for example, permanent residency enabled her to access opportunities previously denied and allowed her to feel *“valued.”* This reaffirms that documentation acts as a two-edged sword; a mechanism used for both inclusion and exclusion.

5.2.1.2 Interpersonal Discrimination and Afrophobia

The results demonstrate the complexity of Afrophobia and interpersonal discrimination that Black migrant women must contend with. These experiences stem from the intersection of identities (gender, race, and foreignness), reinforcing further marginalisation and exclusion. Legal status was non-negotiable for the participants’ inclusion. However, their responses illustrate that it was more germane to the quality of service delivered and the bureaucratised exclusion from state officials, including the Department of Home Affairs and the police, towards Black migrants (Adjai & Lazaridis, 2013; Moyo & Zanker, 2020; Umeh et al., 2024; Umezurike & Isike, 2013). This is tied to the interpersonal discrimination that they experienced by representatives of institutions and government officials. Discriminatory attitudes on a one-on-one basis and profiling by local authorities were extensively reported in the participants’ early and senior years at the intersection of race and foreignness. The findings indicated that their encounters with government officials and the police were accompanied by racism and xenophobia.

The women attested to facing institutional racism and xenophobic reactions and, at times, without being able to distinguish whether it stemmed from their race or foreignness, as these identities cannot be separated. The findings underscore the importance of using an intersectional framework to understand the compounded discrimination faced by Black migrant women. The participants’ narratives revealed that foreignness, often inextricably linked to Blackness and gender, was a primary marker of “otherness.” This intersection created a layered vulnerability, subjecting them to overt and covert forms of exclusion. Georgia’s experience at the police station, where she had to tolerate dismissive remarks about her foreignness to complete essential tasks, illustrates how institutional representatives utilise microaggressions to assert dominance. These interactions not only undermine the women’s dignity but also reinforce systemic barriers, as migrant women must navigate these power imbalances to access basic services. Similarly, Karen’s and Kayla’s

experiences with interpersonal discrimination from Black South Africans reveal intra-racial dynamics shaped by xenophobia. Karen's observation that she faced harsher treatment from Black South Africans compared to White exposes the complexity of racialised hierarchies. This "Black-on-Black" hostility is indicative of a broader social narrative that positions migrants as outsiders, even within shared racial or cultural groups. These findings reflect how institutionalised xenophobia permeates interpersonal interactions, embedding itself into the behaviours and attitudes of those tasked with serving the public.

The root cause of xenophobia is laid out following South Africa's institutional history, its approach to population mobility, and decades of hostile political rhetoric (Misago, 2016). The literature also points out that xenophobia turns into Afrophobia due to the "hostilities among Africans of different nationalities" (Akinola, 2017), something that the participants referred to as "Black-to-Black" treatment manifested through anti-immigration attitudes and negative sentiments (Landau, 2011; Misago, 2016). The findings prove what the literature suggested, that xenophobia is disproportionately directed at Black African migrants regardless of legal status (Amusan & McHunu, 2017). This racialisation of Black migrants in post-apartheid South Africa has been highlighted by Adjai and Lazaridis (2013), where xenophobia is framed as the "new racism."

In the findings, it is clear that the intersection of race and foreignness created particular social locations, and while Blackness could be a domain for inclusion, it is the social and historical context that determined the participants' inclusion (Aylward, 2010; Kulkarni et al., 2016; Misago, 2016). Further, it is the intersectionality framework as an analytical framework that considers social categories and fluid organisational, institutional, and sociocultural contexts alongside historical, political, economic, and cultural processes (Brah & Phoenix, 2004; Choo & Ferree, 2010; Dhamoon, 2011). It can be argued that the legacy of apartheid, which is encapsulated by the continued conception of White economic power and privilege and institutional discrimination through nominally legitimised governmental policies against Black individuals, showed that Black migrant women 's experiences are not simple or isolated but rather complex and interrelated in relation to power (Bozalek, 2010; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Dhamoon, 2011; Pincus, 1996).

There was no doubt that the participants attested to experiences of Afrophobia and institutionalised

xenophobia mainly at the hands of Black South Africans, and state officials (Neocosmos, 2010; Umezurike & Isike, 2013). This correlates with some of the words and phrases put forward by them to describe their racialised experiences as Black migrants. These included "*lots of you people here,*" "*why don't you do it in your country?*" "*[a] Black South African is [typically] very harsh,*" "*we're not really taken seriously,*" "*the last one as a Black person to really receive proper treatment,*" "*the way they [Black South Africans] interact with you…is very hostile… very rude,*" "*I felt like it was intentional,*" "*the tone changed,*" "*being rude, mean,*" "*because of who I am,*" and "*very dismissive.*" Their accounts reveal how Afrophobia—the fear or hatred of African migrants—manifests in discriminatory practices at institutions, such as the Department of Home Affairs, police stations, and public hospitals. The treatment described by Grace, who recalled that she was treated with hostility at both the Department of Home Affairs and a public hospital, exemplifies the dehumanisation experienced by Black migrant women. Her description of feeling invisible, devalued, and unworthy highlights how institutional environments reinforce power imbalances through discriminatory practices. Afrophobia was further reflected in Maria's observation that Black individuals, particularly those of ordinary socioeconomic standing, are often deprioritised in institutional settings.

This finding aligns with previous research indicating that migrants from African countries face greater prejudice and discrimination in South Africa compared to migrants of other racial or ethnic backgrounds (Landau, 2011; Sekati, 2022). Nicole's reflection that White migrants rarely share the same experiences at the Department of Home Affairs points to the intersection of racial privilege and foreignness. This discrepancy underscores the racialised nature of institutional interactions and the preferential treatment afforded to migrants who are perceived as belonging to a "higher" racial category (Mngomezulu & Dube, 2019; Sekati, 2022).

Power dynamics play a significant role in shaping the interactions between Black migrant women and institutional actors. The narratives reveal how power is wielded by representatives of institutions to assert dominance and control over vulnerable populations. Georgia and Morgan's accounts of the hostile treatment from airport migration control and the Department of Home Affairs underscore how these interactions are often rooted in a desire to remind migrants of their subordinate status. Institutional environments are structured to maintain existing hierarchies,

particularly for vulnerable groups and individuals with intersectional identities who are treated as "less than" or "invisible" (Angu, 2023). The requirement to queue for hours or days, as described by Grace and Yvette, reflects how institutional systems are designed to exhaust and deter individuals, exacerbating feelings of fear, humiliation, and distress. This process of bureaucratic gatekeeping not only delays access to services but also reinforces the notion that migrants are undeserving of efficient or humane treatment. Further, this dehumanisation underscores a deeper societal rejection of their identity and humanity. The narratives also point to their powerlessness in the face of discrimination. Grace, for instance, expressed a lack of agency in speaking up for herself, reflecting how systemic barriers can disempower individuals and leave them feeling voiceless. This lack of agency was echoed in Yvette's account of enduring dismissive behaviour at the Department of Home Affairs, where staff were described as unhelpful and apathetic. Such experiences not only hinder access to essential services but also reinforce feelings of exclusion and alienation.

5.2.1.3 Accessing Social Welfare and Education: Marginalisation Through Foreignness

Finally, another theme that emerged from the participants' experiences highlighted how their foreignness affected their access to social welfare systems, preventing them from equal treatment and creating cycles of dependency and exclusion. This is in line with the literature that highlighted how migrant women were treated differently, discriminated against because of lower standards of medical treatment, and overcharges for service delivery, and eventually, denied medical treatment (Misago, 2016; Sigsworth, 2010). Besides this, their inability to access educational funding or inequalities in tuition fees and entrance requirements excluded the women from resources that would foster their inclusion. For them, education served as an asset that would strengthen their personal and professional growth, fend off discrimination, and claim inclusion (Ncube, 2017). In essence, they were marginalised by being socially constructed and categorised by state discourses and policies as *"outsiders," "aliens,"* and *"non-privileged"* regardless of their education as a resource to overcome inclusion barriers (Dodson & Crush, 2004; Piper, 2008; Robertson, 2005; Tagwirei, 2016).

However, all the aspects discussed above contribute to constructing varying degrees and different valuations of foreignness. Even though Black migrant women migrated to South Africa after 1994,

following the end of apartheid (Crush et al., 2008), they are still identified as foreigners. The pervasive presumption of their “foreignness” is attached to their African descent and presuming social and legal implications. The racialisation of these women as foreign reinforces the South African racial hierarchy by constructing Black migrant women as outsiders, and aliens, against whom “real citizens” (i.e., South Africans) can unite in times of crisis. In addition, this racialisation places Black migrant women between Blacks and Whites, adding a layer of neutrality or scapegoating on the racial stratification in South Africa.

Foreignness, as ascribed to Black migrant women, does not mean that these women are non-South Africans but un-South Africans with reference to the constructs of citizenship, national origin, race, and language. South African-ness, as an overarching collective national identity, embeds various racial, linguistic, and religious identities that the Black migrant women do not articulate; therefore, they are excluded from the South African workplace and society. Nationality and citizenship were prominent markers of foreignness and were extensively discussed by the participants, similarly to other studies (Johansson & Śliwa, 2014; Rodriguez & Scurry, 2019; Showers, 2015).

The findings of this study align with broader literature on the systemic exclusion of migrants (Bell et al., 2011). However, they also add nuance by emphasising the intersection of foreignness and race in shaping the experiences of Black migrant women. While race and gender are often cited as primary markers of exclusion, this study reveals that foreignness often supersedes these identities, shaping unique challenges for migrant women. The findings also highlight the dual role of documentation as both a barrier and a pathway to inclusion. While permanent residency offers participants validation and access to opportunities, the process of obtaining it often reinforces systemic exclusion and marginalisation. Furthermore, the emotional and psychological impact of navigating these barriers cannot be overstated, with many participants expressing frustration, helplessness, and a diminished sense of agency.

5.2.2 Foreignness and Race: Otherness and Language Discrimination

The findings reveal that the interplay of Blackness, language, and foreignness interacts in such a way that it influences the inclusion of Black migrant women in South Africa. The stories

demonstrated how the women overcame layers of discrimination associated with their racial and migrant identities, with language becoming a crucial indicator of their otherness. The data also highlighted how perceptions of inclusion or exclusion and social interactions were impacted by their foreignness, which is tied to stereotypes and xenophobic attitudes.

5.2.2.1 Language as a Marker of Belonging and Otherness

The Blackness of the participants enabled them to remain invisible in society since the phenomenon takes place in a Black majority context. Evidently, it could be concluded that this would lead to an "insider status" of the participants. However, Blackness encompasses more than just the colour of one's skin (Black Is… Black Ain't, 1995). Being racialised through language as Black non-South Africans resulted in intensified verbal harassment, including bullying or derogatory language, increased anxiety and fears related to physical harassment, and feelings of non-belonging (Mai, 2011; Onwukwe & Gibson, 2023; Pilane, 2015).

Black South Africans employed the South African indigenous languages as an identifier of the women's foreignness to classify them as "*others,*" "*foreigners*," or "*aliens*," (Umezurike & Isike, 2013). Most participants asserted that their non-indigenous South African language-speaking background and accent were identifiers of their foreign origin during their acculturation and integration, which became a basis of difference, otherness, and potential exclusion. Lauren's statement that *"people expect you because you're Black to answer back in Zulu"* undermines the cultural expectation that Blackness is synonymous with linguistic proficiency in the indigenous South African local languages. Yet, when expectations remain unmet, feelings of frustration and hostility emerge from locals, reinforcing the participants' sense of otherness. In addition, her words "*I don't think I should be discriminated against just because I'm Black, I don't speak your language,"* depict intergroup discrimination as a symptom of intergroup relationships, resource conflicts, or stereotypes about the other group (Stephan et al., 2000a; Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Zwingel, 2012).

South Africans utilised language as a litmus test to assess "nativeness" and distinguish between "us" and "them." This demonstrates how linguistic identity serves as a barrier to social inclusion and that not living up to these cultural norms may lead to judgment or exclusion (Carroll, 2010).

Morgan's account of language being used to *"decide whether to attack you or not"* illustrates the extreme consequences of failing to conform linguistically, revealing the precariousness of participants' interactions in public spaces. Consequently, their social inclusion appears to be influenced by elements that extend beyond mere visibility and continues to be restricted nearly 30 years after the end of apartheid (Anthias, 2012; Claybrook Jr., 2021; Yuval-Davis, 2011). Besides this, the emotional and social cost associated with the linguistic drive to fit in and the sense of exclusion that emanated from language were evident. For example, Nicole acknowledged *"playing dumb"* under these circumstances, and Yvette felt like the *"black sheep in the conversation."* Their narratives indicate various coping mechanisms that they employed to navigate an environment where linguistic otherness frequently led to conflict or mockery.

