The Lived Experiences of Black Managers in Accessing Top Management Positions within the Namibian Private Corporate Sector

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Declaration

I, Jacobs Sihela, hereby declare that the work on which this thesis is based is my own original work (except where acknowledgements indicate otherwise) and that neither the whole work, nor any part of it has been, is being, or is to be submitted for another degree in this, or in any other university.

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Dedication

In love and spirit, I dedicate this PhD thesis to Masiye Mwemba, my late grandmother who transitioned into the Ancestral realm during the writing of this thesis. *Ima*, I honour your spirit and I present this PhD to you as a token of my gratitude for your love and efforts in raising me.

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Abstract

This PhD study draws from anticolonial and decolonial thought systems to explore how multi-level factors; macro-level (social-contextual contextual histories, economic, legal and religious), meso-level (organisational cultures, structures, processes and procedures), and micro-level (interpersonal and intergroup), intersect to shape the experiences of black managers in accessing top management positions within Namibian private sector organisations. This study aimed to uncover the historical and political elements that underpin black managers' experiences. The data in this study was collected through a decolonial data collection process utilizing storytelling interviews with 44 study participants, recruited through snowball sampling. The research adopts a qualitative research design that infuses thematic analysis with decolonial, and anticolonial, lenses of data analyses, rooted in the African indigenous paradigm. The findings of this study reveal influential multi-level factors influencing the experiences of black managers are interwoven and imbued with coloniality of power (coloniality)—continuing colonial social and economic patterns rooted in the colonial histories that are not lost to the past. In the Namibian context, coloniality is anchored in the histories of colonial violence, including the German genocide of black Namibians (1904-1908) and its apartheid successor. These histories continue to reside in the society and the private sector, re-inscribing and entrenching colonial social and economic relations that are (re)produced at organisational levels. The study's critical theoretical contribution highlights coloniality as the deep-seated and concealed structure undergirding the persistent racial inequalities within Namibian private sector organisations, through which black managers are subjugated, disempowered, exploited, and marginalised from opportunities to access organisational resources and top management positions. Furthermore, the study shows that coloniality in the contemporary private sector is intimately tied to the private sector's participation in past colonial violence. At present, it appears that coloniality in the private sector is facilitated by influential white executives forming white affiliations of power in maintaining the material and symbolic interests of the white minority populace. This study labels these enacted implicit political and insidious managerial practices and mechanisms as: 'managing to colonise'. Finally, this study recommends dismantling the coloniality of power underlying racial inequalities in the private sector and the broader Namibian society through anticolonial and decolonial praxis grounded in reparative social justice, equality and self-determination.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

Glossary: Terms and Concepts

Access: the discursive and material occupation of employment role or position or seat of power in a certain rank.

Black: Although the term has a political significance, but in this study, for simplicity sake, black denote people with African ancestry.

Blackness refers to the current visible, invisible and internalized characteristics, qualities and political assumptions, beyond physical traits, that deprive power and inscribe disadvantaged identities to those historically oppressed and marginalised racial groups, more commonly those of the black race (Biko, 1978; Steyn & Conway, 2010; Nobles, 2013).

Colonial difference —difference among people and geopolitical territories created by the hierarchization and classification of people and the planet by Euro-modernity colonial power (Mbembe, 2017; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018)

Coloniality of Power (Coloniality): The idea of coloniality of power connects European colonialism's activities and its continuities after the formal colonial administration has ended.

Colonisation: invasion by a group of people taking over the land, property through violence, and imposing their own culture on the indigenous people and erasing the cultures of indigenous people

Decolonisation: restorative justice through economic, cultural, spiritual, onto-epistemologies, psychological freedom to undo colonisation

Difference: "the result of a work of abstraction, classification, division, and exclusion – a work of power that, afterward, is internalised and reproduced in the gestures of daily life, even by the excluded themselves" (Mbembe, 2017, p. 183).

Institution: 'Institution' refers to a set of organisations and the relationships that bind these organisations together in a social system or network with a purpose (Barley, 2010).

Other: The manner in which one group excludes or marginalizes another group on a social and/or psychological level. When someone is viewed as the "Other," the gazer tend to emphasise what makes the gazed person different or opposite from them, determining how they are depicted, particularly through stereotypical imaginary.

Race: is the organising principle in the colonial hierarchization and classification of people and the planet for strategic purpose to benefit the coloniser from the domination of those classified and racialised 'other' (Quijano, 2000). Thus, race is discursively constructed by epistemic, political and social arrangements with ontological effects (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Quijano, 2007).

Racialisation: The assigning of a racial identity to person in a way that the person may or may not accept.

The Private Sector: the component of the economy that is run and operated for profit by individuals and businesses rather than by the government.

Top Management Positions: refer to the highest level positions in the organisational hierarchy that is responsible for strategic decisions of the organisation, and the job roles of members of the executive team is marked with power delegated to them by the Board of Directors, their job autonomy and it is characterised by high salary rewards" (Menz, 2012).

White: although the term can vary based on context, nationality, and point of view, but generally, white is a racial classification of individuals and a skin colour specifier, commonly used for persons of European heritage.

White privilege: the notion that whites accrue advantages by virtue of being constructed as white

Whiteness: a manifestation of racial power in everyday activities shaped by white supremacy ideologies —historically constructed ideologies that regards the white race as superior to other race groups and awards unfair advantages and privilege to those perceived to be "White" and deny advancement of other racial groups (Ariss, Ozbilgin & April, 2014; Grimes, 2001; Samaluk, 2014).

White Supremacy: "signifies a historically emergent, socially constructed and institutionally embedded racial hierarchy that enshrines white physical, cultural, intellectual and moral superiority" (Liu, Martinez Dy, Dar, & Brewis, 2021, p. 106).

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Introduction: Research Background and Rationale

For most countries in the former colonial world, the histories of settler colonialism, slavery and apartheid colonialism continue to reproduce colonial patterns that are deeply inscribed within society, shaping economic and social relations (April, 2021; Ruggunan, 2016; Ulus, 2015). Decolonial scholars refer to the continued colonial patterns as 'coloniality of power' (Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013; Quijano, 2000). Maldonado-Torres (2007, p. 243) describes coloniality of power (coloniality in short) as the "long-standing patterns of power that emerged because of colonialism, but that define culture, labour, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administration".

Scholars contend that histories of black chattel slavery, colonisation and apartheid continue to play out in organisations and thus resurface and spill over into organisational practices and processes (April, 2021; Cooke, 2003; Cornelius, Amujo, & Pezet, 2019; Mollan, 2019). These historical-oriented organisational practices and processes reproduce colonial patterns, thus sanctioning and naturalising white supremacy and white privilege in the workspace while undermining equality of access to resources and other opportunities for black and other racially minoritized professionals (Dar & Ibrahim, 2019; Liu, 2017a; Liu, Martinez Dy, Dar, & Brewis, 2021; Nkomo & Al Ariss, 2014).

Scholars emphasise that it is only through an understanding of the historical (and present), ideological, political and economic rationales that underpin and sustain organisational practices that we may be able to adequately address organisational racial inequalities (Nkomo & Al Ariss, 2014; Opie & Roberts, 2017). In the words of Opie and Roberts, it is imperative that "scholars and practitioners explore the racist histories that undergird contemporary workplace discrimination and subsequently address it in ways that encourage actual change" (Opie & Roberts, 2017, p. 708). Yet much of management and organisational studies have paid less attention to how histories of colonialism, settler-colonial genocides, chattel slavery, and apartheid

shape the present-day realities throughout society and its institutions[1] or fail to consider the effect of historical continuities on marginalised employees (Banerjee, 2021; Dar, Liu, Martinez Dy, & Brewis, 2020). As Dar and her colleagues note, MOS scholarship on race and racism is marred by "the continued omission of the roles of indigenous genocide, extractive settler-colonialism and black chattel slavery in contemporary capital accumulation and wealth disparity" (Dar et al., 2020, p. 4). These omissions result from "an epistemic blindness in most management theories because histories of race, racism and colonialism are excluded or glossed over" (Banerjee, 2021, p. 1). This epistemic blindness precludes/prohibit deep analyses of the persistent racial inequalities that exist within organisations; indeed, most research focuses on the surface-level manifestations of racial inequalities and ascribes those inequalities to racial identity or personal biases while paying little attention to the deep-seated ontological basis for our understandings of race as a site of difference and which came to be rooted in coloniality, and enables the sustainability of organisational inequalities grounded in discourses of race and other differences and played out in discursive practices of domination and subjugation (limki, 2018).

Refusal to understand, confront and engage with these histories of racial difference and their outcomes leaves organisational racial inequalities intact (Liu, 2021; Nkomo & Al Ariss, 2014). The outcome may be the unequal distribution of organisational resources and opportunities—the means through which organisations actively perpetuate socio-economic inequalities (Amis, Munir, Lawrence, Hirsch, & McGahan, 2018; Bapuji, 2015; Bapuji, Ertug, & Shaw, 2020; Primecz, Mahadevan, & Romani, 2016). Scholars point out that entrenched socio-economic inequalities negatively affect employees who belong to economically marginalised racial groups—as their organisational power and status are determined by the low socio-economic status and power of their racial group, which becomes the basis for their marginalisation and disempowerment (Collins, 1989, 1993, 1997; Magee & Galinsky, 2008; Wilson, 1997). Consequently, black and other racially marginalised employees face "access discrimination", which is the systematic exclusion of "members of a

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[1] 'Institution' refers to a set of organisations and the relationships that bind these organisations together in a social system or network with a purpose (Barley, 2010).

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subgroup of the population from entering a job or an organisation (Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Wormley, 1990, p. 64).

In this study, I draw on Fleming and Spicer's (2014) definition of organisational power as "the capacity to influence other actors with political interests in mind. It is a resource to get things done through other people, to achieve certain goals that may be shared or contested" (p. 239). These authors define 'politics' as activities "that rearranges relations between people and the distribution of goods (broadly defined) through the mobilisation of power" (Fleming & Spicer, 2014, p. 239, emphasis in original text).

Other MOS scholars note that issues of race and racial inequality in workspaces are defined by power asymmetries and should be understood as a power contest (cf. Liu, 2020; Liu et al., 2021; Nkomo & Al Ariss, 2014; Nkomo, 1992; Primecz et al., 2016). Yet, theories and methods that foreground and examine power—its historical sources, its political bases and how it functions to preserve political interests and its effects on black and other racially minoritized professionals, are rarely deployed in MOS research.

1.2.   Brief Research Context Description

When Namibia gained political independence in 1990, the legacies of German settler colonialism and its Apartheid successor continues to frame social relations, by creating highly adversarial and low-trust relations, particularly in the workplace, and an occupational hierarchy cemented along racial lines (Klerck, 2008). Survey results published by the Employment Equity Commission of Namibia (EEC) from 2010 to 2017 reflect that the top management positions in the private sector remains white dominated (EEC, 2017). Top management positions in this study refer to the highest level in the organisational hierarchy that is responsible for strategic decisions of the organisation, and the job roles of members of the executive team is marked with power delegated to them by the Board of Directors, their job autonomy and it is characterised by high salary rewards" (Menz, 2012). Section 3.2 will provide more details on the Namibian context.

1.3.   Problem Statement

The literature review that provides this study with its theoretical framework reveals the theoretical and conceptual deficiencies of the MOS field, which Banerjee (2021) calls an "epistemic blind spot", which functions in such a way as to obscure the deep-seated historical and political elements, facilitated by power, that underlie the persistent racial inequality in organisations, such as the Namibian private sector, and its effects on black professionals' access to organisational resources and upward mobility opportunities. Within the MOS field, a few historicised or "historically conscious" and politicised research studies have attempted to expose the 'hidden' organisational power structures built by coloniality and facilitated by those who are politically interested and invested in upholding coloniality, and which underpin the persistence of racial inequalities in global 'colonial'[2] organisational spaces. As a result, some scholars have accused the MOS field of not taking a strong enough stance against racial inequalities and the perpetuation of epistemic violence and are thus complicit in sustaining broader social inequalities (Chrispal, Bapuji, & Zietsma, 2020; Dar et al., 2020; Girei, 2017; Ibarra-Colado, 2006).

Although management theories and methods that expose historical and political elements that underlie racial inequalities are vital, this theoretical approach is still inadequate to affect any alteration of colonial relations of power (Banerjee, 2021; Girei, 2017). There is still a need to develop practical or praxis interventions—that complements theory, to "decolonise" organisations, such as the Namibian private sector, and the broader society (April, 2021; Banerjee, 2021; Girei, 2017; Jammulamadaka, Faria, Jack, & Ruggunan, 2021). To decolonise entails dismantling the hidden historically constituted power structures that underlie the persistent systematic racial inequalities at societal, institutional, and organisational levels (e.g. decolonising minds) to enable substantial equality and emancipation for the colonially oppressed through self-determination and reparative social justice interventions (April, 2021; Banerjee, 2021; Girei, 2017; Jammulamadaka et al., 2021).

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[2] 'Colonial' is used throughout this study to denote the continued colonial order despite the end of the colonial administrative control.

1.4.   Research Approach and Significance of the Study

Scholars argue that to nuance the understanding of persistent socio-economic inequalities created along racial lines and to avoid empty theorising, scholarly studies must be appropriately contextualised within specific social-historical, social-political, and geographical settings (Holvino, 2010; Nkomo, 2011a; Nkomo & Al Ariss, 2014; Nkomo, 1992; Opie & Roberts, 2017). Most studies on race and racism in western organisations are rooted within western paradigms and then generalised and extrapolated to different geopolitical contexts—rendering this practice a form of epistemic colonisation (Ibarra-Colado, 2006). This is problematic, as such knowledge could be irrelevant to some contexts and severs people's connections to their local histories (cf. Alcadipani, Khan, Gantman, & Nkomo, 2012; Girei, 2017). To this end, there is a growing call for decolonising management knowledge production by producing knowledge based on local contextual experiences and worldviews (cf. Alcadipani et al., 2012; Girei, 2017). To decolonise MOS research, scholars recommend capturing the lived experiences of the 'colonially' marginalised—for their voices are usually silenced in mainstream management and organisation studies (Girei, 2017; Mir & Mir, 2012; Muzanenhamo & Chowdhury, 2021).

Therefore, this study, as a decolonised research, focuses on the Namibian context—which is mainly absent from MOS discourse—and centres the experiences of black managers, whose experiences of accessing top management positions in the Namibian private sector. are silenced in MOS discourses on race (Girei, 2017; Mir & Mir, 2012; Muzanenhamo & Chowdhury, 2021), Brief descriptions of Namibia (its colonial history and socio-economic realities) and the Namibian private sector are provided in Chapter Three for the sake of readers who might not be familiar with the contexts.

Other MOS scholars have argued that proper contextualisation requires not only focusing on the broader socio-historical level or macro-level issues but should explore how multi-level factors constituted by social, institutional, organisational and interpersonal levels affect the experiences of black and '*Othered*' professionals in white-dominated organisations (Cortina, 2008; Girei, 2017; Hennekam & Syed, 2018; Taser-Erdogan, 2021). Girei (2017) states that moving through these multi-levels "might help address some of the main gaps identified with MOS, such as its abstract

stance, its epistemic violence in silencing alternative perspectives and its complicity in sustaining broader inequalities" (p. 467).

Therefore, this study adopts a multi-level strategy to explore societal and institutional (referred to as *macro* in this study), organisational (*meso*) and micro-interpersonal and intergroup (*micro*) influential factors that undergird the experiences of black managers as they attempt to access top management levels in Namibian private sector organisations. More importantly, this study seeks to explore the hidden and deep-seated structures that undergird black managers' experiences in navigating those workspaces.

The need to offer emancipatory possibilities to those colonially oppressed black and "Other" professionals also inspired this study. Despite research that has revealed the dehumanising effects of racial inequalities on black and marginalised employees in the global 'colonial' workspace (cf. Dar & Ibrahim, 2019; limki, 2018; Liu et al., 2021), there is virtually no scholarly voice on emancipatory possibilities for colonially oppressed black employees. As noted earlier, this silence could be attributed to the "epistemic blind spot" in MOS. Some scholars argue that this silence is not purely unintentional but more reflective of the notion that some topics in MOS are uncomfortable truths and are thus 'taboo' subjects (Chrispal et al., 2020). This tendency to hold some issues as 'taboo' has not only revealed MOS's failure to take a stand against colonisation and re-colonisation in organisations but also reveals the epistemic coloniality inherent in MOS knowledge production (cf. Alcadipani et al., 2012; Ibarra-Colado, 2006), rendering MOS complicity in maintaining 'colonial' violence in the global 'colonial' workspaces (Chrispal et al., 2020).

Therefore, to transgress the "taboo" and contribute to shifting MOS from its colonial entrapment, I follow what Maldonado-Torres (2007) calls a 'decolonial turn', which he describes as "making visible the invisible and analysing the mechanisms that produce such invisibility" (p. 262). This study deploys anticolonial and decolonial theories to explore the invisible or concealed historical and political forces shaping the experiences of black managers in the contemporary Namibian private sector. Chapter 3 provides more details on the theoretical foundations of both anticolonial and decolonial thought. But in short, anticolonial and decolonial thought systems view

colonialism as an ongoing historical project that persists into the present. Thus, this approach allows for the excavation of hidden colonial structures and allows for the understanding of their modes of functioning in reproducing colonial organisational practices. More importantly, both theoretical lenses seek to dismantle those hidden colonial power structures embedded in society and organisations to offer emancipatory possibilities to the colonially oppressed black and brown professionals.

This study adopts anticolonial and decolonial theories for three main reasons. First, through the anticolonial and decolonial lens, I engage in deep analysis to explain and uncover the hidden structures that undergird the persistent racial inequalities and racism within private sector organisations by examining the lived experiences of e colonially oppressed professionals within socio-historical, economic, and political contexts. As analytical tools, the anticolonial and decolonial lens offers the researcher an opportunity to delve beyond racial identity and surface-level manifestations of racial inequality to explore historical sources of power, its modes of operation and political bases.

Second, as described in Chapter 3, anticolonial and decolonial thought systems are not only theoretical tools but offer strategies for praxis, hence providing a pathway that takes us beyond mere theorising to offer pragmatic possibilities towards the dismantling of colonial structures while at the same time, offering emancipation possibilities to the colonially oppressed. This study recommends anticolonial and decolonial interventions rooted in reparative justice, self-determination, equality and justice to dismantle coloniality at societal, institutional, organisational and interpersonal levels. This pragmatic intervention aims to bring equality, self-determination and social justice to all citizens (April, 2021; Dussel & Ibarra-Colado, 2006).

Third, despite research that has called for decolonising MOS, research on persistent racialised inequalities in organisations, although properly contextualised, continues to be studied through Eurocentric worldviews (Girei, 2017). Moreover, the critique of western hegemony in MOS knowledge production is necessary, but there has been little attention given to possible pragmatic approaches to carrying out decolonised research grounded in decolonial theories and decolonised research

methods (Banerjee, 2021; Girei, 2017). This research adopts a decolonial and anticolonial research process to address these shortcomings. It deploys storytelling as a research method rooted in the African indigenous paradigm (described in Chapter 4). This illustrated approach will be helpful to future researchers who seek to advance decolonised research in MOS.

1.5.   Research Objectives

This study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- To examine how multi-level (*Macro, Meso and Micro*) influential factors function to influence the experiences of black managers in accessing top management positions within contemporary Namibian private sector organisations.

- To explore and unmask the underlying context-specific historical and political dynamics that underpin the factors influencing black managers' experiences of navigating the organisations in pursuit of top management roles.

- To recommend anticolonial and decolonial emancipatory praxis to uproot the colonial structure that underpins racial inequalities in the private sector, to bring forth justice, equality and self-determination.

- To advance the use of both anticolonial and decolonial theories and methods in MOS research, intending to contribute pragmatic ways to decolonising MOS knowledge production through 'indigenous' onto-epistemologies.

1.6.   Research Questions

The main research question that guides this study is:

What are the experiences of black managers in accessing top management positions within Namibian private sector organisations?

The above overarching research question is sub-divided into three related questions, namely:

- *What are the social-contextual (Macro-level) factors that influence the experiences of black managers in accessing top management roles in Namibian private sector organisations?*
- *What organisational (Meso-level) factors shape the experiences of black managers in accessing top management positions in Namibian private sector organisations?*
- *What interpersonal and intergroup (Micro-level) factors shape the experiences of black managers in accessing top management roles in Namibian private sector organisations?*

1.7. Theoretical Contributions

This study attended to the research gap gaps highlighted in Section 1.1, and made the following theoretical contributions to literature:

(1) The bigger problem this study unmasked is the coloniality of power (coloniality), which appeared to be the deep-rooted and underlying factor that shapes power and politics at multiple levels (Macro, meso, Micro) which seem to receive less attention in MOS. This study examines how black managers' experiences in the contemporary private sector are shaped by historical continuities and politics of power. It argues that the Namibian private sector continues to be a colonial capitalist apparatus through which coloniality is fostered, reproduced, and legitimised by unwarranted historical white fear known as the *swart gaavaar* (black threat).

Furthermore, unlike most MOS research, the anticolonial and decolonial approaches employed in this study went beyond racial identity to expose the root causes of persistent racial disparities.

(2) This study provides an unusual argument that black managers' pursuit of top management positions in the white-dominated private sector is a 'colonial' and political struggle – where their black bodies, which are devalued, denied agency and dignity, are conscripted to uphold coloniality. Continuing to do so is detrimental to the well-being and dignity of black managers.

(3) In this study, I introduced two concepts to the literature. First, I uncover a series of informal practices which I label 'managing to colonise', which refers to

management practices, mainly enacted by white executives, that are directed towards upholding coloniality at institutional and organisational levels. Second, One of the ways 'Managing to colonise' is manifested is through a concept which labelled 'transactional tokenism' which describes how white executives exert power to coerce and abuse black managers to perform roles depended on their blackness and political affiliations with black policymakers and industry regulators for the benefit of the organisation.

(4) This study examined how the white gaze operates as a medium through which coloniality is expressed and mediates relations between black managers and their white counterparts. Further, this study showed how the colonial gaze could be internalised by black bodies in service of maintaining coloniality and white power structures.

(5) This study contends that the economic liberation of the black majority will be necessary to liberate whites and thus create a 'new form of humanism', as envisioned by Fanon (2004). The study advocates for conscious-raising rooted in Black Consciousness to support the economically oppressed black majority.

(6) Last but not least, this study has contributed to both the deployment of anticolonial and decolonial theories and decolonial methodological approaches to illustrate a pragmatic way of decolonising MOS knowledge production that goes beyond mere critiquing the persistent epistemic coloniality in MOS.

1.8.   Structure of the Thesis

The remaining part of this thesis is arranged in chapters as follows:

Chapter 2—Literature review: The chapter will provide a survey of MOS literature on factors that shape black professionals' access to professional development and upward mobility in white-dominated organisations. The chapter also reflects on how issues of race and access to organisational resources and opportunities, particularly for black and other racially minoritized employees, have been studied from critical perspectives. Finally, the chapter highlights the findings from previous studies and illuminates the gaps in the literature, thus guiding this current study.

Chapter 3—Theoretical foundation and Context: This chapter will discuss the theoretical foundation of the study, highlighting the rationales and application of theoretical /analytical tools and resources that are deployed to answer the research questions of this study and attend to the gaps in the literature identified in Chapter 2. This chapter will also provide a brief historical and present description of Namibia and the Namibian private sector to assist readers unfamiliar with the context.

Chapter 4—Methodological Considerations: This chapter details the methodological approach and strategy adopted in this study. The chapter further provides rationales for selecting and utilising the African indigenous paradigm and the storytelling research method adopted in this study. The chapter also demonstrates how the data was collected and analysed.

Chapter 5—Findings: This section presents the empirical material gathered from study participants' experiences and perceptions, shared through storytelling.

Chapter 6—Discussions: This chapter discusses the findings presented in Chapter 5 through the anticolonial and decolonial lenses described in Chapter 3. The chapter also offers recommendations to address the challenges faced by black managers in navigating private sector organisations to access top management roles.

Chapter 7—Conclusion and Recommendations: This chapter summarises the study findings and discussions, highlighting the study's key findings, theoretical contributions, and practical utility. The chapter ends with study limitations and recommendations for future studies.

1.9.   Conclusion

This chapter introduced the topic of study by including the rationale for the study where the research gaps were identified. The chapter then presented the significance of the study that was followed by the objectives and the research questions of the study. Next, the chapter highlighted the theorical study contributions to the literature and end by outlining the structure of the entire thesis. The next chapter present the review of the literature from the MOS field related to the topic of study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

This chapter examines relevant Management and Organisations Studies (MOS) literature to understand how and to what extent black managers' experiences in global 'colonial' workspaces have been studied. The literature review mainly focused on MOS scholarly works about the experiences of black and other racially minoritized professionals and the challenges and opportunities they experience in navigating global 'colonial' workspaces. The chapter highlights the findings and arguments by scholars from critical theoretical standpoints and from varied analytical approaches to illustrate the state-of-the research and the gaps in the literature.

2.2. Race, Racism and Their Effects on Black Professionals

"Organisations are not race-neutral entities" (Nkomo, 1992, p. 501), yet there is little research on race and racism issues in MOS, and scholars bemoan the paucity of studies that centres the experiences of black and other marginalised employees in organisations (Dar et al., 2020; Nkomo, 1992, 2021). Nkomo (2021) points out that gender issues have been heavily discussed in the MOS field, with even a few journals dedicated to gender within organisational theory and praxis. Yet, still, race remains under-researched in MOS. In her reflections on the progress in the study of race in MOS since her seminal paper, "*The Emperor Has No Clothes: Rewriting "Race in Organisations*" (Nkomo, 1992), Nkomo (2021) asserts that there continues to be an alarming denial of the centrality of race in MOS. To that effect, Nkomo (2021) proposes the formation of a journal that focuses solely on race. Although a few scholars have engaged in race issues in organisations (cf. April, 2021; Prasad & Qureshi, 2017; Riad & Jones, 2013; Sisco, 2020; Thomas, 1990), there remain still gaps in the MOS Knowledge (MOSK) on race issues in organisations in different contexts, as Nkomo (2021) notes.

A noted limitation in MOS theorisation of race issues is that scholars ignore coloniality or colonial continuity logic, which is the ontological basis of racial difference – enabling persistent racial inequalities, domination and subjugation in global "colonial" organisations (limki, 2018). Further, limki (2018) notes that "inequality and exploitation in work are not merely structural effects but instead are ontological effects of the

institution of difference" in coloniality/modernity (p. 328). Iimki further warns that unless we reckon with coloniality, the ontological basis for racial difference which provides the rationale for racial inequalities, "any endeavour at justice or liberation remains troublingly incomplete" (2018, p. 328). Evidently, from the literature reviewed, few studies seek to interrogate the historical and political structures which undergird race and racism issues in organisations.

2.3. Race and Access to Top Management Positions

Few MOS scholars (cf. Atewologun & Sealy, 2014; Nzukuma & Bussin, 2011) have studied the intersection of racial identity and job seniority to explore the experiences of black managers in management positions. These studies found that black managers, regardless of their level of seniority, still experienced marginalisation, although differently from lower-ranked black employees. Nzukuma and Bussin (2011) argue that the experiences of marginalisation reduced black managers' tenure, as it forced them to change employment from one organisation to another within the South African corporate space.

Some studies were concerned with how black managers access those top management positions in the first place. These studies show that access to the top management ranks is a challenge for most black professionals as such access is granted based on ideas about racial difference, where 'other' bodies are deemed unfit to or atypical of the normal occupants of those roles (cf. Collins, 1989; Dar, 2019; Knight, Hebl, Foster, & Mannix, 2003; Myeza & April, 2021). As some scholars have noted, in white-dominated organisations, marginalised employees in senior management roles are regarded as being out of place, transgressing their normative social role, which then designates them as archetypical subordinates, not managers (Knight et al., 2003). As Puwar (2004) notes, black and other marginalised managers exist in the imagination of dominant white employees as "space invaders" or "bodies out of place".

The review of the literature reveals the paucity of MOS scholarship which places voices of the marginalised black managers at the centre to understand their struggles and triumphs in navigating white-dominated workplaces to access top management positions. Also, more studies are needed to explore context-specific

factors, such as underlying ideologies and power relations, that shape access to organisational opportunities for black managers, particularly at top management levels. Moreover, most studies focus on lower organisational levels rather than the top strata (Auster & Prasad, 2016). However, paying attention to the dynamics at the top organisational level can reveal how those who occupy seats in management ranks play a role in maintaining racial inequality in the organisation and subsequently shape access to organisational resources and development opportunities (Wyatt & Silvester, 2015).

Although focusing on social identities, such as racial or gender identity of the individual and their job seniority level is necessary, these approaches rarely pay attention to the historical and political contexts within which participants and organisations are located. It is vital to understand the deeper historical and political contextual factors in order to identify and dismantle the hidden power structures that maintain racial marginalisation and oppression in organisations (Holvino, 2010; Nkomo, 2011a; Opie & Roberts, 2017). Nkomo (2011b) cautions that examining organisation experiences of people in former 'colonised' locations without understanding the historical and political context is likely to lead to empty theorising. However, even "proper" contextualisation alone is not enough, as it might not necessarily offer emancipation possibilities to black professionals who are colonially oppressed (Banerjee, 2021; Jammulamadaka et al., 2021).

Power, Race and Access to Top Management Positions
Power is a ubiquitous term that has proven difficult and slippery to conceptualise (Clegg, Courpasson, & Phillips, 2006; Fleming & Spicer, 2003, 2014).
According to Geppert, Becker-Ritterspach, and Mudambi (2016), Stephen Lukes' pioneering work on a three-dimensional model for power analysis in 1974 has had a considerable impact on power discourse in the MOS sector. Lukes provides three degrees of power dimensions, as summarised by Clegg et al (2006): the one-dimensional idea given by Robert Dahl in 1957; the two-dimensional approach proposed by Bachrach and Baratz; and Lukes' own third dimension of power. Clegg et al. (2006), citing Dahl (1957), state that the first dimension of power identifies the powerful as those who can make actual decisions that control the powerless. The second dimension of power was defined by Bachrach and Baratz in 1962, which sees

power as visible when other actors are denied access to decision-making or their ideas are excluded from, or prevented from reaching, the agenda. Lukes offers his own third-dimensional approach, also known as the "radical view of power," which is defined as "power to prevent people, to whatever degree, from having grievances by shaping their perceptions, cognitions, and preferences in such a way that they accept their role in the existing order of things." (Lukes, 1974, p. 28). Recent scholars on organisational power have criticised Lukes, Bachrach, and Baratz's classical ideas of power as being excessively restrictive since they preclude the possibilities of active forms of social agency and the potential of the powerless to emancipate themselves (Clegg et al., 2006; Geppert et al., 2016).

However, in this study, the concept of power is adopted from Fleming and Spicer (2014), who defined organisational power as "the capacity to influence other actors with political interests in mind. It is a resource to get things done through other people, to achieve certain goals that may be shared or contested" (p. 239). These authors define "politics" as comprising "activity that rearranges relations between people and the distribution of goods (broadly defined) through the mobilisation of power" (Fleming & Spicer, 2014, p. 239).

To understand issues of race in organisations and how race shapes access to opportunities for racially marginalised employees, some scholars have suggested focusing on the power contest in organisations, how power difference was first generated, and how power difference affects organising practices and mechanisms (Zanoni, Janssens, Benschop, & Nkomo, 2009; Nkomo, 1992). Several MOS scholars have argued that organisations are power structures and sites of political struggle where powerful managers exercise power to protect and enhance their self-interests or group interests (Baker, 1978; Alvesson & Deetz, 2000; Clegg et al., 2006; Fleming & Spicer, 2014). For several other MOS scholars, race matters are at the centre of the struggle in organisations that are perceived to be white power structures and within which black bodies are given less power and status and sometimes exploited to maintain the white power structure (Canham, 2014; Canham & Williams, 2016; Dar, 2019; Dar et al., 2020; Dar & Ibrahim, 2019; Liu et al., 2021).

In organisations in formerly colonial geopolitical contexts, this power difference in those organisations is shaped by the colonial history of that territory. This is because organisations embedded in unequal 'colonial' societies play a role in replicating colonial patterns in the workplace and thus shape organisational relations and interactions between descendants of the black "colonised" and white "coloniser" (Myeza & April, 2021; Ulus, 2015). These persistent patterns reflect the persistence of continued colonial relations in the workplace, manifesting in racist ideas and practices, which become modes through which black professionals are subjugated, oppressed and disempowered (Dar, 2018, 2019; Dar et al., 2020; Dar & Ibrahim, 2019; Liu et al., 2021).

Although a few scholars have contributed valuable insights to the understanding of power and politics in the organisations, from a survey of the literature, analytical studies of power and politics and the place of race in these organisations, and how these variables shape mobility, or the career development of black professionals remain scarce. Moreover, the small body of scholarship within MOS does not explicitly expose power mechanisms enacted by the dominant white group to shape organisations. There is an urgent need for more politicised theorising of race in organisations if we are to properly examine power, its past and present sources and political bases, and its effects on the experiences of black and other racially minoritized employees in navigating global 'colonial' workspaces.

2.4. Influential Multi-Level Factors Shaping Experiences of Black Managers in Accessing Top Management Roles

This section reviews the literature on the multi-level (*macro, meso, and micro*) influential factors shaping black professionals' access to organisational opportunities and top management ranks. These factors have been studied at different analytical levels; societal, institutional, organisational, and interpersonal. From the literature survey, this section highlights the identified factors and how these factors shape the experiences of black professionals in accessing top management positions in different contexts. The section also points out the limitations and strengths of analytical approaches used in those previous studies, gaps in the literature, and opportunities to enhance future studies.

2.4.1. Social Influential Factors

Historical Influential factors

Histories of colonisation, chattel black slavery and apartheid continue to shape social and economic relations in the colonial world (Mbembe, 2017). These histories continue to reside in people's imaginations as racial ideologies and myths remain unchallenged and thus continue to influence the present realities in institutions and organisations (Cooke, 2003; Cornelius et al., 2019; Mollan, 2019). Similarly, other scholars argue socio-historical hierarchies based on colonial difference are (re)produced in private sector organisations and function to configure unequal power relations and workplace interactions (Jack & Westwood, 2011; Iimki, 2018; Liu, 2017b). As described in the next chapter, colonial difference results from colonial stratification and classification of the planet and its people, based on markers such as race, for the benefit of the colonisers, and those classifications remain intact in the world today (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018).

MOS scholars have pointed out that racial hegemonic power structures in organisations are historically grounded and intergenerationally inculcated by the global white supremacy ideologies (Dar et al., 2020; Liu et al., 2021). Liu and her colleagues describe white supremacy logic:

> White supremacy includes the more familiar and specific references to extremist, alt-right movements emboldened in the contemporary climate of explicit racial violence. Yet, it also extends beyond them to signify the broader set of social systems characterised by the coloniality of power. In this sense, white supremacy signifies a historically emergent, socially constructed and institutionally embedded racial hierarchy that enshrines white physical, cultural, intellectual and moral superiority (Liu et al., 2021, p. 106).

These scholars have pointed out the marginalising and dehumanising effects of white supremacy on black and other racially minoritized employees in the global 'colonial' workspace (cf. Dar & Ibrahim, 2019; Iimki, 2018; Liu et al., 2021). Corroborating this view, Chowdhury (2019) notes that white supremacy logic harms

black employees as "their daily lives and freedoms of expression are affected adversely" (p. 289). For instance, at the organisational level, white supremacy reifies unequal power dynamics that are used to limit black managers from holding empowered executive roles, as this is perceived to be a threat to white dominance in the workplace (Lowe, 2013; Mcginn & Milkman, 2013). Lowe (2013) asserts that white executives seek to keep executive leadership positions for white managers since black subjects "are unconsciously expected to carry followership and not leadership roles in organisations" (p. 160). Essed and Goldberg (2002) describe the process of racial exclusion that is intended to maintain white-dominated management levels as a form of "culture cloning", which they describe as "the systemic reproduction of white, masculine homogeneity in high-status positions" (p. 1068).

Scholars suggest that it is only through a deeper understanding of the historical past and present ideological, political and economic rationales that underpin and sustain 'colonial' organisation practices that we may be able to sufficiently address organisational racial inequalities (Nkomo & Al Ariss, 2014; Opie & Roberts, 2017). As Opie and Roberts emphasise, it is imperative that "scholars and practitioners explore the racist history that undergirds contemporary workplace discrimination and subsequently addresses it in ways that encourage actual change" (Opie & Roberts, 2017, p. 708). For example, in the South African context, several MOS scholars foregrounded the historical context of colonial apartheid in analysing the experiences of marginalised employees in navigating white-dominated organisations (cf. Myeza & April, 2021). These scholars all point to the colonial legacies of apartheid as they continue to shape social and organisational relations of domination and subordination between black professionals and their white counterparts (Motsei & Nkomo, 2016; Myeza & April, 2021; Nkomo, 2011a).

However, MOS scholars have not sufficiently engaged in "historical consciousness" research that would expose how colonial histories continue to produce colonial patterns in society and their implications on institutional and organisational practices and processes (Banerjee, 2021; Dar et al., 2020). Haitian anthropologist, Trouillot (2015), teaches us that history is not fixed is not in the past but informs present realities. The literature review throws into stark relief just how few studies have paid serious attention to how histories of colonialism, settler-colonial genocides,

chattel slavery, and apartheid continue to influence the present realities in institutions and society and the effects of historical continuity on marginalised employees (Cooke, 2003; Cornelius et al., 2019; Mollan, 2019). This has resulted "in the continued omission of the roles of Indigenous genocide, extractive settler-colonialism and black chattel slavery in contemporary capital accumulation and wealth disparity" (Dar, Liu, Martinez Dy, & Brewis, 2020, p. 4). This omission or inadequate historical contextualisation has led to "an epistemic blindness in most management theories because histories of race, racism and colonialism are excluded or glossed over" (Banerjee, 2021, p. 1).

Socio-economic Inequalities

Socio-economic inequality "creates, asserts, and institutionalises power inequalities" at the institutional and organisational level (Primecz et al., 2016, p. 129). A growing body of research in MOS illustrates how economic inequalities are produced and reproduced in organisations (Amis et al., 2018; Bapuji, 2015). Scholars point out that entrenched socio-economic inequalities not only negatively affect marginalised groups outside the organisation but also bear on employees who belong to those social groups; –their power and status within the organisation are informed by the broader socio-economic status and power of their social group. Consequently, their low power and status within organisations become the basis for their subjugation, marginalisation and disempowerment (Collins, 1989, 1993, 1997; Magee & Galinsky, 2008; Wilson, 1997), which results in organisational "access discrimination" that undermines their ascendancy to top management roles (Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Wormley, 1990; Wyatt & Silvester, 2015). Access discrimination is the systematic exclusion of "members of a subgroup of the population from entering a job or an organisation (Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Wormley, 1990, p. 64).

Few studies have explored how and why black managers continue to be marginalised and rendered vulnerable because of their economic precarity (Collins, 1989, 1997). Collins (1997) suggests that since black managers belong to the economically deprived populace, they have a less secure financial safety net in the US context. Scholars point out that entrenched socio-economic inequalities negatively affect marginalised racial groups outside the organisation, but also on employees who belong to those racial groups—as their power and status within the organisation are

inscribed on them based on the low socio-economic status and power of their racial group, and their low power and status in organisations become the basis for their marginalisation and disempowerment (Collins, 1989, 1993, 1997; Magee & Galinsky, 2008; Wilson, 1997).

However, the review of the literature reveals that there is still less context-specific clarity on how socio-economic inequality along racial lines was created in the first place, how they continue to be sustained (by which actors and their rationales), and the consequences on black and/or other racialised professionals navigating 'colonial' workspaces in specific contexts. More so, insufficient research suggests practical ways to address organisational inequalities linked to economic inequalities along racial lines in societies where organisations are embedded.

Socio-legal Contextual Factors

Scholars in countries that had racial segregation laws, such as apartheid in South Africa and Namibia, have pointed out that legislation such as Affirmative Action has acted as an enabler by which black managers have been able to penetrate management ranks from which they were formerly excluded(April, 2012, 2021; Myeza & April, 2021; Nkomo, 2011a). Similarly, in the USA context, Collins demonstrates that the only enabler that allowed black managers access to top management positions resulted from the Affirmative Action (AA) introduced after the civil rights movement (Collins, 1989, 1993, 1997). For Collins, although AA enabled black professionals to occupy top management positions, the political agendas of influential whites still controlled black professionals' access to top management levels. In South Africa, Nkomo (2011a) notes that white executives merely strived to comply by meeting the bare minimum AA requirements but did not engage in transformation efforts that could create equal and fair organisational cultures. Although few black managers were allowed into top management ranks, this did not change the status quo.

Institutional Level Influencing Factors

Scholarship shows that institutions (industry) may cooperate to form a site for group-based oppression—where one social group oppresses another group, thus (re)producing and enforcing intergroup asymmetries emanating from the surrounding society (DiTomaso et al., 2007; Soylu & Sheehy-Skeffington, 2015). Other scholars

have argued that institutions may collectively oppose state-led transformations to protect their own economic and other interests (Adams & Luiz, 2021; DiTomaso et al., 2007). In the USA context, for example, there is a clear agenda by the white social group to horde economic power, which is usually manifested at the institutional level (DiTomaso et al., 2007) "through norm-setting, interpersonal interaction and the shaping of rules at work" (Soylu & Sheehy-Skeffington, 2015, p.1101).

MOS and non-MOS scholars have argued that, historically, the private sector in Southern Africa was created as a means of capital accumulation for the advancement of the white minority through the maintenance of their economic dominance and the economic deprivation of the black majority (Canham & Williams, 2016; Dale, 2001; Ramphele, 2008). This historical white conservatism persists and has become part of the institutional logic of the private sector (Moore, 2020). Thornton and Ocasio (1999) define institutional logics as "the socially constructed, historical pattern of material practices, assumptions, values, beliefs, and rules by which individuals produce and reproduce their material subsistence, organise time and space, and provide meaning to their social reality "(p. 804). In their study, Adams and Luiz (2021) argue that white-dominated institutions in post-apartheid South Africa are reluctant to transform their organisations in alignment with the state's democratic pursuit of racial equality; thus, racial inequality persists. Moore (2020) has aptly labelled institutions bent on (re)producing racial inequality as 'white institutional spaces'. More (2020) describes 'white institutional spaces' as institutions reproduced by racist institutional practices, ideologies and discourse, which are often concealed signifiers of white power and privilege within that space.