In contrast, some participants navigated their gender identities at the intersections of race and foreignness, whether it was genuinely experienced or merely perceived. This navigation has led them to adopt protective identities that necessitate racial passing and code-switching (Anderson, 2003) to highlight certain social positions while temporarily downplaying others. For instance, Anna elaborated on her experience between her linguistic background and South African languages, which occasionally led to mistaken identity.
She explained how knowing Ndebele eased her way to fit in:

> *So, the language that I speak [is] Ndebele- I'm proficient. It's almost similar to the languages that are spoken in South Africa. So, in South Africa, actually, I fit in here… People are actually surprised when they find out that I'm actually not South African.*

Notwithstanding this alignment, her inclusion was not necessarily genuine. While Anna *"fit in here"* linguistically, foreignness often emerged as a point of surprise or judgment upon closer scrutiny. Even though "passing" was employed to blend into Blackness and language to assimilate and network in South Africa (Kanuha, 1999), this duality undermines the conditional nature of belonging, where initial acceptance can quickly give way to exclusion once foreignness is revealed. The literature supports that under these circumstances, passing is not perceived as a liberating tactic but rather as a manifestation of "internalised oppression" or self-loathing (Beard & Glickauf-Hughes, 1994; Harbeck, 2014). However, code-switching was not deployed by the participants, which contrasts research studies on migrants that emphasise navigating their social and national identities through code-switching and regard it as a useful tool to elicit favourable

reactions (Hopper, 1977; Onwukwe, 2024; Singer & Eder, 1989). This may have occurred because they employed other coping mechanisms, it was overwhelming, or they did not feel a sense of belonging whatsoever in South Africa.

5.2.2.2 Anti-Foreigner and Anti-Black Intolerance and Discrimination

The findings highlight the complex interplay between Blackness and foreignness in shaping participants' experiences. Their narratives illustrate how xenophobic and anti-Black attitudes intersected, creating a double burden of discrimination. While foreignness marked the women explicitly as outsiders, Blackness often shaped the nature of the xenophobic responses they received. The participants' social categorisation by Black South Africans as *"makwerekwere"* (a xenophobic term) was ascribed to describe their foreignness and, specifically, the strange sounds of foreign languages spoken by African foreigners in South Africa. In addition, gendered insults reflected the intersectional nature of their marginalisation. Jasmine, for example, highlighted how these labels reinforced stereotypes about Black migrant women, positioning them as subordinate within both racial and national hierarchies. The discourse of we/us (ingroup) versus them (outgroup) illustrates the struggle for belonging and non-belonging between Black South Africans and Black African immigrants in post-apartheid South Africa (Umezurike & Isike, 2013).

The women's foreign and racial identities intersected in such a way that made them hyper-visible, influenced others' perceptions of their identity, and subjected them to judgment or stereotyping. For instance, Nicole's darker pigmentation led to both misidentification with certain South African groups and heightened scrutiny as a migrant (i.e., embodied intersectionality). The assigned identities of "hard-working" and "intelligent" migrants, linked to prejudice, were common amongst South Africans. The "hard-working" migrant identity was also constructed by the participants, resonating with the well-known "good worker" rhetoric concerning migrant workers (Findlay et al., 2013; MacKenzie & Forde, 2009).

Further, various comments and statements, such as "*you definitely look like one of us, and we are definitely going to invite you to two more parties"* (Grace), posit that South African Blackness is perceived as a social norm that results in the participants' social inclusion. Regardless of cultural differences and appearance as markers of "otherness," they were not excluded. According to the

participants, their personality was inclusionary (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

Despite the challenges, participants demonstrated agency in navigating and resisting exclusion. Some women highlighted that migrants from African countries are vulnerable to prejudice and large-scale dislike, yet their distinct physical features, such as dark skin, make them unidentifiable as they pass as South Africans, Coloured, Tswana, or Xhosa. Several participants, Elena, for instance, used racial passing to counter the negative effects of racialised xenophobia against Black foreigners and gain certain benefits, such as for networking and work purposes. This practice, as discussed earlier, is a thriving social management practice and is not based upon a rejection of stigmatised identity but situationally employed to resist social oppression (Kanuha, 1999). It is outlined and identified in the literature as the primary conditions for passing and includes, amongst others, fitting relationships and intimacy with others, access to opportunities, resources, wealth, and spaces that passers otherwise would have been denied or excluded from (Kanuha, 1999).

Other participants, including Anna and Jasmine, reframed moments of misunderstanding or prejudice as opportunities for connection. Anna's recounting of surprising bank employees with her foreignness reflects her ability to disrupt stereotypes and challenge assumptions. Similarly, Jasmine's experiences of being teased for her proficiency in mathematics highlight moments where perceived foreignness could transform into admiration or humour.

5.2.2.3 Racialised Xenophobia, Contested Identity, and Mental Well-Being

The participants' narratives also revealed the complex and intersectional nature of their experiences, highlighting how their identities intersected to produce feelings of alienation, inferiority, and emotional distress. Beliefs surrounding stereotypes and socially constructed notions of racialisation and categorisation, along with the perception of Black migrant women as eternal outsiders—and therefore, as potentially dubious in terms of legal status—also shaped the experiences of the women. Participants self-identified according to racialised foreignness. The paradox of being racially aligned with Black South Africans while simultaneously being excluded because of foreignness was evident in Nicole's account of *"we might all be Black, but they're Black South Africans and you're Black from another country,"* serving as alienation and feeling they will *"never be enough"* and *"outsiders."* Regardless of a shared racial identity, Black migrant

women were often treated as outsiders, particularly during periods of heightened xenophobic violence (Essed, 1991; Landau, 2011; Yuval-Davis, 2011).

Furthermore, the participants' accounts emphasised how foreignness is racialised and weaponised, reinforcing the divide between "local" and "foreigner" even within shared racial categories. The visible marker of Blackness, which links the women with the broader Black community, becomes secondary to their perceived foreignness, transcending documentation or legal status, and shaping persistent barriers to full inclusion. According to the participants, this is ascribed to the perception of South Africans that Black foreigners belong to an inferior identity, while South Africans are of a distinct, superior identity, that of the "Rainbow Nation" (Tshishonga, 2019; Zegeye & Maxted, 2002). This intergroup conflict has its roots in the activation of the social identities of Black South Africans triggered by their "internal oppressor," trauma and threats found in society (Alleyne, 2004; Tajfel, 1975). The narratives revealed that South African Blackness emerged as a perceived norm against which one's own position was measured and understood.

In addition, foreignness was rooted in the women's professional background, shaping people's perceptions. Kim's experience at a social event, gathering attention as the only Black woman, underscores how Black migrant women are often hyper visible in predominantly White or racially mixed spaces. She said that South Africans "*don't want to say that I'm a Kenyan first, you know, because that's my identity as a Black woman. They want to see where I was trained"* by saying *"she was trained at Harvard,"* socially categorising her through the domain of education over her self-categorisation that was founded on race and gender (Stets & Serpe, 2016). Thus, domains upon which self-identification is founded conflict with social identification in the South African setting at a macro-level, where Blackness, as a racial identity, is brushed aside to support inclusion (Myeza & April, 2021). This can trigger the individual to make socially categorised identities more central and salient over time to support inclusion. Alternatively, by retaining self-identification, they are likely to face challenges around inclusion. Trying to balance the two can lead to a battle of cognitive dissonance. While this is a rather counterintuitive conclusion to draw since the setting in question is majority Black, it is the legacy of the context of South Africa where one's inclusion in organisational spaces can be supported by distancing oneself from one's Blackness (Daya & April, 2014).

The literature indicates that social identity consists of self-categorisation and its assessment and affects a person's self-esteem (Tajfel & Turner, 1978; Trepte & Loy, 2017). The self and self-esteem were particularly stressed by the participants when they referred to self-identified "outsideness." Their sense of self-identification as outsiders solidified to the extent that they had to humiliate and devalue themselves to compromise and tolerate certain attitudes and life choices. A negative identity is rewarded with negative self-esteem, followed by ongoing competition, social mobility behaviours, or cognitive strategies to create a more positive image for the ingroup (Tajfel & Turner, 1978). The findings contrast research that Black consciousness can be a panacea for racism, racial superiority, and Afrophobia in South Africa and challenge racial hierarchies, address White privilege, and confront Black-on-Black violence (Angu, 2023).

Another finding of this study is associated with integrating in interracial contexts and how positional visibility is manifested in social settings. Maria's statement that *"it's okay to be in a place as long as I've got a friend who's White or Coloured,"* revealed how proximity to Whiteness or lighter-skinned individuals served as a form of social capital to gain acceptance and mitigate exclusion. This underscores how colourism and racial hierarchies continue to influence perceptions of belonging and respectability in South Africa. With regard to this, the study agrees and disagrees with various studies. For example, this study supports the finding by Colic-Peisker (2005) that social inclusion appears to be determined by factors beyond visibility, such as the language barrier and a non-indigenous South African speaking background, which serves as a foundation for difference and possible exclusion. This study adds to other findings highlighting that Whiteness predominates in powerful social places and is presented as the norm and standard in South Africa, being part of a global structure of racial capitalism, which encourages White supremacy, privilege, and power (Mngomezulu & Dube, 2019; Ndinda & Okeke-Uzodike, 2012; Seekings, 2008; Sekati, 2022). As Blackness is inherently ranked as a subordinate race whereby Blacks are considered innately inferior and intellectually limited (Adam & Moodley, 1993), the South African context upholds the proprieties of Whiteness and White privilege in social and public spaces.

For many participants, South Africa was not homely enough, even after years of residence or legal citizenship. The constant negotiation of identity, coupled with societal hostility, prevented the

participants from fully rooting themselves in South Africa, regardless of the long residency or legal citizenship. Morgan's narrative captures the pervasive alienation experienced by Black migrant women. She shared her feelings about her sense of belonging:

> *When you [are] constantly reading the newspaper… foreigners are here to take our jobs, there are no jobs for South Africans [...] I've grown up here to [a] certain extent, [but] it still doesn't feel like home… I'm more at ease in the White suburbs and even though there is that barrier with White people looking at you funny because you're Black […] I would be uncomfortable if I was to live in the townships… because I just don't fit in. And they're [Black South Africans] very, very hostile. Some of them towards foreign Black females, and they make it known cause of that preconceived idea.*

Being hyper visible in a White suburb was not an obstacle for Morgan despite the racial barriers she encountered there; on the contrary, it served as a safety precaution and reflected her perception of these spaces as less overtly hostile than Black South African communities. This incline also revealed a sense of displacement, as even these spaces failed to feel like home. Afrophobia impacted her personal identity as she was keen to modify who she was to acculturate and feel a sense of belonging (Johansson & Śliwa, 2014; Netto et al., 2020; Semu, 2020). The racialised experiences of the participants and, consequently, their exclusion profoundly impacted their mental and emotional well-being. Feelings of inferiority and paranoia emerged due to their "outsideness," which was exacerbated by the societal message that no matter their contributions or efforts, they would never fully belong.

5.2.3 Intersections of Foreignness, Race, and Gender in Shaping Organisational Inclusion

The findings demonstrated how Black migrant women experienced employment barriers and how organisational cultures shaped their workplace inclusion at the intersection of gender, race and foreignness. They spoke about their identities' salience, the organisations' role, and diversity and inclusion policies affecting their lived experiences as professional Black migrant women.

5.2.3.1 Structural Inequalities in Access to Employment and Progression

The findings of this study illustrated that the intersection of gender, race, and foreignness impacted employment access and opportunities for the women. The participants' accounts revealed persistent, multilayered barriers to their career advancement, equal wages, and professional

recognition, regardless of the formal presence of diversity management policies and national migration laws. These barriers do not stem from solely personal biases; they are embedded within organisational structures and societal norms that prioritise certain identities over others.

The Role of Foreignness in Shaping Workplace Exclusion

The participants expressed that foreignness had the power to influence their access to equal opportunities, reinforcing their exclusion from promotions, job vacancies, and the labour market. This implies that foreignness is heavily intensified on a meso-level, and that immigration and labour policies cannot facilitate greater inclusion in labour markets for migrant women. This finding is present in the literature that details the exclusion of specific demographic groups, including women, racial minorities, and immigrants, from valued opportunities, including jobs, promotions, information networks, decision-making, and human resource investments (Bell et al., 2011; Mor Barak, 2000; Roberson, 2006).

Almost all participants stressed the preferential employment and higher salaries of their local counterparts, albeit the lack of skills and qualifications, confirming the results of the alleged, "skill paradox," and recruiters' bias against skilled migrants (Dietz et al., 2015). Skilled migrants, including women, as highlighted in this study, face discrimination either because their skills are undervalued or because their skills are valued, yet seen as a threat to the job prospects of local workers. This is critical because the bias may prompt poor decisions that have adverse effects both on organisations and migrant women candidates, including Black migrant women.

Moreover, the othering that Black migrant women experienced indicates how images of the "other" are institutionalised within organisations (April et al., 2012; Barn, 2008; Mangu, 2019; Ncube et al., 2019; Trimikliniotis et al., 2008), being excluded from the labour market, and compelled to deskill their qualifications. Grace said that "*myself, because of who I am, it means I'm being disqualified,"* highlighting how national identity can override merit and skill in recruitment. This preference for South African citizenship is not only a reflection of organisational policies, whereby wage disparities are rationalised through citizenship, but also a societal bias that associates foreignness with lower value and a lack of belonging.

Other participants explained how foreignness deteriorated professional exclusion by sharing insights about the psychological toll of being passed over promotions or a salary increase because of their non-South African citizenship. Their accounts are consistent with discourse on the challenges encountered by migrant workers, particularly women of colour, who experience the double burden of discrimination due to both foreignness and gender (Samari et al., 2024). These findings also highlight a critical tension in migration policies: while they may technically allow migrants to enter the labour market, they do not address the systemic inequalities migrants face once they are employed. In essence, policies of inclusion are undermined by the informal and subtle prejudices that remain entrenched in workplace cultures.

Racialised and Gendered Barriers to Career Progression

Besides foreignness, the participants supported that race and gender emerged as significant axes of exclusion because of exclusion from workplace opportunities. Dual discrimination was evident in their accounts and was a barrier to their career progression. Several participants described how accessing senior-level positions and compensation was utterly racialised and White-dominated; systemic inequalities were far more prominent than individual discrimination. Grace, for example, noted that despite their qualifications and performance, Black and migrant workers were frequently excluded from high-status, high-paying professions due to the majority of White South Africans in senior posts. This is aligned with the critical race theory, which supports that structural mechanisms that favour Whiteness while marginalising people of colour maintain racial inequality (George, 2021). Regardless of similar responsibilities and performance levels, the participants' professional stagnation and pay gaps with their White peers were primarily caused by race. This is a clear reminder that racial disparities in economic opportunities in the workplace still exist.

The women further reported that the intersection of race and gender added another layer of complexity to this dynamic. Yvette's experience being *"passed over"* promotions due to her intersectional identity as a Black migrant woman in favour of a White South African male indicates the multiple layers of discrimination and disadvantage that Black women experience in the workplace (Carbado & Gulati, 2013; Rajendran et al., 2017; Syed & Pio, 2010). This is in the centre of Kimberlé Crenshaw's intersectional analysis, whereby intersectional identities intersect to create unique forms of oppression and marginalisation.

The literature indicates that it is challenging to ascertain the criteria by which identity predominantly shapes one's experiences (Carastathis et al., 2018); yet, the participants explained how different identities significantly influenced their inclusion experiences. The intersection of gender, race, and foreignness was mentioned as a dominant factor and barrier to inclusion in accessing equal opportunities, while it marginalised the women, hindering their career growth. Black migrant women found themselves in a peculiar positioning within the workplace. Their accounts highlighted differences in their treatment in relation to males and where the intersection of gender and race was used to exclude, marginalise, and undermine them. Their involvement in professional positions and, in some cases, of high authority disrupts the traditional gender hierarchy since Black South African women typically do not hold such positions (Booysen & Nkomo, 2010; Msibi, 2009; Ntuli & Wittenberg, 2013). Consequently, due to the entrenched gender segregation practices within employment frameworks, local male counterparts and clients generally do not anticipate engaging with women (Booysen & Nkomo, 2010; Rodriguez & Scurry, 2019).

Previous research on African migrants in South Africa has established that they are subjected to different forms and degrees of prejudice and discrimination, being racialised as “the other”- encountering exclusion in the labour market and society and deskilling their qualifications (April et al., 2012; Barn, 2008; Mangu, 2019; Ncube et al., 2019; Trimikliniotis et al., 2008). In contrast with other findings (Showers, 2015), the participants did not deploy ways of assimilating into Whiteness to gain upward mobility and fully integrate into South Africa. Their ways of coping with workplace barriers were primarily hard work, self-advocacy, manoeuvring and navigating career paths, and evading or disclosing their foreignness, and will be discussed in further detail in the following section. The otherness of the participants subjected to discrimination by the organisational institutions was critical to their well-being, self-esteem, and self-worth.

Intersectional Vulnerability: Gendered Harassment and Organisational Cultures

The pervasiveness of GBV and sexual harassment was evident in the participants’ accounts. Even though six participants acknowledged experiencing some form of gendered harassment, many were uncertain about qualifying their experiences as sexual harassment. This is justified in the literature as inappropriate or discriminatory behaviours which are often disregarded and go

underreported, normalising harassment in the workplace (Spiliopoulou & Witcomb, 2023). According to the literature, women with intersectional identities, such as women of African descent, are frequently labelled as inferior and hypersexual, which reflects larger exclusionary trends stemming from the segregationist policies of apartheid (Dodson & Crush, 2004; Neocosmos, 2010). Kim's story of receiving favours based on her gender and hearing sexualised remarks about her appearance brings to light the subtle gendered violence that women face in the workplace. These experiences are often dismissed as mere “pet names” or benign affection, even though they contribute to an environment of power imbalance and exploitation. Black women have been studied as sexually harassed, particularly because of the simultaneous occurrence of identities, race, and gender, which takes a toll on their psychological well-being (Welsh et al., 2006).

In response to gendered harassment, some women, including Lizi and Jenny, decided not to report these incidents to the Human Resources department but to confront their perpetrators. This reaction was possibly due to the lack of trust in organisational policies or fear of stigmatisation and further marginalisation. This contradicts the literature, which supports that mainly women of precarious immigration status and in low-paid jobs may not report harassment because of the extreme difficulty of securing steady employment and fear of deportation (Kristen et al., 2015). The narratives showed that the women leveraged the switch to the dynamic identity of standing up and advocating for themselves, yet still containing a sense of fear and anxiety about risking their jobs. Others concluded that their workplace had inefficient Human Resources policies in place, which sheds light on the institutional barriers that see women refraining from reporting gendered harassment (Kristen et al., 2015; Spiliopoulou & Witcomb, 2023; Williams et al., 2011). There is clearly a need for effective anti-harassment policies, Human Resources representatives to support women, and a shift in the overall organisational culture.

Conversely, participants like Zizi shared that she felt protected by organisational anti-harassment policies, which shows that efficient, consistent, and strict anti-harassment policies cultivate a sense of security and inclusion. Therefore, even though gendered harassment is a common problem in the workplace, it may be addressed by implementing transparent organisational policies and practices that safeguard the dignity of all employees.

The inclusion experiences shared by the Black migrant women were diverse, as they were recipients of both positive and negative experiences. Their experiences suggest that their identities continue to shape the opportunities available to them in organisational settings. Their intersectional identities form the complex, intersectional nature of discrimination in the workplace, regardless of the formal policies in place aimed at inclusion. It is imperative for organisations to re-evaluate, re-form, and implement effective anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policies, and create support systems and a genuinely inclusive environment for all workers to thrive based on their skills and not their identity.

5.2.3.2 Organisational Cultures and the Intersections of Gender, Race, and Foreignness

The findings revealed the complex interplay between the individual identities of Black migrant women and organisational cultures. It was evident that their inclusion was shaped not only by their identities but also by the organisational context, including the mission, policies, and cultural environment. The women shared both positive and negative experiences where workplaces facilitated their inclusion, while others reinforced exclusionary practices associated with racial, gendered, and xenophobic biases.

Inclusive or Exclusionary Cultures: Navigating Intersectional Identities

The women extensively discussed how their inclusion experiences were directly influenced by the organisational environment in which they worked. Whether open-minded or restrictive, the organisational culture significantly influenced how individuals navigated their identities and positioned themselves in the workplace. Some participants shared that their identity of foreignness and Blackness was embraced because they were *"allowed to be,"* and it felt *"homely"* (April et al., 2012; Ferdman & Deane, 2014; Wasserman et al., 2008). Anna and Christina described their work environments as *"open-minded"* and inclusive, where their foreignness was not a barrier to inclusion but rather an asset. These findings suggest diverse organisational mentalities in terms of discrimination. This is also in line with studies that highlighted the role of progressive organisational cultures in fostering diverse and inclusive workspaces where people of different identities can coexist without significant prejudice (Linares, 2015).

The intersection of gender and foreignness also played a crucial role in determining the inclusivity

of the organisational environment. These women were primarily employed in the non-profit sector, advocating for human rights and advancing social justice for women and migrants. An organisational mindset combined with a mission represents the business philosophy itself, as it lays down the broad contours of the operating culture, critical to the execution of any strategy, idea, or initiative (Legrand et al., 2019). At the same time, gender was either unremarkable or subject to the broader dynamics of race and foreignness. Participants managed to navigate their gender identity without significant barriers, showing that successful diversity and inclusion policies can create a holistic environment that addresses multiple forms of identity-based marginalisation simultaneously (Al Ariss et al., 2013; Tarba et al., 2019).

On the contrary, participants shared experiences where foreignness became a visible marker of exclusion. Participants navigated structured or traditional environments by strategically omitting their citizenship during the job application process. This illustrates that organisational practices and norms can amplify exclusion based on identities such as foreignness. Moreover, participants echoed sentiments of discouragement due to the structural barriers they faced at the workplace. Even though national policies, such as the B-BBEE Act, are meant to promote economic empowerment, they unintentionally contribute to the marginalisation of foreign workers, particularly those from Black or non-Western backgrounds.

Policy vs Practice: Divergences in Organisational Inclusion

It was intriguing to see that diversity and inclusion policies were extensively mentioned by most participants as both a source of inclusion and a site of potential exclusion. It appeared to be fragmented among participants, as some supported that diversity management was prioritised and efficiently implemented, encouraging them to freely express their identities, be that Africanness, Blackness, or foreignness. Positive experiences shared by the participants exhibited that their identities were highly valued without the fear of discrimination. As Maria and Kim described, they were able to *"exercise their Blackness,"* or they were *"well taken care of as foreigners."* This self-definition, self-determination, and self-acknowledgment were a way to exercise not only their individual but collective agency as well (Bailey, 2012; Hogg, 2015).

However, there were participants like Georgia, who spoke about her exclusionary experience and

the micro-level discrimination encountered with Human Resources personnel who were reluctant to handle the paperwork of migrant employees. This challenge indicates that the implementation of diversity policies often elicits additional challenges. Literature has pointed to the discrepancy between the formal policy and informal practices within organisations in diversity management (Kristen et al., 2015; Spiliopoulou & Witcomb, 2023; Williams et al., 2011). In addition, foreignness was considered an advantageous identity in the selection process for the recruiters; yet other women, like Kayla, felt that being a foreigner could also hinder her progression in certain environments. Her experience of being urged to drop her Tanzanian citizenship for the sake of meeting B-BBEE requirements underscores how diversity policies can inadvertently be used to uphold exclusionary practices that favour certain identities over others. This is particularly evident in the complex dynamic between race, nationality, and BEE compliance, where the inclusion of local Black South Africans may sometimes exclude Black foreign nationals despite their qualifications or contributions to the organisation.

Taken together, these narratives reveal that policy and practice are inseparable dimensions of organisational inclusion. While formal diversity frameworks may provide the promise of equity, their translation into practice is mediated by workplace culture, informal norms, and entrenched power hierarchies. Inclusive cultures have the potential to amplify the effectiveness of policies, whereas exclusionary or discriminatory cultures can neutralise or even invert their intended outcomes. This convergence illustrates that, for Black migrant women, organisational inclusion is not determined by policy design alone, but by the interplay between structural mandates and lived cultural realities.