Thus, white institutional spaces may continue to reproduce inequalities imposed by colonisation and apartheid and may resist efforts to transform to align with the new state's democratic pursuit of racial equality (Adams & Luiz, 2021; April, 2021; Nkomo, 2011a), and thus racial inequality persists as institutional racism (Heckler, 2019; Hennekam & Syed, 2018). By fostering institutional racism, institutions actively produce and entrench socio-economic inequalities through discriminatory organisational practices, such as unequal compensation levels and allocating managerial roles based on racial difference (Amis et al., 2018; Bapuji, 2015; Bapuji, Patel, Ertug, & Allen, 2020). Lower wages, seen through the race pay gap, are

enforced by relegating the racialised "Other" to low-paying positions, thus worsening the income inequality and ultimately increasing socio-economic inequality (Bapuji, Ertug, et al., 2020). Furthermore, Amis et al. (2018) note, "by choosing who to recruit into particular positions, who to promote to top managerial roles and how to allocate rewards, leaders of organisations potentially ensure that inequality is not only created but sustained" (p. 1135).

A more specific systematic exclusion practice that organisations enact collectively to limit access to top managerial positions for marginalised groups is through what Cooper, Baird, Foley, and Oxenbridge (2020) termed "normative collusion". Cooper et al. (2020) defined "normative collusion" as a process that generates "norms and practices within the industry ecosystem – composed of industry-specific structures, actors, and interactions – that work against women *and other marginalised employees*' ability to engage and progress in managerial careers" (p.1916, emphasis added). However, Cooper et al. (2020) do not explicitly reveal the historical and political forces that create and facilitate normative collusion mechanisms.

Other scholars have shown how institutionalised inequality runs through the organisation's value chain, such as the supply chain or Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs (Banerjee, 2018; McCarthy& Moon, 2018). Programs such as the CSR programs are sites where corporations exercise power to reinforce socio-economic inequality through the unfair distribution of value/reward to society, often facilitated through partnerships between different organisations (Bapuji et al., 2018; Banerjee, 2018; McCarthy& Moon, 2018, Riaz, 2015).

Although institutional theory in MOS has helped to identify the strategies or mechanisms that organisations enact at the institutional level to (re)create economic inequalities, more studies are still needed to understand the consequences of these institutionalised inequality-supporting practices and mechanisms (Bapuji, Ertug, et al., 2020). More crucially, there remains little understanding of the context-specific ways that organisations enact collective resistance to transformation or the collective modes they enact to (re)produce and entrench socio-economic inequalities. Despite factors such as the role of history in shaping institutionalised organisational behaviours and

practices, there is still limited research that explicitly explicates the historical (*the present past*), economic rationales, and political factors underpinning the strategic actions that organisations collectively enact to entrench economic inequality. In other words, institutional theories' explanation of economic disparities remains ahistorical and depoliticised. Moreover, as other authors have pointed out, institutionalist theorising of the role of organisations in sustaining inequalities has failed to account for power, power sources beyond the institution, and the self-interests of organisational actors (Munir, 2020; Willmott, 2015) tied to economic rationalities. Munir further points out that institutional theories lack an emancipatory agenda (Munir, 2020).

Thus, MOS must go beyond institutionalist analysis and adopt a theoretical lens that foregrounds *historicised* and *politicised* deep analysis of the collective organisations' behaviours to uncover the hidden institutionalised structures, such as the histories that underpin systematic organisational inequality-enforcing behaviours. As Nkomo and Al Ariss (2014) note, progress in reducing racial inequality in the workplace will only happen when there is a fuller understanding of how socio-racial power and privilege are historically grounded and how histories underpin institutionalised unjust practices and mechanisms.

2.4.2. Organisational Level Influencing Factors

Organisational Power, Inequality Regimes and Influence on Black Managers' Mobility/Professional Advancement

For Auster and Prasad (2016), power is at stake at the top of the organisation—where strategic decisions are made. Scholars have argued that the racial makeup of the Top Management Team (TMT) is crucial in setting the tone for the rest of the organisations (cf. Auster & Prasad, 2016; Cortina, 2008). The power wielded by white executives is exerted to set "the tone for the entire organisational *culture* and employees look to them for cues about what constitutes acceptable conduct" (Cortina, 2008, p. 62, emphasis added). In the same vein, MOS scholarship contends that racially disparate executive management team sends a signal of the particular racial ideologies and beliefs held by top managers that are diffused throughout the entire organisation and

may legitimise and normalise a racially unjust culture (Auster & Prasad, 2016; Romani, Zanoni & Holck, 2021; Sayed & Agndal, 2020).

At the top of the organisation, Romani et al. (2021, p. 9) note, management teams "exert power by producing and enforcing unfair categorisations, meanings, norms, rules, practices, processes, and moods that exclude, marginalise, and/or unequally reward specific categories of employees". Power imbalances are created and sanctioned at top levels and circulate throughout the organisation, creating privileges for white employees and disadvantage for the racialised "Other" employees (Al Ariss et al., 2014; Liu, 2017a; Nkomo & Al Ariss, 2014; Samaluk, 2014). Thus, Clegg, Courpasson and Phillips (2006) concluded that "to understand power means deciphering various forms of political economy in organisations; that is, the means that organisational leaders use to perpetuate power and the structures of dominance they strive to create and legitimise" (p. 17).

MOS scholars contend that the unequal distribution of organisational resources and opportunities is usually politically motivated (Clegg et al., 2006; Bunderson & Reagans, 2011; Fleming & Spicer, 2014). A management structure that is dominated by white serves as a mechanism through which whites are able to wield power over organisational resources, which they distribute to white employees at the expense of black and other racially minoritised employees (Bunderson & Reagans, 2011; Ray, 2019). As noted by Petitt (2009) and April and Singh (2018), the prominent mechanism of disempowering black executives is through limiting their decision-making power. Mithani and O'Brien (2021) state that the "decision-making process in organisations is vulnerable to multiple interests. Not only do actors carry different self-interests, such interests include the desire for personal gains and alignment with the group/network interests within and outside the organisation. Thus, the tendency of white top managers to horde decision-making power enforces and maintains organisational cultures that serve to privilege and protect white symbolic and material interests (Moore, 2020; Nkomo & Al Ariss, 2014).

In their study set in the South African context, April and Singh (2018) noted how asymmetrical racial power dynamics at executive management levels manifested through "empowered powerlessness". Empowered powerlessness is a concept April

and Singh used to explain a phenomenon experienced by South African black executives who were placed in positions of authority (senior job roles) but deprived of actual l power to make executive or strategic decisions (April & Singh, 2018). These black executives were often excluded from the real decision-making in covert and subtle ways (April & Singh, 2018). These 'tokenised' black executives were deprived of power, and, in return, organisations compensated them with high salaries to keep them locked in their powerlessness (April & Singh, 2018). In the same vein, Petitt (2009) refers to the limited power possessed by black executives in white-dominated organisations as 'borrowed power', implying that it is not an authentic power, as these black executives are denied decision-making power such as promotion decisions and organisation distribution of resources.

April and Singh (2018) argue that most black executives lack the agency to challenge or resist the practice of 'empowered powerlessness' in their workplaces. Instead, they mask their non-resistance by claiming 'tiredness' of fighting the power dynamics in their organisations with little change or admitting to being afraid to extract themselves from lucrative executive positions—mainly when they are often the first in their families to attain such positions. In this way, they may be accused of complicity with the practice of ongoing 'empowered powerlessness'. However, Lenhardt (2014) argues that the reluctance to critique or challenge 'workplace oppression' is not necessarily intentional but could be due to fear among the 'oppressed' of being further stigmatised and marginalised for "rocking the boat".

Acker (2006) notes that unequal power distribution in organisations and institutions creates 'Inequality regimes'. For Acker (2006, p. 443), 'Inequality regimes' are "interrelated practices, processes, actions, and meanings that result in and maintain class, gender, and racial inequalities within particular organisations". Organisational inequality regimes, as Acker (2006) notes, are linked to inequality in the surrounding society, its politics, history, and culture" (p. 443). Authors further point out that influential top managers, usually white males, facilitate inequality regimes, advertently or inadvertently, by enacting and re-enforcing organisational cultures that support their interests and those of the dominant group (Acker, 2006; Nkomo, 2011a). Acker defines organisational culture as "the sum of particular, often time and place-specific, images, attitudes, beliefs, behaviours and values" (Acker, 2012, p. 216).

Through these repressive cultures, unequal economic power structures are reproduced in organisations that uphold racial injustice in organisations (Liu, 2017b; Pullen et al., 2019; Romani et al., 2021).

From the literature survey, one notes that the study of power at the organisational level has contributed valuable insights, such as the power formation of inequality regimes. However, more research is needed that connects organisations to the expression at other levels. More importantly, the sources of power and rationales behind maintaining racial inequalities at the organisational level are not sufficiently linked to historical and political factors at the broader societal level.

Access to Organisational Resources: Support and Mentoring

Research has shown that because of their ascribed low power and status, black and other racially 'minoritized' professionals are likely to receive inequitable access to corporate resources and opportunities, resulting in organisational "access discrimination", which undermines their ascendancy to top management roles (Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Wormley, 1990; Wyatt & Silvester, 2015). Studies by Wyatt and Silvester (2015), drawing from a UK sample, and Thomas (2001), drawing from a US sample, both found that professional advancement to executive roles is usually slower and more challenging for black professionals than their white counterparts. One reason for this difference in mobility is ascribed to difference in access to both formal and informal support that black and white managers received from influential white executives. These studies found that compared to their black counterparts, white junior professionals received more and better support and mentoring, such as social networks, multiple mentors, guidance and secret information from influential white executives on how to get to senior levels (Thomas, 2001; Wyatt & Silvester, 2015). On the other hand, black and minority ethnic managers depend solely on formal organisational development opportunities—which are less effective than informal ones — to achieve their upward mobility goals (Thomas, 2001; Wyatt & Silvester, 2015).

Other scholars have concluded that the unequal distribution of organisational resources is usually politically motivated (Baker, 1978; Clegg et al., 2006; Bunderson & Reagans, 2011; Fleming & Spicer, 2014). This means that organisation resources

enable the propagation of personal and 'dominant' group interests within organisations, such as unfair promotion criteria imposed on black managers and conferring privilege to white employees (Nkomo & Al Ariss, 2014). Scholars have challenged the notion of achievement implied by meritocracy – an idea relied upon to legitimise the disproportionate success of white managers in executive positions compared to black and brown managers without recognising the ready privilege underlying that success, and thus concluded that the notion of meritocracy in racially unjust organisations is a myth (cf. Castilla, 2008; Castilla & Benard, 2010). In their study in the south African context, Nzukuma and Bussin (2011) found that racial hostility and lack of support led black managers to lack trust in their organisations to support their professional development. Instead, they opted to take control of their professional development by moving from organisation to organisation. This allowed them to take control of their careers by building their skill sets and competence, giving themselves a sense of being in control over their careers (Nzukuma & Bussin, 2011). However, Nzukuma and Bussin (2011) do not clarify if the movement of black managers from one organisation to another necessarily resolved the problem of racial discrimination and lack of support, as changing organisations may only move the problem to another organisation.

Job Allocations, Hiring, Promotion, and Tokenism

Scholars have noted that job segregation based on race is rife in white-dominated organisations (Ashcraft, 2013; McCluney & Rabelo, 2019; Ray, 2019). Ashcraft (2013) has coined the term 'Glass Slipper' to describe a phenomenon where systematic advantages and disadvantages come to mark some job positions as suitable for one social group and not for the other, based on racial or gender identities. For instance, In the USA context, McClune and Rabelo (2019) found that black women at management levels are primarily assigned to serve diversity and inclusion work, which proved to limit their mobility. Thus, the Glass Slipper may be detrimental to marginalised employees in management positions. The allocation of jobs based on racial difference is historical, as it is traceable to how white colonisers imagined the limited intellectual capacity of black people during the colonial-apartheid era. As Ruggunun (2016) points out, in terms of job allocation during apartheid, "there was something innate about the black body that rendered it cognitively and physically different and thus not suited for all types of work and labour" (p. 109). This colonial

and apartheid racial stereotype infantilised adult black workers as 'tea girls' and 'garden boys' (Canham, 2019).

Several studies have argued that power asymmetries in an organisation undermine the promotion of black managers to executive roles in white-dominated organisations (cf. Acker, 2006; Bunderson & Reagans, 2011; Fleming & Spicer, 2003; Nkomo & Al Ariss, 2014; Nkomo, 1992; Primecz et al., 2016). As a result, black managers may occupy senior or executive management positions as tokens, mostly to meet employment equity regulations quotas (Myeza & April, 2021; Nkomo, 2011a). We could view tokenism as a form of coercive and manipulative power enacted by influential white executives to extract value from disempowered black executives (Acker, 2012). As Dar and Ibrahim (2019) argue, the black body is "an affective body within a libidinal economy where its sense and sense-making are reconfigured and potentially manipulated through white power" (pp. 1244-1245). Tokenism results in the disempowerment of black managers by influential white executives who reduce the actual power and authority black managers hold in those managerial roles. In such a situation, black managers are vulnerable to exploitation.

Equity Policies- Diversity and Inclusion Ineffectiveness

Organisations enact policies such as Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI), and even Affirmative Action policies to address racial inequality in their workspaces. Still, these policies pale in the face of persistent racial inequalities. There are several reasons for the infectiveness of these policies. For instance, one body of research argues that organisations are complicit in reproducing asymmetrical racial power relations by enacting uncritical and 'power-neutral' racial diversity programs, policies and practices that implicitly maintain racial inequalities by assuming equal racial experiences for all employees (Ahmed, 2007b, 2009; Arciniega, 2020; Noon, 2007, 2017). These scholars argue that equity policies enacted by organisations characterised by unjust organisational cultures are likely to be ineffective or may serve a superficial purpose, which normalises and cements oppressive organisation culture. As a result, white values and standards are elevated and set as a standard for achieving inclusion (Ahmed, 2007b, 2009; Arciniega, 2020; Noon, 2007, 2017). This elevation of white norms and values leads to the reproduction of symbolic and material visual white

supremacy in the workplace, upending transformation efforts that those same policies seek to achieve (Liu & Pechenkina, 2016).

For scholars such as Noon (2017) and Holck (2016a, 2018), the structural inequalities in society act to mitigate against the effectiveness of organisational efforts, such as diversity training, to enhance equality. Although scholars have attributed the ineffectiveness of diversity interventions to the inequalities entrenched in organisations and society, more studies are needed to explore context-specific historical and political dynamics that inform those structural issues and explain why and how organisational policies, such as diversity and inclusion policies, are rendered ineffective.

Slow Transformation of Organisations

Although legislated transformation policies, such as Affirmative Action (AA), have introduced significant changes in the workplace, particularly in the private sector, these transformation policies are still deemed less effective (Acker, 2006; Nkomo, 2011a). Scholars ascribe the ineffectiveness of Affirmative Action policies in the workplace to uncritical attempts to transform or 'undo' inequalities in organisations with legislation, without at the same time disrupting or de-centring structures of inequality, as that may not create substantive equality (Canham, 2019; Nkomo, 2011a). Nkomo (2011a) argues that organisations have been focused on complying with the legislated equality laws for complying but cannot commit to the moral and care responsibility that the law seeks to promote. In turn, organisations may seem to abide by the regulations, but little transformation happens, or even worse, inequality may increase for the marginalised and minoritized employees (Ahmed, 2009; Liu et al., 2021). Acker (2006) argues that organisations may resist these laws to legitimise inequality anchored in the recalcitrant ideologies held by the dominant group. This resistance reflects white backlash ratified to keep the white domination status quo (Liu et al., 2021). Again, limited research explicitly shows how organisations embedded in different contexts implicitly or explicitly enact resistance against transformation laws and regulations. And there is still a lack of studies that illuminate associated context-specific reasons to explain the political or economic motivation behind organisational resistance to transformation.

As observed from the surveyed literature, several studies have recommended interventions, such as transformation policies, to promote organisational fairness and access equality and improve the numbers of black and other marginalised employees in the C-suite. However, these interventions remain ineffective. Thus, more research is needed to suggest ways of creating social and organisational environments in which these interventions may be effective. For instance, studies must be explicit about dismantling power structures that undermine the effectiveness of organisational interventions set to address racial inequality.

2.4.3. Micro-Level: Interpersonal and Intergroup Influential Factors

Racial Stereotypes, Racial Biases and Racial Discrimination
Scholarship on race and racism in organisations suggests that racial stereotyping plays a negative role in forming or enforcing employees' self-perceptions —negative stereotypes become internalised and shape the way black employees are viewed by their white counterparts and themselves (Alleyne, 2005; Myeza & April, 2021). Scholars have pointed out that negative racial stereotypes result in internalised racial oppression (Alleyne, 2005; Song, 2017), which could manifest through low self-esteem and inferiority complex among black employees (Alleyne, 2005; Nkomo, 2011), resulting in black and other minoritized managers of colour, creating their own psychological barriers that lead to self-exclusion (Alleyne, 2005; Liu, 2016). Self-exclusion among black employees from pursuing managerial roles arises from the fear of racial stereotypes if they fail to perform as expected and a sense of non-belonging in their workplaces (Alleyne, 2005; Canham, 2014).

Some scholars have highlighted that stereotypes and myths create unconscious racial bias—engaging in unconsciously (sometimes consciously) negative conceptualisation and subordinating the racial 'other' in workplaces (Ulus, 2015), which leads to racial bias which creates disparities in racial representation at executive management levels (Lowe, 2008; Nkomo & Ariss, 2014; Samaluk, 2014). Racial biases are habitually expressed subtly since blatant racism is easy to identify, prosecute, and punish, thus making racial biases difficult to tackle. As a result, it is argued that aversive racism has become more popular than overt forms of racism

(Deitch et al., 2003). Aversive racism is described as a form of "racism that allows for individuals to hold racist views while buttressing such views with non-racially based rationales (e.g. beliefs in opportunity and individual mobility), thus maintaining a view of themselves as nonprejudiced" (Deitch et al., 2003, p. 1301). Aversive racism is mainly expressed as subtle behaviours such as distancing or avoidance, unwillingness to offer assistance, unrecognition or unfriendly communication (Deitch et al., 2003). Aversive racism seeps into organisation practices and structures organisational processes, and practices tainted by aversive racism may be wrongly perceived as benevolent (Romani et al., 2018). Although subtle and hard to identify, aversive racism acts to limit and delay marginalised employees' ascendancy to top management positions (Deitch et al., 2003; Knight et al., 2003; Mokoena, 2020; Romani et al., 2018; van Laer & Janssens, 2011).

Although there have been some studies on stereotypes and aversive racism that impact black and minoritised employees, we still "know less about the structural contexts that yield and reinforce these distorted perceptions, and how to transform them" (McCluney & Rabelo, 2019, p. 149).

The White Gaze and Incivility

Rabelo, Robotham and McCluney (2021) described racial discrimination as emanating from what is commonly referred to as the 'white gaze'—the viewing of black and *blackened* bodies through a distorted whiteness lens. These scholars draw from Fanon (1967) to conceptualise the functioning of the white gaze in white-dominated organisations. For Fanon (2008), the white gaze is colonising, and he describes the gaze as the crushing weight of colonialism. Yancy (2008) describes the white gaze as possessing power drawn from whiteness. Thus, to gaze is to exercise power over the black subject, and this power is fed by the enduring 'colonial' power structure (Sithole, 2016). In the same vein, Ahmed (2007) whimsically notes that black bodies are inscribed with histories, which surface on their skin, attracting racial discrimination and dehumanisation. In essence, racial discrimination is shaped by the illusory ideologies of white superiority and black inferiority rooted in a history of colonisation, slavery and apartheid, which subject black bodies to misperception, control and scrutiny (Rabelo et al., 2021). Thus, these scholars empathise that the white gaze fixed on the black

body is a power apparatus used by individuals/actors holding power in the 'colonial' power structure to maintain the racialised social hierarchies (Rabelo et al., 2021).

Another growing body of research has viewed racial discrimination, and other forms of discrimination, such as gender and religious discrimination, as forms of incivility (Cortina, 2008; Soylu & Sheehy-Skeffington, 2015). These scholars suggest that workplace racial incivility is a socio-economic and historically-rooted systematic mechanism for dominant social group members (white managers) to assert their status, boost personal and collective self-esteem, and protect their privilege and control of organisational resources and opportunities (Cortina, 2008; Daniels & Thornton, 2019; Soylu & Sheehy-Skeffington, 2015). The effects of incivility "manifest in an imbalance of numbers or seniority in the organisation" (Soylu & Sheehy-Skeffington, 2015, p.1101). Authors view incivility as a form of hostility driven by a desire by the dominant group to psychologically dominate low-status groups into permanent subordinate positions (Cortina, 2008; Soylu & Sheehy-Skeffington, 2015). As a result, the subordination of the low-status group offer opportunities for the dominant group(s) to garner material or economic domination over low-status groups, including hoarding organisation resources, power and access to management roles, thus perpetually reinforcing racial discrimination and centring white privilege (Cortina, 2008, Liu, 2017a).

Furthermore, studies have noted that workplace racial incivility is socio-historically created and not solely rooted in individual behaviour, even though it manifests and is experienced at the interpersonal or intergroup level (Cortina, 2008; Motsei & Nkomo, 2016). These racially discriminatory and oppressive practices affect black employees' welfare, work performance, esteem, and health, undermining their perceived competence or fitness for top management positions (Alleyne, 2004, 2005; Deitch et al., 2003; Kenny & Briner, 2010).

Workplace Cross-Race Relationships and Interactions

Professional relationships are critical for employees to ascend to management levels, leading to improved job satisfaction and workplace well-being (Colbert, Bono, & Purvanova, 2016).

In their study set in the United Kingdom context, Wyatt and Silvester (2015) suggest that low-quality relationships between lower-level black managers and white elite managers created a chasm between them that played against black managers' opportunities to access influential mentors or sponsors who could help facilitate their advancement to executive management levels. For some scholars, the relationship between black and white professionals is tainted by colonial relations of power, which are reproduced in the workspace (April, 2021; Dar, 2018, 2019; Ruggunan, 2016). For instance, although theorising outside MOS, Lowe (2008) describes the tendency by whites to treat blacks as subordinates or objects as a manifestation of a notion that he calls the "colonial object relations". Lowe (2008) describes 'colonial object relations' as inherited from the psychological legacy of colonisation and slavery that places blacks under the white gaze as objects for white domination. In the same vein, Ulus (2015), from her study conducted in the Indian context, concluded that lingering colonial power patterns affected workplace emotions and negatively affected workplace relationships between the former coloniser UK workers and former colonised Indian employees.

There is a widely accepted notion among scholars that workplace professional relations and interactions are mediated by and are a product of power differentials. For instance, some studies show that managerial elites may impose power to influence employees' self-construction into desired subjects (cf. Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Canham, 2014; Dar, 2019; Humphreys & Brown, 2000; Wasserman & Frenkel, 2019). Canham (2014), Dar (2019), and Glass and Cook (2020) demonstrate that black managers were forced to contort themselves within the coloniality of power structure in their workplaces to attain proximity to influential white executives—who held power to facilitate their promotion or professional advancement. These studies suggest that interpersonal and intergroup experiences in the organisations are essentially socio-historical constructed inequalities in the society that are filtered through into organisations and act to influence interpersonal and intergroup workplace interactions.

At the interpersonal and personal levels, some studies have foregrounded racial identity, or intersection of identities, to explain the underrepresentation of black managers in the top ranks (cf. Kenny & Briner, 2010; Tomlinson, Muzio, Sommerlad, Webley, & Duff, 2013). Although these studies offer an explanation based on social identity, they rarely attend to the institutional and social contextual factors that may

underlie the racial discrimination that black and 'minoritised' employees experience. Therefore, these studies seem to be less explicit on the historically and politically conditioned power dynamics underlying black professionals' interpersonal and intergroup organisational experiences. Although focusing on racial identity at the individual or psychological level is helpful, it is essential to note that individuals are inseparable from their social context (Liu, 2020).

2.5. Theoretical Approaches to Studying Race and Organisational Experiences of Black Managers

As noted earlier, issues affecting black and other marginalised professionals in the colonial workspace have not received extensive attention in MOS. However, a few studies have deployed studies such as postcolonial and decolonial theories to examine the experiences of black and marginalised in these workspaces. These studies are briefly highlighted in the paragraphs that follow.

2.5.1. Postcolonial Theorising

There is a growing body of research that uses "postcolonial" theory to analyse how remnants of colonialism in different "postcolonial" contexts have a bearing on the experiences of the 'former' colonised organisational experiences (Jack & Westwood, 2011; Prasad & Qureshi, 2017; Ulus, 2015). The postcolonial theory seeks to explain how present conditions of control, domination and oppression between subjects in organisations in former colonised geopolitical territories result from the continuing effects of past colonialism and imperialism (Jack & Westwood, 2006; Jack et al., 2011; Prasad, 2003; Prasad & Qureshi, 2017; Nkomo, 2011). For instance, Ulus (2015) deploys postcolonial theory in the Indian context to examine emotions in what she calls a 'postcolonial workspace'. Ulus (2015) argued that lingering colonial relations were reproduced and affected workspace emotions, such as racial tensions between local Indian professionals and UK expatriates.

Although postcolonial management theorists have offered valuable insights into 'postcolonial' workspaces, postcolonial theory has been criticised for viewing colonisation as a project of the past; it does see traces of that legacy in the present but yet pays scant attention to the present or recognises colonisation to be an ongoing

project (Grosfoguel, 2011; Simmons & Dei, 2012). Another critique levelled against postcolonial theory by Non-MOS scholars is that postcolonial theory is heavily reliant on Eurocentric theories, thus reducing itself to a mere critique of Euro-modernity: Eurocentric critique possesses no threat to euro-modernity (Grosfoguel, 2011; Sithole, 2016).

The literature review in this current study shows that postcolonial management and organisation scholars seem to pay less attention to present-day mechanisms of colonisation or recolonisation of the racialised 'Other' in the workplace. However, these scholars have not exposed present-day actors or 'colonisers' and the practices and strategies they enact to ratify colonisation and re-colonisation in the organisation. Last, from the literature review, it would appear that postcolonial management theory, like institutional theory, seems to lack an emancipatory agenda beyond the critique of colonialism and its legacies.

Despite these shortcomings, the postcolonial framework has proven to be a valid theory that should not be abandoned, as Jammulamadaka et al. (2021) recommends. Although the postcolonial theory is not the main theoretical framework adopted in this study, this current study will engage findings from postcolonial management studies on race and racism in organisations to explore and understand black managers' experiences in contemporary Namibian private sector organisations. In doing so, Jammulamadaka et al. (2021) note, it allows scholars engaged with decolonising MOS knowledge an opportunity to "move along, in between and across" theoretical "spaces with a practical wisdom" (p. 731).

2.5.2. Adoption of Decolonial Theory in MOS

Decolonial thought contends that European colonisation is an ongoing project that should be dismantled to free presently 'colonised' subjects. The theoretical foundations of anticolonial and decolonial thought systems are described in little more detail in the next chapter (Chapter 3). Unlike postcolonial theory, both anticolonial and decolonial thought systems contest the 'post' in the postcolonial theory and post the concept of the 'colonial' to signify colonialism as an ongoing project that must be dismantled to emancipate the colonially oppressed (cf. Grosfoguel, 2011; Simmons & Dei, 2012).

Although there have been calls to decolonise MOS knowledge production, there is still little uptake of decolonial theory as an analytical tool in MOS. This limited decolonial theorising in MOS could be "due to the persistent reproduction of white patriarchal capitalist knowledge regimes" which ignore alternative forms of knowledge production" (Dar et al. 2020, p. 4). Evidently, at the time of writing this PhD thesis, I could locate only three studies that utilised decolonial theory. In one of those few studies, limki (2018) deployed coloniality analytics, outside a typical organisational setting, in an Indian context to examine the experiences of Indian surrogate mothers serving white couples. limki (2018) argues that the unequal relations between Indian surrogate mothers and white couples were defined by racial and gender difference informed by coloniality.

Another example, similar to limki (2018), is Manning (2021), who deployed postcolonial, decolonial and mainstream feminist theories to explore the experiences of a group of Mayan women weavers to understand how coloniality shaped their organising experiences. Manning (2021) uses decolonial and feminist theories to develop a methodological research approach she termed Decolonial Feminist Theory. Both limki (2018) and Manning (2021) deployed decolonial theory creatively to study the experiences of women outside of typical organisation settings and sought to understand their organisational experiences based on study participants' subjective lived experiences of the ongoing colonisation. Both studies pointed to how coloniality operated in different contexts to shape relations and intersubjectivities and its implications on the lived experiences of the colonially oppressed racialised 'Other'.

From the literature survey, it appears that MOS scholars are reluctant to deploy decolonial theories in their studies of organisational racial inequalities. Moreover, although the deployment of a decolonial view outside typical organisational settings are necessary to understand how histories shape the organising practices of people at the margins of society, there is still an insufficient examination of context-specific process or ways through which ongoing colonisation shape organisational practices (within typical organisational settings), and its effects on black and other racially minoritised professionals. For instance, virtually no studies in the MOS field explore the Namibian historical context and place the voices of the colonially oppressed at the centre. Scholars have noted that knowledge production in MOS continues to be

dominated by western scholars who pay little attention to non-western context specificities (Alcadipani, Khan, Gantman & Nkomo, 2012; Girei, 2017; Ibarra-Colado, 2006; Jammulamadaka, Faria, Jack & Ruggunan, 2021).

2.5.3. Application of Anticolonial Thought in MOS

Nkomo (2011b) calls to include anticolonial thought in MOS scholarship. Briefly, anticolonial thought is a theoretical framework that centres on dismantling colonial continuities through decolonisation processes. Anticolonial thought draws inspiration from anticolonial political struggles, such as the African anticolonial liberation movements (and the writings of the anticolonial activists and thinkers that spearheaded the liberation movements), to emancipate the present-day colonially oppressed subjects (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001; Nkomo, 2011b; Simmons & Dei, 2012). This theory shares similar theoretical fundamentals with decolonial thought advanced by scholars in Latin America.

Since Nkomo (2011) made the call in 2011 to engage anticolonial analytics in MOS research, the call has not been heeded. At the time of writing this thesis, there was virtually no MOS study that applied anticolonial analytics to the study of race issues in organisations. Some scholars argue that this limited engagement with anticolonialism is not entirely accidental (cf. Muzanenhamo & Chowdhury, 2021). Muzanenhamo and Chowdhury (2021) note that the absence of scholarship based on non-western theories, particularly black scholarship, is attributed to white hegemony and epistemic injustice in MOS. Further, these scholars argue that MOS tends to relegate knowledge outside of the western worldviews to the periphery since, in the imaginary of the west, this alternative knowledge is rendered useless if not dangerous (Muzanenhamo & Chowdhury, 2021). In the same vein, Dar et al. (2020) have openly called out the business school, a site where most MOS knowledge is produced, as racist. Dar and her colleagues joined other scholars in their accusations of the MOS field as complicit in reproducing epistemic coloniality and called for decolonising MOS knowledge production (cf. Alcadipani et al., 2012; Girei, 2017; Jammulamadaka et al., 2021; Muzanenhamo & Chowdhury, 2021).

This study, therefore, seeks to respond to Nkomo's (2011) unanswered call by adopting an anticolonial lens to examine the experiences of black managers in accessing top management positions in the Namibian private sector. As explained in Chapter 3, the decision to adopt anticolonial theory in this study is also motivated by a political intention to transgress epistemic coloniality inherent in MOS knowledge production (cf. Alcadipani et al., 2012; Ibarra-Colado, 2006) by using alternative theoretical frameworks to search for new meaning. In the search for deeper meaning, this study deploys both anticolonial and decolonial thought to uncover the historical and political issues underpinning black managers' experiences navigating the Namibian private sector to secure top management positions.

2.5.4. Emancipation Agenda in MOS

There is an emerging stream of theorising in MOS that calls for consciousness-raising of organisation and society members, both the oppressed and oppressors, as a way to address oppression and realise liberation or emancipation possibilities (cf. Auger, Mirvis, & Woodman, 2018; Chowdhury, 2019; McCarthy & Moon, 2018). Likewise, other MOS scholars have also noted the benefits of individual and collective liberation, such as increased authenticity, self-realisation, and autonomy (Alvesson & Willmott, 1992; Barros, 2010). However, with few exceptions, such as Chowdhury (2019), MOS scholars have overlooked the need to theorise or propose emancipatory options for colonially oppressed black and other racially minoritized employees in global 'colonial' workspaces despite research that has revealed the dehumanising effects of coloniality on these groups of employees (cf. Dar & Ibrahim, 2019; limki, 2018; Liu et al., 2021). From a critical standpoint, this silence is not viewed as purely unintentional but seems to reflect the notion that some topics in MOS are considered "taboo" (Hudson, Okhuysen, & Creed, 2015). For Hudson et al. (2015) 'taboo topics' are those topics, such as race, considered off-limits or rather uncomfortable truth for MOS scholars, resulting in lacklustre theorising on these issues, making MOS field complicit in perpetuating black employees' oppression (Chrispal et al., 2020; Hudson et al., 2015). The predisposition to hold some issues as taboo thus renders MOS complicity in maintaining coloniality and white supremacy in the global 'colonial' workspace (Chrispal et al., 2020).

To transgress the taboo and contribute to moving MOS from its colonial entrapment, Jammulamadaka et al. (2021) invite MOS scholars to engage in *praxistical* theorising—enacting theoretical and praxis intervention as a decolonising exercise.

2.6. Summary of Identified Gaps in the Literature

The limited research on black and brown employees' experiences focused at multiple analytical levels to nuance how different factors at each level shape the experiences of black managers in 'colonial' workspaces. Many studies that employed one level of analysis, e.g. organisational (meso) level, have uncovered valuable insights that bear on the experiences of black managers at those respective levels. However, there's little understanding of how those factors intersect or the hidden linkages between the influential factors at different levels act to shape the experiences of black professionals in organisations in those specific contexts.

MOS scholars have long noted the influence of power in creating societal and institutional level inequalities and the effects of those inequalities on black managers in organisations (cf. April, 2012; Nkomo, 1992; Wilson, 1997). Yet theories and methods for examining organisational power—its historical sources, political and economic bases of organisational power structures, and their effects on black and other racially minoritized professionals—are rarely deployed in MOS research, creating what Banerjee (2021) calls an 'epistemic blind spot'. This epistemic blind spot limits researchers from exposing the hidden structures that underpin and naturalise organisational racial inequalities. On the contrary, most MOS studies focus on the surface-level manifestations of those concealed power structures. For example, few studies go beyond theorising the manifestations of racial inequalities to uncover factors functioning behind the scenes to sustain that racial inequality. These studies are usually depoliticised, decontextualised, and lack an emancipatory agenda oriented toward dismantling structures or sources of power asymmetries that foster persistent racial inequalities.

More concerning, there's virtually no research n MOS that offers emancipatory possibilities, for example, through self-determination, for black employees who continue to suffer the burden of coloniality in global 'colonial' workspaces. Instead,

studies are bent on addressing surface-level issues and increasing black 'body count' on management levels without dismantling the oppressive structures or supporting colonially oppressed employees in their struggle against everyday colonial practices in their workplaces. This silence on emancipatory possibilities theorising resulting from analytical blind spots renders MOS complicit in maintaining coloniality in global 'colonial' workspaces. Therefore, some scholars have argued that this tendency to only engage with race issues at the surface level reflects that MOS scholars view race issues as taboo or uncomfortable truth to interrogate deeply (Chrispal et al., 2020).

Finally, to address the above shortcoming, some scholars have called for decolonising MOS knowledge production. Despite research that has called for decolonising MOS, the majority of research on race issues and persistent racialised inequalities in organisations continues to be studied through Eurocentric worldviews. Although the critique of western hegemony in MOS is necessary, there are virtually no practical examples that clearly illustrate how to deploy theories and methods to carry out a decolonised MOS research. Although very few MOS studies have deployed decolonial theories as analytical tools (cf. limki, 2018), I could not allocate studies that deployed decolonised research methods. For example, a methodological approach rooted in 'indigenous' epistemologies. Therefore, this reveals that epistemic coloniality in MOS thrives despite the growing criticisms laid against it. Thus, this research attempts to address the above-noted shortcomings and gaps, intending to enhance the relevance of MOS knowledge.

2.7. Conclusion

The chapter provided a snapshot of the scholarly work on race and racial inequalities in organisations and its effects on black and brown employees. Because of the limited research on race in organisations, fewer studies have focused on the interplay of societal, organisation and interpersonal/intergroup levels influencing factors underpinning organisational experiences of black managers. The chapter highlights gaps in the literature, and crucial among those gaps is that MOS studies have focused on surface level issues underpinning the experiences of black managers. The sources and functioning of power dynamics that underlie these experiences remain understudied. Thus, this study takes a *historicised* or "historical conscious" and politicised approach grounded in anticolonial and decolonial thought to explore the

visible and obscured factors influencing the organisational experiences of black managers in accessing top management positions within the contemporary Namibian private sector. I describe anticolonial and decolonial theories in the next chapter and provide an outline of their analytical application to this study. The next chapter also offers a brief description of the context of this study – Namibia and the Namibian private sector, for readers who are not familiar with the context.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Foundations and Study Context

3.1. Theoretical Foundation: Anticolonial and Decolonial Thought Systems

3.1.1. Introduction

This first section of the chapter aims to provide a clear picture and describe the two theoretical traditions adopted in this study, namely, the anticolonial and decolonial theories. This first section of the chapter discusses the foundations of the anticolonial and decolonial theories. The section also discusses the rationale for adopting the two theoretical frameworks, their similarities, and how the two were linked to form an analytical framework used to interpret the findings of this study.

3.1.2. Anticolonial and Decolonial Adoption Rationale

Ruggunan and Sooryamoorthy (2019, p. 8) note that "producing management scholarship is a deeply political act embedded in the identity, politics and epistemological viewpoints of its scholars". Other scholars have criticised MOS scholars for perpetuating epistemic coloniality by centring Eurocentric epistemologies and worldviews while decimating and erasing other forms of knowledge or alternative ways of knowing (Alcadipani et al., 2012; Banerjee, 2021; Girei, 2017; Ibarra-Colado, 2006; Jammulamadaka et al., 2021). As a result, this epistemic coloniality undermines deep analysis and understanding of race and racism issues in organisations, thus lessening the theorising on how to dismantle the persistent racial inequalities within organisations (Dar et al., 2020; Liu et al., 2021). This outcome is evidenced in limited theorising of possible emancipatory praxis for the colonially oppressed employees in MOS literature, which render MOS complicit in the colonial violence involving colonising. Thus, it would be safe to say that MOS continue to forge the theoretical tools on imperial and colonial epistemic resources, which reproduces the same violence academics seek to address. Therefore, it is time for new theoretical tools forged outside the western worldview. It is time for anticolonial and decolonial theories to problematise the persistent racial inequalities and their effects on society and organisations.

Moreover, this PhD is a political project tied to the black liberation project that seeks to transgress the epistemic colonisation of knowledge production by western hegemonic epistemologies in MOS. To this end, I am guided by the notion that

scholarship should be relevant to the local populace and must be targeted toward social justice and making the world a better place (Moya, 2011).

Decolonial scholars have argued that the pretentious objectivity foregrounded in the name of universalised Eurocentric rationality is a way to colonise research and knowledge production (Mignolo, 2014; Smith, 2012). On the contrary, my intention is aligned with Flyvbjerg (2006, p. 370), who asked MOS scholars to "empower and re-enchant" MOS research by producing knowledge that applies to the local context where they live in a "way that matters". A way that matters to me is adopting anticolonial and decolonial thinking to examine the historical and political underpinnings of the contextual factors shaping participants' experiences. I vowed to do so in anti-oppressive or anticolonial ways by focussing on participants' subjective positions and voices of participants to allow them to 'speak back' – giving back voices to those who have been marginalised, silenced, and understudied in MOS scholarship (Alcadipani et al., 2012; Mir & Mir, 2012; Muzanenhamo & Chowdhury, 2021). In doing so, I am answering the call to decolonise MOS (Banerjee, 2021; Girei, 2017; Ibarra-Colado, 2006; Jammulamadaka et al., 2021; Ruggunan, 2016).

The following sections discuss the theoretical foundations of anticolonial and decolonial theories and how I brought the two approaches together to form an analytic tool used in this study.

3.1.3. Anticolonial Thought

Nkomo (2011b), citing Young (2001), describes Anticolonialism as a counter-discourse that "places value on collectives who are cognisant of differences but unite around common struggles against social structures of oppression" (p. 29). At the root of anticolonial thought acknowledges that colonialism is an ongoing project, not something in the past. Colonisation, as (Mudimbe, 1988, p. 2) describes it, is "the domination of physical space, the reformation of natives' minds, and integrating local economic histories into western perspective". Anticolonial thought foregrounds history and views history as encapsulated in the present; thus, the past is a source to draw inspiration for anticolonial political mobilisation in forming tools to counter the unrelenting present colonial continuities (Dei, 2017).

African anticolonial thought has two dimensions; the first dimension is the political struggle for liberation, and the second one is the epistemological analytic

dimension. Anticolonial thought primarily draws from the revolutionary scholarship of African and *diasporic* African scholar-activists and revolutionary leaders, such as Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, Kwame Nkrumah, Amilcar Cabral, and many other intellectuals who spearheaded the African revolution that brought about African national political independence after the second world war (Dei, 2006, Nkomo, 2011b). Thus, African anticolonial thought in totality appreciates the African nationalist movement and its history as a source of inspiration in the resistance to the unending colonisation and imperialism. The African nationalist history serves as a reminder that Africans have always resisted colonial oppression (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001). In the African context, anticolonial thought is grounded in the historical struggles of black people and the pursuit of total liberation of African people, their resources, land, minds, and spirits. The political freedom brought by African revolutionary leaders was not just a political act to reclaim their property but to reclaim their economic liberation and full humanity. Yet, that total freedom vision remains an unfinished project (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013).

Anticolonial theorists view colonisation as a 'double-edged sword' that dehumanises both the coloniser and the colonised (Césaire, 2000; Fanon, 2004). Césaire (2000) describes the double harm of colonisation aptly when he states that: "First we must study how colonisation works to *decivilize* the coloniser, to brutalise him in the true sense of the word, to degrade him, to awaken him to buried instincts, to covetousness, violence, race hatred, and moral relativism" (p. 35). For instance, Césaire (2000) contends that Nazism resulted from European atrocities against Africans that turned some Europeans, such as Hitler, into savagery, forcing them to enact a "European colonialist procedure" on other Europeans (p. 36).

As an analytical apparatus, anticolonial thought insists that uncovering the historical processes that formed the present global dispossession and oppression of black people is necessary to forge a struggle against the current ongoing colonial situation. As Simmons and Dei (2012, p. 71) note, "the historical specificities of colonisation, is a place where knowledge dwells for colonially oppressed peoples". Thus, anticolonial thinkers assert that it is crucial to understand the history of European colonisation and imperialism in Africa through a trans-historical viewpoint that holds histories as not lost to the past but locked in the present and shaping the future. From this viewpoint, anticolonial thought posits the notion of the 'colonial'. Simmons and Dei (2012) note that the 'colonial' signifies a reading of colonialism as a current event, and

this reading is "relevant to the present in which both nations, states and communities, as well as bodies and identities, are engaged as still colonised and resisting the colonial encounter" (p. 67).

Fanon (2008) points out that colonisation of the black subject continues through what he calls the '*Historico-racial*' schema, which he describes as historical racial mythology created by white people, imposed on black people, thus shaping their agency and identity in the anti-black world. The continued necessity of forcing his corporeal schema into the structure of the *historico-racial* schema eventually results in the collapse of Fanon's corporeal schema to reveal a second schema: the "racial epidermal" schema. Unlike the historic-racial schema, which merely forces a history upon Fanon, the 'racial epidermal' schema functions metonymically. Fanon (2008) figuratively describes the epidermal racial schema as mythology constructed by whiteness, whose effects he described when he stated that: it "made me responsible at the same time for my body, for my race, for my ancestors" (p. 92). Fanon (2008) describes the 'racial epidermal' schema as internalising the 'skin', implying that the racial myths attached to the skin are internalised by both the colonised and the coloniser and serve as the reference when defining the 'being' of the colonised.

Anticolonial thought is an analytical and practical intervention framework that interrogates and re-examines power differences as configured by colonial relations (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001). For Dei and Asgharzadeh (2001), anticolonial thought engages with *Indigeneity*, spirituality, agency and resistance, the politics of knowledge production in challenging colonial impositions, and the ongoing presence of colonialism in institutions such as schooling, corporations, which are a bastion of imperialism and also fertile sites for decolonisation.

Thus, in this study, anticolonial thought is applied to the analysis of the experiences of black managers in the private sector by linking the colonial histories of Namibia to the present conditions and their implications on black managers' ascendancy to top management positions.

Decolonisation: Liberation, Resistance, Agency, and Self-Determination

According to Nkomo (2011b), African anticolonial thinkers criticise not only colonialism but sought solutions to address continued colonisation, anti-black racism, and

imperialism to improve the oppressed black people's condition. Anticolonial thought focuses on the right to self-determination for the colonially oppressed (Ahluwalia & Zegeye, 2001; Biko, 2004). Furthermore, anticolonial thought posits liberation as mostly achievable through developing alternative systems that counter colonial and imperial power systems in ethical and non-oppressive ways (Biko, 2004; Fanon, 1967b, 2004). In essence, anticolonial thought provides solutions or modes of resistance against the ongoing colonisation to reclaim the humanity of the black/African and other 'colonised' subjects (Nkomo, 2011b). As such, anticolonial scholars and activists have unmasked colonial continuities and its pillars of global white supremacy, globalisation, and neo-colonialism and exposed the role these visible and invisible oppressive systems play in constructing the position and subjectivities of the African subject in this anti-black world (Biko, 2004; Chinweizu., 1987; Mamdani, 1996; Rodney, 2012). This intervention makes up 'decolonisation', which is a liberation practice of freeing the colonised from all structures of oppression (political, economic, epistemic, spiritual, cultural) to restore their dignity and, in the process, create new humanity (Biko, 1978; Fanon, 2004, 2008). Fanon (2004) describes decolonisation aptly by saying:

> Decolonisation is quite simply the replacing of a certain species of men with another species of men [...]. Decolonisation never takes place unnoticed, for it influences individuals and changes them. It transforms spectators crushed with their inessentiality into privileged actors, with the grandiose glare of history's floodlights upon them. It brings a natural rhythm into existence, introduced by new men, and with it a new language and a new humanity. Decolonisation is the veritable creation of new men […]. The 'thing' which has been colonised becomes man during the same process by which it frees itself. In decolonisation, there is, therefore, the need for a complete calling into question the colonial situation. If we wish to describe it precisely, we might find it in the well-known words: 'The last shall be first and the first last'. Decolonisation is the putting into practice of this sentence. (pp. 35-37)

Fanon (2004) views decolonisation as a way to liberate the oppressed black people who have been excluded from humanity for so long, who he described as 'the wretched of the earth'. Sithole (2016) explains Fanon's view of decolonisation as a demand for freeing black people from subjection and subjugation by white colonial

tyranny, which essentially means that black people "should tenaciously militate for liberation" (p. 24). Fanon (2004) states that the decolonising exercise requires overhauling social and institutional systems by dismantling the colonial power upholding those systems. Thus, similar to Fanon (2004), other African anticolonial authors call for a holistic approach to decolonising akin to 'holistic healing', including decolonising the spirit, knowledge, and economies (Ani, 1994; Biko, 2004; Chinweizu., 1987; Thiong'o, 1986) as the first level of resistance and counter efforts to dismantle colonial oppression (Nkomo, 2011b). To achieve decolonisation, Fanon (2004) and later Biko (2004) called for Black Consciousness as a liberation political framework that inspires black people to militate against all forms of colonial oppression and assist them in their efforts towards self-determination.

Black Consciousness as Decolonisation Praxis

Borrowing from Fanon, Biko (2004) maintained that liberation requires affirming the consciousness of the oppressed black people. Biko called for Black Consciousness (BC) as a philosophy of struggle to regain the humanity of black people who have been dehumanised by colonialism (slavery, apartheid, and racial capitalism) and to create oppositional discourse against the white narrative of race (2004). Biko describes Black Consciousness as a philosophy that:

> Expresses group pride and the determination of the blacks to rise and attain the envisaged self […]. At the heart of this kind of thinking is the realisation by the blacks that the most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed. (2004, pp. 101-102)

Similar to other African anticolonial scholars and revolutionary leaders, Biko (2004) understood that rescuing the African psyche from the clutches of colonialism is the first step toward decolonisation (Chinweizu, 1987; Biko, 2004; Thiong'o, 1986). Similarly, Paulo Freire (2017) called for *Conscientisation*[3] or critical consciousness as a crucial step toward the emancipation of the oppressed. For Biko (2004), critical consciousness was essential for self-determination, and reflected in his statement when he stated:

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[3] Paulo Freire (2017) define *Conscientisation* as the cultivation of critical awareness of the oppressed 's oppressive situation and then taking action to change their situation.

Black consciousness seeks to show the black people the value of their standards and outlook. It urges black people to judge themselves according to these standards and not be fooled by the white society, which has whitewashed themselves and made white standards the yardstick by which even black people judge each other. (2004, p. 33)

Today, several African anticolonial scholars maintain that Black Consciousness is still relevant in (post) apartheid South Africa (by extension Namibia) since colonialism and apartheid persist in different disguised forms (cf. Maart, 2014b; Sithole, 2016). Thus, Black Consciousness remains a necessary tool for forging solidarity among the economically oppressed black majority against colonial-apartheid continuities and white supremacy so that they can thrive and not just survive (Maart, 2014b; More, 2012). Sithole (2016) strongly argues that black people must wage a struggle against the global racism that dehumanises them, and this struggle must "not be controlled by the liberal ethos" and black ought to "think in terms of politics outside the imagination of the white liberal register" (p. 27).

Anticolonial thinkers posit that the ongoing global black oppression is rooted in colonialism (in its past and present forms) that inflicted and continues to inflict harm on the Africans' body, psyche and spirit (Ani, 1994; Biko, 2004; Chinweizu., 1987; Manganyi, 2019) and disrupted their languages (Mazrui & Mazrui, 1998; Thiong'o, 1986), resulting in their displaced sense of being, and thus leading to what Fanon (2004) calls 'alienation'. Fanon states that because the colonised has been alienated from herself, she resorts to mimicking the coloniser and thus further pushes the colonised away from herself. This coloniser-colonised relation has snatched the souls of Africans and other colonised people he called the 'wretched of the earth' (2004). Thus, the liberation of black subjects through self-determination will create what Fanon (2004) terms a "new humanism", which is a "new black men [human], and with it, a new language and a new humanity" is formed (p. 36). Therefore, anticolonial thought views decolonisation of the colonially oppressed as a practical tool for restoring the humanity of the colonised black subject. As part of decolonisation, anticolonial thought posits cultural and spiritual rituals as a necessary tool to invoke decolonisation of the African mind, thus restoring the African into humanity (Ani, 1994; Somé, 1993, 1999). Diop (1974, 1991) called for the reclaiming of the knowledge of Africa and the restoration of pre-colonial history that was lost and destroyed by colonial invaders.

Chinweizu (1987) argues for forming a culturally based African identity that incorporates harmless elements of modernity congruent with an African ethos.

Table 1 below outlines the key elements that characterise an anticolonial analytical framework.

Table 1: Key Features of Anticolonial Analytical Framework

Feature	Description
Race	Centres race as the central organising principle of colonisation but acknowledges the interlocking nature of race with other systems of dominations such as gender, age, spirituality, etc
Historical Consciousness	Foreground historical formation of colonial and re-colonial relations. Awareness of the history of past resistance enacted by the oppressed serves as a source of inspiration for resisting colonialism.
Political	Politically motivated to dismantle the 'colonial', which is the persistent colonial structures after formal colonial administration ended.
Trans-historical Analysis	View colonialism not as a past event but as an ongoing/current event. This viewpoint holds the colonial encounter as trans-historical rather than historical because it endures over time to continue colonising people and places to benefit the 'coloniser'.
Voice	Centres the voices and lived experiences of the colonised. Anticolonial thought is an epistemology of the oppressed.
Liberation	Inclined to give agency, power, and voices to the oppressed to forge resistance against the 'colonial'.
Identity as epistemic resource	Reject the narrow view of objective reality that insists on separating the researcher from the research. Instead, accepts the researcher's identity, mainly dominated/colonised identity, as a research resource.
Epistemic freedom	Seek liberation from epistemic colonialism and valorise indigenous ways of knowing

Adapted from Ani (1994); Dei (2017); Dei and Asgharzadeh (2001); Fanon (1967), (2004); Moya (2011); Nkomo (2011b); Simmons and Dei (2012)

Since Nkomo (2011) made the call to engage anti-colonial analytics in MOS research, it was noted that the call was not given recognition. At the time of writing this thesis, there was virtually no MOS study that applied anticolonial analytics to the study of race. Therefore, this study seeks to be one of the few studies to respond to Nkomo's (2011) call by adopting an anti-colonial lens to examine the experiences of black managers in accessing top management positions in the Namibian private sector. This decision is also motivated by a political intention to transgress epistemic and white supremacy ordeal in MOS that ignores black scholarship and undermines local experiences of 'colonised' subjects.

3.1.4. Decolonial Theory

Decolonial thought emerged out of Latin America, although inspired by African anti-colonial thought (Maldonado-Torres, 2017). At its core, decolonial theory/thought foregrounds the colonial continuities that persist after formal colonial administration have ended (Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Mignolo, 2007; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013; Quijano, 2007). As an analytical tool, decolonial theory seeks to make visible the often invisible and de-centre the global colonial power structures that continue to define present social, economic, cultural, knowledge, and racial relations of domination (Grosfoguel, 2004; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). Decolonial scholars have named this enduring colonial power matrix 'Coloniality of Power' (or, in short, 'coloniality'). Furthermore, these scholars contend that 'modernity' or the discourse of modernity, expresses coloniality; thus, coloniality and modernity are the two sides of the same coin (Mignolo, 2007; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018).

Coloniality of Power (CoP)

Decolonial scholars empathise that there is a difference between colonialism and coloniality. Coloniality refers to "the longstanding patterns of power that emerged from colonialism and continue to define culture, labour, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production, long after the end of direct colonialism" (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p. 243). Thus, in the Namibian context, coloniality of power explains why present economic, social relations, and racial hierarchies reflect those of the colonial and apartheid era. Moreover, it has been noted that coloniality of power expresses itself differently according to the historical context of the territory (Maldonado-Torres, 2007).

Other scholars have stated that coloniality of power is the mode through which historical white supremacy tendencies are sustained and normalised (Liu et al., 2021). Liu and her colleagues describe white supremacy as signifying "the wider set of social systems characterised by the coloniality of power. Moreover, white supremacy signifies a historically emergent, socially constructed and institutionally embedded racial hierarchy that enshrines white physical, cultural, intellectual and moral superiority" (Liu et al., 2021, p. 106).

Decolonial scholars confirm that the coloniality of the power matrix expresses itself through matrices of power, namely: the coloniality of being (Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Wynter, 2003); the coloniality of knowledge (Mignolo, 2007; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013; Quijano, 2000); the coloniality of labour (Quijano, 2000, 2007); and the coloniality of the economy (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Quijano, 2000). According to Mignolo and Walsh (2018, p. 185), colonial difference – a result of "classifying and ranking people and the planet" define coloniality. Furthermore, Mignolo and Walsh (2018) describe the colonial difference as an epistemic mechanism with ontological consequences" (p. 185). Mbembe (2017) notes that 'difference is the result of a work of abstraction, classification, division, and exclusion – a work of power that, afterwards, is internalised and reproduced in the gestures of daily life, even by the excluded themselves' (p. 183). Thus, the colonial difference in the contemporary Namibian society, for example, inculcated hierarchies that define social and economic relations, using biological racial markers as an organising principle, which creates power asymmetries by valorising white bodies, subjectivities, and rationalities, and devaluing bodies, subjectivities, and rationalities of the black racialised 'Other' (Fanon, 2008; Mbembe, 2017). The next segment describes those power matrices highlighted in the above paragraphs.

- ***Coloniality of Being***

The concept of coloniality of being draws from the colonial continuity of the colonial racist imagination of the colonised and racialised people as a non-being or less than human, thus construed as /things/objects or not fully human (Fanon, 2004; Grosfoguel, 2016; Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). Therefore, this racist imagination strips the racialised 'Other' of ethical value (limki, 2018; Maldonado-Torres, 2007). For Maldonado-Torres (2007, p. 259), coloniality of being is a process where the racialised 'Other" is denied ethical treatment, and these "exceptions to

ethical relationships become the norm". Similarly, Grosfoguel (2016, p. 10) notes that for victims of the coloniality of being, "the extension of rights, material resources and the recognition of their subjectivities, identities, spiritualities, and epistemologies are denied". In other words, ethical considerations are forgotten in imposing coloniality of being on the racialised black being and thus dehumanising the black subject. Historically, colonial racism turns racialised black bodies into sites upon which white supremacy is exercised or finds its meaning and tendencies normalised and naturalised (Grosfoguel, 2016; limki, 2018).

- ***Coloniality of the Economy***

The coloniality of the economy signifies the continued domination over access to economic resources through global capitalism. In former colonies, the coloniality of the economy is exercised through continued dominion over land, mineral resources, and the use of those resources in commercial trafficking that excludes the natives. Thus, in the situation where 'colonial' nation-state administration has failed to restore the economic power to the former colonised majority, coloniality of the economy becomes a way through which the white minority exerts control and domination of the majority (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). To this end, in the Namibian context, where the 'former' colonisers remained and retained land and economic control, this white minority group continues to exert and uphold coloniality and create an 'internal colonisation' (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). Mignolo and Walsh (2018, p. 5) describe internal colonialism as "the patterns of colonial power continued internally" (i.e. a nation within a nation). By following Mignolo and Walsh's (2018) line of reasoning, we observe internal colonisation as an act by the white minority group dominating the black majority group through exploitative economic practices that keep economic power and resources in the hands of the white minority group (the nation within a nation).

- ***Coloniality of Labour***

Coloniality of labour is part of the coloniality of the economy, which is manifested in the ways through which work continues to be structured and exploited by a colonial logic that usurps free or underpaid labour from 'colonised' subjects for colonial capital gains (Quijano, 2000, 2007). Quijano (2000, 2007) argues that coloniality of labour dictates that, on the one hand, those racialised others occupy low-status work such as serfdom, unpaid or underpaid labour. On the other hand, those regarded as belonging

to a superior race occupy high earning positions that allow them to control the capital accumulation project and make economic decisions that serve the capitalist interests of the dominant group. According to limki (2018), the fact that labour is now paid/compensated does not mean coloniality of labour ceases to exist. On the contrary, job allocations and salaries continue to be allocated based on colonial differences, thus re-enacting the coloniality of labour in a new and less salient form.

- ***Coloniality of Knowledge/Epistemology***

Knowledge/epistemic coloniality refers to the control and domination of subjectivity, identity, control, distortion, and the erasure of knowledge of the racialised 'Other' and positioning Eurocentric knowledge and understanding to be the universal and the only way of knowing (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). In Africa, epistemic coloniality has been experienced through the colonial destruction of the knowledge of African pre-colonial civilisations and knowledge systems (Diop, 1974, 1991). This erasure and distortion of African history have led to Africans not knowing their true history and being subjected to accepting European historical myths (Ani, 1994; Chinweizu., 1987; Wilson, 1997). The colonisation of Africa was designed to impose a "broad worldview that was underpinned by strong epistemological interventions that culminated in the colonisation and transformation of African consciousness" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013, p. 23). For Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013), colonisation of the consciousness through epistemic coloniality is the worst form of colonisation. Figure 1 below depicts the matrices of coloniality.
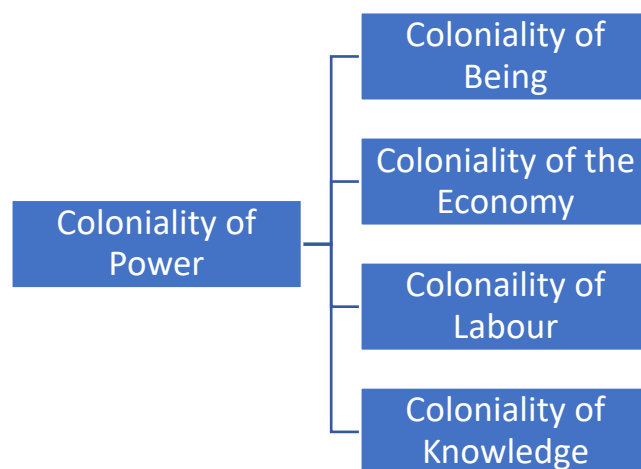
Figure 1: Coloniality of Power Matrix (adapted from Quijano, 2000; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). Source: Author

3.1.3. Decoloniality

Similar to Anti-colonial thought, decolonial scholarship calls for a form of decolonisation, which scholars refer to as 'decoloniality'. Decoloniality, as Mignolo and Walsh (2018, p. 5) note, is a "way, option, standpoint, analytic, project, practice, and praxis" of contradicting persistent colonial power structures. Mignolo and Walsh (2018) describe decoloniality as a practical contextual project that is lived and thus:

> It is intellectually, spiritually, emotionally, and existentially entangled and interwoven. The concern is with the ongoing processes and practices, pedagogies and paths, projects and propositions that build, cultivate, enable, and engender decoloniality, this is understood as a praxis—like walking, asking, reflecting, analysing, theorising, and actioning—in continuous movement, contention, relation, and formation. (p. 19)

Mignolo and Walsh (2018), and Mignolo (2021), confirm that the basis of decoloniality is self-determination as a means of liberation. As Mignolo and Walsh (2018, p. 3) point out, practical decoloniality entails self-determination intervention that leads to what they call "*re-existence*", which is "the redefining and re-signifying of life in conditions of dignity" for 'colonised' subjects entrapped in the coloniality power matrix. For decolonial scholars, decoloniality aims to attain decolonial justice, which "opposes the preferential option for imperial Man by the preferential option for the *damne´* or condemned of the earth" (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p. 260).

3.1.5. Anti/Decolonial Lens—A Merged Theoretical Lens

Based on the two brief descriptions of theoretical traditions provided in the previous paragraphs, anticolonial and decolonial discursive frameworks/ thoughts, it is clear that the two prisms have unmissable similarities, confirming that decolonial theory was adopted from anti-colonial thought. Anticolonial thought holds that colonisation continues even after the formal colonial admiration era. Thus, colonisation is not something in the past but an ongoing reality. Anticolonial thinking seeks decolonisation through collective practices that look back to the historical political anticolonial mobilisations as a source of knowledge and motivation to dismantle present colonisation to attain liberation (Dei, 2017; Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001). Anticolonial thought regards continuities as part of the historical process they refer to as 'colonial-

a systematic historical and ongoing process that seeks to dominate and oppress the racialised "other" through psychological, economic, and spiritual mechanisms.

Similarly, decolonial thinking seeks to disrupt or dismantle colonial continuities—coloniality of power (coloniality) constituted by the colonial domination of economic models, political order, knowledge and the being of 'Others'. Decolonial thought pursues decolonisation through a process of decoloniality, which foregrounds practical inventions targeted toward dismantling the coloniality of the power matrix. The striking similarities between the two theoretical systems are that they seek to dismantle persistent "global colonial hierarchies" (Grosfoguel, 2016). Furthermore, both analytical prisms foregrounds self-determination as a liberation means for the colonially oppressed. Thus, 'anti/decolonial' theorising offers an opportunity to break the silence or 'taboo' on theorising the liberatory possibilities for oppressed employees in the global 'colonial' workspace (Chrispal et al., 2020; Dar et al., 2020).

Anti/Decolonial Theorising in this Study

As stated before, I adopted a composite of anticolonial and decolonial theories – referred to as Anti/De-colonial theory in this study – to centre the voices of black managers in theorising their experiences in accessing top management positions in contemporary Namibian private sector organisations. Moreover, this study foregrounds the historical and political dynamics in theorising the experiences of black managers to bring to the surface what coloniality conceals. That means foregrounding the historical and political aspects that underpin the experiences of black managers. This way, this study is politicising and historicising the underlying structures that shape the experiences of black managers in the Namibian private sector. This study aligns with MOS scholars who have bemoaned the historical acontextual and depoliticised knowledge produced in the MOS field, stressing that it is essential to understand the historical and political context to uproot and dismantle the power structures that maintain oppression in organisations (Holvino, 2010; Nkomo, 2011a; Zanoni et al., 2009). Additionally, Nkomo (2011b) cautions that examining organisational experiences of people in "third world" locations without understanding the historical and political context is likely to lead to empty theorisation that lacks depth and meaning.

Moreover, it is essential to recognise that I theorise about black managers' experiences in the private sector informed by an awareness that there are racial disparities at the management level within the Namibian private sector (EEC,2019). So, this study aims to explore and make noticeable the invisible forces shaping the experiences of black managers by highlighting the underlying root causes that form and sustain the racial disparities at management levels in the private sector. To gain a complete understanding of the experiences of the study participants, I situate the factors shaping their experiences in accessing top management positions through a multi-level analysis (Macro-Meso-Micro).

- ***Macro-level: Social and Institutional Level***

At the macro-level, I rely on historical records and juxtapose those records with enunciations of participants that relate to the way socio-historical factors shape their experience in accessing top management positions. To do this, I attempt to focus on how historical and political dimensions work in tandem to recreate past colonial patterns at the institutional and social levels. This study groups institutional and social factors as macro-level factors for ease of analysis. I draw from MOS and non-MOS scholarship to focus on how macro-level factors influence the experiences of black managers in accessing top management positions within Namibian private sector organisations.

- ***Meso-Level: Organisational Level***

In this study, the meso-level factors refer to influential organisational factors—culture, practices and processes, that have a bearing on the experiences of black managers in the private sector. I draw from MOS scholarly works that critically interrogate or seek to expose the hidden and invisible ways organisations create, legitimise, and perpetuate racial inequality and its associated effects on black and marginalised employees, particularly those in management /senior roles. Similar to macro-level analysis, I apply the anticolonial and decolonial analytics by foregrounding the historical and political dimensions underpinning those organisational factors shaping the experiences of black managers in accessing top management positions.

- ***Micro-Level: Personal and Interpersonal Level***

At the micro-level, the focus is placed on black managers' interpersonal and intergroup experiences in their interactions and professional relationships with their white counterparts. In analysing these experiences, I mainly relied on anticolonial and decolonial conceptualisation, such as the *white gaze* and *colonial difference*, to explore how interpersonal/intergroup factors link to the meso and macro-level factors and their implications on black managers' experiences in accessing organisational resources and opportunities. More crucially, I attempt to connect the macro and meso level influential factors to the uncovered micro-level factors bearing on the experiences of black managers in ascending to top management roles in Namibian private sector organisations. In addition to this, I attempt to link those multi-level factors to cast a light on their interconnectedness operation and interwoven underlying root causes shaping their experiences. Finally, in an anti/decolonial fashion, this study sought to point out the racial injustices and the contextual factors shaping them and recommend transformative inventions grounded in anticolonial and decolonial praxis.

3.2. Study Context: Namibia and the Namibian Private Sector Context

Namibia's peculiar socio-political, economic, and socio-psychological history and realities and the country's position in the Global South render it contextually distinct from Global North countries, where most MOS studies are set (Alcadipani et al., 2012; Girei, 2017). Therefore, to begin this section, I will proceed to offer a brief colonial history of Namibia.

3.2.1. Brief Colonial History of Namibia

Namibia's gruesome colonial histories that lasted 106 years are impossible to recount within this PhD scope fully. However, I will offer a brief discussion of the colonial histories of Namibia and the Namibian private sector to give a background of the context through which the experiences of black managers in the Namibian private sector should be understood.

German Settler-colonialism

After the 1904 -1908 genocide/holocaust, most genocide survivors, including women and children, were deployed in white-owned private organisations as slave labourers (Sarkin, 2011). Historical evidence reveals that organisations set up by German settler-colonialists, many of which continue to operate in the Namibian private sector today, benefitted from free black enslaved labour and sold blacks into the African and Transatlantic slave trade (Olusoga & Erichsen, 2010; Sarkin, 2011). Therefore, based on historical evidence, it is transparent that black people (including children) once entered Namibian organisations' workplaces as unpaid enslaved people and commodities. Similarly, black people retained the roles and social status of underpaid or unpaid labourers or enslaved people for the white settlers in the broader society. Furthermore, historical evidence reveals colonial violence on black bodies through– genocide, exploitation, subjugation, rape, and slavery (Césaire, 2000; Olusoga & Erichsen, 2010). The settler colonialists justified this colonial violence through religious doctrine and Eurocentric imagination that marked black people as non-human, a process that (Césaire, 2000) calls '*thingification*'. Through the colonial gaze, black people were viewed as objects and whites as subjects (Fanon, 2004), thus rendering both black men and women *killable* and *rapeable* with no impunity (Maldonado-Torres, 2007). Figure 2 show a glimpse of the heinous crime perpetrated by German settler colonialists.

Figure 2: German genocide victims: pictured before they were sent to concentration camps to work as slave labourers and starved to death. Source: Namibia National Archives.

Apartheid and Black Employees' Social and Workplace Status

After the German colonial rule that involved genocide, land, and property theft, from 1920 to 1990, Namibia became a South African apartheid regime colony, which extended the apartheid rule to Namibia (Katjavivi, 1988). Through its policies and violence, the apartheid regime continued the marginalisation and oppression of the black population in Namibia – commonly referred to by racial slurs such as *kaffir*[4] and baboons[5] (*bobbejaan*), as noted by More (2017). More (2017) point out that these racist terms demonstrate that white people viewed black people as animals (Baboons) or non-human. In the same vein, Maart (2014a) avers that the term '*kaffir*':

> came to represent the most offensive racial slur to be uttered by the apartheid regime and the white population against black people, to suggest a range of attributes ranging from backward, tribal, illogical, steeped in tradition, lazy,

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[4] *kaffir* - a racial slur that was used for black people in Southern Africa. It's an Arabic term which means "non-believer" but was adopted by racist Dutch settler colonialist to denigrate black people.
[5] More (2017) points out that white people viewed black people as animals (Baboons) or non-human.

uncouth, without reason and rationality, tempestuous, slow-thinking, but also rebellious, stubborn, defiant. (p. 6)

These dehumanising and racist stereotypes fostered the continual infantilisation of black adults as 'garden boys' or 'tea girls" (Canham, 2019). Consequently, black employees were relegated to low-level positions such as domestic workers and manual labourers, which were part of the culture of continuing and entrenching 'coloniality of labour'[6] (Quijano, 2000). Non-MOS scholars have argued that the labour relations in (post) colonial Southern African workplaces reflect apartheid-era workplace tendencies, a situation they contend demonstrates the continuation of the 'apartheid-workplace regime' (von Holdt, 2002; Webster & Omar, 2003). The 'apartheid-workplace regime' resulted from the apartheid social relations defined by racial stereotypes and myths fostered by white supremacy ideologies supported by legislated racist laws, shaping organisational practices and workplace relations between black and white employees. As von Holdt (2003) pointed out, black bodies were not allowed to take supervisory or management positions in all workplaces as these positions were reserved for white bodies under the notion or ideology of *Baaskaap*[7]. This white supremacist ideology held whites as natural "bosses" who were entitled to control and own black labourers (von Holdt, 2002). According to von Holdt (2002), under *Baasskap*, whites demanded black employees treat every white employee as their "boss". As such, white male employees were referred to as *Baas*[8], young male white employees as *Klein Baas*[9], and white female employees *Meisis*[10] (von Holdt, 2002).

3.2.2. Economic Conditions: Persistent Economic Inequalities in Namibia

As stated earlier, like many other African countries, Namibia achieved political independence but not economic freedom, as the economy remains in the hands of the white minority. The Namibian Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) (n.d.) estimates that the white minority group—making up 5% of the population, controls 95% of the

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[6] Quijano (2000) describes 'coloniality of labour' as the racial division of labour, as determined by colonial racial myths and stereotypes, to serve the economic interests of the coloniser.

[7] *Baasskap* is an Afrikaans term that can be directly translated to "boss-hood" is a white supremacy ideology that assigned whites as superior in all political, cultural and economic spheres of society (von Holdt, 2002).

[8] *Baas*- Afrikaans word for "Boss"

[9] *Kelin* Baas an Afrikaans term that could be translated to "small-boss".

[10] *Meisis*- a title for a white female "boss" or the *Baas*'s wife.

economy, and the black majority controls the remaining 5%. This wealth disparity is historical and traceable to the land dispossession and unfair economic practices during the colonial-apartheid administration that excluded the majority black population (Baker, 1978; Wilkins & Strydom, 2012). Since economic disparity continues in present Namibia, this economic situation renders the struggle for liberation an incomplete project (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). As Fanon (1967) reminds us, "true liberation is not that pseudo-independence in which ministers having a limited responsibility hobnob with an economy dominated by the colonial pact" (p. 105).

African decolonial scholar, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013), points out that coloniality shapes the economy of most African nation-states, including Namibia. According to Quijano (2000, 2007), one of the matrices of coloniality power is the economic dispossession of the "colonised" (Seizing land and control of the economy), creating what Mignolo and Walsh (2018) refer to as the 'coloniality of the economy'. Mignolo and Walsh (2018) contend that, with the failure of political decolonisation, it is through the 'coloniality of the economy' that influential white elites exercise 'colonial' power to dominate the majority racialised 'Other' – that is, by making the 'colonised' depend on the "coloniser" (Carmichael & Hamilton, 1967). Baker (1978) points out that the group in control of the economic structure "makes the allocative decisions that determine the distribution of power, privilege, and resources within society" (p. 321). Similarly, Fanon (1967) reminds us that, in a colonial world, "the economic substructure is also the superstructure. The cause is the consequence; you are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich" (p. 31). Fanon's view heralds what Cedric Robinson (2000) later termed "racial capitalism"—the idea that racism and capital exploitation are mutually constitutive. For Robinson (2000), the convergence of race and economic power emerged through co-constitutive capital accumulation and exploitative racial systems derived from slavery, genocide, and apartheid social ideologies.

3.2.3. A Brief Colonial History of the Namibian Private Sector

Historically, the private sector has a dark colonial history that appears in historical records. For instance, private sector organisations, many still in operation today, were active during the era of German colonisation and benefited from the genocide by using free enslaved labour from black natives who we kept in concentration camps (Olusoga

& Erichsen, 2010). These private organisations used slave labour that included the use of women and children who were malnourished and exposed to abject poverty.

In the camps, the sick was left untended to die after laying in their excrement for weeks. However, these conditions did not stop private companies and individuals from exploiting the sick concentration-camp prisoners who worked to death (Olusoga & Erichsen, 2010). Olusoga and Erichsen (2010) go further to point out that the prisoners who were hired to "individual as farmhands or servants were arguably more fortunes than those hired to German private firms where they were "forced to build roads, construct buildings, lay rails or stack heavy bags of food or ammunition" (p. 167). The mortality rate on these sites was 40 per cent.

Moreover, although private sector organisations benefited from slave labour and were thus complicit in the genocide, one troubling example of a private firm that actively took part in the genocide—presently trading as *Woermann, Brock & Co*, which owned the Woermann Shipping Line. The Woermann Shipping Line opened up its private concentration camp to satisfy its high demand for slave labour (Olusoga & Erichsen, 2010). Olusoga and Erichsen (2010) note that:

> As surviving photographs show, at Swakopmund, the Woermann Shipping Line employed so many concentration-camp prisoners that they were permitted to open their own private concentration camp. In this private concentration camp, the prisoners—described at the time as "stock" or "head", as if they were cattle – lived in conditions almost identical to those in the main military camps. (p. 167)

Thus, historical evidence shows that private firms also participated in the trading of enslaved people in the African Atlantic slave trade, and these organisations still operate in the Namibian private sector today with no impunity (Olusoga & Erichsen, 2010; Sarkin, 2011).

Moreover, during apartheid, private firms built a state-business relationship that enabled private organisations to participate in the exploitation of free labour and execute gross human rights violations of black workers (von Holdt, 2003). On top of that, the apartheid state and corporations supported each other to enforce and maintain apartheid (Nattrass, 1999; van Vuuren, 2017). Furthermore, private sector

organisations benefitted from the apartheid regime legislation that implemented the economic exclusion of black people through racist economic policies enacted by white nationalist institutions, such as the *Afrikaner-Broerderbond*[11], that were formed to ensure capital accumulation and generational wealth creation for white-owned businesses and individuals (Baker, 1978; Wilkins & Strydom, 2012). Wilkins and Strydom (2012) inform us that, in 1939, the *Afrikaner-Broerderbond* created an organisation that they called the *Reddingsdaadbond,* which was responsible for the economic upliftment of Afrikaners by pooling "Afrikaner Money, establish Afrikaner Concerns and support Afrikaner concerns" (P. 425). The *Reddingsdaadbond* provided and mobilised funds to the amount of 30 Million Rands within the first 11 years of its existence, and these funds went into creating 'Afrikaans business enterprises' such as banks and insurance corporations, such as *Sanlam* and *Santam*, which still operate under the same names in present Southern Africa (Wilkins & Strydom, 2012, p. 427). These apartheid economic protectionism efforts illustrate acts of coloniality of the economy intended to protect and preserve economic interest and power through corporate profits and control of wealth. As noted by MOS and non-MOS scholars and activists, historically, the private sector in Southern Africa was created as a vehicle for capital accumulation for the advancement of the white minority group, to maintain and enforce their economic dominance and continue the economic deprivation of the black majority (Dale, 2001; Ramphele, 2008; Canham & Williams, 2016). Thus, it is safe to say that the Namibian private sector is a historical source of white economic power.

After Namibians gained political independence, under the rubric of reconciliation, these organisations that benefitted from Apartheid were not held accountable or at least morally culpable for supporting the apartheid regime. Nevertheless, historical records show clearly how private firms participated in colonial atrocities and benefited and continue to benefit from what Tuck and Yang (2012) call 'imperial wealth. Unfortunately, this colonial history is not acknowledged by private sector organisations, but there are rather active efforts to deny and erase these histories of violence (Cooke, 2003), signifying what Trouillot (2015) calls 'silencing the past'.

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[11] The *Afrikaner-Broerderbond* was an Afrikaner nationalist organisation set up in 1908 to drive and defend Afrikaner economic and cultural interests (Wilkins & Strydom, 2012).

3.2.4. Black Managers' Representation in Top Management Positions

The Employment Equity Commission (EEC) (2019) has constantly reported the disparity of racial presentation at senior management levels in the Namibian private sector. The percentage figures in Table 2 depict survey results published by the Employment Equity Commission of Namibia (EEC) from 2012 to 2017, reflecting unequal racial representation at management levels, particularly within the private corporate sector. On average, a percentage of black (racial majority) executives represents 26%, compared to the average of 60% for white (racial minority) executives.

Table 2: EEC Reports on Racial Representation at Management Levels (EEC, 2019)

Period	Previous racially disadvantaged (majority Black) Namibians	Previously racial advantaged (Minority White) Namibians
2012/2013	26%	59%
2013/2014	22%	61%
2014/2015	25%	58%
2015/2016	28%	55%
2016/2017	29%	57%

The Namibian government legislated Affirmative Action policies, such as the Employment Equity Act, which led to formation of the Employment Equity Commission (EEC), to address racial, gender and other disparities in organisations. But unfortunately, as the ECC reports show (depicted in Table 2), racial representation disparities, particularly at management levels, persist in Namibian private sector organisations.

The question that begs to be asked is, why do these disparities persist despite efforts to address them? This study makes it one of the objectives to understand the mechanisms and practices upholding racial inequality in the contemporary Namibian private sector by exploring the experiences of black managers (the underrepresented victims) in accessing top management positions. More crucially, the study seeks to explore the historical and political dynamics underpinning the racial disparities at management levels within the private sector.

3.2.5. Conclusion

This chapter presented a brief description of the theoretical foundations of this study and the context of this study: Namibia and the Namibian private sector. The chapter highlighted the rationale for adopting anticolonial and decolonial theories and how the theories were deployed as analytical tools in this study. Regarding the study context, the chapter provided a brief colonial history of Namibia. It highlighted how the past remained deeply inscribed in Namibian society and its implications on present-day social and economic relations. Furthermore, the chapter highlighted the history of the Namibian private sector, its historical formations in the two epochs of colonialism in Namibia, and its complicit and participation in colonial atrocities. This brief history provides a contextual understanding of Namibia's historical and political contextual specificities that shape the experiences of black managers in the present contemporary private sector.

The following chapter describes the methodical approach adopted in collecting empirical material for the study.

Chapter 4: Methodological Considerations

4.1. Introduction

This chapter aims to provide details on the process and rationales for selecting the research methodology deployed in this research. In essence, the methodology adopted in this study is in alignment with and committed to the decolonial and political agenda of the study. The chapter also offers a rationale for adopting a storytelling research method guided by an African indigenous paradigm and its implications for research methods and practices followed in this study. Finally, I conclude the chapter by briefly describing the processes that informed my decision to choose an approach for data collection, data analysis, and ethical considerations practices ennobled in this study.

4.2. Decolonising Research: A Struggle Against Epistemic Coloniality

Colonialism, according to Ngugi wa Thiong'o, "imposed its control of the social production of wealth through military conquest and subsequent political dictatorship. But its most important area of domination was the mental universe of the colonised, the control, through culture, of how people perceived themselves and their relationship to the world [worldview]" (Thiong'o, 1986, p. 16). This colonial imposition of the western worldview was mainly through religion, language, and ways of knowledge production (Ani, 1994; Asante, 1987; Thiong'o, 1986). Through scholarly research, the European worldview continues to be perpetrated as universal since Eurocentrism is embedded in research methodologies and methods of research. As a result, Smith (2012) notes, research has been used to facilitate the objectification of the 'other'. "Objectification is dehumanisation" (Smith, 2012, p. 41).

The field of MOS has been identified by its ability to actively participate in epistemic coloniality through its knowledge production practices and mechanism that privilege western worldviews and ignore or silent alternative ways of knowing or seeing the world (Alcadipani et al., 2012; Girei, 2017; Ibarra-Colado, 2006; Jammulamadaka et al., 2021). Undoubtedly, epistemic coloniality springs from an uncritical adoption of Eurocentric epistemologies that have been forced on the world as universal through what Santos (2016) called *abyssal thinking* – the euro-modernity tendency to reject or label anything outside the western epistemological frame of reference as unreal or superstition—a process used to negate and destroy other worldviews. For Asante

(1987), it is dangerous to hail one worldview as universal as 'universality can only be dreamed about when we have "slept" on truth based on specific cultural experiences' (Asante, 1987, p.168).

Curry and Curry (2018) warn about adopting Eurocentric philosophical traditions that are usually ahistorical, apolitical, and race-neutral, and some of them are even of racist origins, such as those espoused by reformists and liberal intellectual traditions. In the same vein, Dei (2017) cautions that it is counterproductive, particularly for black scholars, to adopt white epistemologies in pursuit of black liberation, as these western epistemologies negate organic intellectualism and the production of relevant knowledge for black liberation.