The impact of B-BBEE and Organisational Frameworks on Migrant Women

The findings indicate that organisational structures triggered the discrimination and exclusion of participants through the incorporation of the B-BBEE Act (Winters, 2013). The influence of the B-BBEE Act on the preference for South African citizens for senior positions was extensively mentioned, highlighting the disadvantage by the intersectional identities of race and foreignness in relation to hiring and career progression.

Lizi's account of being denied a senior management role due to her foreign status, despite her

qualifications, exemplifies how legal frameworks, such as B-BBEE can inadvertently create barriers for Black migrant women. This adds nuance to the broader conversation on diversity and inclusion in organisations, which emphasises that national cultures and institutional frameworks—such as a nation's laws on equal opportunity—are critical determinants of workplace experiences (Klarsfeld et al., 2019). The South African context and its historical background are particularly salient; while policies such as B-BBEE are intended to redress historical inequalities and promote local employment, they also expose the limitations of diversity initiatives when national identity becomes a rigid boundary of inclusion or exclusion.

An unexpected finding was that White employers at times leveraged foreignness as a resource to navigate systems of domination and isms phenomena. As Morgan recounted, *"from White management…they would rather employ in certain positions Black foreigners than say Black South Africans because we sort of don't always push the whole racism card, and we're always trying to conform and keep out of trouble."* This demonstrates how foreign Black individuals could be favoured over South Africans due to their perceived docility and lower likelihood of invoking "the racism card." This contradiction underscores how race and foreignness are dynamically interconnected within organisational settings, with identities operating not as static but as contingent resources shaped by organisational priorities and policies. In this context, foreignness became an institutional resource, serving instrumental purposes of conformism, while simultaneously shaping how individuals were accredited as "valuable" non-nationals. This finding aligns with anecdotal evidence, which suggests that White employers often prefer to employ African migrants over Black South Africans because of their perceived stronger work ethos (Angu, 2023), thus privileging particular categories of Black workers (Johansson & Śliwa, 2014; Sang et al., 2013). This can be regarded as a positive outcome compared to what the literature generally supports about the conflicts between Black foreigners and Black South Africans, the maintenance of White privilege and supremacy, racial hierarchies, and the targeting of vulnerable African migrants and refugees (Angu, 2023; Mamdani, 2001).

However, the findings demonstrated that the identity of foreignness, race, and gender often worked against the participants, since Black South African citizens, both men and women, were perceived as receiving preferential treatment. This corroborates literature indicating that African women,

particularly those of Black descent, appear to have benefited from favourable treatment, although it frequently receives backlash as "unfair discrimination" (Ncube, 2017). Having said that, foreignness remained the most salient identity marker for Black migrant women, limiting their access to employment equity opportunities. Employers were often forthcoming with their intentions to hire Black locals either to conform to legislation, such as Immigration Act, or to be awarded B-BBEE points by attaining specific targets, which benefited only a relatively small percentage of Black people and more specifically, the political Black elite (Krüger, 2018). Thus, while Black migrant women navigated professional and institutional spaces where they shared racial identity with the majority population, they continued to experience systemic exclusion due to compounded effects of foreignness, gender, and other social factors.

5.2.3.3 Power, Exclusion, and Intersectionality in Organisational Life

The impact of marginalised intersections on workplace inclusion has been extensively discussed in the literature. However, limited research has addressed these dynamics in the South African context. The findings of this study indicate that the effect of intersections of gender, race, and foreignness on workplace inclusion was prominent. In specific, the effects of anti-Black racism and xenophobia, gendered and racialised microaggressions, and the pivotal role of managerial support emerged as key determinants of inclusion or exclusion.

Foreignness as a Marker of Exclusion: Racism, Xenophobia, and Belonging

The women described their inclusion experiences as being profoundly shaped by their foreignness. They shared experiences of isolation, alienation, and a lack of belonging at the centrality of foreignness, which acted as a barrier to their inclusion. These experiences were mostly encountered at the hands of colleagues or managers/supervisors. The participants emphasised the salience of their foreignness, articulated feelings of being *"the only one," "the odd one out,"* or *"a foreign entity"* within the organisational context (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Being *"the only one"* or *"token"* represents the "numerical minority" status of being the sole representative of a specific group, encapsulating disconnection and exclusion that arise from foreignness.

These sentiments were particularly salient in predominantly South African organisations, a racially and homogenous environment, where participants felt excluded based on their ethnicity or national origin. These dynamics often lead to a heightened pressure to perform, polarisation, interpersonal

and systematic workplace exclusion, and social alienation (Elvira & Cohen, 2001; Ghosh & Barber, 2021; Kanter, 1977; Yoder & Aniakudo, 1997). Anti-Black racism and xenophobia intensified these dynamics, creating a hostile work environment where the women failed to associate with other groups due to linguistic barriers or exclusion from racially categorised groups such as Indians, Coloureds, or Blacks, leading to reinforced dehumanisation and low self-esteem (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Othering created barriers to their sense of belonging and workplace inclusion, offering a platform for "*subtle but still aggressive xenophobia"* (Yvette), "*under-the-ground intimidation"* (Evelyn), stereotypes, racialisation, hostilities, and micro-aggressions (Park, 2015; Wright et al., 2017).

For instance, Yvette's narrative about being dismissed by a White South African male colleague illustrates that her foreign status was invoked to diminish the value of her professional input:

> *He wanted to, perhaps, remind the team that I was not South African by birth and, perhaps, my opinion shouldn't matter. [...] It was kind of embarrassing, it resurrected that feeling of [being a] "sub-citizen" I had [experienced] as a refugee in my early years in RSA [Republic of South Africa]. [...] To get people to rally up with him, he had to make that comment, just to highlight the fact that I am a foreigner.*

This captures the nuanced yet significant ways that xenophobia affects power dynamics in the workplace, positioning foreignness as a marker of inferiority regardless of competence or qualifications. The women's experiences show that their intersectional identities as Black migrant workers positioned them as "outsiders" within racialised organisational hierarchies (Mamdani, 2001). The participants, as the only Black professionals, were often subjected to racial and ethnic assumptions, associating Blackness with capabilities and inferiority in the workplace (Collins, 2022; Kaufman, 2012; McCall, 2005; Pincus, 1996; Walsh, 2014).

However, some participants recalled significant moments of inclusion. Jenny, who initially felt like *"a foreign entity*," was eventually humanised through her fundraising outreach initiative for Zimbabweans. Therefore, her self-categorisation as a foreign entity was overlooked since her organisation implemented Corporate Social Responsibility programmes that embrace migrant-focus initiatives (Knappert et al., 2018; Stets & Serpe, 2016). Jenny concluded "*that was my first ever experience of actually connecting with my colleagues and being included [...] I feel like that's*

when I was humanised to my team," which illustrates how a single event can shift perceptions and facilitate inclusion. This opposes what April et al. (2012) claimed about the South African work environment that tends to be more welcoming and less psychologically harmful to foreign employees of European ancestry, as they are more aligned with the predominant senior management and executive tier in South Africa, namely White English and Afrikaner men, compared to African foreign workers. Yet, while inclusive moments were significant, they were scarce, suggesting that broader structural challenges of racism and xenophobia continue to undermine inclusion.

Overall, the participants' experiences highlight how intersectional identities produced layered forms of marginalisation, forcing women to navigate whether their exclusion was primarily racialised, gendered, or xenophobic (Carastathis et al., 2018). The internalisation of these negative reactions and attitudes resulted in feelings of inferiorisation rooted in White superiority, exclusionary foreignness, and patriarchy (Adam & Moodley, 1993; Booysen & Nkomo, 2010; Dhamoon, 2011; Msibi, 2009; Walby, 1989). The findings reveal persistent psychological distress triggered by the remnants of the apartheid regime, hindering the well-being of Black migrant women.

Gendered and Racialised Micro-Inequities: Subtle Mechanisms of Exclusion

According to the findings, the intersection of gender and race emerged as another critical axis of marginalisation and exclusion in the workplace. Even though gender was a potent source of exclusion, several participants recalled moments of exclusion when gender intersected with race and foreignness. The women experienced gendered, racialised microaggressions and invisible barriers, such as persistent micro-inequities, rooted in the organisational context, which questioned their professional abilities, often in subtle but insidious ways, and hindered their inclusion (Acker, 2006; Acker & Sayce, 2012).

For the women, exclusion from meetings and decision-making processes, restricted participation in discussions, being corrected, judged, and undermined shaped their experiences at the workplace. These exclusionary processes and micro-inequities are constructed by the compounded burden of their intersectional identities, which is institutionally regulated, and have simultaneous dynamics.

The literature highlights that individuals from underrepresented groups, like Black women, minorities, or individuals with intersectional identities prone to discrimination or exclusion, and often encounter microaggressions or micro-inequities within organisations (Baboolal, 2019; Henning, 2020; Pio & Essers, 2014; Sue et al., 2007).

The way the intersection works is unique as it differently shapes the inclusion experiences of groups of women because “there is not one category of ‘woman,’ but many ‘women’ who are different and unequal to men and each other” (Crenshaw, 1991; Holvino, 2010). Concurrently, although it may seem that Black migrant women have commonalities with local women due to gender segregation and gendered social dynamics in South Africa and similarities with expatriate men because of their foreign status, the participants possess a distinct position as Black migrant women which is regarded as unique to the structural and subjective aspects of their experiences in this environment (Cole, 2009; Rodriguez & Scurry, 2019).

In addition, some women described how the intersection of gender and race was utilised against them to undermine their authority. Kim’s experiences with male professors indicated how entrenched gender stereotypes manifest in academic settings, with men opposing receiving instructions from her, despite her seniority. Similarly, Anna recounted that she had to assert herself to gain respect from male colleagues while being publicly undermined in front of clients. These experiences indicate that racial and gendered dynamics were very powerful in workplace interactions and that the intersection of gender and race played a crucial role in asserting authority (Colic-Peisker, 2005; Cornell & Hartmann, 2006; Magan, 2020; Phinney et al., 2001; Shao, 2021).

The findings demonstrated that their male counterparts leveraged their gender to dominate them, particularly by dismissing their expertise and knowledge solely due to their gender (Gough, 2013; Syed & Özbilgin, 2009). The participants emphasised that they felt overpowered by their male counterparts and as if they were superior to them based on their masculinity with regard to characteristics, competence, and knowledge. Not being part of a “boys club,” or sitting in a predominantly White male boardroom illustrates that men’s power status in organisations is significantly maintained and professional spaces in South Africa remain deeply racialised and gendered (Connell, 2005; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Dhamoon, 2011; Morrell, 1998).

These actions demonstrate prevailing perspectives as well as underlying messages that society has come to accept, such as sexism and racism, thus revealing the biases of those committing these acts. The circumstances surrounding such events are significant, as the continuous series of actions can affect victims psychologically and physiologically, further intensified by systemic issues (Pierce, 1970; Solórzano, 1998; Sue et al., 2007). Deeply embedded social disparities such as racism and sexism often remain unnoticed, and the nature of aggressions adapts to the context (Sue et al., 2007). In South Africa, the simultaneous interaction between systems of domination (racism, patriarchy, apartheid, colonialism) and institutionalised processes (e.g., racialisation, gendering, and culturalisation) has not yet successfully dismantled patriarchal and racial ideologies (Dlamini, 2013). As a result, gendered and racialised exclusion and microaggressions impede Black migrant women's workplace inclusion.

While each micro-inequity appears harmless and frequently goes unnoticed by those in the majority, those who endure them may ultimately feel exhausted by the gradual build-up of their cumulative impact. The Black migrant women felt threatened and bullied as social psychological phenomena such as gender stereotypes and prejudice came with a lack of respect and acceptance (Daya & April, 2014). However, many participants avoided addressing these micro-inequities, highlighting the need for organisations to review and strengthen policies addressing micro-inequities while pointing out the significance of equity, diversity, and inclusion (Chakrabarti et al., 2024; Markulj et al., 2024; Murugas & Maharaj, 2024; Rowe, 2008). This led the women to deploy their assertiveness and authority to prove themselves and their worth in organisational spaces.

Managers as Gatekeepers of Inclusion and Exclusion

The participants discussed extensively their experiences with managers/supervisors. It was very intriguing to see how the intersectionality framework informed research on the inclusion experiences of Black migrant women by considering intersectional identities, disadvantages, and discrimination (Atewologun, 2018; Case et al., 2014; Talwar, 2010). The findings revealed how their identities reflected relationships with managers and how they experienced xenophobia, racial discrimination, and sexism in their interactions. The literature has highlighted how intersectional identities and workplace inclusion are interconnected, shaping individual narratives and experiences (Ayoko & Fujimoto, 2023; Dobusch, 2021; Knappert et al., 2018; Ortlieb et al., 2021;

Shore et al., 2011).