Moreover, the epistemic disobedience pursued in this study is inspired by the awareness that African historians and Egyptologists such as Cheikh Anta Diop (1974, 1991), George James (1954), and Théophile Obenga (2004) contend that what we know today as European philosophy has its origin in ancient African civilization and not in ancient Greece as the centuries-old paradigm suggests. These African scholars—whose scholarship remains unknown and are usually labelled nationalist historians by the western academia[12], contend that ancient Greek philosophers plagiarised and whitewashed ancient African philosophical and spiritual traditions that they learned from *Kamit* (ancient Egypt)—which pre-dates ancient Greece (Diop, 1974, 1991; Obenga, 2004). And to protect their plagiarised knowledge, European colonisers sought to destroy the sources of their knowledge through the destruction of pre-colonial black civilisations, ancient libraries, and artefacts (Williams, 1987). As Fanon (2004) teaches us, the coloniser first went back in the pre-colonial history of the colonised and destroyed that history to colonise the mind by making her believe that she has no history and thus is suitable to be colonised. Thiong'o (1986) reminds us that "economic and political control can never be complete or effective without mental control" (p. 16).

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[12] Marimba Ani (1994), Amos Wilson (2014) and Mignolo and Walsh (2018) reminds us that Eurocentric history that has been accepted as value-neutral is in fact nationalist in its agenda to project Europe as the centre and origin of human civilization. Eurocentric history is guarded and enforced by the tendency to automatically reject and label any opposing historical facts as untrue. This type of thinking is typical of what Santos (2016) called *abysmal thinking.*

However, I do not intend to delve into the historical origins of philosophy and its contentions. Instead, my ambition is to highlight that silencing African pre-colonial histories—the erasure of histories contrasting the coloniser's prevailing narratives (Trouillot, 2015)- is part of epistemic coloniality and sensitive to historical epistemic violence overlaps with the present epistemic coloniality (Liu, 2021). As Maldonado-Torres (2007, p. 243) cautions:

> Coloniality is maintained alive in books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of people, in aspirations of self, and so many other aspects of our modern experience. In a way, as modern subjects, we breathe coloniality all the time and every day. (p. 243)

Thus, guided by this awareness, this thesis sought to *de-link* from European thought (Mignolo, 2007a). For Mignolo (2009), de-linking is best achieved through epistemic disobedience, a derelict attitude towards the Euro-American worldview, and attendant ways of knowledge production as part of what he calls *dewesternization,* which is necessary for dismantling epistemic coloniality. Similarly, Marimba Ani (1994) questions how a worldview that springs from a culture with a history of violence has come to be accepted as universal? Ani (1994) boldly contends that to decolonise Africans from epistemic colonisation, Africans must *de-Europeanised* – separate and unlearn the European thought patterns, and she warns that the "future towards which Europe leads us [Africans] is genocidal" (1994, p. 2, emphasis added). In the same vein, Steve Biko called on Africans to reject western values. By so doing, they will be:

> "rejecting those things that are not only foreign to us but that seek to destroy the most cherished of our beliefs – that the cornerstone of society is man himself – not just welfare, not his material wellbeing but just man himself with all his ramifications". (Biko, 2004, p. 51)

In reflecting on the dangers of African academics adopting worldviews that are foreign to themselves, Baba Buntu (2013) concluded that:

> "the most critical crisis of Africa may not be its actual statistics of failed economic development or democratic governance, but the dominant worldview that has been created of Africa as incapable of self-determined transformation,

and the paralysing loyalty that many African scholars demonstrate to externally located knowledge and worldviews" (p. 10).

Liu (2021) recently called for epistemic resistance to counter colonial legacies and their invisible mechanisms that discipline knowledge production according to racial standards and norms in the MOS field. Liu (2021) makes an imperative moral call to MOS scholars when she asserts:

> We need to recognise the inherent racialisation of management theorisation that has historically presented white middle-class *cis*-gender heterosexual able-bodied Anglo-American men as the most legitimate knowers in the academy while upholding their knowledge as not only neutral and universal but inherently worthy. More importantly, we need to accept responsibility for the harm our cultural practices cause and cultivate an imperative for change. (p. 15)

Thus, de-linking through epistemic disobedience, de-Europeanising, or epistemic resistance are all resurgences among colonised scholars to reclaim their right to know differently, as Dei (2017) aptly puts it. The right to know differently is to reclaim one's humanity (Smith, 2012) and affirm organic intellectualism and epistemic freedom. Moreover, epistemic freedom is the most fundamental freedom aimed toward reclaiming one's humanity (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). Epistemic freedom entails using epistemologies and paradigms in alignment and not separate from the researcher's personhood and cultural experiences (Farias et al., 2017). To use epistemologies incongruity with the researcher's cultural experiences is akin to "a child being exposed exclusively to a culture that was the product of a world external to him [and] he was being made to look stand outside himself to look at himself" (Thiong'o, 1986, p. 17). Thus, as an African and black researcher in this study, I reject the western worldview imposed as universal. As Dei (2017) reminds us, Africans should produce knowledge on their terms without needing not to seek validation from the epistemology of the west power structure, as doing so will concede power to the same system they wish to resist. This form of epistemic resistance is anti-colonial and decolonial praxis in action and serves two political purposes; to liberate the researcher and enrich knowledge production.

4.3. Research Philosophy: African Indigenous Paradigm

Each research is guided by a paradigm, which is a set of presumptions guiding the researcher's actions, thus shaping the methodology or approach adopted to achieve the aim of the research (Chilisa, 2012; Mertens, 2018). These presumptions are commonly referred to as ontology (presumptions about reality), epistemology (belief about knowledge), and axiology (ethical presumptions). These assumptions, unfortunately, have long been dominated by Euro-centric worldviews, a situation that the decolonising research agenda seeks to upend. Anticolonial and decolonial theories advocate knowledge production that engages with indigenous knowledge (Simmons & Dei, 2012). Since research is a complex and political endeavour undertaken to generate knowledge and the understanding of a phenomenon, Chilisa, Major and Khudu-Petersen (2017, p. 326) contend that "people of all worlds irrespective of geographic location, colour, race, ability, gender or socio-economic status should have equal rights in the research scholarship and research process to name their world views, apply them to define themselves and be heard". This freedom to know different is foundational to this study's anticolonial and decolonial thinking, which seeks to contribute toward decolonising MOS knowledge production.

Thus, in the spirit of decolonising MOS knowledge production, it is fitting to use an indigenous paradigm (Chilisa, 2012; Smith, 2012) in this study as it resonates with the African philosophical lineage and the African cosmology of the participants and me as the researcher. In particular, the indigenous African paradigm adopted in this study is based on Ubuntu (Chilisa & Mertens, 2021; Chilisa, 2012; Mucina, 2011) and *Maat* (Asante, 2012; Karenga, 2012) philosophical and life principles. Chilisa (2012) describes Ubuntu as "an African concept of humanity defined by three main principles:

"(1) I am we; I am because we are,

(2) relations between people with the living and the non-living; and

(3) spirituality, love, harmony, and community building" (pp. 117–18).

And almost similar, Maat is an Ancient African principle of life that promotes sanity and cohesion among the living, non-living, and all creations (Asante, 2012; Karenga, 2012). The law of *Maat* is enshrined in 42 ideals that can be clustered into seven core principles, which are: truth, balance, order, harmony, righteousness, propriety, and

justice (Karenga, 2012). Both *Maat* and Ubuntu foster harmony and balance by advocating engagement and interaction with the living, non-living (including Ancestors and the Unborn), divine forces of nature *(Neterus)*, and all of creation with care and respect and reciprocity (Chilisa, 2012; Karenga, 2012). At their core, both *Maat* and Ubuntu theosophical principles are based on the notion that all of creation is connected by the same permeating energy flux or life force called "*Ntu*" or *Ka,* and the same essence infuses all the creations, and subsequently, all share in and are part of an omnipresent divine ecosystem (Chilisa, 2012; Karenga, 2012; Mucina, 2011).

Furthermore, by adopting a paradigm grounded in African philosophical traditions, I heed Ayi Kwei Armah's (1984) caution to African scholars against becoming what he terms an 'intellectual orphans', who he describes as:

> "The majority of non-Western intellectuals educated in colonial or neo-colonial institutions [who] are trained to be ignorant of their philosophical antecedents while struggling to assimilate data, theories and father-figures [*such as Nietzsche, Foucault, Marx, and Hegel*] from the Western arsenal. (p. 58 emphasis added)

Moreover, indigenous research paradigms, as Smith (2002) and Chilisa (2012) aver, enshrine and respect worldviews and cultural experiences of the racialised 'others' whose epistemologies and ontologies have been relegated to 'barbarian margins' (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). An African epistemology is how Africans (black) view the world and interpret and make sense of reality within their cultural context (Asante, 1987; Buntu, 2013; Mucina, 2011).

Indigenous Paradigm Assumptions

I wish to emphasize that, although this study privileges the African indigenous paradigm, I do not attempt to rely on indigenous knowledge solely but seek to integrate the indigenous way of seeing the world with other knowledge systems, for instance, western social science knowledge, where there was compatibility. I am motivated to find areas of compatibility and build cohesion since Ubuntu teaches us to embrace other forms of knowledge as long as they do not violate the fundamental Ubuntu philosophical principles. As one African proverb teaches us, "even the teeth (which are sharp) and the tongue (which is soft) co-exist in one mouth". This proverb points

to the value of bringing things that might be different into co-existence. On this note, Mucina (2011, p. 6) quoted Dei (2000) at length to empathise that:

> Indigenous knowledge does not "sit in pristine fashion" outside of the effects of other knowledge... The interplay of different knowledge is perhaps one of many reasons why Indigenous knowledge must be taught in the academy. The goal of integrating Indigenous knowledge in the academy is to affirm this collaborative dimension of knowledge and, at the same time, to address the emerging call for academic knowledge to speak to the diversity of histories, events, experiences, and ideas that have shaped human growth and development. And, if one recognises that knowledge is not static but constantly being created and recreated in context, then Indigenous knowledge needs to be an integral part of the ongoing co-creation and re-creation of academic knowledge/work. (p. 113)

Table 3 below summarises the ontological (reality), epistemological (knowledge), and axiological (ethical) presumptions that underpin the indigenous paradigm.

Table 3: Indigenous Paradigm Assumptions in this Study

Indigenous Paradigm/Framework Assumptions	
Reality (Ontology)	• Multiple constructed realities grounded in the material, social, and spiritual context, • Reality defined by the interconnectedness of the living and the non-living – e.g. Ancestors and *Neterus* (divine forces of nature) and relational existence. Reality is contextual and cultural bound.
Knowledge (Epistemology)	• Knowledge is subjective, objective, relational, and includes spirituality and visions. • Relational assumption of knowledge means that no one person can hold knowledge exclusively. As expressed by the African proverb, the *truth is like a baobab tree, and no*

	one person can embrace it. Knowledge is gained through relations that include the living and the non-living.
	• Knowledge created through dialogue on what is known and what can be known, and what should be held as sacred or secret
	• Knowledge is produced collectively through dialogue and invocations of Ancestral and nature spirits.
Ethics (Axiology)	Research practices are guided by Ubuntu and *Maat* principles that include respect, care, reciprocity, reverence, responsibility, reflexivity, responsiveness, and justice. Ethical values reflect paradigmatic research validity, social and epistemic justice, and decolonisation.
Methodology	Deploys a transformative lens that allows for mixing indigenous methods with western methods without subordinating indigenous methods.

Sources: Adapted from Chilisa and Mertens (2021); Chilisa (2012); Mucina (2011); Smith (2012)

4.4. Research Strategy: Qualitative Research

There are two main research genres in social sciences, and these are qualitative and quantitative research. The decision to adopt a quantitative, qualitative or mixed approach – the combination of both qualitative and quantitative strategies, is driven by the research question, the way research questions are framed, the desired theoretical or practical contributions that the researcher wishes to make, and researcher's epistemological stance (Creswell, 2014; Neuman, 2006). Table 4 provides differences between traditional qualitative and quantitative research.

Table 4: Contrasting Qualitative and Quantitative Research

Qualitative	**Quantitative**
Construct social reality, cultural meaning	Measure objective facts
Focus on interactive processes and events	Focus on variables

Authenticity is the key factor	Reliability is the key factor
Value-laden and explicit	Value-free
Theory and data fused	Theory and data separate
Context constrained	Context independent
Few cases/ participants	Many cases/participants
Data analysed thematically	Data analysed statistically
Researcher involved	Researcher detached

Sources: Neuman (2006); Creswell (2014), Denzin and Lincoln (2018); Patton (2015)

Based on Table 4, I deemed a qualitative research design apt for pursuing the goals of this PhD study. Since this study aims to understand the experiences of black managers, their perceptions, and meaning participants attach to their experiences it is appropriate to adopt a qualitative strategy. As qualitative research authors have noted, qualitative research is a collection of interpretive practices that are deployed to understand the phenomena in their natural settings as experienced by the participants, the meanings participants make of their experiences, and the contextual components attendant to the phenomena to make sense or interpret the phenomena (Creswell, 2014; Patton, 2015). In addition, as part of the research process, the qualitative researcher brings their political and social positions to the research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). In essence, during a qualitative research process, the researcher's positionality is not entirely separated from the research, making the researcher both a part of the situation studied and an instrument of research, active and deeply embedded in the account being produced. As part of the research process, the qualitative researcher brings their political and social positions to the research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Thus, the researcher must engage in thick description and reflexivity to enunciate the practices and beliefs that shape their data collection process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

Researchers in the social sciences , in a quest to understand and clarify human activities and practices, need to start by understanding the manners by which individuals effectively comprise and reconstitute the implications, shaped through social association, which they use to make sense of their experiences– an endeavour that is best accomplished through the use of qualitative approach(Alvesson & Geertz, 2000; Merriam, 2009, Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Denzil & Lincoln, 2018; Patton, 2015).

Denzin and Lincoln (2011) purports that at the core of qualitative and critical research is the avowal and commitment to humanistic and social justice through studying the social world from the perspective of the oppressed and marginalised individual, with an intention of liberating the oppressed. Thus, the route to focus on exclusively black managers' narratives is to accentuate the voices of the marginalised black managers in predominantly white middle, senior and executive management teams in the Namibian private sector organisations.

4.5. Research Method: Storytelling

Storytelling owes its origin to oral traditions worldwide (Achebe, 1988). Storytelling, in this study, will draw inspiration from the African oral traditions (Mucina, 2011), such as the oral traditions and rituals, which include gestures, proverbs, songs, and dance. Although Africa is home to the most Ancient writing styles as the *Medu Neter* (hieroglyphics) in Ancient Egypt (*Kamit*), *Nsibidi* of Nigeria, *Adinkra* of the Akan people in Ghana, and others, African indigenous traditions, like most indigenous traditions in the world, there is a predominant use of stories as a tool to transmit knowledge, wisdom, spiritual rituals, values, and traditional morals among community members (Achebe, 1988; Karenga, 2012; Thiong'o, 1986). The African oral tradition uses stories for pedagogical and communal purposes, and Africans view stories as belonging to the community, not an individual, regardless of the narrator (Achebe, 1988; Thiong'o, 1986). Chinua Achebe aptly describes the role of the story in the community:

> It is only the story that can continue beyond the war and the warrior. It is the story that outlives the sound of war drums and the exploits of brave fighters. It is the story [...] that saves our progeny from blundering like blind beggars into the spikes of the cactus fence. The story is our escort; without it, we are blind. Does the blind man own his escort? No, neither do we own the story; rather, it is the story that owns us and directs us (Achebe, 1988, p. 50).

As a result, African people value stories and are vibrant storytellers (Thiong'o, 1986). Thus, since this study focuses on the experiences of black (African) managers, it was befitting to deploy storytelling as a research method because storytelling is fundamental to the way Africans communicate.

As a research method rooted in African indigenous oral tradition, Mucina (2011), citing Imbo (2002), submits that:

storytelling encourages us to trouble that which we perceive. In the troubling of our perception, we enter the realm of phenomenological interpretation; that is, storytelling encourages us to question our interpretation of meaning because interpretation is an ongoing social process that is always occurring between us. (p. 8).

Further, Wilken (2004) notes that storytelling can bring issues, some complex and emotional, to the attention of both the participants and researcher that can be of interest for further debate and thus spur re-imagination. Therefore, storytelling is an ideal approach that could foster healing, empowerment, and decolonisation among the 'colonised' and 'wounded' participants.

Furthermore, I chose storytelling as a research method for two other political reasons. Firstly, choosing storytelling as a research method is a "decolonial turn" towards honouring and giving equal weight to the oral traditions of African people. Secondly, as an African (black) scholar myself, I follow Mucina (2011), whose use of storytelling is connected to building a sense of connection to other black people through storytelling; he avers that:

The aim of the Ubuntu structure of storytelling I use is to make black people use their stories to talk to other black people in complex, challenging, and sometimes contradicting ways. I want us to be comfortable and uncomfortable with each other's stories, as this keeps us engaged with each other (p. 7).

In the MOS field, scholars such as Boje (2018) and Gabriel (2000) advocate for storytelling as a suitable research method in MOS research. These scholars view storytelling as a mode of communicating and interpreting the world and can be an epistemological tool for analysing reality. Boje (2018) makes a crucial distinction between storytelling and narratives by enunciating that storytelling is more dialogical and multi-perspectival than narratives, which are *monological.* Storytelling is viewed as constituting a web of stories with the ability to shape life events into experiences (Boje,2018; Gabriel, 2000). James and Minnis (2004) and Ulus (2015) argue that storytelling evokes emotions and reason and, thus, can be instrumental in assisting researchers in gaining a better understanding of emotions and hidden issues that can otherwise be missed or misperceived through other research methods that are more structured. In alignment with the African relational paradigm, James and Minnis (2004)

advocate for the use of storytelling in research; as storytelling allows for knowledge co-creation since stories are remembered, created, and recreated through an iterative process that includes interaction, communication, and feedback between participants and the researcher.

Therefore, storytelling was deemed a suitable research method through which black managers can express their experiences and perceptions (emotions and feelings) related to accessing top management roles in the Namibian private sector.

4.6. Data Collection Tool

4.6.1. Storytelling Interview

Since this study adopted the storytelling research method, it was only appropriate to use storytelling interviewing to align the data collection tool to the research method. In addition, storytelling interviewing in this study involved opening a safe space for participants to tell stories about their experiences with minimum interjections (Davis, 2007). Table 5 outlines some advantages/disadvantages associated with storytelling interviewing.

Table 5: Perceived Advantages/Disadvantages of Storytelling Interview

STORYTELLING ADVANTAGES	STORYTELLING DISADVANTAGES
• **Exploring lived experiences in depth** - provides a safe space for people who are usually silenced to explore their experiences, thus engendering trust. - Allow participants to draw from their cultural model, thus allowing for deeper exploration of experiences	• May invoke story emotions in some participants

• **Power Shift/Power correction** - Power shifted towards the storyteller, which corrects the researcher's dominance issue in traditional interviews, thus enhancing participant empowerment and connectedness - Stories can be expressed in the third person, deflecting attention from the personal to depersonalized 'characters	• It can spiral out of control if not properly guided
• **Empathy and reciprocity** - Sharing and exploring each other's lived experiences and life histories results in reciprocal empathy	• It may be more lengthy than traditional interviews

Sources: Chilisa (2012); Davis (2007); Kovach (2009); Mucina (2011); Smith (2012).

Despite its weaknesses (highlighted in Table 5), as with most research data collection tools, the advantages of using storytelling superseded its disadvantages as it enabled me to uncover hidden factors, and their associated political and historical dynamics, underlying the experiences of black managers in accessing top management positions in the Namibian private sector.

4.6.2. Sampling, Locating and Recruiting Study Participants

I followed the purposeful sampling technique to find and select participants for this study (Patton, 2015). Purposeful sampling requires selecting and accessing key respondents who can help narrate information-rich stories (Patton, 2015). Study participants were asked to help identify other potential participants—the snowballing technique of sampling (Patton, 2015). And through snowball sampling, other potential participants were identified and contacted. This technique was effective because most participants were willing to participate if they were referred to me by people in their circle of colleagues.

A total of 44 participants were recruited, which was made up of 30 males and 14 females ranging in age between 24 and 63 with years of managerial work experience ranging from 1 year to 16 years in their current roles. In addition, participants from industries such as banking, auditing, retail, insurance, and manufacturing within the Namibian private sector were recruited to diversify and enrich the data.

The selection criteria used to recruit participants for this study included the following; the participant was required to meet the following set requirements:

1) Visibly of the black race and self-identifying (or have at least one black African parent or of mixed heritage and self-identifying as black);

2) Serving in either middle, senior, or executive management role in a Namibian private sector organisation at the time of the interview;

3) At least above 18 years old; and,

4) Willing to discuss their organisational experiences associated with racial identity.

Participants Locating and Recruitment

- *Social Media*

To locate black managers in the private sector, I turned to LinkedIn. LinkedIn was an ideal place to start as a social media platform for professionals since I did not belong to any professional network. By searching through LinkedIn, I could find and connect with potential participants. Once a connection was established through communication via LinkedIn messaging, I sent an invitation to participate through email.

- *Personal and Supervisor's Network*

One tactic I thought of was to talk to friends and family members about my research and seek their recommendations for the targeted participants. Friends and family would recommend potential participants or refer me to people who could assist in getting me in touch with a potential participant. Similar to referrals from my supervisor's network, this strategy yielded positive outcomes. However, it was limited reach since it was only the people in my network.

- *Supervisor (Research Champion) Network*

Additionally, I relied on my supervisor's network to recruit participants for this study. Having done consulting work in Namibia before and owing to his extensive years of experience in the academic and professional world, my supervisor had built a connection with some organisational elites in the Namibian private and public sectors. My supervisor served as the research champion and supporter. He sent emails (with me in copy) to key contacts in Namibia, asking them to participate in my research and

to help locate potential participants for my study. Through referrals from key contacts in my supervisor's network (some in the public sector), I received further referrals, gaining access to suitable participants.

- *Organisation Search*

To reach more participants, I visited websites of private sectors organisations to identify black managers on published management teams and organisation structures bearing their names and pictures. I then made efforts to contact those identified potential participants.

Furthermore, I contacted the organisations' head offices or Human Resource departments – and explained to them the details of my study to ask for their help in identifying potential participants within their organisation. Sometimes I was given contact details (phone number and email address) of potential participants. I preferred calling before emailing. By speaking to the participants through the phone, I could explain my research clearly, and this invoked some level of interest and trust in most of the participants I spoke to and yielded positive outcomes.

Participants Consent

The consent forms (Appendix Three) were sent via email to all participants that showed interest in participating in the study. The participants were asked to sign the consent form before the interview began. All participants signed either before the meeting and sent back a signed consent copy via email or the participant signed the consent form just before the interview session began.

The consent form included a letter explaining the objectives of the study in jargon-free English. The following aspects were also included in the letter:

- Voluntary nature of participation
- Participants' rights during the interview, e.g. the right to withdraw from the interview with no repercussions
- The anonymity of the interview participants and their organisations or workplace
- The estimated duration of the interview
- How collected data will be handled
- Intended use for the collected data

Before the interview began, the above themes were re-emphasised orally and clearly stated; the purpose of the study and the reason the participant was invited to participate in the study.

4.6.3. Conducting Storytelling Interviews

Participants shared stories of events and experiences of their struggles and triumphs in accessing top management positions and organisations' resources necessary for their professional development. Stories that participants shared included elements that spoke to interpersonal, organisational, institutional, and social factors shaping their access to top management positions in the Namibian private sector. Moreover, participants shared not only their own stories but stories of incidents or experiences of other black professionals—some who had left the organisation (or forced to leave), and some from other organisations within the private sector. In line with the indigenous paradigm guiding this study, It is important to remember that, these stories are not individual but communal stories (Thiong'o, 1986), which means that these stories are "not removed from the contexts and peoples that jointly experience/are complicit in these stories" (Caxaj, 2015, p. 3).

The interview process of this study followed the four main steps described next.

Step One: Introduction

The first step of the interviewing included explaining the purpose of the interview, asking for consent, repeating the rights of the participants, asking for permission to audio-record the interview, and explaining to the participants why recording is necessary. At this step, I developed a genuine relational connection with the participants that went beyond developing rapport, but through the Ubuntu lens of seeing myself as a reflection of the participant, as a way to honour and respect the humanity of the participant. This provided an opportunity to make the participants build a sense of belongingness to the research, and I assured them that their stories and perceptions mattered and needed to be heard and will be respected.

Step Two: Storytelling Time

At this point, I asked participants to tell stories of their experience in accessing management positions in the Namibian private sector in their own words or terms

with no interruption. Before the interview, I politely informed participants that I was keen to know more about their experiences, particularly those concerning:

- Broader societal issues that they thought had a bearing on their professional advancement;
- Organisational factors that influenced their ascendancy or stalled their mobility to executive management levels;
- Interpersonal issues (relations and interactions with other managers) that influenced their ascendancy or hindered mobility of the management structures.

During storytelling, I listened actively, and that entailed resisting interrupting the stories but only using non-verbal gestures such as smiles, head nods, and ad-libs such as *Ok, Alright, Faa, Hmmm*, all done to encourage participants to speak freely. Active listening signifies respect to the participant, and this is in alignment with the African indigenous ethos, mainly Ubuntu, that guides this research. Respect enabled the participants to delve into more details when they told their stories. The necessity for respect to participants in interviewing is expressed by a proverb in my language, *Sitotela*, which says: *Inkuluzuni kuinyukula loza kuishembashemba*, which, in English, translates to; if you intend to pluck out a feather from an ostrich, you must first treat the bird with respect and kindness. This proverb means that to get valid information or wisdom from a person (mostly an elder), you ought to treat that person with respect and kindness.

Step Three: Dialogue Time

After active listening until the end of the story, the participant and I engaged in a dialogue on the elements of the story shared. I asked questions to gain the participant's perception of their experiences shared in the story. This is the point of storytelling where knowledge is sought to be co-constructed (Chilisa, 2012; Mucina, 2011) as the participants and I explored the stories for meaning and hidden or underlying elements shaping those experiences shared in the story. I also used this opportunity to probe for clarity on aspects of the story the participants shared and to revisit some issues/events of interest that were least exploited or glossed over during the storytelling. I posed questions to the participants, such as "*could you please shed more light on that?"; "what happened then/after/before?"; "how*

did that event/experience make you feel?"; "why do you think that happened or didn't happen?". These questions were posed to get more clarity on participants' perceptions and the meanings they ascribed to their experiences. In particular, participants shared their perceptions on what influenced, how it influenced, and the root cause underlying their experiences. I also shared my understanding or view of their experiences from the story and perceptions the participant shared to make sure I did not misinterpret their experiences and perceptions during the data analysis.

Step Four: Conclusion

And finally, we concluded the interview by both reflecting on the possible solutions or ideas to bring change to their organisations, the private sector and society at large. After pressing 'stop' on the voice recorder, I explained to the participants the next process in my research and asked if they would like to have a contact session again in the future for any further questions. Most participants at this point indicated that they would like to be contacted again and were keen to read the outcome of my research. As part of the anti-colonial practice, I ended the dialogue by respectfully asking the participant to allow me to analyse and interpret the data using theoretical tools, and all participants gladly offered me that permission.

Each interview lasted for one hour on average. The actual interviewing process in this study unfolded in two ways. The first bunch of interviews were conducted through face-to-face (FTF) interviews that were conducted from October 2019 to March 2020. Because of the Covid-19 global pandemic that emerged when I was in the middle of the data collection process, it became a challenge to continue with face-face interviewing, thus prompting the need to move from face-face interviewing to video calls interviewing.

Audio-recording of Interviews

Interview conversations were captured with a digital audio recorder after obtaining the consent of the participants to do so. The audio recording captures the exact stories that included participants' perspectives, which allows for smooth interview conversation (Lee, 1999) and, in turn, facilitates ease of future data analysis. However, audio recording cannot capture non-verbal expressions (Lee,1999).

Active Listening

To aid in the process of data analysis, I took notes right after each interview. I resisted taking notes during the storytelling and the dialogue that followed to allow for active listening and respectful engagement with the participant. Thus, active listening required giving full attention to the participant. The practice of giving full attention to the participant is ethically and culturally motivated as it aligns with the concept of a cultural cosmology of *Ubuntu* espoused in this study. Ubuntu places high regard for other humans and disparages viewing participants as objects to extract data from but as valuable humans pertinent to knowledge production.

Transcribing Recorded Stories and Coding Practices

A professional transcriber transcribed each interview verbatim. I also transcribed some recordings using an online-based transcribing online Artificial Intelligence software transcriber called *Ottari*. During the transcribing phase, the identity of the participants was hidden to ensure participants' anonymity. I assigned names of my Ancestors to participants as pseudonyms to protect the identities of the participants. Moreover, this is a way for me to honour and invoke my Ancestors in the research process, who, according to my belief system, actively assisted me throughout the research process and are thus worth ennobled as co-researchers. The anticolonial and decolonial research protocol guiding this study allows for the enlisting of my Ancestors as co-researchers (Buntu, 2013; Mucina, 2011). This is because, as an African researcher, I subscribe to the advocacy for Africans to reignite their consciousness or claim their African 'Self' – which is constituted by a collective and integrated relationship between the material and spiritual world (Buntu, 2013; Mucina, 2011). Table 6 shows the list of the participants and their ascribed pseudonyms and other biographical details, such as their age, managerial level, years of experience and qualifications.

Table 6: Details of Participants

Pseudonym	Marker	Age	Industry	Year of Experience	Academic Qualification	Hired
Liwakala	MSM	57	Telecommunication	16	Bachelor degree	Internal
Njahi	FMM	35	Fishing	7	Masters	Internal
Siseho	MMM	37	Banking	5	Masters	External
Nanvula	FEM	39	Auditing	8	Honors	Internal
Tombwe	MMM	26	Auditing	3	Honors	Internal
Liswaniso	MMM	32	Banking	5	Masters	Internal
Mbongwe	MSM	36	Finacial Services	4	Bachelors	External
Mwanangombe	MSM	40	Insurance	14	Honors	External
Mukuwela	MEM	46	Auditing	10	Honors	Internal
Kakona	MMM	33	Banking	5	Masters	External
Mahunga	MSM	39	Consulting	15	Masters	Internal
Malumo	MMM	30	Insurance	4	Honors	Internal
Mwemba	MMM	32	Banking	3	Masters	Internal
Tawana	MMM	30	Banking	3	Bachelors	Internal
Ntelamo	MMM	38	Investment	5	Bachelors	Internal
Sitembwa	MMM	26	Banking	3	Bachelors	External
Suukuta	MEM	48	Banking	5	Masters	External
Sililo	MEM	40	Banking	5	Masters	External
Maketo	MEM	50	Auditing	7	PhD	Internal
Likukela	MMM	33	Auditing	3	Honors	Internal
Milupi	MMM	34	Banking	4	Honors-CA	Internal
Kachana	FMM	29	Banking	3	Honors-CA	Internal
Simwanza	MSM	41	Insurance	6	Masters	Internal
Manja	MEM	55	Auditing	4	Honors	External
Sikute	MMM	28	Banking	4	Honors	External
Nakwezi	FMM	29	Auditing	3	Honors	Internal
Kalaluka	MMM	27	Auditing	3	Honors	Internal
Masiye	FSM	31	Retail	4	Bachelors	Internal
Tatelo	MEM	52	Mining	11	Masters	Internal
Itwa	MSM	55	Investment	8	Masters	Internal
Mukendwa	MEM	51	Banking	12	Master	External
Suluzungila	MEM	41	Banking	10	Honors	Internal
Inonge	FSM	39	Insurance	12	Masters	Internal
Chaze	FMM	50	Auditing	6	Masters	Internal
Kuze	FMM	33	Mining	4	Honors	Internal
Namasiku	FEM	40	Insurance	7	Masters	Internal
Nyambe	MEM	56	Retail	20	Masters	External
Mainga	MMM	27	Manufacturing	4	Honours	Internal
Tusano	FSM	37	Banking	9	Bachelors	Internal
Masikabi	MMM	25	Financial Services	2	Bachelors	Internal
Simalimba	MSM	52	Insurance	15	Masters	Internal
Mutumba	FSM	44	Multi-corporation	13	Masters	External
Wati	FEM	37	Consulting	10	Masters	Internal

Study participants were divided into six categories by gender and job level for analysis purposes. Even though the study was not focused on gender, the gender component was solely used for data classification purposes. In this study, three job levels were used to classify participants. These categories included; Middle Managers (also referred to as Line managers) as those reporting to senior managers. Senior managers included managers above middle managers, such as general managers,

who reported to executive managers. And lastly, executive managers (Top managers) refer to members of the executive team or the Top Management Team (TMT).

As shown in Table 7, participants were grouped by job level and gender for ease of reference. Consequently, I used these six categories (FMM, MMM, FSM, MSM, FEM, and MEM) to classify the participants based on their gender and level of management level. The first letter of the three denotes gender- Female (F) and Male (M), then followed by managerial job level: Middle Manager (MM); Senior Manager (SM), and Executive Manager (EM), to form the three-lettered acronyms.

Table 7: Participants Markers and Quantity

Code	Description	Quantity
MMM	Male Middle Manager	15
FMM	Female Middle Manager	6
FSM	Female Senior Manager	4
MSM	Male Senior Manager	7
FEM	Female Executive Manager	3
MEM	Male Executive Manager	9
Total		**44**

4.7. Data Analysis Process

The preceding section details the processes and practices I employed to make sense of the gathered stories and the associated perceptions and meanings conveyed in those stories. The idea for analysis was to capture ideas within stories that spoke to the multiple factors that have a bearing on black managers' experiences in accessing top management positions. As stated earlier, from an African indigenous perspective, although these stories were expressed as individual stories, they all shared the same complexity (although consciously or unconsciously acknowledged differently) on how black managers navigate the private sector workspace.

As an African researcher, I brought into this analysis my spiritual and cultural 'Self', which had a significant influence on the outcome of the data analysis in this study. For instance, during the analysis phase, I regularly enacted rituals to invoke

and embody Ancestral spirits and *Necturus* (divine nature spirits), which I relied on for supra-intelligence – awakened higher sense of awareness and intuition, and communication with the spiritual realm through dreams and signs that also helped to guide the data analysis process.

Furthermore, I faced a challenge during data analysis that arose from the lack of pragmatic decolonised approaches to analysing storytelling interviews data. Thus, I had to tailor-make a suitable data analysis procedure that aligns with the anticolonial and decolonial framework adopted in this study. Although it is necessary to advocate for decolonising research, it is also vital that researchers seeking to decolonise research must collect and analyse data through decolonial approaches. The data analysis process I followed is illustrated below.

Step 1: Pre-Analysis/Data Arrangement

The collected stories and dialogues contained contextual elements that spoke to social, institutional, organisation, and interpersonal level experiences black managers faced in navigating their workspaces to access top management positions. To analyse the data, I followed the three steps illustrated below.

The first step was to identify the categories through a pre-coding data analysis. Creswell (2014) advises pre-coding during data analysis. Pre-coding in this study was conducted by identifying pre-emerging patterns, their similarities, overlap, and differences from the participants' stories and co-established perceptions (in dialogue) about their lived experiences concerning accessing top management positions. Since this study aspired to carry out a multi-level analysis, I then proceeded to form a coding structure constituted by three main groups or categories - *Macro, Meso, and Micro* level influential factors. All the themes related to experiences directly or indirectly underlying the access to executive management roles for black managers were to be organised into the following three main clusters:

- *Macro-level:* This category included evidence of factors (themes) underpinned by the broader socio-historical, socio-ideologies, economic, family, and religious context of Namibia. *Macro*-level themes also included Institutional level factors, those factors that are collectively constituted by institutions. In this case, the *macro*-level included elements that are broadly relevant to the Namibian private sector.

- ***Meso-level:*** This category compromised of evidence of themes related to experiences facilitated by the organisation environment—structures, culture, processes, and procedures that shaped participants' professional advancement to executive management roles.

- ***Micro-level:*** This category grouped evidence of personal and interpersonal level barriers and enablers that informed participants' experiences of ascending to top managerial roles.

Step 2: 'Indigenised' Thematic Coding

This study relied on thematic coding as recommended for thematizing data collected to answer research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2013). However, the coding process was naturally tailor-made in accordance with my African cosmology – which informs the ontological, epistemological and axiological stance of this study. Thus, for example, African spirituality practices such as the invocation of Ancestral and nature spirits came to bear on the coding and themes development procedure. Thematic coding procedure was selected as it is the most utilised and "distinctive method with a clearly outlined set of procedures in social science" (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 178).

Following this approach, all interview transcripts and the researcher's reflective journal notes were inductively coded for themes aligning to the research questions, as recommended by Braun and Clarke's (2013) reflexive thematic analysis procedure. To facilitate coding, I used *Nvivo* 12 Qualitative Data Analysis Software to code the data from 44 transcripts that were loaded into the software program.

The details of the thematic coding procedure are described in the preceding section.

Phase One: Immersion In the data

The first step of coding involved immersing myself in the data. This process involved re-listening the audio recordings while reading along on the transcripts. I also did this to ascertain the quality of the transcripts. By immersing myself in the data, I could embody the research and data analysis (Andrews, 2021). Through this process, I could visualise possible codes that will fall into each pre-determined category/cluster. For instance, I could figure out key messages which spoke to the social, organisation,

and interpersonal contextual location of the participants, and thus the arrangement of the codes in the three respective groups (Macro-Meso-Micro). At this stage, I could also prefigure how to relate or interpret these pre-emerging patterns through the anti/decolonial lens that this study adopted.

Phase Two: Actual Coding

The second step entailed the process of open coding, which involved identifying key messages within the data to form first-order codes. This involved identifying common participants' lived experiences shaped by social, organisational, and interpersonal barriers and enablers in accessing top management roles and categorising them as such. This phase depended on my categorical thinking abilities. I was able to group open codes under broader categories of (Macro, Meso and Micro) before proceeding to the next phase, where I identified patterns in the first-order codes.

Phase three: Identifying Patterns (Codes to Sub-Themes)

The third phase Involved using focused coding to arrange, eliminate and re-arrange first order codes into similar or related groups of codes to form second-order codes or sub-themes. In this phase, I incorporated indigenous practices in the analysis process, which included deep reflections, use of intuition, and invoking and embodying Ancestral spirits and *Neterus* (divine spirits of nature), which all assisted me in identifying patterns in the first-order codes.

Phase Four: Developing Themes (Sub-themes to Themes)

Through deep-refection and dream visions, applying my coding skills, I developed coherent pictures of how sub-themes overlapped and coalesced into themes. This stage also included constant reflexive asking myself about the underlying reason informing my decision on the arrangement of sub-themes to form themes. I continuously asked myself questions, such as, *why do you think these two sub-themes are related*? Are you sure these two sub-themes are related to the way you imagine them, or is this your presupposition taking hold here? I am aware that thematizing is subjective, but is this thematizing process in alignment with the moral principles of Ubuntu and *Maat* that demands honesty and respect for participants' experiences? Further, although I did not subscribe to the notion of objectivity in this study, reflexivity was necessary to avoid blind spots and dishonesty that would contaminate the data

analysis. Also, in line with the Ubuntu and *Maat* principles of respect, reciprocity, and justice, I held myself accountable to present the experiences of study participants as honestly as possible as a way to honour the participants and treat their experiences with the sacredness they deserved. To illustrate, Table Nine shows an example of how macro-level influential themes were generated from codes formulated from interviews extracts.

Table 9: Example illustrating the thematic analysis process in this study

Macro-level: *Evidence related to the influence of macro-level factors on the experiences of black managers*			
Interview extracts: *Apartheid is still here […] It's like we are not free. We should be honest, and nothing has changed […].* *Colonisation did not end; whites still have land and property they took away from us after killing our people […].* *[...] you are treated like you are not an independent country. Are we free?* *Apartheid ended, but not in the private sector. Here, things are still run the apartheid-style. You know the mentality. You are black, so you must work under a white person just like it was under apartheid. That mentality did not die […].*	**Open Codes** • Apartheid is alive • German colonial legacies • Historical dispossession of land/property • Colonial crimes: Genocide and other colonial atrocities • Colonial mentality	**Sub-themes** • Colonial legacies • Colonial ideologies	**Theme** Colonial histories continuity

Phase Five: Searching, Reviewing, and Completing Themes (Forming a Coherent Story)

Through further deeper reflection, the themes that emerged were further refined and re-arranged within the three categories to paint a clear picture of how the themes related, overlapped, and contrasted. At this stage, I also consulted with my supervisor, who helped me in refining themes. Consulting with my supervisor was done throughout the research process, as it is in alignment with indigenous knowledge production,

which views knowledge production as valid when produced communally or relationally (Chilisa, 2012; Mucina, 2011). Here, I demonstrated and utilised the concept of relationality and reciprocity inherent in African cosmology in knowledge production. For me, this was another decolonial research praxis.

The last process of this phase, as depicted in Figure 3, involved outlining the links between all themes and how they interacted to influence the experiences of black managers in ascending to the C-suites of corporate Namibia.

Acessing Top management Positions
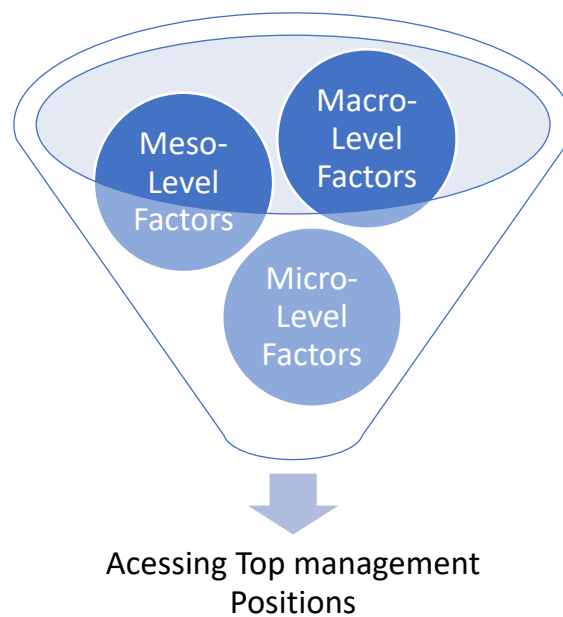
Figure 3: Illustration of the interplay among multi-level factors influencing experiences of black managers in accessing top management positions

4.8. Research Criteria

Unlike positivist criteria of internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity in quantitative research, scholars such as Lincoln and Guba (1985) have argued for different criteria in qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) postulate four evaluative criteria elements; credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, to strengthen qualitative research quality. Next, I will describe how I endeavoured to meet these criteria in this study.

Mertens (2018) describes credibility as the ability to ensure confidence in the accuracy of the reached study outcomes. Rudestam and Newton (2015) advise that "it is the researcher's responsibility of convincing oneself and one's audience

that the findings are based on a critical investigation" (p. 131). As a researcher, I am cognisant that knowledge production is not a neutral exercise. Therefore, I engaged in reflexivity throughout the research process, and I also sought continuous debriefing with the supervisor. Reflexivity involves the researcher's self-reflection on their role in the research process to ensure rigour in qualitative research (Alvesson, 2011; Cunliffe, 2003). I offer a reflection at the end of this chapter expressing my experiences during the research process and how my body politics and positionality as a Namibian colonised subject who struggles with everyday coloniality may affect the research process and research outcomes.

Transferability is described as providing sufficient detail to allow readers to judge the applicability of findings to other contexts (Lincoln & Guba,1985; Mertens, 2018). However, I was not interested in transferability since the Namibian context, particularly the historical and political context, is unique; therefore, seeking transferability would be impossible and undesirable. My role as the researcher was to provide brief descriptions of the socio-historical and political context of Namibia, provided in Chapter 3, to allow the reader to make sense of the findings.

Dependability is attained by providing access to data that shows the emergence of hypotheses and changes in understanding (Mertens, 2018). Lincoln and Guba (1989) suggest using an "inquiry audit" as one measure, which might enhance the dependability of the study. As indicated earlier in this chapter, throughout this study, I reflected on all my thought processes, personal ideologies, and spiritual position that I believed had the potential to influence the research process and strived to align all my research practices to the principles of honesty, truth and justice as demanded by *Ubuntu* and *Maat*.

Confirmability is described as the capacity to provide a chain of evidence between data and conclusions that are reached (Mertens, 2018). To meet confirmability, I have presented the findings of this study with interview excerpts.

4.9. Ethical Considerations

As a PhD candidate researcher, I first sought ethics clearance from the Department of Commerce Ethics in Research Committee (EiRC) at the University of Cape Town before recruiting research participants. However, the ethical considerations in this study sought to go beyond the outlined ethical recruitments by the EiRC and pay heed

to the participants' cultural values and practices (Smith, 2012; Thambinathan & Kinsella, 2021). Thambinathan and Kinsella (2021, p. 5) advise researchers to adopt:

A safe, culturally competent ethical protocol is integral in maintaining a respectful and compassionate environment in which research can take place. Restructuring Western ethics is a prerequisite for carrying out decolonizing research methodology. There is a need to shift the Western ethical standards that are directed to individual integrity into one of collective responsibility, with a focus on respectful and genuine relationships.

Thus, this study sought to ground ethical protocol in the concept of *Ubuntu* and *Maat* - the African philosophies unto which this study is anchored.

Thus, as postulated by Chilisa (2012), ethics considerations guided by Ubuntu entail relational ethics of care principles of "accountable responsibility, respectful representation, reciprocal appropriation, and rights and regulations" (p. 117). Using culturally competent ethics criteria grounded in the concept of *Ubuntu* and *Maat* is supported by Meleis (1996), who advocates for a culturally competent scholarship based on a relational ethic of care criteria. In the same light, Walton (2014) argues researchers have to move beyond the ethical lens dominated by western scientific materialism to explore ethics rooted in spiritual and indigenous traditions.

As highlighted earlier, data collection and transcription were done with the consent of the participants by allowing the participant to sign the consent form. Further, I ensured protection from any harm for all participants through anonymization of participants' identities by assigning them pseudonyms. Given the political, personal, and sensitive nature of the information that was collected in this study, any information that was likely to reveal participants' identities was removed. In the participant information sheet, participants were notified of the sensitive nature of the questions in the interview. Even though these questions have positive intentions, they can potentially evoke negative emotions. To ensure that the experiences and voices of participants were represented accurately during data analysis, I shared transcripts and findings from the study with the participants and sought their feedback on the extent the transcripts and data analysis best described their experiences.

4.10. Reflexivity: My Reflection on the Research Process

I would like to start by stating that this research has been emotionally challenging for me as the researcher. As a black person, who has experienced the throes of colonisation and coloniality, the pain of the participants from everyday experiences of coloniality, the dehumanisations and lack of space to mourn or even make their suffering known was emotionally draining. I could not help but viscerally experience the pain and suffering shared in their stories and the tears from some participants during the interviews. Thus, as similarly experienced by Detta (2018), it was challenging to maintain neutrality or detachment when participants were sharing their painful and distressing experiences. In fact, it is unrealistic and inhumane to try maintaining detachment, and I believe only an insane person would attempt neutrality in such situations.

As a black researcher, my daily struggles with colonisation and oppression are not divorced from the struggle of other colonised black people. Thus, my scholarship is aligned with the project of the liberation of black people (Dei, 2014). However, I was alerted by other MOS scholars that my analysis and approach to doing research may be contested by others who are less objective or biased, or even dangerous (Dar et al., 2020; Muzanenhamo & Chowdhury, 2021). However, my aim is not to pretend to be objective and to be disembodied from body politics, as purported objectivity is impossible, unhelpful, and undesirable in an authentic knowledge production exercise (Dei, 2017; Flyvbjerg, 2006; Moya, 2011).

The best thing I felt I could do was to engage them with empathy and provide emotional support to participants whilst taking care of my own emotional well-being. Although I was fully aware of my positionality and the risk this posed to the validity of the research, disembodied neutrality became my most minor concerns. Instead, I prioritised empathetical listening and capturing participants' stories in the most humane and authentic way, which involved not taking a disinterested intervention but sympathetically offering them a safe space to talk openly and freely about their experiences. This intervention helped participants to feel safe, and they articulated their experiences with ease, which yielded a researcher-participant reciprocal and respectful co-construction of research data (Mucina, 2011).

As an African researcher guided by Ubuntu moral philosophy: *Mutu ki mutu ka batu* (a human achieves their humanity through connection/morally relating to other humans), I resisted viewing research as an extractive process of information from bodies (Chilisa, 2012; Smith, 2012). Throughout the research process, I pledged to honour the research principles defined by Ubuntu and Maat and each step of it with the reverence it deserved. I became cautious of the possibility of producing knowledge out of Black pain for a careerist purpose. To ease that angst, I opened myself to the possibility of being part of the research and viewed myself as somewhat a conduit transmitting these lived and embodied experiences from the participants to the attention of academic space and beyond, and in the process to be transformed by the research process. This apprehension, coupled with immense care and respect for black experiences, demanded that I elevate to my highest state of being as I connected with each participant's lived story. With care, I offered to write about their stories without elevating myself to a messiah or saviour status. I did so in the least harmful way whilst acknowledging the inherent harm of research practices (Smith, 2012). To be honest and pure in my conduct, I was guided by the principles of *Maat* and *Ubuntu*. This adherence to these quasi-spiritual demands called on my high sense of morality, which was instrumental in helping me go beyond the bare university's research ethical considerations criteria required for ethical clearance. I also had to respect and valorise the participants' stories by avoiding overintellectualizing their experiences and authentically and honestly analysing them as a moral act of care. Although I used thematic coding to analyse the collected data, which can be reductive, I strived not to reduce the essence of those experiences. My approach was to push an emancipatory and social justice agenda for these participants, even in the slightest way possible.

On the sunny side of things, I built a humane connection with almost all the participants, which is integral to the relational paradigm of Ubuntu and *Maat* represented in this research. Another positive aspect was that, although stories of resistance were few, it gave me hope that the forms of resistance that the few participants could spark collective resistance in the future. The personal is always the collective. However, these participants must be supported in their struggles with everyday coloniality in their workspaces, as I later recommend in Chapter 6.

4.11. Conclusion

This chapter provided the rationale for adopting an indigenous research paradigm grounded in an African worldview and deploying the storytelling research methodology adopted in this study. This approach is aligned with the agenda to decolonise research methods and practices in MOS research. The chapter further discussed the selected qualitative research strategy, storytelling interviewing as the data collection tool, and the data analysis process adopted in this study. Finally, the chapter discussed the research criteria and ethical and political considerations that I observed as the researcher. The chapters end with my reflection on the research process. The following chapter presents findings from the data analysis of the current study.

Chapter 5: Findings

5.1. Introduction

This PhD study explores factors that shape black managers' experiences in accessing top management roles within the Namibian private corporate sector. The following main research question guides this study: *What are the experiences of black managers in accessing top management positions within Namibian private sector organisations?*

To answer the above-stated research question, I adopted a multi-level analysis strategy that stratified participants' experiences and perceptions into three categories, namely, social and institutional (*Macro*), organisational (*Meso*), and interpersonal and intergroup (*Micro*) levels. Accordingly, the following three sub-questions—are formulated according to the multiple-level analysis strategy to guide the research process:

- *What are the social-contextual (Macro-level) factors that influence the experiences of black managers in accessing top management roles in Namibian private sector organisations?*
- *What organisational (Meso-level) factors shape the experiences of black managers in accessing top management positions in Namibian private sector organisations?*
- *What interpersonal and intergroup (Micro-level) factors shape the experiences of black managers in accessing top management roles in Namibian private sector organisations?*

The preceding sections elaborate on the themes and sub-themes, demarcated into three categories that emerged from the data analysis as depicted in Figure 4 below. The first section reports on the macro-level factors, the second section reports on the organisational level factors, and the last section reports on the interpersonal/intergroup level experiences.
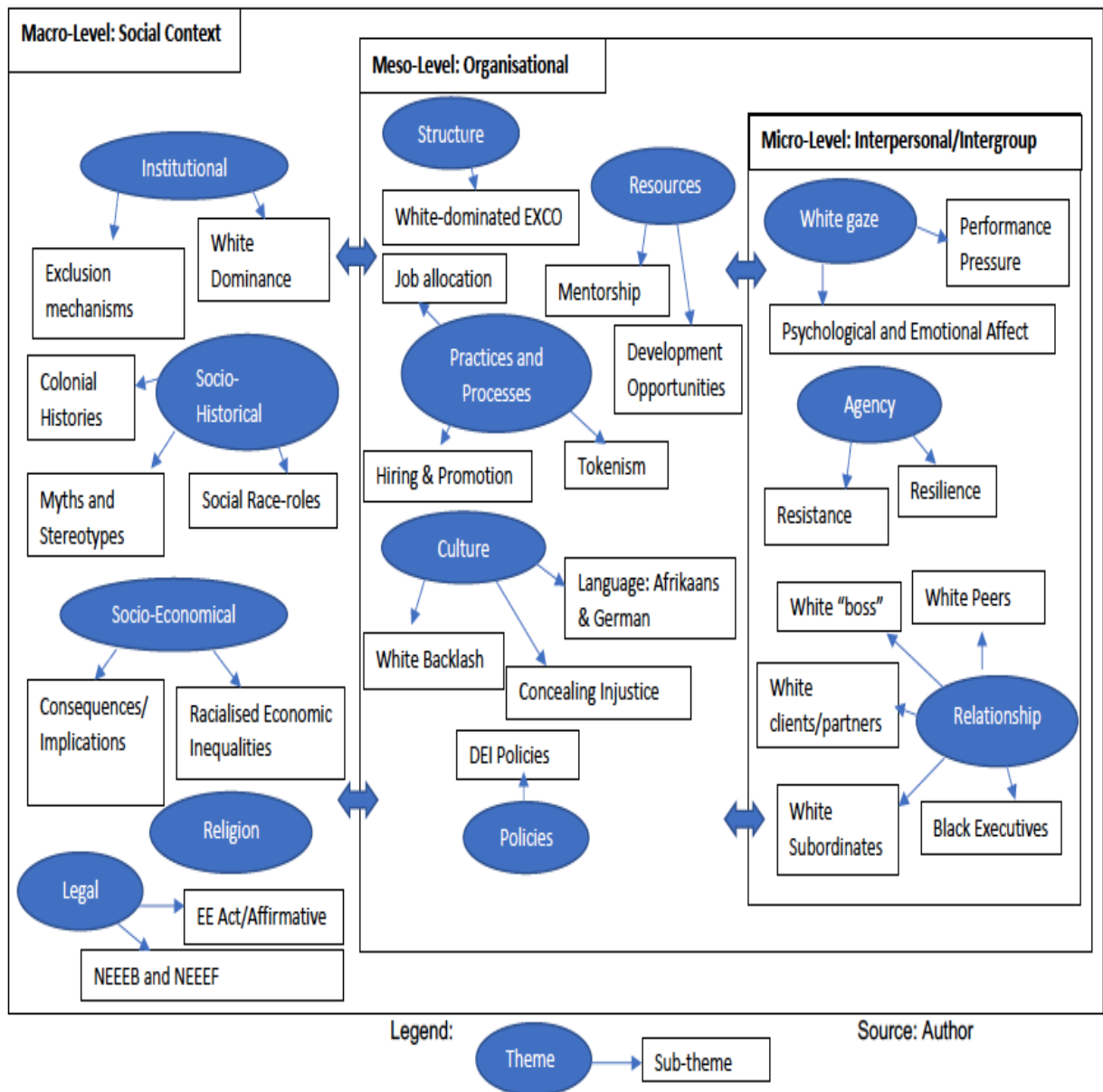
Figure 4: Themes and sub-themes generated from the data analysis

5.2. Macro-Level Experiences: Social Contextual Factors

This section presents research findings that intend to answer the first sub-research question: *What are the social-contextual (Macro-level) factors that shape the experiences of black managers in accessing top management roles within Namibian private sector organisations?*

The findings under this section focus on macro-level factors classified mainly as historical, socio-psychological, economic, and legal contextual factors that appeared to shape black managers' experiences in accessing top management positions in Namibian private sector organisations. The following sections present those factors as themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data analysis.

5.2.1. Socio-Historical Influential Factors

Colonial Histories Continuity

In a significant number of responses from the participants, it was noted that there was a common sentiment and awareness of how colonial and apartheid legacies in Namibia shaped their individual and workplace experiences. Participants showed an awareness of how German colonial rule in Namibia, including the Nama and Herero genocide from 1904 to 1908 and the later Apartheid land dispossessions and economic policies, continue to shape their present realities in society and their experiences in the workplace. Participants' sentiments were captured in the quotations below:

> *[…] we still live that [colonial] history today. We are still suffering; we are still landless, we are poor, and today, we are forced to work for the grandchildren of those who stole from us (Mbongwe, MSM36) [13].*

> *Colonisation never really ended. The Germans and Boers [Afrikaners] still have most of the land and properties, and they control the economy [...] little has*

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[13] All the names assigned to participants are pseudonyms to protect the identity of participants. I have assigned names of my Ancestors to hide the identity of the study participants. This is one of ways I chose to honour, acknowledge, invoke and embody my Ancestors in the research process.

changed, it's like we are still under Apartheid, just look at the whole private sector, it is obvious (Njahi, FMM35).

Other common sentiments were captured from expressions such as "*we are still not free*", "*we failed to dismantle apartheid*", and "The *Germans and Afrikaners are still ruling over us*". Responses of this nature relayed the perception that social inequalities within the workplace reflect colonial continuities in contemporary Namibia society. These responses also show how the concentration of wealth and ownership of the economy is still within the white minority populace, who are the descendants of the colonialists. Participants expressed these sentiments with signs of historical pain, despair, and disbelief, and many of the participants did not see a bright future for Namibia. Reflecting on his experiences in the private sector. For example, Simalimba, a 52-year-old senior manager, states that colonial apartheid is so deeply entrenched in society that it seeped into the private sector, creating an oppressive work environment. He stated:

[…] you might think we are free because we have a black government, but I tell you this; apartheid still lives here. It was just rebranded […]. We were told to go to school to be successful in life, and yes, some of us [black professionals] might earn better salaries, but are we free? Is that success when you earn your salary from working in a racist work environment similar to that of apartheid or colonial times? (Simalimba, MSM52).

What is noticeable from stories shared by participants is that colonial histories persisted through two main modes: (1) historically determined social race roles and (2) racial ideologies that form racial stereotypes and myths. The next paragraphs report on these identified two modes in detail.

- ***Socio-Historical Race Roles in Namibia***

Most participants' expressions show that historical social-roles stereotypes that assigned black people as subservient labourers to be supervised by white people are still dominant in the Namibian social belief structures and are often evident in the workplace. Seventy-five per cent of the participants indicated they could trace social race-roles stereotypes back to the colonial era and apartheid when black women were

relegated to domestic work, and black men were mainly employed as gardeners or janitors in organisations or manual labourers in the mines and industries. In addition, some participants stated that white employees in the private sector still find it challenging to accept black persons as their superiors or peers or worthy of holding positions of power in these organisations. I captured these sentiments from expressions such as:

> *[...] you know whites [Shakes her head] […] the only thing they can relate your skin colour to is that housekeeper they have at home. So definitely, when they see you in that position, they equate you to their domestic workers at home, so they value you based on how they value their domestic workers (Njahi, FMM35).*

> *[…] I think it is still difficult for many white people today to accept a black person as their boss. White people grew up seeing black people serving them in their homes, they grew up knowing blacks to be domestic workers or gardeners, and now a black person is your boss? Do you see how that can trouble many white people in this country? (Sikute, MMM28).*

As reflected in the above responses, participants expressed awareness of hidden and elusive social race-role notions that saliently render black professionals as "fit" or typical for less skill-intensive or less critical managerial roles. Participants in the following sub-section reveal the societal myths and stereotypes that seem to reify racial stratifications.

- ***Socio-Historical Racial Myths and Stereotypes***

Data patterns suggest that both black and white professionals can internalise socio-historical racial myths and stereotypes. In the interview extracts below, Nakwezi and Sitembwa's perceptions illustrate how black and white employers internalise socio-historical racial myths of black inferiority and white superiority. For example, Nakwezi and Sitembwa reflected on how his socialisation may have played a role in constructing his self-perception and its effect on his self-actualisation.

Most of the issues we are dealing with today are influenced by history, you know, those things from the past affect us even in the corporate world today in so many ways, and we are often not aware of this […] blacks used to be just labourers. White people were managers and supervisors and mistreated black people […]. White people believed black people did not feel pain, so they treated them with no pity. Those things are still stuck in our minds today. Whites still hold this mentality that; I am white, and I should be the boss, and I can treat black people in any way I want (Nakwezi, FMM29).

The quote above illustrates how historically created social race roles play a role in reinforcing the wrong perception about black professionals and may thus undermine their pursuit to reach their full potential in the workplace. Further, participants pointed out the racial myths internalised by white employees, such as the one stated by Nakwezi: "*I am white, and I should be the boss, and I can treat black people in any way I like*".

5.2.2. Economic Factors: Economic Inequalities and Vulnerability

Study participants echoed the sentiment that societal-level economic inequalities (the economy disproportionately controlled by white minority group) created by legacies of colonialism and apartheid has, directly and indirectly, affected their workplace experiences. There was a common perception among participants that there were deliberate efforts by the white minorities to maintain economic domination. Participants attributed the reasons underlying those apparent white economic domination mechanisms to 'fear' or anxiety among the white minorities. The anxiety or so-called 'fear' seems to stem from the clear realisation that black people are trying significantly hard to occupy influential top positions in organisations and own their means of production. As illustrated in the quotes below, participants perceived white people as driven by anxiety over losing their economic power (after losing political-administrative power).

[…] for them [whites], they see it as a survival thing, so they fight to preserve their economic power. Now that apartheid has ended, the only power they have now is economic power. And I think the laws that we have put in place to

promote the previous disadvantaged have also increased their fear (Siseho, MMM37).

[…] I think white people fail to recognise the damage apartheid and colonisation did to us [black people]. I don't know if it's ignorance or just fear of sharing. The best thing white Namibians could do is show some sort of compassion and do the best in their power to bring some level of redress and try to correct the mess history has created. But they have refused to share the land and still hold on to all the wealth, which is ever-growing. Look, I don't think sharing could threaten their survival at all. It is just greed and lack of compassion (Itwa, MSM55).

According to Itwa and other participants, what appears to be white anxiety acts to perpetuate white economic domination. Participants criticised the white-dominated private sector for not repairing or redressing the historically created inequalities and being complicit in worsening the disparities between white and black Namibians.

Effects of Socio-economic Inequalities on Black Managers' Experiences

A commonly shared view among study participants was that the unfavourable socio-economic status ascribed to black people because of racialised economic inequalities bore on their workplace experiences. Data patterns demonstrate that historically created socio-economic inequalities seemed to reduce participants' agency to oppose racial oppression at organisational and interpersonal levels, thus making them susceptible to racial oppression and marginalisation. Participants highlighted that their poor financial backgrounds and family financial responsibilities made them less likely to resist their subjugation in the workplace. Doing so would make them risk losing their jobs and thus be unable to support their families. Participants stated they were less likely to opt-out of the toxic work environments because of the lack of opportunities and financial obligations. They expressed these sentiments in the statements below:

[…] Our parents fought a liberation war for our political independence. But unfortunately, we have to fight a new war, the war of economic liberation. Unless we change the economic disparities in this country, discrimination will persist in the private sector (Inonge, FSM39).

[…] My livelihood depends on this job, even when I am discriminated against, like when they gave that job to that white guy. Yes, I was angry, but I could not resign; I have a family to feed. So, I just had to take it in. As I said earlier, a white person can leave at any time because opportunities are plenty for them and their family is probably well off. As for me, a black person, I can't just leave because I know it will not be easy for me to find another job the next day, and my family is poor. I have a family to support, and I have a sister and cousin in university who I support (Kuze, FMM33).

Sadly, for many participants, their poor backgrounds, and many of them being the first ones from their families to go to university, informed their ambitions to get top management level — and increase their earning capacities, and this would afford them the ability to support their poor families (extended families). Participants, Tombwe and Kakona, shared their perceptions of how their economically deprived backgrounds affected their professional mobility and social lives.

[…] As a black person growing up in Katutura [black low-income area], I came from a poor family. To be honest, poverty motivated me to work hard in life, which meant taking my education seriously to emancipate my family from poverty one day. That same motivation keeps me working hard in my job so that one day I can get a general management or EXCO position (Tombwe, MMM26).

[…] I come from a big family. Even though we were poor, we didn't go to bed on empty stomachs because my parents worked hard to provide for us. Since I am the first one in my family to go to university and hold a better-paying job, my whole family looks up to me for financial assistance. I have younger siblings at university that I support, including my cousins, whom I help here and there. It is an African thing. Most of us come from big families and with no generational wealth, unlike most of my white colleagues who come from small and rich families [...]. So, I have to work hard no matter the treatment I get here because it is the only source of income that I have to provide for my family (Kakona, MMM33).

Many of the participants expressed that their low-income backgrounds were a source of motivation in their job performance, and it undermined their agency to resist racial oppression and marginalisation. For example, the lack of agency foisted on black managers is reflected in statements by Kakona, such as "*I have to work hard no matter the treatment I get here because it is the only source of income*". Other participants expressed similar statements, implying that they felt obligated to go the extra mile and make the additional effort, regardless of the hostile work environments.

5.2.3. Institutional-Level Influencing Factors: Namibian Private Sector as an Instrument of Power

The following constituents present themes that emerged relevant to institutional (private sector) level influential factors that appeared to mediate the experiences of Black managers in accessing top management positions.

Continued Colonial Patterns in Contemporary Namibian Private Sector

Data patterns paint a picture of institutional-level practices that appear to be collectively enacted and practised by the private sector organisations and actors, forming a systematic racial exclusion culture. Participants raised two common reasons for the persistent racial exclusion in the Namibian private sector. First, participants held the view that the Namibian private sector was historically built from colonial exploitation proceeds and was run to be the source of white economic power. Presently, the private sector is still seen as an instrument used to maintain white economic power for participants. Second, participants pointed out that the reason the private sector remains white-dominated in management positions was that whites did not build the private sector to accommodate black employees in positions of management. Study participants held the common observation that an implicit political agenda motivated the apparent racialised economic exclusion practices to maintain white economic domination and subvert the economic interests of the majority black population group, as reported in the preceding section. For participants, these apparent institutionalised practices mitigated black managers' mobility to top management positions in the private sector. The following quotes reveal those perceptions:

[…] if we look at the history of the private sector, this sector was created to be controlled by one race [the white race]. They did not build it with black people in mind. So, that history determines the industry's fate. So yes, there are laws in place to hire black people in management positions. But still, they find ways to circumvent those laws because they [white owners/shareholders] want to have total control of all the industries. They want nothing to disturb their economic power (Kanyebu, MEM56).

[…] if you look deeply at the history of all these private companies, even this bank, and all these big private corporations, they were started for white capital accumulation […] from exploiting black people, and our stolen land, cattle and minerals were used to build most of these private firms that we see today to benefit themselves […]. Even this bank was set up to finance white businesses and white farmers. Yes, over the years, they have tried to rebrand these companies, but that is all surface transformation. […] they will continue to keep us away from economic freedom […] they only care about their capital interests (Tatelo, MEM52).

As the above quotes reveal, participants expressed awareness and criticism of the historical systematic exclusion mechanisms supposedly deployed by private sector organisations to protect and preserve the white minority's economic interests.

Mechanisms of Institutional Racial Exclusion Culture

Study participants observed that institutionalised economic exclusion practices at the institutional level were primarily enacted through white-dominated executive management teams, racially-biased corporate social investments, racial biases in the supply chain, and business-to-business relationships. The following sections report on the mechanisms mentioned above.

- ### *White Dominance of Executive Teams in the Private Sector*

There was a perception among participants that there was a political agenda behind white executive managers' efforts to hold on to power. Participants were of the view that racial disparities at top management levels are maintained in their organisations to ensure white dominance in the private sector and to ensure the preservation and

protection of white economic interests. For participants, white people feared losing control and ownership of the private sector, which translates to losing economic power, thus motivating the need for whites to enact mechanisms to maintain their control over the sector. The above-stated perceptions are manifested in the following selected interview extracts:

[...] the whole ecosystem of the finance service industry or any industry in the private sector was set up and is owned by the people who oppressed us. We kept the same structures after independence to the benefit of white people. That is why we see few black people at executive levels [...]; it is not a matter of qualified black professionals as they would want us to believe. There are more qualified black Namibians now, maybe five years after independence; that excuse would make sense, but now it does not. I think it's about ownership and control [...] it is something that is never said out loud, but whites are holding to these positions to stay in control of the private sector, which means protecting their wealth (Sikute, MMM28)

[...] these guys [white managers] are protecting their interests and to favour their kind. So, it comes down to controlling resources in the sector. Yeah! It's a matter of controlling resources because the moment you have an EXCO boardroom that is 80% white, that's the payroll distribution. It shows that resources, such as good pay, are going to white communities. So, we need to see it from that angle (Sililo, MEM40).

- ***Corporate Social Investments Racial Biases***

Participants posited that one of the ways organisations contribute to racialised social inequalities is through their Corporate Social Investments (CSI) or Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) practices, which seem to be inclined to favour white communities and white-owned/controlled social institutions such as private schools, NGOs, and events hosted by these organisations. For example, participants expressed their organisations allocated more CSI financial sponsorships to private schools (predominantly white-oriented private schools) compared to public schools (predominantly black-oriented public schools). Participants also shared observations that their organisations directed more sports and social events CSI sponsorships

towards those considered to be "white sports codes" and white-owned event-organising companies. The participants' observations are crystallised in Simalimba's comment in the quote below.

[…] private schools receive massive sponsorship from the private sector compared to the public schools because their [white managers] kids go to private schools. Also, white sports codes and those events where you find 99% white people receive more sponsorships. For example, [event name withheld] cycling event receives crazy sponsorship from major private firms, including my firm, because many white managers take part in that event (Simalimba, MSM52).

- ***Supply Chain Processes Racial Biases***

Some participants also expressed that their organisations seemed to practise what appeared to be racially biased tendering and procurement processes and procedures. For example, in the quote below, Malumo, a 30-year-old middle manager, expressed what he observed as racial bias embedded in the outsourcing or tendering process for services such as consulting services. He stated:

[…] I see how jobs or contracts are given to whites. Almost all the big outsourced jobs are given to white firms even before they are advertised; it's like they already decided who will get the job […] because they have networks with those white clients, and they give each other jobs […] this is how black firms are excluded from opportunities in the private sector. Well, black companies will get small tenders like cleaning or maybe catering, just to show that there is some sort of fairness in our procurement process (Malumo, MMM30).

As exemplified by Malumo's opinion in the above quotation, several other participants also perceived the seemingly racially-biased procurement processes that excluded black-owned businesses from participating in the "white enclave economy" at the private sector level. This finding resonates with the forthcoming section, which highlights the lack of black-owned organisations in the private sector and the associated consequences to the advancement opportunities of black professionals.

- ***Business to Business Racial Discrimination***

Another practice that emerged from the data points is how business-to-business relationships in private sector organisations appeared to be structured by race. This means that white-controlled organisations such as banks or audit companies are likely to offer better services to other white-owned organisations. For example, commercial banks we perceived to be biased in financing enterprises and start-ups. Participants pointed out that white-owned businesses received financing from banks with fewer barriers compared to black-owned enterprises or start-ups. Sililo, a CFO in one of the commercial banks, shared a story that exemplifies racial discrimination:

[…] A white guy who runs this other company approached our bank for an interest-free loan. I said no, that is against the law. We cannot give you an interest-free loan. This client had already spoken to my CEO (white), who backed him up. To my surprise, my CEO pretended not to know the banking laws and pushed that we give this guy an interest-free loan. When I said no, he (the CEO) even dared to ask me to prove what I was saying was true when he knew the law very well. I was shocked. I was like, you need me to prove what you already know because you want to give another white person an illegal advantage? Also, it shows the way this guy (CEO) thought of me. I mean, we have been colleagues for five years, and he did not believe me, and he chose to believe another white person he just met a few days ago and knowing very well that his white guy is wrong? (Sililo, MEM40).

Similarly, Nanvula, an executive in the auditing firm, reflects on how her firm (white-owned) discriminates by harshly auditing books of black-owned enterprises. In contrast, white-owned companies seem to be audited with leniency. She states:

[…] I see the difference with black businesses, their books are audited harshly, and you don't see the same level of scrutiny for white companies […]. In the end, access to funding or credit scores of the black business is affected. This is another way these white auditing firms make it tough for black businesses to survive. We see these things happening. And unfortunately, until now, there is not a single black-owned auditing firm in this country to make life easy for black businesses (Nanvula, FEM39).

The above revelations point to the institutionalised racial discrimination in the contemporary Namibian private sector. The data suggest that private sector affiliations among white organisations exclude and disadvantage black businesses and offer privileges to white-owned organisations. The consequences of these institutionalised racial exclusion practices are explored further in the next segment.

Consequences of Institutional-Level Racial Exclusion Culture

- ***Limited Mobility and Professional Advancement Opportunities for Black Managers***

Most participants, particularly in middle and senior management, noted more barriers to accessing top management jobs or making frequent job changes within the private sector than their white counterparts. They mainly attributed their employment barriers to the persistence of racial inequalities in the private sector, rooted in its history and deliberate efforts to keep black managers from accessing opportunities. However, participants observed that despite internal obstacles, internal upward mobility was reasonably possible through internal hiring or promotion compared to being hired externally within the private sector. Participants also highlighted their lack of access to informal development prospects, such as networks, and how this undermined their chances of accessing outside opportunities within the private sector. Simalimba and Inonge, both senior managers, shared their observations:

> *My chances of getting an executive management job out there [in the private sector] are narrow. That chance will probably be here if I am lucky or if I stay long enough. That is why many blacks stay in one private sector for too long. I mean, if you are doubted by white people here who see your work but still doubt you, how about those whites outside who do not see your performance? What are the chances of hiring you as a black person if they don't know you? The encounters with white clients already tell you something (Simalimba, MSM52).*

> *And the other issue is about control and connections I talked about earlier. It is easier for a white person to get a top job or any job elsewhere in the private sector compared to a black person with the same qualifications and experience. Remember, many whites have access to closed networks, many job*

opportunities are shared only within those networks, and blacks are kept out. I believe it's deliberate. They work together to keep black people out of reach of those opportunities. That is why the unemployment rate is very low among whites and high among blacks (Inonge, FSM39).

I think we are hoodwinked, and there's almost a silent agreement among white folks to work together to make sure whites land all the job opportunities. I have seen how white people do not have to apply for jobs. It's not networking, it's a syndicate […] they are looking after one another, and we are on our own.

- ***Black-Owned Enterprises Visibility in the Private Sector***

Several participants pointed out that the persistence of white domination of the private sector sets an entrance barrier for black-owned organisations and thus contributes to the low visibility of black-owned enterprises within the sector. Furthermore, participants perceived that the low visibility of black-owned organisations in the private sector enhanced racial inequalities in the private sector, reducing their job opportunities and access to top management jobs in the private sector. The following interview quotes expose these perceptions:

[…] there are very few black-owned businesses in the supply chain of most of these private firms. The exclusion of black businesses is something we should address if we are serious about transforming the private sector. And because whites dominate all industries, they treat us this way because they know we have nowhere to go. The government does not pay much, and the few SOEs cannot take us all [...]. I strongly believe that black unemployment is high because there are few black-owned companies to hire and fairly promote black professionals. There's not even one black-owned auditing firm in Namibia. Can you believe that? (Suluzungila, MEM41).

MY white colleagues do not have to worry about unemployment because white businesses will hire them when they resign from here. It is difficult for a black person to leave their job. I see that's why my white colleagues are not afraid to challenge anything. That's why they are confident to challenge even performance ratings. They are not scared to lose their jobs like us blacks. That's

why we suffer so much at the hands of white people because we are vulnerable. We are like orphans here (Masikabi, MMM25).

As revealed in the responses above, participants perceived that increased entry and visibility of black-owned enterprises in the private sector would reduce the power imbalance in the sector. Their perception appeared to be underpinned by the supposition that a racially transformed private sector would reduce the vulnerability of black professionals entrapped in oppression and domination by the present status quo — a white-dominated private sector. Thus, they also hoped that a transformed private sector would likely result in the fair racial distribution of management job opportunities in the sector. Participants held that increasing black-owned enterprises in the private sector would reduce the high unemployment rate, predominant among black graduates and youth.

5.2.4. Legal Social Context

This section reports on research findings on how black managers perceive their workplace lived experiences associated with legislative frameworks enacted for the Namibian labour market. As described in Chapter 3, Namibia introduced laws at independence in 1990 to address the gaps created by settler colonialism and apartheid. One piece of legislation, the Employment Equity (EE) Act 29 of 1998, is part of the Affirmative Action (AA) laws enacted to address the racial and gender disparities at the management level in the Namibian private sector. The EE Act led to the formation of the Employment Equity Commission—a statutory body set to oversee the compliance of the EE Act. To address persistent racialised socio-economic inequalities. In 2016, the government of Namibia drafted the National Equitable Economic Empowerment Bill (NEEEB) from the associated framework—National Equitable Economic Empowerment Framework (NEEEF). Once passed into law, the Bill will bid white-owned organisations to sell at least a 25% stake to black persons or black-owned enterprises (Office of the Prime Minister, n.d.). However, the NEEEB is yet to be passed into law since it was tabled in parliament in 2018.

These legislative provisions elicited participants to reflect on how Namibian employment equity laws have shaped workplace experiences, particularly regarding

opportunities to access top management roles in the private sector. Participants expressed divergent views regarding the role of AA in shaping participants. On the other hand, many participants viewed AA as an enabler. However, among that same group, some participants perceived AA as limited in its effectiveness, as reflected in the slow transformation of the private sector's top management's racial presentation.

Affirmative Action (Employment Equity) As an Enabler

Although participants criticised the slow transformation of the private sector management, several participants attributed their advancement to the management level to Affirmative Action. The following excerpts from an interview with Milupi, a 34-year-old male middle manager, crystallise those perceptions:

> *[…] because now, in the corporate world, you see that being black; you stand a chance to get appointed based on the Employment Equity policies, but had it not been for those AA policies; I don't think the status quo would have changed […] at least now there is progress, although slowly (Milupi, MMM34).*

The above excerpt reveals that, for many participants like Milupi, black managers regarded the enactment of Affirmative Action as the motivation for their inclusion in management teams within the private sector, and they acted to seize that advantage. Thus, for example, Masiye, a 31-year-old senior manager, stated:

> *Affirmative Action has really helped us [...] because of the government's pressure on the private sector, and things have changed slightly. I am confident that many of us are appointed or promoted to comply with AA. I also took advantage of AA, but I had to work hard and study to prepare myself for that opportunity. So, AA has helped to some extent, but that is not the only thing. There are also issues about performance, staying out of trouble, and showing interest in growth (Masiye, FSM31).*

However, as exemplified in the quote above, data shows that despite AA being hailed as a career enabler for some black professionals, participants also stated that it required effort and preparedness to earn the advantage afforded by AA in their workplaces. These actions included gaining higher qualifications and maintaining a

higher job performance strategy. Interestingly, as part of the requirements to benefit from AA, Masiye referred to "staying out of trouble", which infers that AA is an enabler for those who did not challenge the status quo or resisted racial oppression. Since white executives facilitated the promotion and hiring of AA candidates, the data shows that, at the organisational level, AA compliance seemed to be under the prerogative of influential white executives who exercised power in deciding how to comply with the legislation in alignment with their interests.

(In)effectiveness of Affirmative Action Laws (Employment Equity Act)

All participants had a consensus about the slow progress AA has accomplished since its inception. Participants attributed the slow progress to the resistance by private sector organisational actors who resisted full compliance with the EE legislation. Others lamented the EEC's limited enforcement of the EE legislation in private sector organisations. For instance, Wati expressed her observation of how private sector organisations circumvent the EEC full compliance prerequisites.

> *These companies have found ways to circumvent the Employment Equity Act. One way they do it is to hire white women in management positions [...], and since that complies with the new EE Act, the EEC can't do anything to those organisations. I still don't understand how white women were classified as previously disadvantaged […] white women were privileged under apartheid, and they shared the wealth with their husbands and continue to be privileged now because some of them inherited wealth from their parents and fore-parents […] because of that amendment, there are still a lot of companies that are still very much white at the top. I think that is why there is little progress (Wati, FEM37).*

Wati and other participants viewed private sector organisations as resistant to complete compliance with the EE legislation. Instead, these organisations sought loopholes in the Act to circumvent its full requirements or only meet compliance requirements with the bare minimum. Also, several participants, similar to Wati, raised concerns about the EE Act amendment of 2007 that led to the designation of white women as a previously disadvantaged group. Some participants expressed that although white patriarchy was prevalent during colonial eras, white women still

enjoyed privileges, unlike black women and black men. Their concern was that private sector organisations seemed to misuse and take advantage of the amendment to avoid hiring black professionals as they appeared to be hiring and promoting more white female professionals into management positions compared to black professionals – as it regarded the management level as compliance with the amended EE Act. Sililo echoed Wati's sentiment and suggested the review of the EE Act as the terms of the Act are unclear, which lends the Act to circumvention by organisations. He argued:

> *[…] the definitions in the Act are not really that clear. For example, there is a vague definition of what is management. And that's why people take advantage. So, I think they must clean the law. Yeah, we must get to a point where we say no, no, the law must be. We must clean up definitions for somebody to speak of senior management. There must be a clearly defined management team. Now, these firms can decide what senior management is. I also suggest more vigorous enforcement of the law (Sililo, MEM40).*

Some participants also held the same sentiments and expressed that; the EEC does not fully enforce the organisation's compliance with the EE legislation. Participants asserted the ECC appeared reluctant to attend to the apparent weakness in the Act. Besides this, it allowed those corporations resistant to AA to circumvent or bid minimum compliance to EE legislation.

Perceptions of Affirmative Action and Authentic Structural Transformation

Several participants felt Affirmative Action laws lacked serious enforcement by the relevant statutory bodies, i.e., the Employment Equity Commission of Namibia, thus ensuring surface-level transformation in the private sector. Other participants viewed Affirmative Action legislation alone as a weak approach to resolving organisational-level racial inequalities without addressing racialised socio-economic disparities. These participants called for authentic structural transformation through state government interventions, such as land redistribution and supporting black entrepreneurship. The following quotes illustrate those perceptions:

AA and NEEEF will not solve our problem. We will have NEEEF implemented, but we must be careful as it might not support real transformation [...] it will only benefit those few politically connected blacks and their families. What we need is radical social transformation, including education that will change the faulty ways black people have been programmed to think […] we all need strong economic policies to support black entrepreneurs and industrialisation of the public sector [...] only when we do that, can we hope to have a fair society (Tatelo, MEM52).

If we wait for white people to share the land, that will never happen. Government should bring more radical laws that will force white people to share resources stolen from us. I mean, our land and cattle were stolen [...]. All these reconciliation talks will not take us, anyway. In the future, there will be no peace if the government does not drive the equal redistribution of resources now (Mbongwe, MSM36).

I wish our political leaders were bold enough to resolve the land issue. But unfortunately, the government is being intimidated by white people who always refer to Zimbabwe and fear foreign investors running away. So, we are gripped by fear of the Zimbabwean situation and our affection for foreign investment (Njahi, FMM35).

The above quotes illustrate participants' call for government interventions to drive the broader structural and institutional transformation to undo what they referred to as "surface transformation". Some of the recommended interventions were economic reform policies, referred to as: "*strong economic policies to support black entrepreneurs and industrialisation of the public sector*", and land redistribution policies, expressed in statements such as *"bold enough in resolving the land issue"*. However, participants noted that two main reasons weaken such "radical" interventions; first, the perceived fear of enduring economic sanctions from the western country-states, similar to those imposed on Zimbabwe when the country implemented the land redistribution and resettlement program; and second, the perceived fear of losing foreign investment, which is deemed vital for economic growth.

Thus, participants viewed 'authentic' socio-economic transformation as a solution to their racial oppression plight in Namibian private sector organisations.