Some participants experienced extensive support from their managers, who actively worked to counteract bias and foster inclusion through decision-making processes. For example, Georgia's manager, a Colombian migrant, actively resisted the gendered assumptions about her ability to travel as a mother, advocating for her continued leadership responsibilities. Her manager challenged the prevailing narrative by leading by example of how managers can intervene to disrupt discriminatory practices. However, such managers were the exception, not the rule.

In contrast, some participants' testimonies reflected that the demeanours of their managers/supervisors were primarily discriminatory or failed to support them, which had an adverse effect on their inclusion and career success. Their experiences reflected undertones of gendered, racialised bias and xenophobia. For example, Jenny emphasised the difficulties of working with a xenophobic and misogynistic manager, highlighting how some managers perpetuate underlying prejudices. In her case, the manager's failure to intervene reinforced the exclusionary dynamics that were present in the team. Black migrant women are racialised as foreigners unable to integrate and, further, associated with several stereotypical depictions.

Other women reported that their managers engaged in xenophobic rhetoric, making statements, such as *"you should have thought about that before you migrated to South Africa… then you need to learn Afrikaans,"* jokes about their "*Zimbabweanness and foreignness," "making random statements about foreigners,"* or being *"ignorant."* All these sentiments are deeply rooted in anti-immigrant rhetoric related to local South African language proficiency, reinforcing exclusionary power structures. Additional complexities include intra-racial discrimination and gendered power struggle, with managers failing to acknowledge their racial and gendered identity in South African organisations (Ayoko & Fujimoto, 2023; Kornau et al., 2023). Kim's experience with her Black male supervisor sabotaging her career path reflects how intra-racial discrimination impacts professional advancement. The fact that Kim, as a Black migrant woman, asserted her authority over her supervisor underscores the challenges Black women face in navigating external racial prejudices and dealing with internalised biases within their own racial communities.

The women encountered a multi-layered, racialised, and gendered power dynamic, as managers acted as "gatekeepers" of inclusion, exercising authority to treat them differently from others (Hebl et al., 2020; Nkomo & Ngambi, 2009). These experiences of exclusion were manifested by Whites, both men and women, as well as people of colour. The findings revealed the racial insensitivity of female supervisors, both White and of colour, that may exist even among women in positions of power (Braun et al., 2017; Johnson & Mathur-Helm, 2011). This highlights how racial dynamics complicate relationships between women of colour in hierarchical organisations. As a result, managerial support is not always a guarantee, and power imbalances persist even among marginalised groups.

Their racialised identities as Black migrant women were so powerful and salient that even religion could not bridge racial differences. According to Evelyn's story, self-identified as a Black African Muslim woman, power dynamics were shaped on the basis of the intersection of gender, race, foreignness, and religion (Hall et al., 2015; Pierre, 2004; Waters, 2001). This adds a layer of subjectivity that the women must negotiate as their bodies are marked and positioned as outsiders to their Indian Muslim female supervisor, who displayed a patronising attitude, assuming that Black supervisees were migrants or refugees. This reflects both xenophobic and racialised hierarchies, whereby Blackness and foreignness are racialised as subordinate identities, producing inferior positions in the workplace. Such dynamics align with research on the "Queen Bee syndrome," a phenomenon which continues to be a key feature in the workplace when women in senior positions do not create opportunities for other women, rather posing barriers to their career growth (Braun et al., 2017; Johnson & Mathur-Helm, 2011).

5.2.4 Navigating Exclusion through Strategic Agency

The findings revealed a range of strategies and sources of support that Black migrant women in South Africa employ to overcome their inclusion challenges. The participants spoke about both external and internal coping mechanisms that enabled them to address multifaceted inclusion challenges tied to their intersectional identities.

5.2.4.1 External Support Systems and Collective Belonging

One key strategy was seeking support from external networks and systems, including families, friends, church communities, professional networks, and ethnic communities (Babatunde-Sowole

et al., 2016; Schweitzer et al., 2007; Ungar, 2011). The importance of communalism and social support has been highlighted in research involving African individuals (Babatunde-Sowole et al., 2016; Sherwood & Liebling-Kalifani, 2012).

For most participants, family was the major source of support that helped them overcome inclusion and broader barriers, such as financial insecurity and legal obstacles. Friends became another source of power, contributing positively to their mental health and subjective well-being (Bhugra & Becker, 2005; Schellenberg, 2004). Church and faith-based communities also played a crucial role in the women's social identity formation, providing a sense of belonging and spiritual empowerment. Additionally, the women gravitated towards other foreigners because of shared lived experiences, linguistic ties, and cultural backgrounds. Their foreign identity became a key axis of social inclusion, establishing a solid foundation for mutual understanding, reflecting the findings by the International Organisation on Migration (McAuliffe & Khadria, 2020). This can be justified by the strong anti-foreigner sentiment among South African nationals, highlighting the preference of the women to associate with individuals who share similar identities—racial, ethnic, or migrant—which illustrates how intersectional identity shapes social bonding and inclusion. Though the literature refers to monocultural social networks of cross-border migrants, which was highlighted in the participants' narratives, there was also conflicting data that showed that the participants' relationships were not monocultural and spanned across gender, race, and foreignness, which goes against the findings (McAuliffe & Khadria, 2020). Thus, it is evident that the intersectionality of race, gender, and migration status complicates this process.

Interestingly, some participants gravitated towards diverse individuals, including White individuals, because they perceived them as more *"friendly"* and partly due to previous negative experiences with Black South Africans. This suggests that foreignness sometimes outweighs racial solidarity. This is consistent with the literature, which supports that Afrophobic violence undermines connections among Black populations, while the degradation of Black identity fosters a sense of admiration and respectability towards Whiteness among educated African migrants (Angu, 2023).

The women also emphasised that managerial support was integral to navigating inclusion

challenges at the workplace. The narratives show that they constructed a sense of self and a role identity in line with workplace relationships, setting aside the identities of gender, race, and foreignness. In many cases, managers acknowledged and focused on the participants' competence and skills, encouraging them to apply for opportunities as they embraced their identities (Bell et al., 2011; Roberson, 2006). In alignment with the literature, leader-employee relationships operate as an inclusion-stimulating force, as defined by the employee's perception (Shore et al., 2018). However, participants distinguished between the racial, gendered, and migrant status of their managers, noting that these factors shaped their interactions and sense of belonging. It was interesting to see how their identity was decisive in establishing these relationships and in the juxtaposition, since the participants referred to a *"Black male," "Indian female," "White male South African,"* or *"in a migrant working status"* manager (Cornell & Hartmann, 2006).

5.2.4.2 Internal Coping and Identity Work

By far, the participants' internal responses to inclusion challenges emerged as the most discussed theme. These ranged from overcompensation and hard work, self-advocacy, adaptation, manoeuvring, and innovative paths, passing, evading, or disclosing foreignness, to leveraging personality traits. This is consistent with the literature, which also reported these strategies in the face of exclusion or discrimination of migrant workers (Knappert et al., 2018; Legrand et al., 2019; Linares, 2015; Ncube, 2017; Shih, 2006; Showers, 2015).

Resilience, Hard Work, and Adaptation

The findings showed that *"working twice as hard"* and overcompensating were recurring strategies employed to triumph over inclusion barriers at the intersection of identities. The expectation to overcompensate through hard work illustrates that Black migrant women worked to align their professional identity with social expectations associated with their identities. The majority expressed that they had to prove their competence, ensuring an exceptional outcome. The women upskilled, pursued further studies, worked longer hours, and overperformed compared to their White and Black South African counterparts to dissociate themselves from a foreigner stereotype by demonstrating themselves as hard-working. They tried to overcome stigmatisation, discrimination, and exclusion, making great efforts to be valued, seen, and appreciated as working professional Black migrant women in South Africa (Cole, 2009; Dhamoon, 2011; Lewis &

Grzanka, 2016). Education and upskilling were significant strategies to increase their qualifications and adapt to fit better within the host society.

The women in this study resisted trajectories that other migrants followed, contrasting studies, highlighting deskilling, including pieces of jobs, vending, and informal trading, among irregular migrants in South Africa (Tati, 2008; Zack, 2015). In addition, this study contrasts the perspective that migrants with work permits, study permits, or business permits in South Africa are guaranteed better lives (Ncube, 2017). Importantly, the women did not compromise with deskilling, supporting the findings of another body of scholarship (Mangu, 2019; Ncube et al., 2019).

The women deployed resilience and perseverance at all levels, including the organisational context, to assert their personal and professional identity and to face systemic barriers and discrimination (Tarba et al., 2019). This was by far the most common internal coping strategy, showing that the women's lived experiences shaped their resilience, contributing to their survival and mental well-being (Babatunde-Sowole et al., 2016). Nevertheless, this can come with a cost as it often creates obstacles in expressing authentic emotions, silencing vulnerability, and eventually *"shoving everything under the rug"* (Valeria). This aligns with research, which suggests that Black women face stereotypes of assertiveness, aggression, self-reliance, and independence (Ghavami & Peplau, 2013; Liao et al., 2020; Niemann et al., 1994; Rosette et al., 2018a), which can suppress emotions and hinder access to assistance when necessary (Kelly et al., 2021).

Finally, the participants displayed resilience to culturally adapt and integrate in South Africa. While some embraced South African cultural elements (e.g., learning local languages or adopting food traditions), others, like Feefee, resisted full assimilation because of cultural misunderstandings, highlighting tensions between survival strategies and maintaining cultural authenticity.

Faith, Spirituality, and Emotional Renewal

The participants' stories revealed that their empowerment was an outcome of spirituality and faith. Prayers and perseverance read as ways to cope with systemic exclusion, reinforcing the idea that

intersectional challenges require both internal and external support mechanisms (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991). In the literature, African migrants' resilience is deeply rooted in their beliefs and capability to draw upon their spiritual practices during challenging times (Babatunde-Sowole et al., 2016). Jenny shared that *"I think my identity comes a lot from my faith [...] I will get refreshed to face the new week,"* while Yvette felt *"empowered,"* describing her church as offering *"free therapy."* Thus, the women's personal identities were shaped by religiosity, which was tied to their belonging, enhanced well-being, hope, and life purpose (e.g., Bonelli & Koenig, 2013). As per the literature, religiosity lies at the nexus of personal and collective selves, in terms of both antecedents and outcomes, and communities of faith; instead of relying solely on faith or communities, it can offer various benefits, including having a strong sense of group belonging and health benefits (Lim et al., 2013).

Self-Advocacy and Assertive Identity

Further, the women described their experiences adopting a dynamic identity of assertiveness, self-confidence, and self-advocacy to navigate discrimination. Their ability to build their confidence was operationalised in their interactions to defend themselves, let their voices be heard, and be their own advocates. The transition to this dynamic identity was accompanied by the mindfulness of negative reactions and treatment that could otherwise hinder their inclusion. Nicole said: "*Sometimes it [is] also like, how desperate are you to keep your job? So, when you speak up, you always have to be mindful because not everybody will receive it in a… how you're trying to express yourself,"* indicating the precarious balance between resistance and silence, common among marginalised groups in workplace contexts (Kougiannou, 2019).

In the literature, migrant women's coping strategies and processes of agency have been investigated, yet the aforementioned dynamic identity at the nexus of personal and social identities has not been considered, particularly in the South African context (Bailey, 2012; Mafukidze & Mbanda, 2008; Murray & Ali, 2017; Semu, 2020). The deployment of the dual approach of intersectionality examined power relations and subjectivities and highlighted the active role of the participants and how their intersectional identities provided narrative and resources to them (Prins, 2006). In contrast to prior studies that have employed theories, such as human agency, copying, feminism, institutional, and stages of migration theories to investigate the agency and behaviours

of professional women of marginalised identities, this study adopts a different theoretical approach (Holvino, 2010; Kornau et al., 2023; Magan, 2020; Murray & Ali, 2017).

Evading or Disclosing Foreignness, and Keeping Quiet

The women exercised their individual agency by choosing to disclose or conceal their foreign identities based on the setting. In cases where Black migrant women would not have used avoidance or disclosed their foreignness, they would have significantly risked their safety or reinforced negative sentiments, biases, and stereotypes (Dias & Jayasundere, 2002; Landau, 2011; Misago, 2016).