The National Equitable Economic Empowerment Bill (NEEB) and The National Equitable Economic Empowerment Framework (NEEEF)

Some participants supported the proposed NEEEB to be passed into law and were optimistic about its potential power to transform the private sector – which remains dominated by whites. They believed the NEEEB would enforce the egalitarian distribution of economic resources — as it would administer the inclusion of the majority black population in the economy. However, some participants cautioned that, if not implemented correctly, the NEEEB will not bring authentic transformation, but they may misuse it to benefit a few "politically connected" black people.

> *The government is now trying this NEEEF thing, and it has caused so much panic in the private sector. White people are saying it will erode investors' confidence. But I think NEEEB will be an excellent policy to address the imbalances we struggle with today [...], and it is likely to bring some level of transformation into the private sector companies [...] but should be executed well; otherwise, it will just create a mess (Nakaunga, FEM40).*

> *My concern is that NEEEB will only enrich a few connected black people unless it is implemented correctly. However, if applied correctly, it will probably bring fundamental transformation that will benefit us all (Nakuula, FSM37).*

> *I am confident I was promoted because of NEEEF because they offered me the partner (executive) position right at the time when parliament started talking about NEEEF. I even asked them: I am some NEEEF project? (Nanvula, FEM39).*

As illustrated in the quotes above, some participants also pointed to the apparent backlash against passing the NEEEB from the private sector, which includes the fear that NEEEB will make Namibia less friendly to foreign investment if the Bill is passed into law. However, some participants perceived their organisations had

promoted them in anticipation of the NEEEB/F. To support the NEEEB/F, Nakaunga, a 40-year-old executive manager, stated:

5.2.5. Religious Beliefs

Unexpectedly, it emerged from the data that personal religious beliefs could shape participants' workplace experiences and possibly their career advancement, primarily in two ways. First, a handful of participants referred to their religious beliefs as having contributed to their management-level promotion or helped them gain access to organisational development opportunities. I gleaned the above suggestions from the quotes below:

> *[...] It was by the grace of God that they finally promoted me to the line [middle] manager position (Mwanaamabani, MMM27).*

> *It was really God, luck, and a blessing to be selected for the development program [...] (Masiye, FSM31).*

Second, participants who appeared to have less agency to resist racial discrimination and oppression seemed to rely on religious beliefs as a coping mechanism. The following quotes reveal those claims:

> *[...] all I can do is pray about it, and maybe someday things will change (Liwakala, MSM57).*

> *[…] I have left everything in God's hands. You can't change the way things are here [...] (Malumo, MMM30).*

However, a few participants who seemed non-religious were critical of the role religion could play in the construction of black professionals' self-perceptions. For example, Inonge, in the quotes below, stated that black professionals might subconsciously hold negative religious beliefs, which may cause the inculcation of low self-perception or confidence in them. I evidenced this criticism in Simwanza's shocking comment that God cursed black people for idolatry worshipping.

We should also question our religious beliefs. For example, many Christians believe God to be white, and what does that do to your confidence when you compete with a white person for a job? I am not a psychologist or anything, but we might not talk about some of these things, but they are like programs running in the background (Inonge, FSM39).

The bible says that God cursed black people for worshipping idols, and he put us under the rule of white people [...]. So, we will always be ruled by white people because we have sinned (Simwanza, MSM41).

Based on the quotes above, on the one hand, a few participants' responses illustrate that personal religious beliefs played a role in shaping their ambitions for professional advancement. But, on the other hand, some participants' responses reflected those religious beliefs could be a factor that challenges or deters their agency to challenge racial marginalisation.

5.3. Meso-Level Factors: Influential Organisational Factors

5.3.1. Introduction

This section of the chapter presents findings intending to answer the second sub-research question of this study: *What organisational mediated features shape Black managers' experiences of accessing and performing top management roles?*

I asked participants to reflect beyond surface-level dynamics but on deep-level underpinnings that motivated organisational factors that shaped participants' experiences. Similar to preceding findings on personal and interpersonal (micro-level) experiences, it is essential to note that organisational (meso-level) mediated experiences overlap and intersect with both personal and interpersonal (micro-level) and social (macro-level) contextual factors.

Participants held a dominant perception that most Namibian private sector organisations were complicit in creating and recreating racially unequal work environments. The following sub-titled sections offer details on participants' experiences and perceived mechanisms or organisational regimes that enacted workplace racial inequalities.

5.3.2. Organisation Structure: White-Dominated Executive Management Teams

Several participants voiced that the racial composition of the top management teams was unbalanced and did not reflect the national demographic – most private sector organisations' top management is white-dominated. This unequal racial representation at the executive management levels posed challenges for participants in different ways, as described in the following sub-sections.

Limited Mobility Opportunities for Black Managers

Data suggests organisational structures made up of a white-dominated top executive team could be a barrier for black managers in middle and senior management positions aspiring to reach executive management levels. For many participants, particularly black middle and senior managers, the lack of visibility of black executives at the top level impedes their upward mobility in two ways: (1) diminishes aspiration

and motivation to get to executive levels, and (2) a white-dominated executive team delimits their access to informal development opportunities as white executives disproportionately sponsor or "scaffold" white subordinate managers to executive positions at their expense. The interview extracts below illustrate how racial power imbalance at the top echelon of the organisation may limit aspirant black managers' possibilities of accessing those levels. Participants showed:

[…] as a black person, I can only go up to a certain level, but above that or getting get into executive positions is difficult if you don't have the favour and support of those white executives at the top (Mbongwe, MSM36).

Because there are more white executives, it is difficult for a black person to reach that level […]. So, that creates an imbalance of power in the boardroom and influences the organisation's culture. So, how will these things change? It's when the boardroom [racial composition] starts reflecting society's demographic. For as long as the private sector boardroom is not representative of the demographics of the country, this company will always have these race issues (Itwa, MSM55).

Similarly, several middle managers asserted that the under-representation of black managers at the top echelon limited their chance to access a black sponsor or mentor since white executive managers seemed to exclude them from sponsorship opportunities. For example, Nakwezi, a 29-year-old middle manager, expressed the following sentiments:

[...] it is difficult to get there [executive level] because no role model looks like me for me to look up to someone to motivate you. So, when you see black people up there, it registers that it is possible for you also to get there [...] or even to have someone up there to advocate for me (Nakwezi, FMM29).

Sense of Powerlessness and Belongingness

In their stories shared, participants voiced that the skewed racial representation in executive teams created a racial power imbalance driven by "white paternalism" and collusion tactics — quantitative majority-white managers colluded against "minoritized"

black managers through exclusion and silencing during the decision-making processes. Thus, black managers expressed a sense of powerlessness in making critical decisions or controlling essential organisational resources. Participants shared the following observations:

> *The decision-making process becomes a tussle of power sometimes. Whites dominate our EXCO, [Executive Committee] and whites will team up to support each other all the time [...] they support each other's views and suggestions. Your voice will not matter to them since they are many [...]. Sometimes, you even may not speak. Since they are more than us [black executives], their suggestions are always upheld and implemented. You hardly find conflict or disagreements between whites or even challenging each other in the boardroom. It doesn't happen much often; how is that possible? (Wati, FEM37).*

> *From my perspective, I'm the only black general manager, plus my executive manager and the CEO are both white. Since the EXCO [Executive Committee] is white-dominated, I feel my ability to influence decisions is less. So, the race of people up there influences a lot on how my ideas are taken up (Mahunga, MSM39).*

Sense of Belonging

Participants on all management levels emphasised that the lack of top-level black executives induced a sense of "non-belongingness" in management teams. For example, Nakwezi, a 29-year-old female middle manager, stated that:

> *[...] we are only two blacks in management [...] compared to 14 white people. So sometimes, in our management meetings, you genuinely feel like you don't belong since there are few of us [black managers], and you must constantly prove your views are worth being recognised or accepted. So that makes you feel unwelcome, or you don't fully belong there (Nakwezi, FMM29).*

5.3.3. Normalisation of Repressive Organisational Cultures

Participants expressed that racially unjust organisational cultures were fostered through limited efforts from the executive teams to transform the racially unjust organisational culture, lack of a platform to address race issues (silence on race), and the use of Afrikaans and German languages in the workplace.

Limited Executive Management Team Effort to Transform Organisations

Participants criticised top executives for their limited efforts towards creating a transformed organisational environment, and because of this, black professionals felt less appreciated and did not belong. The excerpts below illustrate those views:

> *Since white people are in control, it has led to a situation where white people in the whole organisation are valued and respected, and we [black employees] are not […] the culture sort of detects that whites should be managers and we [black employees] are expected to serve them [...] that is why there are very few white people below management. Blacks are expected to be processing stuff and not sit in the board rooms making high-level decisions (Kakona, MMM33).*

> *Our leaders seem to be turning a blind eye to the racism happening. Yes, we have all these diversity and inclusion policies and slogans, but I don't think enough is being done to uproot racial discrimination. But like I said, these things have been like this for a long time, and now it's like they have become part of the fabric. I know it will not be easy to change them overnight but what is worrisome is that no serious steps are being taken to change things […]. Instead, bad things are covered up. So, we will not transform or create a safe environment for everyone to feel appreciated and welcome here (Inonge, FSM39).*

As exemplified by the above quotes, most participants lamented the lack of efforts from top management teams to transform organisational cultures, as seen in the following statement: "*Our leaders seem to turn a blind eye to the racism happening*". And as a result, comments such as "*things have been like this for a long time that they become part of the fabric*" express the seemingly permanent nature of racially unjust organisational cultures in the private sector.

In their reflection on the cultures of their organisations, several participants pointed out that the permanence of the racially unequal organisational cultures was traceable to the country's colonial legacies that shaped the behaviours of private sector organisations. For example, Kachana, a 29-year-old commercial bank middle manager, made the following remark:

> […] *remember, this bank started during Apartheid, and as you know, back then, only white people were allowed in supervisor and management positions, so that mindset is still very much alive (Kachana, FMM29).*

Organisations' Openness to Discussing Race Issues

Data patterns suggest that many private sector organisations seemed reluctant to discuss issues of race or racism, and there weren't platforms or "safe spaces" available to discuss those issues openly and freely. However, participants expressed that their organisations were open to discussing other identity issues, such as gender. The quotations below reflect participants' observation of the challenges of engaging in honest dialogue about race in their organisations.

> *What we need is dialogue because, at the moment when issues of race are raised, not everyone is ready to talk about them. Even in EXCO meetings, we can talk about everything, sometimes even issues of gender, but the moment you bring up race, people [white executives] pull back in their shells as if you are out to accuse them of doing something wrong. And, also this idea that race is not an issue, that black people just love playing the race card, which makes it very difficult for us to have these conversations (Nakaunga, FEM40).*

> *We don't talk about racism freely. We all know it's there, but it's that elephant in the room that you can't address [...] once you start speaking about it, you are seen like you are the one instigating it, you become the troublemaker […] people talk freely about gender in the Affirmative Action meetings but not about race (Milupi, MMM34).*

As revealed in the quotes above, data analysis shows that private sector organisations seemed to have limited "safe spaces" or dialogue platforms for

discussing issues about race and racism in their workspaces. Furthermore, few participants showed that the only platforms available in their organisations were the Affirmative Action committee discussions (set as a legal requirement) that similarly rarely engaged with issues of race but more with other identity issues, such as gender.

White Backlash

Participants stated that speaking about race or advocating for racial equality attracted adverse reactions from their white colleagues. Several participants expressed that their white colleagues used shaming strategies to dissuade them from discussing race or advocating for racial equality. Other participants stated that white employees protested policies, such as Affirmative Action, which sought to bring racial equity by citing "reverse racism". As a result, organisations were reluctant to enact tangible racial equity or equality policies with minimal effort because of these complaints. Participants shared the following observations:

> *Our company complies with Affirmative Action, but compliance is very minimal because white people complain about reverse racism. For example, a few years ago, the firm planned to intensify race and gender transformation, and white people complained, saying that it was a way to get rid of white people from the firm. In the end, those plans were abandoned. So, with any program designed to assist black people, white people will see it as discrimination against them (Itwa, MSM55).*

> *When you try to raise issues of racial discrimination and get the organisation to act on it, white people seem to feel that "this person doesn't know his job; he's just bringing this race issue into play to cover for his incompetence". You know the stereotype that blacks like to complain about everything. So, you are discouraged […] (Mwanangombe, MSM40).*

Ineffective Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policies

Study participants expressed negative views on the effectiveness of organisational policies such as Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) policies and initiatives introduced by organisations to address racial inequities. Several participants said they viewed D&I policies as pretentious and not intended to bring the purported racial equality.

Also, participants believed that it was challenging for their organisations to address racial disparities by enacting diversity and inclusive policies without top senior management showing commitment to the transformation of the unequal organisational cultures. Other participants opined that diversity policies were inattentive to the social context of Namibia but were instead adopted as a business practice norm from different contexts. The following quotes illustrate those divergent views:

> You can have so many diversity initiatives to create a level of awareness. But I think it's probably not tackling the issue at heart. The real cause of the problem probably lies outside the company and maybe the way people are brought up. And it is unfair to expect organisations to change the mindset of a person who has grown up thinking like that. It's not that easy. So, they can try, but these initiatives are ineffective. I can't say it's the most they can do. But I think they are things that have proven to have worked in the Western world, but here we are in a different context and in a different continent that has a deep colonial history and is still trying to recover. So, it might not necessarily work (Mwemba, MMM32).

> The messages are there. In company documents, on our website: this is what we stand for, we don't stand for this discrimination, we don't stand for racism, we don't stand for gender discrimination, we embrace diversity. And the diversity song is sung but living up to that song is a different reality. Also, our top leadership seems not to really put effort into making sure things change (Mutumba, FSM44).

It also emerged that organisational policies (such as the D&I) set to address racial inequalities were essentially insensitive to the social realities of Namibia. These policies seemed to oppose the notion of equity – providing leverage to empower black employees.

Exclusion by Afrikaans and German Languages

Unexpectedly, it emerged that, although English is the sole official language in Namibia, several participants experienced exclusion and a sense of not belonging due to the continued usage of the Afrikaans language in management meetings and email

communications. In addition to this, a few participants also expressed that the German language used in their organisation excluded them from participating in meetings. In Namibia, the Afrikaans and German languages are spoken by the white Namibian population group comprising the Afrikaners (descendants of Dutch settlers) and the German (descendants of German colonists) population groups. Thus, study participants' reflections demonstrate that the use of Afrikaans or German languages, particularly during formal engagements, was likely to limit many black managers' contributions significantly. Furthermore, participants who did not speak Afrikaans or German languages indicated that their job performances were also likely to be affected. The following quotes capture participants' experienced exclusion created by the usage of the Afrikaans and German languages in their workplaces:

My white colleagues prefer to speak Afrikaans. So, when you say you don't understand Afrikaans, they will be like, "I'll be clearer if I speak in Afrikaans". But if I decide to speak in my vernacular, who will understand me? So that tells you already that you don't really matter. Whether you understand or not, no one seems to care. So that makes you feel like an outsider, that you're not a part of the team (Njahi, FMM35).

Our firm is an old German auditing firm. Usually, in our partners (executives) meetings, these guys [white managers] speak in Afrikaans or German, and you have to constantly remind them that you don't understand Afrikaans or German […] You know, many things are discussed in meetings, so the moment you exclude me because you prefer to speak in Afrikaans or German, you've dumbed down my voice. So, what value can I add here? You have alienated me. So, my voice is not heard. So, my input is limited when I'm supposed to contribute (Nanvula, FEM39).

A select few participants reported they were fluent in Afrikaans, and they seemed to have taken advantage of their fluency in the language to earn benefits. Inonge's comments in the following extract reveal those sentiments:

Luckily for me, I speak Afrikaans fluently, and luckily that is not a problem for me. We usually hold meetings in Afrikaans, only maybe when we have a client

or service provider who does not speak Afrikaans, but our big clients often speak Afrikaans.

This thread of evidence alerts us to how the use of language asserts white dominance in Namibian private sector organisations.

5.3.4. Access to Organisational Development Opportunities, Support, and Knowledge

This section presents results derived from my investigation to determine participants' experiences and perceptions of accessing both formal and informal development opportunities. The detailed experiences and perceptions are in the following sub-sections.

Formal Development Opportunities: Mentorship and Management Development Programs

One-third of the participants stated that they had benefited from the availability of organisational mentorship and management development programs. These participants described formal development programs as enablers in their career advancement. However, they all emphasised that, as a prerequisite to be selected into the development programs and benefit from the mentoring and management development program, they had to apply double effort in their job performances and display conformity to the norms and expectations set by white executives who controlled the selection process. For example, Mahunga, a 39-year-old senior manager in a management consulting firm, observed:

I was lucky to have been assigned a white mentor who took me under his wings and really supported my growth. If it weren't for him, I would not be at this level today. But I also did not just sit back because I had a mentor. I still had to work twice as hard compared to my other colleagues. And because of my performance, I was selected for the leadership development program [...]. Surprisingly, more whites from our group successfully got promoted [...]. I know some white colleagues who performed lesser than I did but somehow managed to rise more quickly in the ranks than I did. Two of my colleagues that I started

with are now at the executive level, but we all know their performance is just average […] even now at executive (Mahunga, MSM39)

However, most participants, including some who claimed to have benefited from the formal development programs, criticised the formal development programs as being less effective and less race equity-oriented in closing the disparity gap at the top levels. Participants explained how white employees benefited more from these formal development opportunities since white junior managers also benefited from informal development opportunities that were less accessible for black managers. The perceptions, for example, were reflected in the above statements, such as "*I know some white colleagues who performed lesser than I did but somehow managed to rise quickly in the ranks than I did".* It was also interesting to note that participants described their selection into the programs as luck.

Several other participants described their experiences concerning accessing formal development opportunities, particularly mentoring programs, as unfavourable and negative. For example, Nanvula, a 39-year-old executive, described her mentorship relationship as "*toxic*", as she claimed that the demoralisation and humiliation from her mentor ruined the relationship. She sadly recounted:

[...] That guy [White Mentor] and I had a toxic mentorship relationship. He used to say to me all the time: "Why do you even want to become a fully-fledged auditor? I think you should find yourself a high-paying job in one of the SOEs. You don't belong in the private sector". And this is someone who is supposed to be my mentor? (Nanvula, FEM39)

Similarly, Nakwezi describes a similar experience with a mentor who blatantly told her she (mentor) preferred Nakwezi not to get promoted. She narrated:

[...] for example, even now, promotions are coming up in June. And you get assigned to a mentor or counsellor whom you're supposed to be discussing career progression with etc. And then I had a meeting once with my counsellor (White mentor) just a while ago. I asked her, is there anything that you're concerned about and you feel I must work on in the next six months seeing that

I'm due for promotion in the next six months? And she says: "I don't want you to be promoted". So, I was like, why? And then she says, "because I don't want you to be too removed from the work" (Nakwezi, FMM29).

Nanvula and Nakwezi's experiences demonstrate that a formal mentor relationship between black managers and white superiors (senior and executive managers) might not yield positive results — as racial prejudice and cultural barriers may negatively influence the mentoring relationship. For these reasons, participants expressed that they preferred black mentors and lamented the limited number of potential black mentors since black executives are a minority in top management teams of most private sector organisations. For example, Mwanaamabani, a middle manager in an auditing firm, expressed his perceived benefits of having a black mentor from a cultural standpoint. He said:

I would prefer a black mentor [Smiles]. […] because they can relate to my experiences[...] our struggles as black people are mostly the same, and you can be more understanding and sympathetic to another black person when they share their story. Also, a black executive would have probably gone through the same racial challenges I am going through now, and they could be in a better position to offer advice and guidance on how they dealt with the same challenges [...]. But unfortunately, they are very few black executives in the private sector, so most of us are forced to accept white mentors who may not fully understand our struggles (Mwanaamabani, MMM27).

Informal Development Opportunities: Sponsorship or "Scaffolding"

Most study participants shared that they had limited access to informal development opportunities, as these opportunities mainly were accessible through exclusively white networks. Moreover, participants emphasised that white executive managers exerted effort in sponsoring and coaching white subordinate managers to ensure that white subordinate managers had a straight and easy path to the executive level. The excerpts below illustrate that the exclusionary practice of "scaffolding" white junior managers to the executive management level was enacted through; (1) praising white subordinate managers' mediocre performances to influence promotion decisions, (2) enhanced efforts into the development of white middle and senior managers, for

example, by sharing exclusive executive information to white middle and senior managers.

Whites want to keep top leadership roles within private sector organisations. If it is only up to them, this will continue like this. We have noticed how they make it easy for white line managers to excel through the ranks quicker as compared to black managers. We see it in the motivation and support they offer them. The good comments and praises are given to certain white managers' mediocre work. Those praises are given to make those white line managers look like the best performers, but it is not always the case. Looking at some black line managers' performance levels, you will see even better than the praised white managers. Those tactics are made to influence promotion that is not based on actual performance (Wati, FEM37).

If you look at it, it's like a relay race. No pun intended [laughs] [...] where old white executives would want to pass the baton to young white managers to continue the control and leadership of these organisations. So, they push for them by giving them more information about the organisation and offering them additional help. You will see a white general or executive manager go out of their way to make sure the young white managers understand something and offer them all their support. The same is not done for us. So, in the end, the chances of black professionals are limited because, firstly, we don't have the support of the few black executives in terms of mentoring or just showing us the ropes. Secondly, we have no access to networks because most networks are exclusive to whites (Masikabi, FMM25).

From the above quotations, participants observed that unfair advantage conferred to white subordinate managers — of pulling them up or "scaffolded" them to the executive level- ensured that executive positions continue to be occupied by white bodies. Statements such as "*Whites want to keep top leadership white*" and "*old white executives would want to pass the baton to young white managers to continue the control and leadership of these organisations*" propel this claim. Thus, participants perceived the practice of "scaffolding" as a mechanism that enabled the exclusion of aspirant black managers from reaching executive management levels.

Level of Support and Knowledge Sharing

A common theme emerged from the data analysis indicating that black managers received limited support from their white peers and superiors in performing their roles. Several participants reported the low level of support they received affected their job performances. For example, the low level of support in problem-solving and signing off approvals or requests on time was raised by several participants, as reflected in the quotations below.

> *[…] you'll find particular instances where I needed assistance from a white line manager in a different region or another white senior or executive that I would call for help. And they are just very dismissive, like "I don't want to waste my time. I am not interested" type of thing. And it's happened a couple of times (Mbongwe, MSM36).*

> *And I see how he is quick to act on suggestions or approve paperwork from the white managers. And sometimes, it can be frustrating. You want to get things done without pushing so hard, and sometimes when things are not done, the people below you start asking questions, and you can't give them satisfying answers (Chaze, FMMM50).*

Data reveals that participants who experienced limited support from their white peers and white superiors perceive it as a barrier restraining their role performance.

Data patterns show that black managers in middle and senior management roles had lesser access to exclusive executive management knowledge than their white counterparts. In addition to this, several participants stated that white managers were less likely to share knowledge with black subordinate managers. This knowledge created an advantage for white subordinate managers who used it to obtain job interviews. Data patterns suggest that there seemed to be a knowledge monopoly. And knowledge was less accessible to black managers who did not belong to exclusive white networks or had developed minimum informal relationships or friendships with influential white executives.

Tokenism in Promotions and Hiring

Evidence from data reveals that several private sector organisations were engaged in tokenism that involved hiring and promoting black managers for the organisation's benefit. This apparent tokenism practice entailed hiring and promoting black professionals to senior or executive management positions, particularly black managers who were thought to have 'political connectedness' or popularity among other black employees to perform lobbying and Janus-faced roles beneficial to the organisation. As participants reflected, the tokenised black executives were rewarded heftily with executive pecks (salary, bonus, benefits, and status). Data evidence illustrates that influential white executives hired or promoted black managers with "political capital" or familiarity with black majority employees to serve in roles that directly engaged with black stakeholders – majority-black employees in low ranks, black customers' segments, labour unions, regulators, and policymakers. For example, Suukuta, a Human Resources executive, asserted that he was hired to engage with the majority-black employees in lower levels of the firm and the trade unions that presents them – presumably that a white executive will not proficiently perform that role. Suukuta stated:

> *I think it was critical to ensure that they have a black executive in this role[...] because most of our employees are black. So, for black employees to feel a sense of transformation, you need to make sure you have somebody they can relate to, whom they can confide in, and whom they can expect to drive transformation. That will give them hope. Because if you bring a white person here and talk about transformation, do you think black employees will believe them? (Suukuta, MEM48).*

Similarly, Suluzungila, who was hired from the public sector where he previously held a CEO position in a State-Owned Enterprise, shared a similar viewpoint to Suukuta. He asserted that they primarily hired him to engage top government officials (black regulators and policymakers) on behalf of the organisation. He asserted:

> *I was head-hunted for this role [...] I think they head-hunted me because of my previous position in the public sector […] also my connection to important*

figures in government who make regulation policies in the industry we operate in. So, I can say that was one of the primary reasons [...], but I will not take away the fact that they saw my performance in my previous role (Suluzungila, MEM41).

Later on, I asked Suluzungila why he thought his experience in the public sector and network or connection to political figures played a role in his appointment. He answered:

Many whites could not perform well in this position without the same experience from the public sector, running an SOE for five years, and connections I have with political figures. I have negotiated big deals for this organisation with the government, and I am sure that my white colleagues or someone without my knowledge of the public sector governance would not be able to do it easily (Suluzungila, MEM41).

Unfortunately, it emerged from the data that black managers hired or promoted for "transactional purpose" experienced a sense of powerlessness, entrapment, and alienation in the boardrooms. For example, they experience a sense of powerlessness, alienation, and entrapment manifested in the claims made by Masiye, a 31-year-old senior manager in a retail firm, who got promoted to a senior management position to serve what she considered as giving insight to the management team about the black customer segment.

[…] we see it, you get asked questions only If your answer is going to help them [white managers] understand the influence or issues affecting the business in the black community or aspects to do with black employees on the floor [...] let me give a practical example; we are busy with reformulating our strategy, we all know, the situation with COVID-19. I am expected to make them understand why a shop in Katutura [a black community] is not doing well [...] I am expected to relate because I am black. But now, talking about the business strategy, you're the last person that is noticed. Unless you voice it, and even if you voice your opinion, most of the time, it is ignored (Masiye, FSM31).

Furthermore, participants' reflections indicate that tokenised black managers hired for "transactional purposes" were restricted from adding value to their organisations beyond their designated functional roles. They showed this in the above quotes. For instance, Masiye lamented being undermined and relegated to doing her functional role. But, as she asserted, her views were more likely to be considered when they helped white managers *"understand the influence or issues affecting the business in the black community or aspects to do with black employees on the floor"*. Unfortunately, for Masiye and other participants in a similar position, their contribution and perspectives on critical business areas outside their designated roles, such as business strategy, were often disregarded. Thus, participants expressed a sense of powerlessness and non-belongingness.

Promotion and Hiring Practices

There was a dominant view among participants that, even though concealed, the hiring and promotion practices in the private sector are racially discriminatory toward black employees. Participants shared experiences of how senior and executive management positions they felt they qualified for were given to their white counterparts. The participants' experiences show that organisations deployed systematic tactics that raised their stake to earn promotion and thus delayed upward mobility. Participants reported that the tactics that worked against black middle managers were hinged on using their "age" as a disguise for racial discrimination – that they were still "young" or "not ready" for senior management roles. However, participants observed that this was not the case for young white managers who they perceived as getting promotions quickly and receiving the support they needed until they were fully competent in their roles. Given that the notion of age was not mentioned when it came to white counterparts in the same age group with the same level of experience, participants held that the issue was not actually about their age or lack of experience but rather a ploy to discriminate against them. The quotation below exemplifies the experiences of organisational systematic hiring and promotion discrimination tactics deployed to deny or delay the promotion of primarily middle and senior black managers.

> *[...] it is incredible how, always when it's time for promotion, black people are not ready, or you are told you are still young, but whites are promoted to learn*

on the job, and they get the support until they know the job. So, whites move up so quickly […]. There was a case a few years ago where a fresh white graduate was appointed as a line manager straight from university. I have seen that for a black person to move to the next level, they must almost be 100% ready, but, as I've seen with my white counterparts, they can be inadequate. However, they still get the position and get supported [...] for a black manager to get the next level, and it is those cases where it almost becomes impossible for you to argue against that promotion (Mahunga, MSM39).

They told me I should get enough experience first so that when I am promoted, I will not struggle, and I was doing an excellent job in my current role. So, the logic here was that I would miss out on the experience I was supposed to get from this role if I got promoted so fast. But the same was not said of my white colleagues. Most of those I started with as trainees the same year got promoted before me (Kuze, FMM33).

In the above quotes, one instance that was shared that came across as an extreme case was by Mahunga, who recalled that "*a fresh white graduate was appointed as a line (middle) manager straight from the University".* Many other participants observed that inexperienced white middle managers were likely to be offered on-the-job support once promoted. Data patterns indicate that black managers were expected to be "completely ready" in terms of 'age' and 'level of experience' before they would be considered for promotion. Thus, participants' narrated experiences exposed how private sector organisations' hiring and promotion practices may function as hidden and systematic mechanisms that perpetuate racial inequalities through the denial and delay of promotion and hiring of middle and senior black managers.

Racialised Management Positions: Job Segregation

Several study participants shared the perception that specific roles perceived as critical, such as IT and finance management, were reserved for white managers. In contrast, participants stated that roles commonly assigned to black managers were often deemed as less essential, such as human resources and marketing management. To support those claims, participants made the following observations:

[...] for some reason, you will notice that most jobs such as finance manager or IT executive go to white people, other positions such as Public Relations or HR manager, in those positions you will likely find a black person [...]. (Ntelamo, MMM38).

What one sees in the private sector is that black people are usually given roles such as HR, Marketing manager but not finance or IT. Finance is regarded as too big for black people, so finance manager or executive job is mainly reserved for white people (Sililo, MEM40).

The observations expressed in the above quotes reflected that participants knew that social race-roles stereotypes or stigma associated with being black in Namibia rendered them unfit or atypical for specific managerial jobs, such as finance and IT management. Participants expressed that job segregation based on race was potentially limiting their opportunities for upward mobility. Furthermore, participants revealed that organisations allocated specific management positions to match the racial identities of the clients, business partners, and work teams. For example, they appointed black managers to engage with or serve black clients or lead teams with predominately black members. Masikabi and Sikute expressed their observations:

What I have realised is that promotion happens according to race. As a black person, you are likely to be appointed in a position or area where you have to deal with black clients or lead a black team […] (Masikabi, MMM25).

"You are likely to find a department or business unit that is mostly white with a white person heading that unit, and the other business is mostly black led by a black person" (Sikute, MMM28).

5.3.5. Organisational Deception: "We don't follow what we preach"

There was a common poignant view among participants that their organisations were dishonest regarding addressing racial inequality in the organisation. As such, organisations seem to focus on hiding racial inequalities instead of correcting them.

Participants pointed to what they viewed as deceptive manoeuvres or lies that private sector organisations practised ensuring the suppression of black people. These deceptions included gesturing moral and ethical values that were not followed and were essentially meaningless. Participants, like Njahi and Siseho, for example, expressed their perception of the deceptive practices in their organisations in this way:

> *"The values are there, everything we suppose to stand for is in the policies, but they do not have much worth. We all know those nicely written values and principles, but we don't follow what we preach. Black people are suffering and are not respected, yet the company says we stand for fairness, integrity, and high levels of morality. That is not true. It is all lies (Njahi, FMM35).*
> *Our website, corporate documents, and posters all show the ethical values we stand for or that should define us as an organisation, but unfortunately, those values are useless because they are not respected. The company hides behind those written values to look good in the eyes of the public, but the reality inside is ugly. This is pure duplicity (Siseho, MMM37).*

As demonstrated in the quote above, participants aver that organisations engaged in deceptive mechanisms such as presenting themselves as ethical and moral organisations to hide discriminatory racial practices, therefore enforcing racial inequality that disadvantage, disempower, and marginalise black managers.

5.4. Micro-Level: Interpersonal and Intergroup Influential Factors

5.4.1. Introduction

This section presents found themes that centred on the personal and interpersonal factors that shaped participants' experiences in accessing top management positions in contemporary Namibian private sector organisations. This category of themes and sub-themes has been set to answer the first sub-research question of the study: *What factors shape black managers' interpersonal (and intergroup) experiences in accessing and performing top management roles in Namibian private sector organisations?*

Participants were solicited to share their individual and intergroup experiences navigating their organisations to pursue or perform top management roles to answer the above question. In this study, interpersonal and intergroup experiences refer to lived experiences and perceptions of personal positionality, interactions with other individuals, and inter-racial group interactions. The following sub-sections present the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data analysis.

5.4.2. The Weight of the White Gaze

The majority of participants relayed everyday experiences of being undermined by their white counterparts. Participants held that their white counterparts (peers and hierarchal superiors) viewed them as undeserving and less credible to be managers and thus questioned their competencies and qualifications. As a result, participants expressed they needed to prove their credibility constantly by putting double the effort into their roles and pursuing higher academic qualifications and certifications. The following interview extracts reveal some of those shared experiences across all hierarchal management levels. Participants shared:

> It's the constant thing of trying to prove yourself. And every time you prove yourself on one thing, you must prove yourself on the next thing […] it always seems for us blacks that you are presumed incompetent until proven otherwise when our white colleagues are presumed competent until proven otherwise […] it is something that comes from our history and that still very much shapes our thinking today (Mahunga, MSM39).

[…] you still get to those who think whites are superior to black people. So, they doubt your capabilities as a black person because they have no trust in the abilities of black people. So, that is why I am saying you need to work extra hard and equip yourself with the necessary academic or professional qualifications to show that you are capable. You are constantly subjected to all kinds of prejudice and critique (Suukuta, MEM48).

The challenge comes because they expect you to fail anyway, so you work twice as hard [...]. Most black managers are always studying for higher qualifications and certifications to prepare for future opportunities, prove their worth, and dismiss the negative perceptions of black people (Masiye, FSM31).

Participants expressed awareness that white employees' racial undermining and stereotypes, which pressured black managers to double their performance, are linked to society's historical myths and stereotypes. Study participants manifested this awareness in statements such as "*it is something that comes from our history and that still very much shapes our thinking today*".

Consequences of the White Gaze

- *Nervous Condition Induced by a "White Gaze"*

Data suggests white people in higher positions within these organisations would force participants to apply extra effort in their roles and work with vigilance for errors since they perceived that a "white gaze" sought to scrutinise their performances for any mistakes or errors to assign blame or even punishment. Because of this performance pressure under the watchful "white gaze", participants stated that they became fixated on tensely monitoring their performances – a "nervous condition" that marked their job performance. The quotes below manifest the burden of this asserted additional labour:

[...] continuously, you need to prove that you know because the expectation is that you are black and don't know sh*t regardless of your qualifications and experience. So, you constantly need to do double the homework and produce high-quality work. You are forced to read more and always be on your toes such that when a topic comes up, you are speaking facts based on written literature as references in ways others [Whites] don't have to. But you, as a black person,

must always speak based on hard facts. That's the pressure one sits with as a black executive in this company (Sililo, MEM40).

I always have to prove myself. Oh, yeah. Whites are always looking for a chance to prove that you are incompetent. You know, like, you can do everything 99 per cent perfect, and that one time when you make even a small mistake, then it is taken as a big problem. Then it is said, "You see why we don't want to hire black people?" […], so, you kind of have that fear and feel pressured […] I am always like, let me always be at my best to prove that I am capable and black people are capable. Or like, let me always do above and beyond just because, you know, they're always looking for your mistakes (Mbongwe, MSM36).

Another remarkable example of an uneasy condition is Tawana's case, a 30-year-old tax manager (middle manager) in a financial services firm who emotionally shared an anecdote of his experiences by describing how white managers from other departments regularly circumvent him and ask his white "boss" for tax advice — an area he claimed he is more knowledgeable in than his "boss". To prove his taxation knowledge, Tawana stated that he resorted to using complex taxation terminology in his email replies when he finally got the chance to offer advice to those white managers. He narrated:

I am the tax manager, but my white colleagues will not ask me for tax advice, they'll bypass me and ask my general manager, and he will forward the email to me. So, usually, when I send those replies, I make sure it's in a very technical language so that they can see, I know my stuff; I use complex terms to a point where even my general manager has to explain to them in 'laymen' terms what I meant. Because it's like, even whites below me undermine me, with the idea that he doesn't know what he's doing; he got the job because he is black, you know, stuff like that. So, you have to constantly prove that you understand what you are doing and it's not a good thing (Tawana, MMM30).

- *Added Pressure from Black Managers at the Top Level*

The preceding sections revealed that the "pressure to perform" experienced by black managers was pervasive on all management levels. However, for middle and senior managers, the "pressure to perform" seemed to worsen if they reported to a black superior (senior or executive manager) who was also dealing with the same pressure from her white colleagues. In such a case, they perceived the effects of the pressure to cascade down the organisational hierarchy from the black executive to his black subordinates. For example, Simalimba and Tawana asserted that the black executives seemed to perform their roles under pressure from a 'white gaze'. Thus, their black 'boss' had fears of their black subordinates' making mistakes or performing below average —as that would reflect on their black "boss" as incompetent. They explained:

> *Our black executive also seems not to help to alleviate this pressure. On the contrary, she seems to add to it because she keeps pushing us to work hard, but not work hard for the sake of achieving goals but to show that black people can perform [...], but I see it as her anxiety that will make her look bad in the eyes of white executives (Simalimba, MSM52).*

> *Also, our senior manager, who is black, doesn't make it easier for us. You know, we don't get his full support [...] it's like, basically, if you make a mistake, no one wants to make a mistake. But it's almost like, "I hired you, Black person, don't make me look stupid". So, when you make a mistake, for him, it's like, "you see why I did not want to hire you?" So now you feel the need to work even extra hard and be cautious. But the thing is, he also is afraid because any mistake is taken to measure his intelligence (Tawana, MMM32).*

Mwanangombe, a senior manager, when reflecting on his organisation, stated that he observed a higher level of pressure among black managers reporting to a black executive manager compared to black managers reporting to a white executive manager. Mwanangombe expressed the following observation:

> *And I don't see this among young white professionals in my age group or my level. I don't see them getting the same levels of stress that black people face in the corporate world. And funny enough, I don't necessarily see it on black*

professionals who work under white bosses. I don't necessarily see them as stressed as black professionals who work under black executives, simply because their white boss's intelligence or competence is not questioned when there are mistakes made. It's a big thing (Mwanangombe, MSM40).

Other participants held a similar conception that the "pressure to perform" added another layer to their workload. Also, an extra workload kept participants constantly monitoring their performance and emotions.

5.4.3. Cross-Racial Professional Relationships and Interactions

From the participants' standpoint, this study sought to understand the state of professional relationships and interactions between participants and their white peers, seniors, and subordinates within and outside the organisation. Several middle and senior managers reported poor cross-racial professional relationships with their white counterparts (peers, subordinates, and superiors). This fraught relationship is linked to the level of trust, respect, thoughtfulness, and uncompassionate treatment that black managers experienced from their white counterparts. Also, cultural differences appeared to form barriers in creating cross-racial professional relations. The following sub-section reveals supporting evidence for the above claim.

Relationship and Interaction with White Subordinates

Several participants expressed that some of their white subordinates undermined them. Participants perceived that their white subordinates viewed them as unfit to be in management positions. As a result, this affected the relationships and level of interactions with their white subordinates. Participants asserted experiences where white subordinates become avoidant or hesitant to report to them. Furthermore, they expressed concerns that the poor relationship between them and their white subordinates could reflect poorly on their management capabilities. Mbongwe, a 36-year-old senior manager in an investment firm, shared his observation:

You can clearly see it in people[white subordinates] attitudes and behaviours, it comes out, you know, it can take a year before the person actually comes into my office to ask for anything, you know, it's usually just the work, you know,

please sign, and that's it, you know, keeping the distance [....] and that makes your job as black leader kind of tricky as you have to go out of the way to try and build a relationship between you and your subordinate and sometimes it does not work because this person is simply not willing to accept you as their leader […] I don't think white heads [senior managers] have the same challenge. And of course, at the end of the day, it may reflect as a shortcoming in your leadership capabilities [...] (Mbongwe, MSM36).

Tatelo, a 52-year-old bank executive manager, shared a similar experience to Mbongwe. He further shared an incident where two white subordinates resigned soon after he was appointed to an executive management role. He noted:

Some white colleagues were still not happy that I got the job to the extent that two white senior managers reporting to me resigned within the same month I was appointed. The reason was clear why they left; they could not report to a black person (Tatelo, MEM52).

The above quotes reflect the common theme among participants, and the theme involved being undermined or viewed as less credible managers by their white subordinates. Participants perceived that white subordinates firmly held the myth of superiority that made them uncomfortable to report to a black senior or executive manager. As a result, participants reflected on how this dynamic could interfere with their managerial or "leadership" effectiveness or capabilities – as this fraught relationship created a chasm between black managers and their white subordinates.

Relationship and Interaction with White Peers

Participants' reflections demonstrate that relationships between black managers and their white peers were less optimistic. From participants' perspectives, the reasons for the fraught intergroup relationships were primarily twofold: Firstly, it is the lack of trust; there seems to be a significant level of mistrust for white friendliness. Secondly, participants viewed their white peers as embodying a white superiority complex, described as pride and insatiable yearning for dominance by treating them as subordinates or infants and not as peers on the same level. Thus, this intimidating and patronising behaviour from their white peers seemed to interfere with the possibility of

building mutually respectful and professional relationships. The above-stated two reasons were captured from the quotes below:

I socialise with black colleagues but not with my white peers. I have this thing where when white colleagues act friendly. I always ask myself what do they want from me? Because most of the time, my white colleagues will only be friendly to you when they need something from you. It is never for a genuine purpose (Liwakala, MSM57).

You normally realise that probably on the social side of things, we don't really click because we have different interests in general and cultural backgrounds differences. But, still, from the professional perspective, you sort of have to earn your respect through your competencies. Once that is done, now there is a sense of, "Okay, I'm not talking to a black person now, I am talking to another professional" [...]so it's not authentic, and I avoid those types of relationships. I just come here to do my job and go home (Mwemba, MMM32).