The negative implications of their ascribed identities led them to display advantageous identities, thereby enabling others to understand the significance of these identities and mitigating the adverse emotional effects associated with their personal or self-ascribed identities. This result aligns with previous research, indicating that individuals, facing a heightened risk of exclusion and marginalisation, resort to strategies of identity change or control (Colic-Peisker, 2005; Magan, 2020; Phinney et al., 2001; Shao, 2021). Discarding foreignness as a negatively marked identity, maintaining silence to shift focus or ease social tension, and avoiding certain spaces due to fears of xenophobic hostility were common strategies, yet not the most predominant. The need to navigate or hide their foreignness underscores the layered silence of nationality, reflecting both the ongoing structural challenges and the precarious vulnerability of migrants face in the South African society. The women frequently adopted a victimisation mentality only to shield themselves from discriminatory behaviours and hostile reactions to their identities. This orientation conveys a profound sense of injustice and impotence, contrasting other studies that posit individuals often avoid acting in ways that would instinctively safeguard them from victimisation (Guribye et al., 2011; Murray & Ali, 2017; Ncube, 2017).

Conversely, Grace disclosed her foreignness to challenge stereotypes and foster mutual understanding:

> *If somebody doesn't ask out in the workplace, I would immediately tell them that you know, what, yes, I'm a refugee, and I'm proud of it. So I think it removes a lot of negative feelings. I suppose not so much race, in gender, but migration status.*

This strategy of openness was perceived as promoting tolerance and alleviating the detrimental consequences of prejudice. The decision to disclose or conceal foreignness highlights the complex processes of identity negotiation that migrants undertake within a social context marked by both racial and xenophobic tensions.

Manoeuvring and Innovative Pathways

The participants also employed the manoeuvring strategy, manifested by changing career trajectories, workplaces, or even geographic locations to escape discriminatory environments. The women aimed to ascertain environments that would accommodate them by valuing their skills, thereby acknowledging them as contributing members of society.

Similar to other studies, the women did not navigate inherited identities (gender, race, and foreignness), but selected to navigate their lives, which proved to be a potent agency (Magan, 2020; Ncube, 2017; Netto et al., 2020; Rodriguez & Scurry, 2019; Semu, 2020). The participants resisted the ascribed images of their identities associated with incompetence and inferiority by altering career paths or resigning (Ghavami & Peplau, 2013; Niemann et al., 1994; Rosette et al., 2018a). This study echoes the findings by Pio and Essers (2014), who supported that Indian professional migrant women in New Zealand reworked notions of the "other" and processes of exclusion to overcome the institutionalised view of the "other." Notwithstanding the complexities of inclusion, this strategy was not employed by all participants.

At times, and to differentiate themselves, the women engaged in reproducing racial stereotypes about South Africans, like Nicole, who noted that *"South Africans have a lazy mentality."* One explanation is that they have been regarded as "special Blacks," and to uphold this distinction within a racially segregated South Africa, they are compelled to honour Whiteness and seek the approval of their White employers. Within the literature, this dynamic is linked to the psychology of the Black inferiority complex, which continues to haunt the Black populations by maintaining the "internal oppressor," perpetuating "post-slavery traumatic stress syndrome," and upholding the golden standards of Whiteness and privilege (Alleyne, 2004; Angu, 2023; Heffernan, 2015). This phenomenon, however, is not only evident in South Africa; the Black diaspora and migrants within Western contexts have sought to assert their worth in the face of confrontations with Whiteness

(Asante et al., 2016; Richardson & Loubier, 2008; Semu, 2020). Nevertheless, the identities of Black migrant women are salient in the South African context, as they serve the narrative that sub-Saharan African migrants are the source of social pathologies, facilitating the manipulation of Black African migrants by Whites and obstructing their social inclusion (Cole, 2009; Lewis & Grzanka, 2016; Ngamaleu, 2021).

Personal Traits as Inclusion Resources

Finally, many participants evoked personal traits, such as extroversion, curiosity, adaptability, empathy, compassion, and understanding, to facilitate their inclusion by bridging gaps with South Africans. This finding is also highlighted in previous studies (Hoggard et al., 2012; Murray & Ali, 2017), indicating that individuals navigate comparable experiences along the axis of situational elements—novelty, chronicity, and duration—and personal characteristics, including personality traits, individual history, and identity. Diversity and inclusion are, thus, tied to social identities, but also to personality traits and attributes that differentiate individuals (Ayoko & Fujimoto, 2023).

In one way or another, all participants pointed out that their inclusion challenges were tied to their intersectional identities—gender, race, and foreignness. These dynamics were manifested in complex ways across a micro-, meso-, and macro-level. Drawing on the findings and discussion presented above, the researcher developed a multi-layered and holistic framework (see Figure 1) that embeds the multiple intersectional identities of Black migrant women within wider power structures. These include systemic barriers (workplace discrimination, racism, xenophobia, visa issues) and systems of power and privilege (relationships with management and support systems). Further, the framework integrates personal identities (individual traits, such as resilience, perseverance, faith, and personality) and social identities (group affiliations based on foreignness, race, gender, profession, and religion), highlighting the interplay of country- and organisational-specific features such as legal status, which directly impacts career choices and access to employment. Finally, the framework illustrates how country- and organisational-specific influences shape individual experiences. At the micro level, individuals leverage external support systems to mobilise a variety of agentic identities, classified as internal coping strategies. These identities are subject to swift, fluid changes depending on the type of inclusion challenges that Black migrant women face in both the workplace and societal contexts.

5.2.5 Cross-Level Synthesis

From the data presented, the strategies Black migrant women employed to overcome inclusion challenges are not isolated acts, but rather adaptive responses to multi-level intersectional systems of disadvantage and opportunity.

Macro-Level (Societal structures and legal frameworks)

- Barriers: Xenophobic discourses, exclusionary citizenship-based policies, structural racial hierarchies.
- Impact: Foreignness and Blackness mark participants as outsiders regardless of legal status, fostering alienation and limiting access to resources.
- Coping link: Participants developed resilience, selective disclosure of identity, and career manoeuvring as protective strategies against entrenched systemic exclusion.

Meso-Level (Organisational structures and workplace dynamics)

- Barriers: Unequal opportunities for promotion, informal exclusion from networks, indirect discrimination, and visa-related hiring reluctance.
- Impact: Intersection of gender, race, and foreignness constrained workplace mobility and access to privileges.
- Coping link: Managerial allies, overcompensation through hard work, and self-advocacy were deployed to counteract institutional and procedural bias.

Micro-Level (Interpersonal and identity-based interactions)

- Barriers: Linguistic exclusion, accent-based stereotyping, racialised xenophobia, and interpersonal microaggressions.
- Impact: Emotional toll, hypervisibility in some spaces and invisibility in others, shaping self-worth and belonging.
- Coping link: Acculturation, leveraging personality traits, cultivating diverse networks—especially within compatriot and faith communities—enabled participants to negotiate social acceptance.

Coping is layered—participants often combine strategies across levels simultaneously. For example, an individual might rely on church-based support (macro–micro bridge), while strategically overqualifying themselves (meso), and adapting linguistically to pass as local (micro).

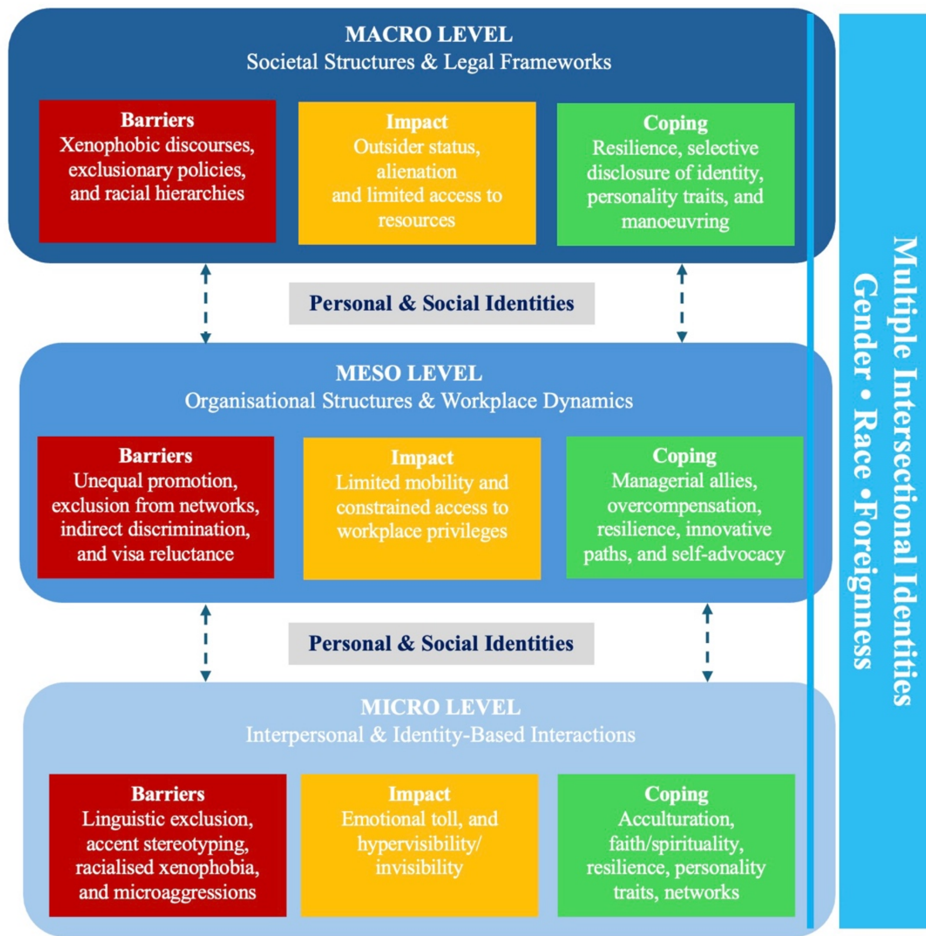

Figure 1. A Holistic and Multi-layered Intersectional Identity Framework for the Inclusion of Black Migrant Women.

5.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE AND POLICY

This research provides an intersectional contribution towards understanding the diverse experiences of Black migrant women in South Africa. Understanding the inclusion challenges of Black migrant women in South Africa by utilising the intersectionality framework is the most significant theoretical contribution. From this perspective, the study generates several policy implications. The study proposes an intersectionality-informed policy framework to address the interlocking systems of gender inequalities, racial discrimination, and racialised xenophobia; challenges that conventional policies failed to resolve. Largely, generic policies designed for the majority population have proved insufficient in addressing the intricate variances, predominantly benefiting the privileged minority while leaving large portions of marginalised groups at a disadvantage (Adjai & Lazaridis, 2013; Crush & Williams, 2002; Mangu, 2019).

Intersectionality should not be viewed in line with gender or race alone, but must be employed as a tool to examine privilege and structural power across organisational, institutional, and sociocultural contexts, embedded with historical, political, economic, and cultural processes (Atewologun, 2018; Brah & Phoenix, 2004; Case et al., 2014; Choo & Ferree, 2010; Collins, 1998; Crenshaw, 1991; Dhamoon, 2011). As such, non-intersectional policymaking approaches not only exacerbate inequalities but also fail to address the complexities of groups with marginalised intersectional identities. Therefore, the inclusion challenges experienced by Black migrant women in South Africa must be approached by policymakers as a phenomenon through an intersectional lens. The compounded marginalisation and disadvantage of this group demands an intersectional policy that acknowledges them as a heterogeneous group with distinct and layered challenges.

Thus, intersectionality must guide the newly shaped policies to protect Black migrant women by acknowledging their multiple inequalities, workplace exclusion, institutional discrimination, racialised xenophobia, and gendered racism across individual, institutional, cultural, and societal spheres of influence (Cho et al., 2013; Collins, 1998; McCall, 2005; Weber, 2004; Yuval-Davis, 2011; Yuval-Davis et al., 2005).

The study's qualitative approach is especially valuable, as it provides insights into the lived experiences of Black migrant women; thus, intersectional policymaking could benefit from these

narratives (Langdridge, 2008; Sloan & Bowe, 2014). Within the South African context, policymakers must re-evaluate the structural roots of the phenomenon and reshape and develop legislation and policy frameworks (Zimbali Mncube). A top-down intersectional policymaking approach should be adopted, beginning at the institutional level, actively involving the media, and filtering down into organisational and societal levels. The study's implications at institutional, organisational, and societal domains are presented below.

5.3.1 Implications at the Institutional Level

The research study reveals urgent practical implications on an institutional level. Documentation emerged as the most essential issue that demands a robust and fair governmental approach. As most participants described, incapacity, unprofessionalism, and inconsistency of state officials significantly impeded their inclusion in all areas of life. Therefore, national authorities, including the Department of Home Affairs, the police, and local government representatives require developmental training and educational workshops on human rights, diversity, inclusion, equality, racialised xenophobia, institutional racism, and discrimination, as well as clarity on distinctions among migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and other migrant categories (Adjai & Lazaridis, 2013; Moyo & Zanker, 2020). Furthermore, notions of Ubuntu, Africanness, Black solidarity, and multiculturalism must be incorporated into such programmes to address racialised xenophobia, xenophobic sentiments, and biases (Moyo & Zanker, 2020). A newly structured identity grounded on the shared values of "racial African oneness" could also foster a more inclusive, rights-oriented approach for Black migrants.

At the legislative level, legislation, such as the White Paper on International Migration of 31 March 1999 and the Immigration Act of 2002 must be reformed to fully recognise the vulnerabilities of Black migrant women. The findings of the research emphasised the institutional discrimination that participants experienced irrespective of legal status, highlighting the paucity of efficient legislative implementation. The conflation of all migrants, including refugees, asylum seekers, etc., legitimises their discrimination, scapegoating, othering, and, eventually, exclusion. The bureaucratised exclusion, which manifested in bureaucratic inefficiencies to attain documentation, was frequently enacted by government officials. As one participant said, *"system streamlining"* and *"streamlining visa application processes"* in combination with a succinct anti-discrimination

policy could alleviate the systemic discrimination faced by the women.

Additionally, *"putting the right people in the right place,"* as one participant said, is a critical step to dismantling systemic barriers. Thus, creating an independent agency/unit that monitors the performance of government officials is indispensable. A revised anti-discrimination immigration policy would not be efficient in the absence of accountability mechanisms. A human rights-based approach, underpinning immigration and related legislation, and integrating an intersectional policy-making system, would ensure that Black migrant women are protected against xenophobia, sexism, and racism. Similarly, the B-BBEE Act requires revision to address its unintended role in marginalising Black migrant women (Krüger, 2018). Cross-sector intersectional policy-making processes and policies, including migration, economic, health, education, and social policy would create more inclusive outcomes.

To ensure employment and labour market access for Black migrant women, the South African Government should introduce initiatives, such as guidance for labour market navigation, comprehensive language and education pathways, coaching, and collaboration with civil society and municipalities to facilitate employment searching. The provision of subsidies to employers would further encourage the hiring of Black migrant women.

Moreover, country-specific, government-funded policies and programmes, including allocated education bursaries and universal health access to ease the integration of the women, are critical. Policy focus should particularly highlight the education of the youth, beginning at early years in school environments. Public awareness regarding migration and training and education campaigns at the grassroots levels targeting racial and gender discrimination, xenophobia, and equality must be also priotirised by government officials.

Crucially, Black migrant women must be recognised as stakeholders and active agents of change. Their inclusion in decision-making processes, alongside civil society organisations and government actors, is essential for intersectional policymaking. Although macro-level human rights policies exist, they require strengthening and explicit targeting of employers to foster meso-level inclusion.

5.3.2 Implications at the Organisational Level

Implications for practice and policy at the organisational level involve establishing pathways within organisational frameworks to not only alleviate but also address the symptoms of inclusion challenges by incorporating intersectionality. Consequently, reforming organisational policies and practices ensures that Black migrant women feel valued, experience belonging, fully participate as employees, and are treated as insiders, being their authentic selves (Ferdman & Deane, 2014; Lirio et al., 2008; Miller et al., 2002; Roberson, 2006).

The narratives of the Black migrant women highlight persistent inclusion challenges at the intersection of their marginalised identities; therefore, organisations should acknowledge experiences of gendered racism, exclusionary foreignness, micro-inequities, microaggressions, and racialised xenophobia by providing a platform for discussion and support. The interplay between institutional (labour and migration policies) and organisational policies demands compliance with legislation; yet, organisations must be able to steer discussions around gender, race, and foreignness, particular social locations, and institutionalised processes.

Black migrant women emphasised that they engaged in an informal mentor role by educating South Africans about broader values, including diversity, equality, and inclusion. However, organisations must not exploit the women's proactivity or exhaust their mental capacity to avoid deteriorating existing inclusion challenges. On the contrary, organisational culture and climate must adopt a humanistic approach to create safe spaces for all stakeholders and reinforce inclusion (Miller et al., 2002; Wilde, 2016). Fostering diversity and inclusion requires immediate attention to cultivate innovative identity dynamics and promote communicative engagement, social cohesion, and support honouring all cultural viewpoints among its workforce (April et al., 2012; Mor Barak & Daya, 2013).

Employees also feel included as part of a workgroup by maintaining positive relationships with managers, while they are not othered because of their identities. Historically excluded groups, such as Black migrant women, feel a sense of belonging when organisations address microaggressions, sexism, gender-based harassment, and xenophobia by implementing discrimination policies. A coherent and actionable discrimination policy must function as the cornerstone for fostering

inclusive and safe workspaces, ensuring that Black migrant women are valued, despite biases attached to their identities (Daya & April, 2014; Wasserman et al., 2008).

Additional practical implications extend to inclusion at the co-worker level. Co-workers may promote inclusion through their interactions, overt and subtle, and formal and informal micro-interactions. Organisations should prioritise the development of inclusive policies, such as awareness training, scaling micro-inclusive interventions, and increasing initiatives to promote tolerance and enhance cultural awareness. The findings highlighted how peer interactions affected the belonging of the women; thus, everyday interactions among colleagues can foster a sense of inclusion (Mor Barak, 2000). An inclusive workplace demands a supportive environment for all employees. By addressing the challenges faced by marginalized groups, the importance of empowerment becomes clear and essential. Strengthening mentor-mentee relationships is a top priority. Assigning mentors, in particular, strong Black female mentors, safeguards inclusion and provides guidance to navigate workplace challenges (Miller et al., 2002).

Ultimately, organisations that foster inclusive environments benefit from increased belonging, cohesion, and productivity. By recognising the intersectional challenges faced by Black migrant women, organisations can transform their culture into one that celebrates diversity and ensures that all employees—regardless of race, gender, or nationality—are respected and valued.

5.4 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study opens several important avenues for future research. This study could include participants beyond professional Black migrant women, such as working professional women from different racial and ethnic backgrounds (local South African women), providing different or similar perspectives. The investigation of constructions and types of Blackness—in relation to skin pigmentation—within the South African space is particularly topical, considering the salience of the post-apartheid context.

Building on the study's specific insights on intersectional identities, intersectionality offers promising future opportunities to study inclusionary/exclusionary experiences for other marginalised groups. The exploration of other groups, such as refugees, asylum seekers, and the

incorporation of various identities, such as social class, age, motherhood, and religion/spirituality, could shed light on opportunities, vulnerabilities, and strategies of resilience, differentiating findings around their inclusionary experiences.

Moreover, different positional levels of authority, including senior managers and the involvement of broader actors, such as national governments, local authorities, employment services, and civil society organisations, could offer greater breadth to the diversity and inclusion discourse, providing an institutional lens. Understanding the perspectives of these stakeholders would offer valuable insights into power dynamics and structural barriers.

Furthermore, this study should investigate the lived experiences of racialised Black migrant men, who may experience similar or differing inclusion challenges. This approach would allow for a comparative analysis between women's and men's experiences, addressing challenges relating to gendered dynamics, migration, race, and inclusion. Future research should also be conducted in different geographical areas through a comparative lens, and would highlight both context-specific and universal aspects of inclusion challenges faced by migrant women.

Additionally, a different methodological approach could yield diverse results. While this study offered rich qualitative insights into lived experiences, future research could use mixed methods to validate and extend the theoretical framework developed here. Quantitative studies could help establish patterns across larger populations, while longitudinal designs would capture the evolving nature of racialisation, xenophobia, and inclusion/exclusion over time. This is especially pressing in light of shifting migration patterns and changing socio-economic conditions in South Africa, where racialisation processes are dynamic and historically contingent. There is also a lack of longitudinal research tracking the evolving racialisation of migrant women in South Africa, particularly in the context of shifting migration patterns and socio-economic conditions.

Finally, the developed multi-layered intersectional identity framework could guide future research in validating and enhancing concepts and enriching theoretical understandings of intersectional inclusion to inform more effective diversity and inclusion policies.

5.5 CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to investigate the inclusion challenges of Black migrant women in South Africa by exploring how the intersections of marginalised identities—gender, race, and migration status—shape workplace and social inclusion. Despite the growing attention to diversity and inclusion, there is little literature on the experiences of under-researched, highly educated, and documented professional Black migrant women from sub-Saharan Africa within a black majority context in the Global South. There is even less literature on relevant experiences utilising a compartmentalised structure to include the macro-levels of country and society, and the meso-level within organisations.

This study is significant as it explores how the intersectional identities of Black migrant women shape their workplace and social inclusion, drawing on the intersectionality theory, identity theory, and social identity theory. Intersectionality amplifies struggles—their experiences were shaped by intersections of race, gender, foreignness, structural barriers, and systems of power. The findings demonstrated that Black migrant women from different industries and positions shared similar experiences such as institutionalised xenophobia, anti-foreigner, and anti-Black intolerance and discrimination, racialised and gendered exclusion, microinequities and microaggressions, shaping inclusion, and affecting their sense of belonging, and mental wellbeing.

Moreover, the findings underscore the importance of considering individual, organisational, and institutional-level processes to foster meaningful inclusion for Black migrant women. Contextualised within the South African context, the research reveals how identity salience and the differentiation between social and self-categorisation contribute to experiences of institutional discrimination, racialised xenophobia, and workplace exclusion. The study revealed that identity is fluid since women are constantly negotiating and adapting their identities depending on context (e.g., work, church, friendships).

Theoretically, the study makes an important contribution by extending intersectionality as a framework for analysing inclusion. It highlights the inadequacy of generic diversity and inclusion policies that fail to address the interwoven realities of multiple marginalised identities. Instead, it argues for an intersectional approach to policy and practice that recognises and responds to the

cumulative and context-specific forms of disadvantage experienced by Black migrant women.

Empirically, the qualitative narratives reveal both resilience and vulnerability. They show how women navigate exclusionary systems, challenge stereotypes, and forge spaces of belonging, while also bearing the emotional and professional costs of structural inequities. These narratives serve as a critical counterpoint to dominant discourses that homogenise migrants or overlook the gendered dimensions of migration and labour.

Practically, the research offers a multi-layered intersectional inclusion framework, setting out implications at institutional, organisational, and societal levels. It calls for systemic reforms in migration and labour policies, improved accountability of government officials, strengthened anti-discrimination frameworks, and the creation of inclusive organisational cultures. It further underscores the importance of collaboration across state, organisational, and civil society actors, as well as the necessity of recognising Black migrant women as stakeholders and agents of change in shaping inclusion agendas.

In conclusion, the inclusion of Black migrant women in South Africa cannot be achieved through surface-level measures. It requires a conscious, intersectional commitment to dismantling structural inequalities and fostering environments where all individuals—regardless of race, gender, or migration status—can belong, participate, and thrive. By making visible the voices and experiences of Black migrant women, this thesis contributes to a more nuanced and socially just understanding of inclusion and provides a foundation for future work toward equitable transformation.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER

Faculty of Commerce

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@Commerce UCT **UCT Commerce Faculty Office**

09 02 2022

Eleana Velentza

Graduate School of Business

University of Cape Town

REF: REC 2022/02/010

Inclusion Challenges of Black, Migrant Women in South Africa:

An Inductive Study using Hermeneutic Phenomenology

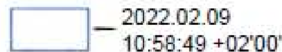
We are pleased to inform you that your ethics application has been approved. Unless otherwise specified this ethical clearance is valid until 31-Dec-2023 .

Your clearance may be renewed upon application.

Please be aware that you need to notify the Ethics Committee immediately should any aspect of your study regarding the engagement with participants as approved in this application, change. This may include aspects such as changes to the research design, questionnaires, or choice of participants.

The ongoing ethical conduct throughout the duration of the study remains the responsibility of the principal investigator.

We wish you well for your research.