Relationships and Interaction with White Hierarchal Superiors

Several black middle and senior managers reported fewer positive relationships with their white hierarchical superiors. These participants experienced challenges in gaining physical access to white executives. Moreover, because of the limited access and low conviviality with white executive managers, participants indicated they received little support in their role performance, limited networking, and sponsorship opportunities. Participants made the following observations:

You come to a point where you have to make decisions, and you need to pull two or three executives into the room. So now, with my race and because I do not have a good relationship with these executives, it becomes extra hard to get access to them or time from these two executives at once. There are times when you need executive decisions, and you might need them urgently; you are not likely to get that support quickly as you would wish. But If you are white, accessibility to executives is much easier. That is why it is easier for my white colleagues to get things done quicker because they have good relationships with executives [White] (Milupi, MMM34).

I may have to wait five to eight years to get to the executive level. Well, they're some of my white colleagues who I started with who are already there. Even when considering executive-level job opportunities, qualifications aside, you start looking at things like interpersonal skills and exposure to certain information about the firm that executives only know. You know executives have their special training and conferences. White executives coach their mentees and give them details about company information exclusive to EXCO, so if I go for an interview with that guy [white subordinate manager], he will beat me on those aspects because he has the upper hand (Mwemba, MMM32).

As revealed in the above quotes, black middle and senior managers struggled to form authentic professional intergroup relationships with their superior white managers. As a result, participants asserted it primarily excluded them from informal development opportunities tied to networking, mentorship, coaching, and sponsorships that their white peers receive from superior white managers. For example, in the above extract, Mwemba expressed how informal development could give white subordinate managers unfair advantages when he said: "*If I go for an interview with that guy, he will beat me on those aspects because he has the upper hand*".

Submit to White Influential Executives

Another common theme that emerged from the stories shared was that black managers, particularly those at middle and senior management levels, were expected to be "nice" in the face of racial oppression – to be considered for promotions or receive support from white senior/executive managers. As exemplified in the quote below, participant Suukuta, a 48-year-old executive, observed that influential white executive managers preferred black managers who did not advocate for Affirmative Action and racial diversity. He observed:

You must be competent. Okay. I think competence and performance are key. And integrity is crucial. But you must not be seen as political. I mean, like being too vocal on political issues such as Affirmative Action or Diversity. You must be, as they say, "What you see is what you get". If you play corporate politics,

146

I think that it becomes difficult for them [white executives] to be able to trust you […] if they don't trust you, they might find a way to get rid of you (Suukuta, MEM48).

It is noteworthy to pay attention to the statements that Suukuta made in the above quote. For example, he stated that: "*it is important* that *you must not be seen as political. I mean like being too vocal on political issues such as affirmative action or diversity".* As exemplified by Sukuuta's comment in the above quote, data analysis shows that black managers who opposed racial inequalities by speaking out or advocating for Affirmative Action or racial diversity were likely to be punished for their resistance by being overlooked for rewards. Participants held that denying them access to opportunities was a way to silence them or discipline them. As a result, participants indicated they had to reconfigure themselves by avoiding contestation and appearing resistant to the status quo to contort themselves into the desired image of white managers, particularly white senior and executive managers.

5.4.4. Racial Discrimination from White Clients and White Business Partners

On top of the racial discrimination, biases, and marginalising behaviours experienced within their organisations, the data of this study reveals that black managers also experience added racial discrimination outside their organisations from white clients and business partners in their professional engagements. In the below extract, participants shared experiences of how their racial identity attracted racial discrimination, prejudices, hostility, and disdain from white clients and business partners that devalued participants. For example, Wati, a 37-year-old executive manager in a consulting firm, described how she felt invisible in a meeting with white clients as they gave all the attention to her white subordinate:

Last year, a white subordinate and I went to meet clients at their head office. In that meeting [shocked expression] [...] when we got to their board room, I was almost made invisible; all the attention was given to my subordinate even though I introduced myself as the executive for business development. I don't think they even heard my name. It was shocking to see how they completely

ignored me, and all questions were directed to my white subordinate (Wati, FEM37).

Similarly, Mukuwela and Likukela shared their experiences of being undermined and stereotyped by white clients.

[...] you'll find the companies that we serve to be dominated by the white race. Also, when you go out there as a black person, they'll have doubts about you. And you need to prove that you can actually perform. So, there's always that extra mile that you need to go as a black person to prove that you can do the work and deliver on the job (Mukuwela, MEM46).

Some clients prefer working with whites only. Because even when you email them or speak to them face to face, you can tell this person doesn't want to work with me. Because you see it in emails, they are so rude to blacks. Also, I don't speak Afrikaans. You email the client in English, and the client responds in Afrikaans, knowing very well that I don't speak Afrikaans. What does that tell you? (Likukela, MMM33).

There was a dominant consensus among black managers at all management levels that their encounters with white clients and business partners appeared to be marked by racial discrimination, prejudice, and contempt. This finding suggests that participants experienced double racial discrimination — inside and outside their organisations. Furthermore, the data suggest that qualifications or job titles failed to protect black professionals from racial discrimination outside their organisations.

5.4.5. Relationship Between Black Subordinate Managers and Black Executives

Remarkably, participants, particularly black middle and senior managers, claimed to receive limited support and mentorship from black executives, which worsened their chances of ascending to the C-suite. The perceived reasons behind this purported lack of support from black executives were mainly articulated as tied to the power dynamics in their organisations. Participants noted that they were aware that, since there were a few black executive managers at the executive level, those few black executive managers could be powerless and immobilised to offer sponsorship or

resources to subordinate black managers necessary to advance black subordinate managers to the executive level. This view was expressed in the following quotes:

[…] there is no real element of that helping hand that white people will do in terms of mentorship, holding that younger, inexperienced white manager and walking them on the path to the top (Sitembwa, MMM26).

Now, it is still about networking, and a majority of the executives are white, and they primarily network with young white managers. As for us black professionals [middle and senior black managers], networking with black executives tends to be fruitless because, yes, you can be on good terms with them [black executives] and everything, but when it comes to appointments, they don't seem to have a voice to advocate for you (Kuze, FMM33).

Although black executive managers acknowledged their limited power in influencing the decision-making to appoint a black professional to the executive management level, half of the black executives who participated in this study claimed that they still offered support to black subordinates to the best of their ability, these participants claimed that they were engaged in trying to change the future structure of the organisations despite the power struggles they encountered. These black executives showed enthusiasm in helping black subordinate managers get to the top levels by increasing the number of black managers in middle management and lower supervisory positions. Kanyebu, a 56-year-old executive, stated:

Although it is a struggle, I still try to mentor young black managers. I encourage them to study, improve their performance and apply for our development programs. That way, they will be in a good position to grasp future opportunities (Kanyebu, MEM56).

The above quote exemplifies typical responses expressed by black executive managers, which indicate that black executives were less likely to offer informal development opportunities such as informal mentoring, coaching, and sponsorships the same way white executive managers offered sponsorships to white subordinate managers. Instead, black senior and executive managers indicated that they solely

depended on formal development opportunities provided by the organisation as the only viable ways to help black middle and senior managers to ascend to the C-suite.

5.4.6. Consequences of Racial Discrimination and Ambivalent Workplace Relationships

Participants' responses indicate that their racialisation and racism experiences posed a potential threat to their psychological well-being, confidence level, and freedom. The following sub-sections report on the evidence from the data in detail.

Threat to Psychological and Emotional Well-being

All other participants who encountered race-based incivility expressed shared feelings of unhappiness, anger, pain, and frustration. Furthermore, several participants also said they were required to remain calm, enact a professional outward disposition, or not show weakness when experiencing racial incivility. For example, Kachana, a 39-year-old female executive manager, emotionally described her experience as follows:

> *I felt very hurt because I should be judged based on my capabilities and not on my race. My skin colour is not supposed to be an issue. But here, it is; unfortunately, it is a harsh reality [...] and to make matters worse, as a professional (gestures inverted commas), I am expected to be calm under such racism [...] you know the stereotype about angry black women (Kachana, FEM39).*

Data reveals that the insidious racial incivility plausibly resulted in diminished emotional and psychological well-being for the affected participants, which was perceived to be detrimental to participants' job performance and perceived competence. This evidence was revealed in participants' responses in the quotes below:

> *So yeah, in a sense that, when you're not okay, your mental health, everything gets affected. Everything you have worked for can be destroyed. Mental health can ruin everything you have put together. So hence, I am leaving (Inonge, FSM39).*

All this stress can drive you to a breaking point. Last year, I had the most challenging time […]. Things were not going well at home. I went into depression; I lost weight; my subordinates asked me if I was sick. Yet, I still showed up and did what I had to do. I got counselling, and I must say really therapy and prayer helped me. But I always wonder, does it ever occur to these white people that "what we are doing is wrong" or we have done enough bad things to this person, and we should stop now?" (Chaze, FMM45).

[...] and your confidence and motivation, yes, it plays on all that. You feel inferior, and you may not even be aware of it. Remember, society already says blacks are inferior to whites [...] it has so many effects. Definitely, things are bigger than just mere discrimination. It can end up affecting your social life and your family life. So, the influences can have far-reaching consequences than just your performance (Ntelamo, MMM38).

From the above quotations, statements such as "*you get tired*", "*and also your confidence, yes, it plays on that*", "*it plays on your emotional states*, and *"your mental health get affected*" were common phrases in the participants' interviews. Participants reflected awareness of the potential threat of racial oppression and marginalisation on their emotional and psychological well-being. Furthermore, participants indicated awareness that their negative racialisation experiences could go beyond affecting their job performance and commitment to disturbing their social lives, including their family lives. For example, in the above extracts, Ntelamo, a 38-year-old middle manager, said: "*It can end up affecting your social life and your family life".*

Level of Confidence and Freedom

Several participants, predominantly middle managers, expressed that the negative racial experiences they endured seemed to have reduced their level of confidence and freedom to take initiatives or be proactive, which, according to them, reduced their level of engagement. Therefore, as exemplified by Masikabi in the quote below, participants perceived that their induced low level of confidence and lack of workplace pro-activeness or lack of engagement made them appear less worthy of promotions than their white peers.

[...] you feel like there is an attempt to make you feel small. They [white managers] patronise you, so you are silenced, or you become less engaged, and then they will say you are not creative. My white colleagues are vocal, and they are free to say whatever is on their minds because they know they are always listened to, and their views will always be supported. They are also free to take chances and take up initiatives because they know nothing bad will happen to them even if they mess up. So, in the end, whites are made to look like they are the creative ones, self-starters, and good decision-makers. Based on that, they are likely to be promoted [Shakes his head] (Masikabi, MMM25).

Interestingly participants reflected on the potential threats that racial oppression and domination, both at the organisational and interpersonal levels, posed to their job performance and psychological and emotional well-being. Consequently, this directly or indirectly shaped their chances to ascend to top management positions. In addition, participants reflected on how negative workplace racialisation experiences were likely to filter into their social lives and thus pose threats, directly or indirectly, to their families and communities.

5.4.7. Coping Mechanisms: Resilience, Agency, and Resistance

Evidence shows that participants responded differently to the racial oppression and marginalisation they experienced in their workplaces. Some participants' reflections demonstrated that they opted to endure racial oppression with little agency and mostly adopted non-resilience as a coping mechanism. On the other hand, a few participants indicated that they resisted racial oppression and domination in their organisations by speaking against the status quo. The following segments report each response mechanism and its associated consequences.

Resilience: Racial Discrimination as Motivational?

As odd as this may sound, some participants claimed that although it was a negative experience, the racial discrimination they experienced made them more productive and helped them build stronger resilience. They claimed that the negative experiences of racial discrimination became their impetus to work extra harder. They further explained that due to their added effort and constant need to prove themselves, they

improved their skills and competence, and in doing this, they became more competent in their roles. The participants stated that even though the experience was not favourable, they focused on becoming better professionals. From the participants' responses, one can surmise that black managers have internalised the endurance that racial oppression places on their bodies as a way to comply with the demand to survive in the Namibian private sector.

At a point in time, it actually improves you or improves your performance because you research more, you read more [...] since now you know the rules of the game. The rule of the game is like, guess what? This white guy is going to try to second-guess you, but you don't care because you've done your homework; he can throw in whatever he wants. So perhaps, in trying to undermine us, they have strengthened us (Sililo, MEM40).

They want to see you not performing to the extent that they expect you to because they want to use that as an opportunity to block your chances of you climbing up the corporate ladder. So, you work hard to ensure they don't get that chance. And because you are always putting your best performance, over time, your performance actually gets better than them [White managers]. So, we know it well that whites will just show a bit of performance and then get promoted, but you, as a black person, have to work twice as hard. So, I know that I have to work double as hard to exceed the requirements to get to the executive level. And I will work double as hard because it is how it is, it is because of my race (Mwanangombe, MSM40).

Sadly, although these participants worked hard and did not challenge the status quo, they still reported that they did not receive fair rewards for their work or efforts. This situation made some participants question most white managers' moral and ethical behaviours – reflected in the ill-treatment of black managers. Still, these white managers gestured as honest professionals on the surface. Some of these participants concluded that perhaps their resilience was misunderstood and taken for granted – their bodies were probably misconceived as being impervious to pain in the imagination of their white counterparts.

The worst thing is that most white people do not realise they are racist, or maybe they are playing ignorance. But I believe, in their minds, they have concluded that we black people are strong enough to handle all the discrimination and mistreatment we receive from them, and it does not affect us psychologically. Because if they did not think like that, they would probably think about changing the way they treat us (Mutumba, FSM44).

This sentiment was reflected in Mutumba's comment below when she stated: "*I believe, in their minds, they have concluded that we black people are strong enough to handle all the discrimination*".

Agency: Speaking Out Against Racial Oppression

For other participants, when asked why these participants opted to endure racial domination and subjugation, their responses pointed to two main reasons: (1) fear and vulnerability underlined by socio-economic status and power difference, and (2) others chose resilience as a sacrifice to inspire future black managers and employees below them. As highlighted in the preceding section, data patterns indicated black professionals faced intimidation in the form of white backlash when they attempted to oppose racial discrimination or advocated for changing the repressive organisational systems. Thus, as reflected by participants, these resentment actions from white managers induced fear in the participants to resist racial oppression — as resistance may attract punishment. Participants shared stories of black professionals who were punished for opposing racially unjust organisations practices. These punishments ranged from shaming, ostracising, being pushed out, and being overlooked for promotions and rewards or through the racial discriminatory disciplinary action procedure. The following quote captures the evidence of the punishment mechanisms used against black managers who were resistant to racial oppression, which likely induced fear in participants to resist racial oppression, as noted by participants:

When you speak against racial discrimination, you become targeted, you are overlooked for promotions, and your bonus is affected. An ex-colleague [Black] left last year because he was very vocal and punished for it. He was forced to leave because it became unbearable to stay and fight [resist oppression]. So, I will admit most of us are still here and in these positions because we are the

"nice blacks". We speak only about these race problems in our small corners, but we don't challenge these things openly [...] we are scared. But mostly is because we have families to feed, so we try not to compromise on that (Kanyebu, MEM56).

I've seen a black colleague who tried to challenge his white executive, and it ended up costing him his job [...]. So, what I told myself is that, let me take in all punches now so that it will be easy for black managers who will come after me and also, you know, be here as motivation for the low-level employee who might be looking up to me as a role model (Milupi, MMM34).

I felt like all white people, from the leadership and those on my level, had labelled me as rebellious just because no one had done it before me. Nobody had questioned anything here before (Nakwezi, FMM29).

As reflected in the quotes above, most participants stated they had no other options than to work twice as hard as their white counterparts by doubling their performance. The endurance of racial oppression was considered "palatable" or desired behaviour by influential white executives. Such idealised docile behaviours were rewarded with some level of career advancement opportunity and economic benefits.

Resistance: "I have had enough"

The data of this study indicated that not all black managers submitted to racial oppression. One-third of participants, particularly middle managers, resisted workplace racial oppression by speaking out against the repressive workplace culture. Despite the hostility and backlash, these participants showed courage and were prepared to face the repercussions of mounting resistance to racial discrimination and marginalisation. The participants expressed that they became targeted once they started opposing the status quo and were further marginalised compared to black managers who conformed to the organisational script. These dissenting participants pointed out that their professional advancement or their ascension to top management positions would be slower or delayed than black managers who could conform to the

white power structure. This claim is stated in the quote below from an interview with Kakona, a 33-year-old middle manager, who shared the following observation:

I joined the organisation as a graduate on a graduate trainee programme. There were a lot of us, black and white. And now, when I look at the stuff that we've all done in terms of the value we have added, there's no difference, and I have done more than most of my colleagues, but they have progressed further than me. So, the way I see it is that, uhhhmm, because I will never allow anyone to step on my head, and I am not in the business of buying favours from white people, I am not their favourite. So, I have been a target […] I am made to pay for speaking out (Kakona, MMM33).

Participants who opposed workplace racial domination indicated that their resistance was evoked by the tiredness of performing docility in the face of racial oppression and that they needed to regain their dignity and self-respect. The few participants who resisted racial oppression showed strong opposition to adopting survival mechanisms as these strategies could be detrimental to their dignity and subject them to dehumanisation. These participants vilified tolerance of racial oppression as they believed that tolerance could encourage more oppression that could lead to their dehumanisation, as pointed out by Njahi in the extract below:

[…] I have had enough […] you know it becomes difficult to change when you have tolerated something too long. When you stop accepting their nonsense, they [white managers] will be like: "What happened to her? For the four years she's been here, she has accepted it". So that's why sometimes it's better to speak out or go to a new environment. The abuse will continue if you stay or do nothing [...] I try to talk to my black colleagues and subordinates about the racism here, but most of us are too scared to act because we think we will lose our jobs. As for me, I will keep talking about these things until the day I leave this place or until things change (Njahi, FMM35).

As reflected in Njahi's comment above, participants indicated that they were speaking out against racial oppression and creating awareness for other black employees to enable them to recognise the racial injustices to incite some form of

action against the oppression. Although, almost all of them stated that speaking out and talking to their peers was not done openly. These few participants sought mobilisation of their black peers and subordinates to speak out collectively to improve the oppressive climate of their organisations.

5.4.8. Conclusion

The findings reported in this chapter indicate that experiences shared by participants were shaped by multi-layered and interconnected influential factors running through societal, institutional, organisational, and interpersonal levels. Furthermore, the findings suggest that societal factors were (re)produced at institutional and organisational levels as racial inequality that came to bear on the interpersonal experiences of all participants at all managerial levels. Thus, it is transparent that, although these factors are analysed and stratified into three categories, evidence demonstrates that all influencing factors are not isolated, and they operate in harmony to shape the experiences of black managers. The next chapter will discuss the findings presented in this chapter through the anticolonial and decolonial lenses, as described in Chapters 3 and 4.

Chapter 6: Discussion

6.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings of themes and subthemes presented in Chapter 2 with a view to answering the overarching research question of this study: *What are black managers' experiences of accessing top management positions within Namibian private sector organisations?*

The main research question was sub-divided into three related questions, namely:

- *What are the social-contextual (macro-level) factors that shape the experiences of black managers in accessing top management roles in Namibian private sector organisations?*
- *What are the organisational (meso-level) factors that shape the experiences of black managers in accessing top management positions in Namibian private sector organisations?*
- *What are the interpersonal and intergroup (micro-level) factors that shape the experiences of black managers in accessing top management roles in Namibian private sector organisations?*

Adopting anticolonial and decolonial perspectives (discussed in Chapter 3), this chapter critically examines the findings from the data analysis as reported in the previous chapter (Chapter 5), which highlights the multi-level factors shaping the experiences of black managers in accessing top management positions in the contemporary Namibian private sector. As such, this study foregrounds exploring the historical and political elements underpinning the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data analysis – as presented in Chapter 5. As stated earlier, Management and Organisations Studies (MOS) scholars stress that, in order to dismantle them, it is imperative to understand the historical and political foundations of the racially stratified power structures which maintain racial inequality, oppression and subjugation in organisations (Holvino, 2010; Nkomo, 2011a). Nkomo (2011b) cautions that examining organisational experiences of people in 'third world' locations without understanding these contexts results in empty theorising.

6.2. The Macro-Level: Social and Institutional Factors

This section analyses and problematises social and institutional contextual (that is, macro-level) factors that emerged from the data analysis as shaping black managers' experiences in accessing top management positions within contemporary Namibian private sector organisations.

6.2.1. Socio-Historical Influential Factors

Colonial Histories Continuity

As stated in Chapter 3, Anticolonial thinkers maintain that the colonisation of Africa by Europeans continues to shape social and economic relations on the continent (cf. Chinweizu, 1987; Nobles, 2015). Decolonial scholars generally refer to these colonial continuities as the 'coloniality of power' or in short— 'coloniality'[14] (Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Quijano, 2000). As briefly described in Chapter 3, black Namibians experienced two extreme epochs of colonial regimes. First, from 1885 to 1915, German settlers imposed a brutal colonial regime that included the genocide and enslavement of Africans (1904-1908) and property and land dispossession (Olusola & Erichsen, 2010; Sarkin, 2011). This colonial history of violence was followed in the 1919-1990 era by the white South African colonial administration, which later introduced the white-minority apartheid regime that perpetrated further dehumanising atrocities: murder, exploitation, segregation, and the disenfranchisement of the majority of black people (Katjavivi, 1988). As stated in Chapter 3, these settlers regarded Namibians through a 'colonial gaze' that objectified and reduced them to non-humans (Fanon, 2008). This objectification of the 'Other' or what Aimé Césaire (2000) calls '*thingification*', which serves as the foundation of the global white supremacy[15] ideology, provided a

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[14] Coloniality refers to "the longstanding patterns of power that emerged from colonialism and continue to define culture, labour, intersubjective relations and knowledge production, long after the end of direct colonialism" (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p. 243).

[15] Throughout this study, the use of term 'white supremacy' "includes the more familiar and specific reference to extremist, alt-right movements emboldened in the contemporary climate of explicit racial violence. Yet it also extends far beyond them to signify the wider set of social systems characterised by the coloniality of power. In this sense, white supremacy signifies a historically emergent, socially constructed and institutionally embedded racial hierarchy that enshrines white physical, cultural, intellectual and moral superiority" (Liu et al., 2021, p. 106).

rationale and justification for the violence that white settlers unleashed on Namibians (Liu et al., 2021; Sithole, 2016; Cress Welsing, 1991).

In the Namibian context, the growth of corporate Namibia is intimately tied to historical practices that dehumanised black people as non-sentient beings. Historical records reveal that private firms, most of them still operating in the present-day Namibian private sector, depending on the enslaved labour (including women and children), from genocide concentration camps, whilst firms like the *Woermann Shipping Line*, which was owned by the present-day retail corporation *Woermann, Brock & Co*, invested in the commodification of black labouring bodies as 'stock' in a private concentration camp that was owned by the corporation (Olusoga & Erichsen, 2010). In the apartheid era that followed, black people were held in the white imaginary not too far removed from primates – referred to as Baboons and *Kaffirs*[16] (More, 2014; Mart, 2014a)—and were relegated to serf labourers within the private sector and white domestic settings.

It is against this historical backdrop of white colonial dominance and oppression of black Namibians that the contemporary racial hierarchy that structures contemporary social and economic relations in Namibia have to be understood. As noted in Chapter 2, Dar et al. (2020) caution that, within the MOS field, there is a "continued omission of the roles of Indigenous genocide, extractive settler-colonialism and black chattel slavery in contemporary capital accumulation and wealth disparity" (p. 4). Consequently, this omission or inadequate historical contextualisation has led to "an epistemic blindness in most management theories because histories of race, racism and colonialism are excluded or glossed over" (Banerjee, 2021, p. 1).

Participants in this study demonstrated awareness of the historical continuities of German settler colonialism and its apartheid successor, as persisting in society and continuing to shape their realities and experiences of subjugation, oppression and

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[16] Maart (2014a) avers that the racial slur, '*kaffir*', came to represent the most offensive racial slur to be uttered by the apartheid regime and the white population against black people, to suggest a range of attributes ranging from backward, tribal, illogical, steeped in tradition, lazy, uncouth, without reason and rationality, tempestuous, slow-thinking, but also rebellious, stubborn, defiant (p. 6).

marginalisation within and/or exclusion from senior positions within the private sector. For instance, Mbongwe, one of the participants, reflected: *"We still live that [colonial] history today. We are still suffering … we are still landless, we are poor, and today, we are forced to work for the grandchildren of those who stole from us"*. This statement is similar to other remarks that participants made, such as "*we are still not free*", "*we failed to dismantle apartheid*", "*German and Afrikaners still ruling over us*", suggesting that despite the prevailing rhetoric of reconciliation and neoliberal democratic governance, black managers within corporate Namibia are inextricably entangled in coloniality or continuities of Namibia's colonial history. Coloniality, in this case, functions as the ontological basis that forms racial difference, which enables racial inequalities, subjugation and oppression of black managers (limki, 2018). To put it simply, the experiences of oppression and domination that black managers are subjected to are rooted in and sustained by the "past that is not past" (Sharpe, 2016, p. 23) or what Hartman (2008) and some other scholars have called the enduring 'afterlife' of the regimes of colonialism and its apartheid successor.

Fanon (2008) discusses how history functions to form what he calls the '*historico-racial* schema'[17], through which black bodies continued to be devalued in the white imaginary. Arguably, the colonial history of Namibia enables the persistent (re)colonisation of black managers through subjugation and dehumanisation, signifying what decolonial scholars refer to as the 'coloniality of being'[18] (Maldonado-Torres, 2007). For victims of the 'coloniality of being', Grosfoguel (2016, p. 10) notes, "the extension of rights, material resources and the recognition of their subjectivities, identities, spiritualities and epistemologies are denied". In the Namibian private sector context, this study illustrates how 'coloniality of being' acted to limit black managers' access to management ranks based on colonial difference—difference that is historically created from colonial ideologies, myths and illusory ideals used by European colonisers to classify and divide humans and the planet (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018).

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[17] Fanon (2008) describes the 'historico-racial' schema as historical racial mythology created by white people, that is imposed on black people and acts to shape their agency and identity in an anti-black world.

[18] Maldonado-Torres (2007) describes the 'coloniality of being' as the denial and permanent questioning the humanity of the black people and other people of colour since they are located in the 'zone of non-being, thus rendered objects/things and their humanity negated, and in dealing with objectified subjects, ethics are forgotten.

In the Namibian context, this study suggests that present-day (re)colonising, exploitation and dehumanisation of black managers in private sector organisations are traces of past (and present) colonial atrocities for which Namibians have yet to receive any reparations or acknowledgement by organisations which benefitted and continue to benefit from past colonial atrocities with impunity. For example, the pain and suffering from the "past that is not past" (Sharpe, 2016, p. 23) is revealed by one participant, Simalimba, who lamented: *"Some of us [black professionals] might be earning better salaries, but are we free? Is that success when you earn your salary from working in a racist work environment similar to that of apartheid or colonial times?"* Simalimba and other participants highlight the fact that black managers continue to suffer ill-treatment in ways not too dissimilar to the totality of the damages wrought on the minds and bodies of their black ancestors by whites who brought settler colonialism to Namibia and imprinted their terrible colonial design through their horrific legacies of black genocide and apartheid crimes.

Myeza and April (2021) point out that the oppression and subjugation that black managers experience in organisations, particularly those organisations in territories with colonial histories of atrocities, could trigger historical trauma[19], thus continuing to inflict harm on black minds and bodies. In the Namibian context, this research highlights the fact that historical trauma persists since past injustices have not been atoned for through reparations and restitution by organisations that benefitted and continue to benefit from past colonial atrocities with impunity. Reparations and restitution are the necessary initial steps toward healing minds and bodies that continue to be fragmented by coloniality. Without reparation and restitution, reconciliation remains an empty gesture, and the past that resides in Namibian society and private sector organisations, masked by the rhetoric of reconciliation and neo-liberalism – an act of 'silencing the past' (Trouillot, 2015)—will continue to inflict multiple harms on black managers. As Trouillot (2015) and other anticolonial/decolonial theorists hold, colonial history cannot be silenced by simply

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[19] Historical trauma is the "massive violence with the intent to impair and/or kill a group of people that cumulatively manifests as chronic psychological wounding across surviving generations—undermine the well-being of [affected Namibian] communities" (Chioneso, Hunter, Gobin, McNeil Smith, Mendenhall, & Neville, 2020, p. 96).

throwing it into a dustbin labelled 'the past'. The garbage of that dustbin overflows, spilling over into, contaminating, and leaving its sulphurous stench on the present.

This study, therefore, aligns with scholars such as April (2021), Cooke (2003) and Cornelius et al. (2019), who argued that repressive and brutal histories, such as chattel slavery, apartheid and colonialism, resurface in present-day organisations and are embedded in organisational practices.

Social Race Roles Formed by Race Myths and Stereotypes

Evidence from the data of this study suggests that coloniality in Namibian society, and by extension, the private sector, manifested and was sustained through historically entrenched social race roles that replicated colonial relations of domination and subordination. As Njahi, a participant, pointed out: "… *the only thing they [white colleagues] can relate your skin colour to is that [black] housekeeper they have at home. So definitely, when they see you in that position [management], they equate you to their domestic at home".* Njahi's statement illustrates how her black body renders her a transgressive anomaly in the white imaginary, what Puwar (2004) calls "bodies out of place", that has violated the 'colonial' social norms and race roles, at least in white imaginary, by occupying a management position reserved for white bodies.

These seemingly immutable social race roles are based on historical colonial classifications such as the white supremacy logic of *Baasskap*[20] during apartheid. The colonial classifications which was defined by colonial difference and colonial discourse delimited and placed people into hierarchical social categories, ascribing value to one group as superior and devalued the 'other' as inferior (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). As the racialised "Others", black people across the colonial world are placed at the bottom of the social hierarchies (Mbembe, 2017), a pattern repeatedly reflected in their workplace positioning (Myeza & April, 2021; Nkomo & Al Ariss, 2014). Thus, social roles are manifestations of colonial, historical socio-ideologies and racial mythology

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[20]*Baasskap* is an Afrikaans term that can be directly translated to "boss-hood", which is a white supremacy ideology that assigned whites as superior in all political, cultural and economic spheres of society (von Holdt, 2002).

implicated in forming and upholding racial inequalities. In turn, social hierarchies based on racial/colonial difference are (re)produced in private sector organisations and function to sustain unequal power relations, workplace interactions and opportunities (Jack & Westwood, 2011; limki, 2018; Liu, 2017b).

More explicitly, this study proffers that coloniality is sustained through social roles and stereotypical representations of black people as subordinates, whose bodies are historically marked for commodification and exploitation as enslaved people or low-wage labourers. These ideas about the inherent physicality of black bodies— essentially as labourers, not managers—are rooted in Namibia's colonial histories that continue to justify the rationale for the persistent devaluation of black managers. Thus, this study supports and extends the argument posited by scholars, such as Myeza and April (2021), as well as Nkomo and Al Alriss (2014), who concluded that, within predominantly white organisations, black and 'minoritized' professionals are deemed 'atypical' or 'unfit' for top management positions.

6.2.2. Economy Inequalities along Racial Lines: Coloniality of the Economy

As noted in Chapter 3, black Namibians' low economic status is grounded in the country's colonial-apartheid history (Olusoga & Erichsen, 2010; More, 2014; Wilkins & Strydom, 2012). For instance, the apartheid regime legislated the economic exclusion of black people through racist policies, and white nationalist institutions such as the *Afrikaner-Broerderbond*[21] functioned to ensure capital accumulation and generational wealth creation for white-owned corporations and white Afrikaners (Baker, 1978; Wilkins & Strydom, 2012), who continue to wield economic control and dominance of the private sector.

Study participants perceived white executives and their white colleagues as gatekeepers or agents politically motivated to reproduce and sustain white monopoly control of the private sector. For example, a participant, Sikute, remarked as he reflected on continued white domination: "*It's about ownership and control […] it is*

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[21] The *Afrikaner-Broerderbond* was an Afrikaner nationalist organisation set up in 1908 to drive and defend Afrikaner economic and cultural interests (Wilkins & Strydom, 2012).

something that is never said out loud, but whites are holding to these positions to stay in control of the private sector, which means protecting their wealth".

Similarly, other participants perceived the top managerial layer of the private sector as white-dominated, as also evidenced in the EEC (2017) report, as a deliberate strategy to maintain white economic power. Participants echoed the voices of MOS and non-MOS scholars who noted the historical origins of Southern Africa's private sector. Their accumulation of capital facilitated the ability of the white minority to maintain economic dominance and the economic deprivation of the black majority (Canham & Williams, 2016; Dale, 2001; Ramphele, 2008).

Fanon (2004) cautioned that political decolonisation inspires anxiety in the colonisers' consciousness. Study participants perceived that white fear over the loss of economic power to the black majority motivated their guarding ownership of the private sector. Some ascribed this anxiety as a significant influencing factor underlying practices that excluded black Namibians from the private sector. This finding resonates with Steyn and Foster (2008), who argue that, since whites lost their political ruling administrative power, they now seek to maintain control over the economy as their source of power and dominance.

However, this unwarranted white anxiety about losing economic power to the black majority is not a recent fear; indeed, it can be traced to colonial-apartheid eras, in which the "*swart gavaar*" [22]drove the systematic economic dispossession of black Namibians (Baker, 1978; Maart, 2014a). Arguably, the same white anxiety appears to inform present-day economic coloniality at the institutional and societal levels, organised through what van der Westhuizen (2016) describes as a white minority 'enclave nationalism'[23]—moulded and enforced through nationalistic economic organising (i.e., a nation within a nation). As Steyn and Foster (2008) note, the same 'old' unwarranted white fear occupies the imaginations of today's white minority. To use Puwar's (2004) concept, in the white imaginary, black managers are imagined as

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[22] The *swart gavaar* is an Afrikaans term that translates to "black threat" or "black danger" that describes the perceived fear of the potential security, economic and cultural threat that the majority black population posed to whites (Maart, 2014a).

[23] Ani (1994) defines nationalism as the "ideological commitment to the perpetuation, advancement, and defence of cultural, political, racial entity, and way of life" (p. xxvi). Ani emphasises that the use of the term "nationalism" is neither limited to, nor determined by the boundaries of a nation-state" (1994, p. xxvi).

'space invaders' who are agents of a black alliance poised to seize economic power and control; hence they become the targets of white anxieties. As Baker (1978) noted, whites always seek to maintain economic control since the group that controls economic structures "makes the allocative decisions that determine the distribution of power, privilege and resources within society" (p. 321). These politically motivated organisational mechanisms maintain the status quo described by Fanon (2008) when he stated that, in a 'colonial' world, "the economic substructure is also the superstructure. The cause is the consequence; you are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich" (p. 31).

Arguably, white economic nationalism is driven by a 'political behaviour'[24] that facilitates and (re)creates a form of 'internal colonialism'[25] that derives its power from 'economic coloniality' or what Robinson (2000) terms 'racial capitalism' – the idea that racism and capital exploitation are mutually constitutive. For Robinson (2000), the convergence of race and economic power emerged through co-constitutive capital accumulation and exploitative racial systems rooted in slavery, genocide, and apartheid social ideologies.

Moreover, the data of this study suggests that, partly because of their socio-economic position, black managers sought to transcend economic precarity conditions through securing high paying management jobs. However, in their pursuit of management positions, their socio-economic status rendered them vulnerable to oppression and exploitation, as their agency and voice were limited—resulting from them being less likely to find other job opportunities outside of their organisations, and most of them could not risk their jobs because of family responsibilities. This economic precarity and loss of agency result in a loss of control over their organisational lives and well-being (Chowdhury, 2019). This finding resonates with the work of Collins (1989, 1997), who highlighted how black American managers continued to face economic precarity, despite ascending into management ranks. More importantly, this finding illustrates that racialised economic inequality perpetuated by organisations

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[24] According to Ani (1994), a political behaviour is "simply a behaviour that issues from an awareness of group definition as distinct from other groups" (p. 6).
[25] Mignolo and Walsh (2018, p. 5) describe internal colonialism as "the patterns of colonial power continued internally" (i.e., a nation within a nation).

contributes to black managers' economic precarity, thus making them susceptible to workplace racial oppression, exploitation and (re)colonisation.

6.2.3. Institutional-Level Factors: Coloniality of the Namibian Private Sector

The study data suggest that the contemporary Namibian private sector remains a 'white institutional space' (Moore, 2020) where economic coloniality/racial capitalism is enacted through a coordinated institutional structure of power and profit defined by a 'colonial discourse' (Muhr & Salem, 2013). In essence, the private sector represents a critical part of white conservatism that is bent on creating an 'economy enclave', constituting a core part of the 'coloniality of economy' (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). As Nyambe, a participant, stated: "*If we look at the history of the private sector, this sector was created to be controlled by one race [the white race]. It was not built with black people in mind. So, that history determines the industry's fate".* This view is in alignment with MOS and non-MOS scholars and activists who argue that the private sector in Southern Africa was created as a vehicle for capital accumulation to secure and maintain the economic dominance and social power of the white minority while entrenching the economic deprivation of the black majority (Dale, 2001; Ramphele, 2008; Canham & Williams, 2016).

Study participants portrayed white executive managers as key actors or 'gatekeepers' of the historically institutionalised *coloniality regime* within the Namibian private sector*,* who set systemic boundaries to control and protect white economic power (economic coloniality). As Magee and Galinsky (2008, p. 356) note, hierarchy "serves important social and organisational functions". In the private sector context, hierarchy or power, arguably, is exerted to align the private sector with its historical purpose. For instance, corporations operating in the contemporary Namibian private sector are the former Afrikaans enterprises established by the apartheid regime for the economic upliftment of the minority Afrikaner group (Wilkens & Strydom, 2012). Despite some changes in the post-independence era, these corporations remain white-owned and controlled.

As some scholars have argued, institutionalised power structures are often historically grounded and intergenerationally inculcated by white supremacy (Liu et al.,

2017; Lowe, 2013). White supremacy reifies unequal power dynamics at the institutional level and limits black managers from holding influential executive roles, for black executive power is perceived as threatening to white dominance (Denis, 2012; Hylton, 2012; Lowe, 2013; McGinn & Milkman, 2013). The historical foundations of the private sector determine who may rightfully hold power in these organisations based on colonial difference.

Outlined below are several mechanisms uncovered in the course of this study through which private sector organisations create and reproduce institutionalised economic coloniality.

Institutionalised Practices Enforcing Economic Coloniality

At the institutional level, data patterns point to three main mechanisms through which the white economic power structure or 'coloniality of the economy' appeared to be collectively enacted, reinforced and normalised by private sector organisations. Based on participants' reflections, these 'gatekeeping' mechanisms include:

- *Maintaining white dominance in top management teams (TMTs)*

The study data suggest that the deliberate numerical overrepresentation of white managers in TMTs was critical in ensuring that economic decisions would be made in the interests of the white minority, thus facilitating economic coloniality. Mithani and O'Brien (2021, p.174) state that the "decision-making process[es] in organisations [are] vulnerable to multiple interests"—as such interests often include personal and group interests within and outside the organisation. Therefore, this mechanism could also be seen as white executives aligning the private sector with its implicit historical and political purpose—to maintain white economic power and material gains for the white populace.

- *Racially biased Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) sponsorships*

The data of this study suggest that institutionalised racially-biased organisational practices appeared to shape corporate practices such as CSR, business-to-business relations/affiliations, and supply chain processes and procedures that created racial boundaries and reinforced coloniality of the economy at the institutional level.

Furthermore, this finding suggests that coloniality was embedded in private sector organisations' supply chain and CSR practices. For instance, participants believed that the CSR sponsorships were disproportionately directed towards white-owned institutions (such as private schools and white-owned social awareness and events organisations).

- ***Racialised business-to-business affiliations and supply chain relations***

Several participants illustrated how race played a role in forming business-to-business connections and transactions in the private sector. For instance, some mentioned racialised affiliations among white-owned organisations, such as banks that excluded and disadvantaged black businesses. An example that stood out was the story shared by Sililo, one of the participants who is a Chief Financial Officer in one of the Namibian commercial banks. Sililo recounted how his white CEO attempted to persuade him to authorise, against the law, an interest-free loan to a white bank client. To Sililo's horror: "*… this client had already spoken to my CEO (white), who backed him up. To my surprise, my CEO pretended not to know the banking laws and pushed that we give this guy an interest-free loan. When I said: 'No', he (the CEO) even dared to ask me to prove what I was saying was true when he knew the law very well. I was shocked*". Another example of institutionalised racist practices was shared by participants from several organisations and involved unfair procurement processes and procedures that outsourced services to predominantly white-owned service providers.

The above-illustrated institutionalised, systematic and racial exclusionary practices and mechanisms resonate with MOS scholars who argue that an organisation's value chain and CSR programs are sites where corporations exercise power to reinforce socio-economic inequality, often through partnerships between organisations (Bajupi et al., 2018; Banerjee, 2018; McCarthy & Noon, 2018). Moreover, one could argue that those mentioned above 'gatekeeping', systematic practices, and norms reflect what Acker (2006, p. 443) termed an 'inequality regime'[26] that is linked to broader socioeconomic inequality. Viewed through an anti/decolonial lens and borrowing from Acker (2006), these institutionalised gatekeeping

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[26] Acker (2006, p. 443) defines 'inequality regimes' as "interrelated practices, processes, actions, and meanings that result in and maintain class, gender, and racial inequalities within particular organisations".

mechanisms represent a regime constituted by political, invisible institutionalised and interconnected actions, processes, and actors coordinated to maintain and reinforce the coloniality of the economy at the institutional level. This coloniality of the economy (re)creates and reinforces racialised economic inequalities, and white supremacy and anti-black racism are (re)produced at organisational levels (Liu, 2017b; Pullen et al., 2019). Therefore, this study contends that the Namibian private sector continues to be a colonial apparatus utilised for white economic domination, thus upholding coloniality, enabling racial inequalities, subjugation, and oppression of black managers to persist.