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IYUNIVESITHI YASEKAPA · UNIVERSITEIT VAN KAAPSTAD

2024/03/20

COM/00659/2024

RE: Research Ethics Committee Project Approval Letter

Dear Eleana Velentza, (Principle Investigator)

Your application for ethics review of your project titled

Inclusion Challenges of Black, Migrant Women in South Africa: An Inductive Study using Hermeneutic Phenomenology.

has been reviewed and evaluated by the

Faculty of Commerce Research Ethics Committee (REC).

Based on the information supplied your application has been successful and is approved.

You may proceed with your research project.

Please note that should:

(i) any serious or adverse effects to participants occur and/or,

(ii) aspect(s) of your current project change and/or

(iii) any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project occur then you should immediately report this to the approving REC. You may be required to submit an amendment to this application, in order to determine whether the changed aspects increase the ethical risks of your project.

Please note the following additional conditions associated with this approval:

(i) Renewal of REC 2023/01/003 extended to 31 March 2025

Regards,

Thomas Moultrie
Chairperson
Commerce Research Ethics Committee

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

INFORMATION SHEET: REQUEST TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY

Ethics clearance reference number: **REC 2022/02/010**

Title: Inclusion Challenges of Black, Migrant Women in South Africa: An Inductive Study using Hermeneutic Phenomenology

Dear Prospective Participant

My name is Eleana Velentza and I am doing my doctoral research at the University of Cape Town's Graduate School of Business under the supervision of Dr. Babar Dharani. I am inviting you to participate in a study entitled: Inclusion Challenges of Black, Migrant Women in South Africa: An Inductive Study using Hermeneutic Phenomenology.

What is the background and purpose of the study?
The research study seeks to form a better understanding of how Black, migrant women deal with inclusion challenges at their workplace, as individuals, as well as within the society in South Africa. The study's aim is to explore the intersection of gender, race, and migration status of Black, migrant women in South Africa and address inclusion challenges in the South African society.

Why am I being invited to participate?
You are invited to take part in this study if you self-identify as a Black migrant woman. I define a Black migrant as any individual who self-identifies as such and is a descendant of sub-Saharan Africa living in South Africa on legal status. Additionally, you should identify as a woman who has completed a high education level (tertiary and above) in any country and is above 18 years old. As a migrant woman, I am interested in your personal experiences and inclusion-related challenges in the host country. Using your perspectives, the study will seek to develop a realistic and holistic theoretical framework that implements effective policies and practices embedding intersectional identities at a workplace and thus, achieve a greater inclusion for Black migrant women. The data collected will be used to form part of a Ph.D. thesis and the results may be used in academic publications or reports.

Importantly, participation in this research is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time. If you do decide to take part, you will be asked to sign an informed consent form before interviews can commence.

What is the nature of my participation in this study?
Your participation in the study will involve a single online or face-to-face semi-structured interview, and possibly a follow-up interview should there be a need. The interview will take place at a time and place that is convenient for you. The interview is expected to last between 60 to 75 minutes. It will be recorded and subsequently transcribed for analysis.

I will interact with you on issues relevant to your identity as a Black, migrant woman, inclusion at your workplace and in South Africa as well as your experiences regarding various forms of discrimination. The timeframe for data collection from participants is a period of about one year. I plan to conduct the interviews between March 2022 and December 2024.

Can I withdraw from this study even after having agreed to participate?
You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. In that case, if data and information have already been collected, they will be destroyed.

What are the potential benefits of taking part in this study?
This research does not compensate participants personally. However, the results will help me understand how Black, migrant women deal with inclusion challenges at their workplace, as individuals, and within the society in South Africa. This unique study will potentially highlight the prevalence of different forms of discrimination experienced in South Africa including gender-based discrimination, institutional discrimination, and xenophobia/ racism due to being Black, migrant, and woman. I hope that, in the future, researchers and the public will benefit from this study through an improved understanding of the lived experiences of Black, migrant women within Black, African social psychology exploring group phenomena from an Africentric perspective.

Are there any negative consequences for me if I participate in the research project?
This research involves both textual data as well as interviews with human participants. The document analysis does not involve harm to any humans. Semi-structured interviews are inherently personal and much like in my research often endeavour to elicit intimate, private details and/or experiences from participants. As such, there is a risk that participants may feel uncomfortable talking about themselves and others. Additionally, topics such as racial, and gender discrimination, xenophobia, and foreignness may arouse uncomfortable emotions especially if you have experienced or perpetrated these.

Where concerns or problems may arise because of the research study, referral to counselling services will be made available for the participants; this will also be indicated on the information sheet. Incident reports will also be submitted to the relevant Ethics Committee.

Will the information that I convey to the researcher and my identity be kept confidential?
You have the right to insist that your name will not be recorded anywhere and that no one, apart from the researcher and identified members of the research team, will know about your involvement in this research. Your answers will be given a pseudonym and you will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods such as conference proceedings. On the contrary, you are allowed to share your authentic identity and name, should you wish so.

Please note that confidentiality agreements should be submitted to the Commerce Faculty Ethics in Research Committee for consideration. Your answers may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including any external interviewer as well as members of the Research Ethics Review Committee. Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study unless you permit other people to see the records.

All the collected data will be kept confidential, and the information will be anonymised. Anonymous data may be used for other purposes, such as a research report, journal articles, and/or conference proceedings.

How will the researcher(s) protect the security of data?
Electronic forms of your answers will be stored by the researcher for a minimum period of five years in a password-protected computer of the researcher for future research or academic purposes. The future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. Electronic copies will be permanently deleted from the hard drive of the computer.

Will I receive payment or any incentives for participating in this study?
You will not be personally compensated for participating in the research.

Has the study received ethics approval?
This study has received written approval from the Commerce Faculty Ethics in Research Committee, University of Cape Town. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher if you so wish.

How will I be informed of the findings/results of the research?
If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Eleana Velentza on 072 749 2707 or vlnele001@myuct.ac.za or eleanavel2011@gmail.com. The findings are accessible for a period of five years. For general information about this research and/or further information about this study, please contact Eleana Velentza on 072 749 2707 or vlnele001@myuct.ac.za or eleanavel2011@gmail.com.

Should you have concerns about how the research has been conducted, you may contact Senior Lecturer Babar Dharani, babar.dharani@uct.ac.za, 078 404 2960. Contact the Commerce Research Ethics chairperson, Lecturer Jacques Rousseau on jacques.rousseau@uct.ac.za, if you have any ethical concerns.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.

Sincerely,

Eleana Velentza
Ph.D. Fellow

APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Ph.D. in Business Administration

INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM:

Participant name: …….

I volunteer to participate in a research project conducted by **Eleana Velentza** as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the doctoral degree **Doctor of Philosophy** at the Graduate School of Business. I understand that the research is designed to gather information about **Inclusion Challenges of Black, Migrant Women in South Africa: An Inductive Study using Hermeneutic Phenomenology** and that I will be one of approximately 30 of people being interviewed for this research.

Background and purpose of the research

The research study seeks to form a better understanding of how Black, migrant women deal with inclusion challenges at their workplace, as individuals, as well as within the society in South Africa. The study's aim is to explore the intersection of gender, race, and migration status of black, migrant women in South Africa and address inclusion challenges in the South African society. This unique study will highlight the prevalence of different forms of discrimination experienced in South Africa including gender-based discrimination, institutional discrimination, and xenophobia/ racism.

Ethics approval

Ethical consent for the study has been approved by the UCT Commerce Faculty Ethics in Research Committee (REF: REC 2022/02/010). If you have any questions or concerns regarding this research, please contact:
The researcher: Eleana Velentza at vlnele001@myuct.ac.za/ 072 749 2707.
The supervisor: Professor Babar Dharani at babar.dharani@uct.ac.za/ 078 404 2960.

Participation and confidentiality

- I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary, that I will not be compensated, and that I may withdraw at any time.
- The interview will take approximately 60- 75 minutes to complete and will be audio recorded.
- I understand that I will not be identified by name in any reports using information obtained from this interview and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure.

- I understand that my identity will not be revealed at any stage during the analysis, writing, or publication of this study unless I give written consent. I also understand that if I wish, I will be given a copy of this consent form.
- Subsequent uses of records and data will be subject to standard data use policies which protect the anonymity of individuals and institutions.

Consent

I consent to participate in this interview, based on the terms outlined above and subject to the following additional condition of my own (if any).

---------------------------- ----------------------------

Signed by interviewee Date

---------------------------- ----------------------------

Signed by Student Date

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me and for agreeing to participate in my study. The study seeks to explore the intersection of gender, race, and migration status and better understand the inclusion ofBlack migrant women in South Africa. I will start with the questions that I have already sent through, but there's a possibility to make follow-up questions or you can either speak openly and in all possible honesty to fully understand the context of your experiences. You can choose to skip questions that you are not comfortable answering. You are also free to withdraw from the interview at any time, should you no longer wish to continue. I am planning to record this interview so that I can take notes at a later stage. Your identity will remain confidential throughout the study by assigning a pseudonym for you. The findings of the study will be used for this study only unless permission is granted by the university and the researcher. All information will be used only for academic purposes but also may be used by other relevant stakeholders within and outside of the university for developmental intervention.

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS:

- How long have you lived in South Africa?
- Could you describe the place/s where you grew up and what it was like for you to grow up there? Could you provide details on the structure of your family, number of kids, etc.?
- Indicate your age group: 18-29 [ ], 30-39 [ ], 40-49 [ ], 50-59 [ ], 60+ [ ]
- What is your country of origin?
- What is your ethnic background?
- What is your marital status?
- What is your primary position in the household? Head/sole bread winner [ ], wife [ ], mother [ ], grandmother [ ], relative [ ], other (specify)
- What is the official language of instruction in your country of origin?
- What is your highest level of education?
- What is your occupation in South Africa?

- What was your visa status when you initially arrived in South Africa? High skills permit [ ], spousal permit [ ], family unification [ ], study permit [ ], business permit [ ], refugee/asylum [ ], retirement permit [ ], other (specify)
- What is your current residence status in South Africa? naturalised [ ], permanent residence [ ], work permit [ ], spousal permit [ ], study permit [ ], accompanying parents [ ], business permit [ ], undocumented [ ], refugee/asylum [ ], other (specify)
- Are you proficient in the English language? Yes [ ] No [ ]

MAIN QUESTIONS:

Foreignness

- Has your migrant status ever led to someone making certain assumptions about you? If so, please give me an example.
- Over time, have you felt any behavioural changes or reactions to your migrant status at work? If so, please give me an example.
- What are some of the challenges that you have experienced at your workplace?
- Do you believe being a foreigner gives you less or more privilege compared to other individuals? If so, please give me an example.
- Was there an instance when you felt that being a migrant woman affected your integration into South African society? Please elaborate more on your answer.
- How do you negotiate your identity as a migrant in South Africa? Please give me a few examples.

Gender

- Do you believe migrant women are more vulnerable and exposed to more violence and gender discrimination in South Africa?
- Have you ever experienced sexual harassment, gender discrimination or gender-based violence in South Africa? What about your home country?
- Have you ever reported any violent and/ or discriminative event that happened to you to the authorities or the organization you work in?
- To what extent, does your gender affect your experience at your workplace and your personal interactions?

Race

- To what extent has your race impacted your professional journey?
- How have you navigated yourself through the various workplaces? Please give me a few examples.
- How does it make you feel being a Black, migrant woman in South Africa where most of the population is Black?
- From your personal experience, do you believe the fact that you are Black makes you have to deal with institutional discrimination in South Africa?

Being a Black migrant woman

- Do you believe your race, gender, and migration status lead to different kinds of assumptions compared to other individuals? If so, please give me an example.
- Has your race, gender, and migration status ever influenced the way others see you and how you are treated at work and your social life? If so, please give me an example.
- To what extent do you think your race, gender, and migration status have influenced and continue to influence your experiences?
- How does it make you feel being a Black, migrant woman at your workplace?
- What is your overall feeling about the local authorities/ institutions in South Africa as a Black, migrant woman?
- Hearing the words ‘‘disadvantage’’ and ‘‘oppression’’, can you link any of your personal experiences to those words? If so, please give me an example.
- How do you usually cope with any obstacles you encounter at work or by the local authorities/ institutions because of being a Black, migrant woman?

Inclusion

- What is your understanding of the word inclusion? What does it mean to you?
- Do you believe being included in your workplace, and the host society is dependent on the gender, race or migration/ native status?
- Outsider- insider: how familiar are you to those words and can you think of any related personal experience?

- Related to your experience of inclusion, does any particular situation/ moment (positive or negative) stand out in your memory?
- How easy has it been for you to form close personal relationships across race, gender, and migrant status in South Africa?