Accordingly, I label those implicit, politically motivated, power-hoarding management practices, such as racially biased business-to-business relations and racialised CSR practices, enacted by influential white executives to uphold and maintain coloniality as *managing to colonise*, signalling white executives' implicit, invisible, yet harmful political motives to control, dominate, and thus dehumanise the racialised 'Other'. Reiterating Fanon (2004), Grosfoguel (2016) reminds us that dehumanisation is at the heart of colonisation. Moreover, the continued socio-economic oppression of black people undermines their agency and self-determination to improve their economic conditions (Baker, 1978; Milazzo, 2014).

The following segments discuss the consequences of economic coloniality in detail.

Consequences of Coloniality of the Economy in the Namibian Private Sector

The study data suggest that the maintenance of 'coloniality of the economy' at the institutional level created two significant consequences: (1) limitations on black managers' professional mobility in the private sector; and (2) limiting/discouraging black-owned businesses' from participating in the private sector. These consequences are explored further in the following paragraphs.

- *Mobility of Black Managers within the Private Sector*

Data analysis suggests that the coloniality of the economy, and its associated self-sustaining mechanism, such as ensuring white-dominated executive management teams, impedes the mobility of black professionals within the private corporate sector. Participants' general perception was similar to what Cooper et al. (2020) termed

'normative collusion' among white managers that limited black managers' mobility in the private sector. In their study on gender inequalities at the institutional level, Cooper et al. (2020, p. 1916) defined 'normative collusion' as a process that generates "norms and practices within the industry ecosystem – comprising industry-specific structures, actors, and interactions – that works against women [and marginalised employees]'s engagement and progress in managerial careers".

Viewed through an anti/decolonial lens and borrowing from Cooper et al. (2020), one could argue that the 'normative collusion' power-hoarding structure in the Namibian private sector limits black managers' professional advancement. This is particularly so for those who do not submit to racial oppression and the white supremacy script. Furthermore, the data shows that, unlike their white counterparts with ample access and networking to management positions within the private sector, black managers depended primarily on internal promotions for professional advancement, thus limiting the pace of their upward mobility or lengthening the time it took them to ascend to top management levels.

- ***Black-Owned Enterprises (In)visibility in the Private Sector***

The study data confirmed the invisibility of black-owned private sector organisations. Their invisibility arises from historical processes, but in contemporary times it is enforced and perpetuated by institutionalised practices, such as business-to-business affiliations and supply chain relations which exclude and discriminate against black-owned enterprises. A striking example was how banks made loan decisions based on race; white-owned enterprises were more likely than black-owned enterprises to receive financing.

These exclusionary practices contribute to the low visibility, entry or survival of black-owned enterprises in the private sector. Further, black-owned enterprises' low access and visibility contribute to the maintenance of white monopoly control, entrenching unequal power and white monopolisation of the private sector. These unfavourable conditions make it significantly harder for black managers to advance in their professions.

Several study participants believed the underrepresentation of black-owned organisations in the private sector to be historically grounded. White accumulation of capital, or the persistent economic coloniality of the private sector, is traceable to the violent German settler-colonialism and apartheid economic exclusionist policies that denied black people formal participation in the economy. This view is supported by Baker (1978), who notes that, during the colonial-apartheid era, when Southern African blacks attempted to compete in the marketplace after white settlers stripped them of significant economic resources, their efforts to achieve economic independence were thwarted by government legislation such as hut taxes and other measures, enacted to restrict black competition. Wilkins and Strydom (2012) note that apartheid governments in Southern Africa worked alongside the *Afrikaner-Broerderbond* – a patriarchal white nationalist organisation, to hinder black peoples' economic pursuits*.* According to Wilkins and Strydom (2012), the *Afrikaner-Broerderbond* not only sought to impede black economic mobilisation efforts but, at the same time, mobilised resources to fund the start-up of white-owned corporations – a majority of which still operate today. Baker (1978) argues that the colonial economic disempowerment of black people led to the "destruction of their social structures, further curtailing African mobilisation capabilities by destroying morale, leadership, and motivation. These factors also contributed to their social disorganisation … [that] virtually forced blacks to labour for whites at, or below, subsistence wages" (p. 319).

Thus, with that historical understanding, one could argue that the present-day economic coloniality of the private sector perpetuates black economic disempowerment, subverting black economic interests, thus "furthering the dependency of the colonised" (Carmichael & Hamilton, 1967, p. 17), particularly black Namibians' dependency on white-owned organisations for employment. This colonial power dynamic maintains white domination and control monopoly of the private sector. Consequently, black managers are forced to submit to the coloniality regime for their economic survival and thus lose control over their organisational lives and well-being (Chowdhury, 2019). Moreover, their restricted mobility and access to internal and external top management positions within the sector are further entrenched through collusions of power enacted by influential white executive managers (Avenant, April & Peters, 2016).

Therefore, this study exposes influential white executives as key actors who act to secure white interests through implicit political management practices—*managing to colonise*—but may always not be seen as such. Thus, one could argue that the 'coloniality', as it operates in the private sector, positions private sector organisations as sites for the (re)colonising of black managers. Moreover, the limitation of the mobility and ascendancy of black managers to top management positions has further economic implications; since these positions represent potential routes towards the upward social mobility of individuals, their families and communities (Canham & Williams, 2016). Iimki states (2018, p. 330), "work is the fundamental means of actualizing life in both its material (i.e., economic) and idealist (i.e., social, political and cultural) dimensions". Thus, denying an individual a management role, for example, robs that person of the opportunity for self-actualisation and robs his/her/their family and community of a role model and visible representation.

Thus, this study joins other MOS scholars in illustrating mechanisms through which institutions and organisations actively participate in increasing social inequality with impunity (cf. Amis et al., 2018; Bapuji, 2015; Liu, 2017b; Pullen et al., 2019; Romani et al., 2021).

6.2.4. Anticolonial and Decolonial Praxis for Transforming the Namibian Private Sector

From an anti/decolonial perspective, to promote fair economic participation for all, this study proposes interventions guided by a decolonial praxis that includes, among other interventions, the dismantling of racial barriers upholding coloniality of power in the private sector. In essence, decolonial interventions will allow for fair participation and inclusion of black-owned businesses in the private sector economy. Moreover, this study argues that boosting the visibility and involvement of black-owned organisations in the private sector could potentially counter the private sector's white dominance and monopoly control. Tuck and Yang (2012) remind us that decolonisation is not a metaphor and should be grounded in genuine efforts to dismantle persistent colonial structures. This study proposes that authentic decolonial praxis contests and dismantles power structures built upon logics of coloniality and white supremacy, which uphold the continued economic colonisation and oppression of the 'Other'.

Tuck and Yang (2012) contend that authentic decolonisation entails reparations for stolen land and property and atonement for genocide committed during colonial settlement. Genuine decolonisation of the private sector should foreground demands for reparations from organisations that have benefitted from colonial genocide, apartheid, slave labour, land and property exploitation, and crimes that created what Tuck and Yang (2012) refer to as 'imperial wealth'. This study further recommends that the government of Namibia supports the decolonising of the private sector by creating a statutory body that will advocate policies and programs rooted in decolonial reparative justice to dismantle private sector coloniality. Finally, decolonial social movements should pressure the private sector to deracialise market entry barriers to allow for fair economic participation and the creation of genuine equitable organisations that will promote true liberation for all citizens (April, 2021; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018).

Biko (2004) states that "for meaningful change to appear, there needs to be an attempt at reorganising the whole economic pattern" (p. 149). For Biko (2004), blacks need to be *conscientized*[27] to help them develop resistance to their economic oppression and mobilise themselves to "question the values and institutions of society and gain economic change through their own political engagement and *economic* empowerment" (Carmichael & Hamilton, 1967, p. 39 emphasis added). Similarly, Dussel and Ibarra-Colado (2006) recommend that when victims of exclusionary practices become conscious of their oppression, they should construct "new forms of organisation as concrete alternatives for a better life" (p. 504). Dussel and Ibarra-Colado (2006) further note that building an alternative organisational system is the most pragmatic form of liberation, which offers the potential to open up "new possibilities in which the life of every victim can be materially transformed, allowing the victim to abandon his state of perpetual anguish" (p. 504).

In the anticolonial and decolonial spirit of moving MOS theorising from the entrapment of coloniality, this study recommends that the economically oppressed be supported as a decolonial praxis for economic self-liberation. This liberation praxis

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[27] To be *conscientized* is to make the oppressed aware or conscious of the oppressive reality which has been, and currently is, shaping their lives (Freire, 2017). For Freire (2017, p. 58), a "deepened conscientiousness of their situation leads people to apprehend that situation as a historical reality susceptible of transformation".

should be grounded in an ethical and non-oppressive anti-colonial ethos of creating an alternative social system that will foster authentic social justice and equality for all (April, 2021; Dussel& Ibarra-Colado, 2006; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). Mignolo and Walsh (2018) point out that practical decolonial interventions are likely to lead to what they call '*re-existence*", which they describe as "the redefining and re-signifying of life in conditions of dignity" (p. 3). Here, *re-existence* for the economically oppressed black majority is attainable through reclaiming and asserting their humanity through ethical self-determination to build a new society (Biko, 2004; Fanon, 2004; Sithole, 2016). As Fanon (1967) emphasises, "it is the liberated individual who undertakes to build the new society" (p. 102). Moreover, this emancipatory recommendation stems from an anticolonial standpoint that insists that the economic freedom of the black majority is necessary for the reclamation of their dignity and humanity (Carmichael & Hamilton, 1967; Biko, 2004; Sithole, 2016), and more widely, equality for all (April, 2021; Pullen et al., 2019).

Thus, this study adds a voice to MOS scholarship that supports the dismantling of economic power structures that uphold racial injustice in organisations (Liu, 2017b; Pullen et al., 2019; Romani et al., 2021).

6.2.5. Socio-Legal and Regulatory Context of Namibia

Klerck (2008) highlights how efforts to tackle persistent racial, gender and disability inequities and discrimination in accessing managerial jobs in the Namibian private sector led the Namibian government to introduce Affirmative Action (AA) legalisation (e.g., Employment Equity Act 1998). However, the data of this study aligns with the Employment Equity Commission report (EEC, 2019), which reflects that, despite racial equity legislation, racial inequality persists in private sector organisations, particularly at senior and executive management levels.

This study suggests that although the Employment Equity (EE) Act has enabled black managers some degree of access to top management positions, the Act's transformative power is nevertheless ineffective in bringing the desired transformation to the private sector, as evidenced by the slow transformation of the sector. Study participants primarily attributed the Act's ineffectiveness to resistance among influential white elite managers for full compliance with EE legalisation at the

organisational level and their disingenuous circumvention of compliance (Acker, 2006). An example of their resistance is the increased hires of greater numbers of white women than black women and black men into management positions. This practice complied with the amended EE Act of 2007, but hiring more white women maintained white domination of top management teams.

Thus, this study's findings resonate with Nkomo (2011a), who pointed out that white managers are likely to resist compliance with the Affirmative Action legislation to protect their personal and group interests. For Acker (2006), resistance to transformation is an act that legitimises inequality. Acker (2006) further notes that resistance against transformation is rooted in socio-ideologies and beliefs about race held by those who resist change. Following Acker's (2006) reasoning, one could argue that the logic of coloniality, defined by white supremacy ideologies, could be identified as the underlying reason for the white executives' resistance to transforming the private sector. Therefore, this finding concurs with scholars who argue that attempts to transform inequity in organisations through legislative means, without disrupting or de-centring structures that uphold that inequality, is less likely to create substantive equality (Canham, 2019; Nkomo, 2011a).

On an optimistic note, some participants viewed the EE Act as an enabler that slightly improved access to managerial roles in the private sector. Thus, black managers aligned themselves to seize the limited opportunities brought by EE legislation by enhancing their human capital and job performance levels. However, the findings of this study indicate that the scope of EE compliance was the prerogative of influential white executives, who, as Nkomo (2011a) suggested, complied with EE legalisation in ways that aligned with their group and organisational interests.

In 2016, the Namibian government drafted the National Equitable Economic Empowerment Bill (NEEEB). This draft bill is currently awaiting cabinet approval. It is proposed to revamp efforts to address historically created inequalities in the face of resistance to compliance with existing AA legislation (Office of the Prime Minister, n.d.). In reflecting on the NEEEB, study participants held mixed feelings about the draft Bill. Some participants were sceptical about the NEEEB, stating that if not consistently implemented, the Bill would not be of benefit to the majority of the population beyond

a few black political elites. On the other hand, significantly more participants were optimistic that the draft Bill could improve racial equality and the mobility of black professionals in the Namibian private sector. Despite their divergent views on the possible outcome of the draft Bill, almost all participants believe that the fundamental reason behind NEEEB was plausible as the legislation could bring some degree of transformation to the private sector. However, as Acker (2006) and Nkomo (2011a) caution, transformation policies should foreground the dismantling of structures upholding repressive regimes and not merely assimilating the marginalised into the repressive power structure.

Therefore, this study proposes that future Affirmative Action policies, such as the proposed NEEEB, should not solely be relied on to dismantle coloniality but enact authentic decolonial interventions, as coloniality can upend and appropriate these policies to reinforce itself (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). Thus, the researcher suggests that future AA policies guide pragmatic anticolonial and decolonial justice programs that are "racially redistributive — such as reparations, or indigenous land claims" (Clarno, 2017, p. 12). As stated earlier in this chapter, these interventions are necessary as they will chart the path toward decolonising and '*deracialising*' the Namibian private sector and society at large to foster true political and economic independence for all (April, 2021). As described in Chapter 3, anticolonial and decolonial scholars call for authentic and holistic decolonial programs aimed at decolonising colonised minds, knowledge systems, cultures, languages, spirits, and economic models; to restore the dignity and humanity of the colonially oppressed black majority (Ani, 1994; Chinweizu, 1988; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013).

6.2.6. Religious Beliefs
Unexpectedly, the data indicated that religious beliefs (primarily Christianity) motivated some black managers to pursue top management positions. A few participants regarded religious faith as an enabler that inspired them to reach top management positions. Interestingly, these participants credited 'godly luck' as a factor in having secured access to management levels. This research, perhaps regrettably, shows that religious beliefs appeared to undermine the research respondents' agency and/or will

to resist racial oppression within the Namibian socio-politico context. In the face of adversity, these black managers placed their faith in a religion as a survival strategy.

African anti-colonial scholars suggest that continental Africa's inherited colonial religions function to uphold white supremacy and coloniality (cf. Ani, 1994; Chinweizu, 1987). Similarly, Biko (1978) cautioned about the effect of colonial religion on black peoples' self-imaginations when he stated that "we are aware of the terrible role played by our education and religion in creating amongst us a false understanding of ourselves (p. 363). Biko implied that colonially imposed religious beliefs could interfere with black managers' understanding of themselves as agents in their self-emancipation. Although religious black managers viewed their belief system as an enabler in their upward mobility in the organisation, on the contrary, this study cautions that embodied colonial religious beliefs could prevent black managers' exercise of agency, undermining decolonisation efforts and entrenching coloniality in the workplace (Biko, 1978; Wilson, 2014). Therefore, this study reiterates that spiritual decolonisation interventions – such as reclaiming and promoting African indigenous spiritual practices (Ani, 1994; Chinweizu, 1987), should be included in the decoloniality project, as recommended in the previous section.

6.2.7. Summary of Macro-level Factors Shaping Black Managers' Experiences in Accessing Top Management Positions

This study contends that black managers' experiences in accessing top management positions in the Namibian private sector unfolded within a socio-historical, socio-ideological, economic, and political context marked by coloniality or continued colonial structures. Factors that structure black managers' experiences are deeply rooted in Namibia's history of settler-colonialism, genocide, slavery, and apartheid. These histories persist as coloniality of power patterns deeply entrenched in contemporary Namibian society and (re)produced and institutionalised in the private sector. Coloniality at the institutional level act to (re)colonise and devalue black managers, thus constructing them as unfit or atypical for top management positions. Crucially, this study contends that, instead of silencing and erasing Namibia's uncomfortable histories, organisations should reckon with the colonial past, which continues to underlie organisational practices that sustain racial inequalities.

This study has further demonstrated that coloniality expressed through its praxis of 'coloniality of the economy' functioned to maintain white economic dominance at institutional and societal levels. This research shows that the coloniality of the economy became the mode through which racism and white supremacy were expressed at institutional and societal levels. The embedding of coloniality of the economy into the private sector limits black managers' professional rate of ascendancy to top management positions. Moreover, the coloniality of the economy limits the participation of black-owned businesses in the private sector, thus enhancing white economic dominance, which further entrenches racial inequalities. The study suggests decolonial praxis that could counter and 'de-centre' coloniality (coloniality of being and the economy) at institutional and societal levels.

The findings of this study further suggest that exclusionary economic practices are driven by white anxiety about their ability to maintain economic power (having lost political power at independence). Participants perceived white elites as upholding the coloniality of the economy through economic exclusion mechanisms and practices undergirded by a nationalistic agenda to maintain historic white economic domination. This study suggests that collusions between white corporate bodies were perceived as a means by which whites secured control and dominance of the private sector. The study labels management practices legitimising coloniality as '*managing to colonise'* to signal their implicit political motives to control and dominate the economy and dehumanise black managers. Consequently, white domination of the private sector constructs black managers as vulnerable to racial oppression, disempowerment, and entrapment – as their precarious economic condition and limited employment opportunities keep them in bondage.

At the socio-legal level, legislative instruments such as Affirmative Action (AA) laws — particularly the Employment Equity (EE) Act—offered some opportunities for some black managers to ascend to top tier management positions. However, the success of EE in achieving this end has been limited. Participants attributed the ineffectiveness of the EE Act to reversing white corporate protectionist practices and providing too much leeway for minimalistic organisational practices to effect proper transformation, e.g., such as allowing latitude for organisations to recruit more significant numbers of white women and thereby comply with the Act, but to preserve

white economic dominance without real change for the majority black, working population.

The National Equitable Economic Empowerment Bill (NEEEB) drafted legislation proposed by the Namibian government was identified by study participants as a factor shaping the legal context of the labour market. Participants thought that it had the potential to bring some level of transformation to the private sector. However, as already shown, policies alone cannot effectively negate the deeply entrenched coloniality and significant workplace socio-economic differentials (April & Syed, 2020; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). Therefore, it is imperative to enact decoloniality praxis to decolonise and disrupt coloniality within the private sector and broader society through decolonial justice that foregrounds reparations and restitution.

6.3. Meso-Level Factors: Organisational Factors Shaping Black Managers' Experiences in Accessing Top Management Positions

6.3.1. Introduction

This section seeks to answer the second sub-research question of this study: *What are the organisational (meso-level) factors that shape the experiences of black managers in accessing top management positions in Namibian private sector organisations?*

Engaging in this question requires a discussion of the themes uncovered from the data analysis. The themes illuminate *Meso* or organisational level factors that shape the experiences of black managers in accessing top management positions. These themes include organisational culture, practices, and processes enacted to sustain, legitimise, naturalise, and conceal racial inequality. As argued earlier, their exclusion at the institutional level is indicative of the political and economic motivations of whites to maintain monopoly control over the private sector and so perpetuates economic inequality.

6.3.2. Organisational Cultures

Data analysis suggests that most black managers had to navigate racially unjust organisational cultures that excluded and marginalised their presence. This study aligns with scholars who assert that white executive managers of organisations enhance their interests by re-enforcing organisational cultures[28] that support their interests and those of the dominant white group (cf. Acker, 2006; Nkomo, 2011a). This research demonstrates Nkomo's (2011a, p. 125) argument that "organisation cultures are not a neutral phenomenon and are typically shaped and formed by the values and assumptions of the dominant groups in the organisation". Other MOS scholars have argued that organisations are power structures and sites of political struggle where senior managers exercise power to protect and enhance their self-interests or group interests (Baker, 1978; Alvesson & Deetz, 2000; Clegg et al., 2006; Fleming & Spicer, 2014). In addition, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) noted that social institutions such as organisations, universities, and schools are sites where coloniality is reproduced. As

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[28] Organisational culture is "the sum of particular, often time and place-specific, images, attitudes, beliefs, behaviours and values" (Acker, 2012, p. 216).

stated in the previous section, this study suggests that the logic of coloniality and white supremacy structure contemporary Namibian private sector organisational cultures through politically motivated behaviour that seeks to maintain white economic domination by preserving white material and symbolic interests.

The following segments discuss themes from the data analysis in this study, which revealed processes and practices through which oppressive organisation cultures are created and legitimised in contemporary Namibian private sector organisations.

Racially Skewed Top Management Structure

Data analysis of this study highly suggests that racially unjust organisational cultures are produced, normalised and endorsed through racially skewed or white-dominated top management structures. Romani, Zanoni and Holck (2021, p. 9) note that management teams "exert power by producing and enforcing unfair categorisations, meanings, norms, rules, practices, processes, and moods that exclude, marginalise, and/or unequally reward specific categories of employees". One could view the dispersal of white power through a white-dominated management structure as deliberately enacted by white executives to horde power and maintain white dominance of organisational structures—thus '*minoritizing*' and marginalising black managers at those levels.

Participants in this study suggested that the exclusion of black executives from decision-making was achieved through white executives' power hoarding tendencies, enacted through coalition formations. Participants indicated that these alliances enabled white managers to retain power by supporting each other in decision-making, a sort of 'them against us' rivalry, which limited and/or silenced black executives' contributions to, and influence on, strategic decision-making, such as in resource allocation and who to promote to management ranks. Thus, one could argue that the formation of a coalition is an implicit political act intended to maintain power by creating an "agenda around goals and rules … that [are] not formally sanctioned by the organisation" (Mithani & O'Brien, 2021, p. 174). In the Namibian context, coalition formation is arguably tied to and facilitates the white economic coloniality project to

maintain the control of the private sector in service of white economic interests, as argued earlier in this chapter.

As a result, study participants experienced a sense of powerlessness and less autonomy in their roles. This finding resonates with the concept of 'empowered powerlessness', described by April and Singh (2018) as a phenomenon—particularly prevalent in South African organisations—whereby black executives are placed in top management positions but deprived of decision-making power to implement policies and practices that could facilitate organisational change. In the same vein, Petitt (2009) refers to the power possessed by black executives in white-dominated organisations as 'borrowed power', implying that it is not authentic power.

April and Singh (2018) argued that most black executives lacked the agency to challenge the practice of 'empowered powerlessness'. Instead, they justify their non-resistance by claiming 'tiredness' of, and fatigue from, fighting their organisations' power dynamics; they see little fundamental change and/or admit to being afraid of the economic consequences that will befall them, their families and communities, by walking away from relatively high earning roles. These outcomes ultimately force their complicity with the practice of ongoing 'empowered powerlessness' (April & Singh, 2018). However, I would argue that white actors within the pathological power structure, who force black managers into conformity, are the ones who should take the blame or be held accountable (Fleming & Spicer, 2003). Dar and Ibrahim (2019) state that white supremacy self-perpetuates within white-dominated organisations by manipulating and coercing black bodies into serving the interests of white power structures. Influential white executive managers wielded power through the coloniality of the economy, deploying that power to entrench oppressive coloniality power structures.

For middle and senior black managers, the consequences of the racially skewed top management structure were twofold: first, the under-representation of black managers in top management teams diminished middle and senior black managers' aspirations and motivation to attain executive status; second, as noted earlier, a numerically white-dominated executive management structure acts to disempower black executives, and thus limits the level of sponsorship and support

they can provide to subordinate black managers—to help subordinate black managers to ascend to executive management levels. The data suggest that white executives often sponsored or 'scaffolded' junior white managers and employees through sponsorships which they provided to white subordinates that included: coaching, providing insider knowledge about the organisation, facilitating appropriate networking opportunities, and advocating for their promotions through praise intended to create a positive narrative around the job performance of their white mentees, all of which helped white juniors ascend to executive positions quicker than their black counterparts. The absence of mentoring support from black or white sponsors limited black junior managers' access to informal development opportunities.

Thus, this study supports scholars who argue that white dominance of top management structures serves as a mechanism by which white managers are enabled to continue to exercise power over black 'Others' (Bunderson & Reagans, 2011; Ray, 2019). Moreover, this study posits that power hoarding by white executives is part of the implicit political strategy that has vested interests in enforcing and reproducing sustainable organisational cultures, which continue to privilege and protect white symbolic and material interests (Nkomo & Al Ariss, 2014).

In what follows, the processes through which organisational cultures are normalised are discussed.

6.3.3. Organisational Processes: Normalising and Legitimising Workplace Coloniality
As outlined below, this study demonstrates that racially unjust organisational cultures are normalised through organisational processes.

Less Commitment from Top Management to Address Racial Inequity
Data analysis in this study suggested that white-dominated management teams show less commitment toward addressing racially unjust organisational cultures. Bowen and Blackmon (2003) indicate that when top management fails to support justice initiatives, those impacted (and their allies) are likely to be silenced. Managerial behaviour, characterised by limited support or mundane efforts to transform organisational cultures, could be considered resistance to organisational transformation (Nkomo,

2011a). Arguably, management's lacklustre commitment to transformation, directly or indirectly, legitimises racially unjust organisation cultures (Acker, 2006). This study's findings resonate with Nkomo's (2011a), who concluded that, in the South African context, executive managers charged with transformation exhibited less commitment to transforming racially unjust organisational cultures, preferring to preserve their self and group interests.

Silence on Racial Injustice

Data patterns demonstrate that racially oppressive organisational culture was legitimised and normalised through silence on the issue of race and racism in the organisations. Participants in this study spoke of limited openness to discussing issues of race and racism; talking about either topic was regarded as introducing bad feelings and disharmony into the organisation; as one participant, Nakaunga, remarked: "*We can talk about everything, sometimes even issues of gender … but the moment you bring up race, people [white executives] pullback in their shells as if you [are] out to accuse them of doing something wrong*".

Participants indicated the absence of spaces within their organisation's conversations about race and racism. Efforts to silence organisational discussions on race or racism is a racial injustice (Milazzo, 2014). We can also regard this racial silencing as a form of 'white talk', defined as discursive practices, including silence, that whites engage in to legitimise and reinforce their dominance and privilege in society and institutions (Steyn & Foster, 2008). Participants believed that private sector organisations permitted discussions about other forms of injustices, such as gender and age, but silenced all talk of race or racism. This finding resonates with Ahmed's (2009) observation that marginalised employees in high-status roles are usually not permitted to speak about racism since their presence at management levels is perceived to undercut any claims about racial injustices within the organisation. In turn, black managers are "asked to perform and use voice daringly or silence instrumentally to leverage degrees of assimilation into white structures" (Dar, 2019, p.432).

White Backlash and Resistance

The research data suggest that 'white backlash' represents a third mechanism through which coloniality in the private sector organisations was normalised and legitimised. Liu and her colleagues describe white backlash as resistance from white employees against interventions to bring equality to white-dominated organisations, such as the full implementation of Affirmative Action (Liu et al., 2021). The white backlash could take the form of shaming victims who spoke out against organisational racial injustice while rewarding black managers who were more docile or compliant. The results from this study share Dar and Ibrahim's (2019, p. 1243) view that shaming is "an affective regime to tame, discipline and eke compliance" from black employees. As the study data shows, white backlash in the form of actions and practices aimed to undermine or prevent transformation is a manipulative strategy; the outcome is to 'discipline' black managers and to make them docile or 'palatable' subjects who accept racial oppression as normal or natural (Canham, 2014; Dar, 2019; Dar & Ibrahim, 2019).

Participants in this study identified some forms of white resistance: for instance, the deliberate breaching of organisation equity or hiring policies and hiring and promoting white employees through practices that disregarded organisational policies. This study supports Liu et al.'s (2021) assertion that white resistance to transformation represents a backlash that is "manifest in subtle ways to preserve white supremacy and *coloniality* … making some concessions whilst leaving the foundations of organising logic and governance unchanged" (p.108 *emphasis added*).

Applying an anticolonial/decolonial approach, this study demonstrates that coloniality of power functions to maintain itself through white backlash and resistance to equality or transformation. Arguably, the white backlash is a strategy that reinforces white domination, leaving the status quo intact (Liu et al., 2021).

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Rhetoric

Despite the presence of policies such as diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) in private sector organisations, racial inequality persists. Study participants perceive diversity policies as mere window-dressing to obscure the limited progress in transforming repressive organisational cultures. The data patterns of this study suggest that coloniality, embedded in organisational and social structures, nullifies equity policies.

This conclusion resonates with Holck (2016a, 2018), who argued that structural inequalities mitigate the effectiveness of organisational efforts to enhance equality. Hence, this study agrees with other research critiques of DEI policies as superficial or ineffective and do little to transform oppressive organisational cultures (Ahmed, 2007b, 2009; Arciniega, 2020; Noon, 2007, 2017). Therefore, this study supports the view that equity, diversity and inclusion policies are more likely to be effective in organisations defined by substantive equality[29] (Canham, 2019; Nkomo, 2011a).

Exclusion by Language: Afrikaans and German Languages in Workplace Communication

Several study participants experienced exclusion as white colleagues, white clients, or business partners insisted on conducting official business in Afrikaans and German languages. As Nkomo (2011a) has suggested, and as borne out in this study, the use of Afrikaans and German languages in the workplace enhanced black managers' sense of non-belonging within management teams. Study participants expressed how their unfamiliarity with Afrikaans and German languages undermined their ability to contribute in formal and informal interactions such as meetings and thus posed a threat to their job performance and professional progression. This finding supports Myeza and April's (2021) and Nkomo's (2011a) studies, which suggest that the Afrikaans language used in internal communications excludes and marginalises black professionals in South African corporate organisations.

Fanon (2008) reminds us that the language of the 'coloniser' could invoke alienation in the 'colonised'; since learning a language entails acknowledging the culture of that language, and the colonisers' insistence on imposing their own 'superior' languages and cultures could lead the 'colonised' to abandon or undervalue their languages and cultures. Following Fanon, Mazrui and Mazrui (1998, p. 57) state that "when an additional language is also the language of the oppressor, the worldview that it implicitly expresses is often accepted as more valid than one's own" (p. 57). This study's findings align with MOS scholar Dar (2018, p. 566), who argues that "the persistence of colonial languages in neo-colonial organising reproduces inequalities

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[29] Canham (2019, p. 402) describes substantive equality as "the recognition and elimination of broader societal inequality".

based on language use". Insistence on communicating in Afrikaans and German languages in the workspace works to impose white cultures on the organisation, again suggesting the maintenance of coloniality through language (Dar, 2018).

6.3.4. Organisational Practices Creating and Legitimising Unjust Organisational Cultures

The next segment discusses particular practices that define organisational cultures and how those practices shape black managers' upward mobility and ascendancy to top management roles.

Executive Hiring and Promotion Practices: Transactional Tokenism

The study data indicate that white-dominated top management teams or committees mostly decide on hiring and promotions to top management roles. Furthermore, participants revealed how influential white executives (who make up top-management teams) engage in unscrupulous practices, which I would label as *transactional tokenism*—it entails selecting token black managers to top positions in service of white interests. The study showed that tokenised black executives were specifically hired or promoted to serve two Janus-faced roles for the organisation. First, black executives were hired and assigned to lobby the black-dominated government and market regulators on behalf of the organisation. In the Namibian context, where the white minority lost colonial administrative power following independence, black managers with 'connections' to influential black politicians and industry regulators were appointed to lobby these politicians and regulators on behalf of their organisations—to create favourable industry operation conditions. Second, black managers were promoted or hired into roles that engaged directly with lower-ranking majority-black employees and to bargain with trade unions.

Thus, one would argue that 'transactional tokenism' describes a form of coercive and manipulative power enacted by influential white executives to extract maximum value from disempowered black executives. For instance, the first aforementioned control mechanism speaks to how white elites seek to use their economic power to dominate economically disposed blacks (Steyn & Foster, 2008). Moreover, transaction tokenism arguably indicates that white managerial elites have adopted and refined control and manipulation tactics to exploit black bodies as

'property' to be utilised to gain 'political capital'[30] to secure organisational and self-interests (Nee & Opper, 2010). Similarly, the second control mechanism—placing black managers in Janus-faced positions to control black employees and negotiate with trade unions—may be seen as another mechanism that entails co-opting black bodies to maintain and perpetuate discrimination against other black bodies in lower ranks and to lobby with or influence their labour unions.

Arguably, practices of 'transactional tokenism', as manifested in both manipulative and exploitative mechanisms, are part of '*managing to colonise*' practices enacted by white managers to assert coloniality of power and, concurrently, to obscure coloniality (by giving it a 'black' face). Thus, this study suggests that 'transactional tokenism' is part of 'managing to colonise' practices and mechanisms enacted to exploit black bodies in the process of entrenching and enforcing coloniality, particularly economic coloniality, thus making black managers complicit in their own 'colonial' oppression. This finding aligns with Dar and Ibrahim (2019), who argues that the black body's "sense and sense-making are reconfigured and potentially manipulated" by the white power structure for white economic benefits (pp. 1244-1245).

Participants noted that even though tokenised black executives were rewarded through high executive salaries for their 'transactional' roles, they were not spared 'empowered powerlessness'. Thus, *transactional tokenism* is viewed as a control mechanism that functioned to limit black executives' authority and limit their autonomy to specific functional roles. Historically, *transactional tokenism* replicates similar tokenism practices in apartheid-era workplaces. For instance, since white managers could not speak African languages, organisations created "a layer of pseudo-black management"—sometimes called *baas-boys*[31] or *indunas*[32] — who were hired/promoted and "assigned to impose efficient control over other black workers, particularly those in lower ranks" (Mokoena, 2020, p. 27).

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[30] Political capital is the relational ties to politicians and politically appointed industry regulators and government authorities (Nee & Opper, 2010).
[31] *Baas-boys* – Afrikaans term that could be directly translated to boss' boys (spies) referring to adult black males.
[32] *Indunas* is a title for African village headmen which was co-opted to refer to black employees overseeing other black employees in apartheid era workplaces (Von Holdt, 2003).

From an anti/decolonial perspective, one could argue that *transactional tokenism* practices in private sector organisations are indicative of how black managers are manipulated and exploited to maintain coloniality (particularly coloniality of the economy), which is unquestionably against black managers' best interests. Therefore, this study contends that the appointment of black managers into top management positions in organisations structured by coloniality is harmful to black managers, as their bodies and energies are manipulated and exploited to uphold coloniality. This view aligns with van Laer and Janssens' (2011) assertion that apparent empowerment behaviour could be disempowering to 'minoritized' employees. Furthermore, as it exists in corporate Namibia, this study posits that *transactional tokenism* is a context-specific mechanism through which power relations are formed and maintained through invisible coercive and manipulative means tied to a white implicit political agenda to uphold the coloniality of the economy.

Promotion Practices: Delay and Denial of Black Managers to Access Management Roles

- ### *High Promotion Criteria Imposed on Black Professionals*

The study data suggest that, compared to white counterparts, black middle and senior managers were held to more rigorous criteria for promotion to higher managerial roles. Besides stringent job performance requirements to be considered for promotion, the data indicate that black middle and senior managers required more years of experience to be considered for promotion. This requirement was justified based on 'age', as black middle managers were constantly told that they were still 'young' and not mature enough to take up senior or executive management roles. In contrast, white middle managers of the same age group were likely to be appointed to higher management roles, even with less experience, and they were offered on-the-job support. For instance, a study participant, Mahunga, shared an extreme case of a white employee who was appointed to a middle management position right after graduating from university*.*

One could argue that ageism and inflated requirements for work experience were forms of "aversive racism", described as "racism that allows for individuals to hold racist views while buttressing such views with non-racially based rationales (e.g.,

beliefs in opportunity and individual mobility), thus maintaining a view of themselves as nonprejudiced" (Deitch et al., 2003, p. 1301). This study shares the conclusions of studies that argue how aversive or subtle racial organisational processes—even when some practices may be perceived as benevolent (Romani et al., 2018)—acts to limit and delay marginalised employees' ascendancy to top management positions (Deitch et al., 2003; Knight et al., 2003; Mokoena, 2020; Romani et al., 2018; van Laer & Janssens, 2011). Furthermore, the denial of promotion on the grounds of immaturity is rooted in colonial and apartheid racial tropes of black people as inherently immature, forever childlike, and hence the appellations attached to labourers: 'tea girls' and 'garden boys' (Canham, 2019). The infantilisation of black managers further reveals how the 'coloniality of being' is reenforced by subtle racial stereotypes that function to mark black managers as perpetual minors, thus rendering them unsuitable for management positions (Canham, 2019; Myeza & April, 2021; Nkomo & Al Ariss, 2014). The exception to this is when they are assimilated into white power structures, where they are compelled to perform 'coolness' to make themselves 'palatable' to influential white managers (Canham, 2014; Dar, 2019).

- ***Racially Segregated Management Positions***

The data of this study indicate that managerial jobs were allocated according to race. For example, managerial positions within finance and IT management were reserved for white managers. Similarly, management jobs were also assigned according to the racial group they served. Black managers were likely to be appointed to departments or teams with large numbers of black employees or to head departments that served a predominantly black customer base. This finding echoes Ashcraft's (2013) conception of the 'glass slipper' – a phenomenon where systematic advantages and disadvantages mark some job positions as suitable for a specific social group based on racial or gender identities.

From an anti/decolonial standpoint, the apparent 'glass slipper' is underpinned by the coloniality of labour (Quijano, 2000). Quijano (2000; 2007) argues that the coloniality of labour is based on colonial racial hierarchies in which members of those who regard themselves as a 'superior' race occupy the high salaried positions, and the devalued racialised "Other" worked as slave labours. However, limki (2018) argues

that the fact that racialised "Others" now occupy high salaried roles does not discount the presence of coloniality.

Racially segregated management positions bear a striking resemblance to labour allocation practices during the colonial-apartheid eras. For instance, restrictions against black managers occupying senior finance and information technology (IT) management positions are rooted in racist mythologies that constructed blacks as 'barbarians', lacking intellectual prowess, and unable to understand complex economic or technological forces. It is not surprising that the finance and IT industries emerged as off-limit roles for black managers. As Ruggunun (2016) points out, apartheid proponents thought that "there was something innate about the black body that rendered it cognitively and physically different and thus not suited for all types of work and labour" (p. 109). Even where black males were placed in supervisory positions in mines and factories, their roles were limited to '*Indunas*' or '*Baas-Boys*', overseers of other black employees (von Holdt, 2003; Mokoena, 2020).

In sum, this study posits that the coloniality of labour that informs managerial job racial segregation, particularly in the Namibian private sector, retains remnants of colonial racist mythologies, such as apartheid labour segregation practices that relegated blacks to 'inferior' or manual job roles. Arguably, coloniality of labour/work maintained white domination and white economic interests by ring-fencing critical executive positions, such as executive finance management, for white managers. These white executives hoarded executive power and control over organisational finances—an essential economic power resource. Allowing black managers to assume control over critical resources could be perceived by the white executives' coalition as giving away power—which would conflict[33] with the coalition agenda.

- ***Access to Organisational Resources***

Data patterns in this study indicate that most participants had limited access to organisational support and informal development opportunities such as sponsorship, networking, mentoring, coaching and executive knowledge provided by white

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[33] Conflict "emerge when an actor, whether an individual or a group, perceives its interests as being harmed by another individual or group" (Mithani & O'Brien, 2021, p.173).

executives. Study participants reported that although they received formal development opportunities from formally appointed mentors (usually white mentors), these opportunities were not necessarily helpful or successful due to race and cultural differences and interpersonal and organisational racial biases and prejudices. Data patterns that emerged in the analysis of this study show that the unequal distribution of resources along racial lines was deliberate. Participants discussed how influential white executive managers controlled and used power to 'colonise' organisational resources to 'scaffold' white subordinate managers to top management levels. Arguably, the 'scaffolding' of white junior employees facilitates a political agenda which seeks to reserve benefits and privileges for white employees. Thus, the 'scaffolding' of subordinate white managers to top management positions reflects the practice of 'culture cloning', described by Essed and Goldberg (2002) as a process of racial exclusion based on "the systemic reproduction of white, masculine homogeneity in high-status positions" (p. 1068). 'Scaffolding' of white junior managers is arguably a 'cloning' exercise that sustains white dominance (Auster & Prasad, 2016).

Thus, this research aligns with studies that suggest that disempowered black and other 'minoritized' managers are likely to experience inequitable access to corporate resources, such as mentorship and network access, which in turn undermine their ascendancy to top management roles (Auster & Prasad, 2016; Wyatt & Silvester, 2015). Furthermore, this study supports arguments that the unequal distribution of organisational resources is usually politically motivated (Baker, 1978; Clegg et al., 2006; Bunderson & Reagans, 2011; Fleming & Spicer, 2014). As this study demonstrates, organisational resources were 'colonised' through a political agenda that facilitated the 'cloning' of white managers who will inherit and continue the '*managing to colonise*' project.

6.3.5. Rhetorical Ethics: Concealing Organisational Injustices/Colonial Violence

From their stories and perceptions shared, participants expressed that their organisations were deceptive or dishonest. These organisations enacted practices to hide immoral acts of colonial violence within the organisations by projecting an exterior identity that embraced moral and ethical standards. Organisations made moral and ethical claims reflected in their stated organisational core values and principles, such

as fairness, integrity, and equality, and proclaimed the same on corporate documents, posters, and websites. This incongruent behaviour could be described as what anticolonial scholar Marimba Ani (1994) calls: 'Rhetorical ethics'. Ani (1994) defines 'rhetorical ethics' as a set of deceptive and subtle practices "framed in terms of acceptable moral behaviour towards the 'Other', which is meant for a rhetorical purpose only. Its purpose is to disarm victims" (p. *xxv)*. Borrowing from Ani (1994), this study illustrates how contemporary Namibian private sector organisations performed rhetorical ethics to hide their (re)colonising tendencies attached to their implicit political agenda to maintain coloniality.

Arguably, 'rhetorical ethics' not only obscure workplace pathologies undergirded by coloniality, but it is also a mode through which workplace coloniality is reinforced and legitimised to continue inflicting harm on black managers. Since these organisational pathologies are habitually concealed, they are likely to be projected onto black managers who may internalise them as personal incompetence or inability, which must be corrected through training seminars and endless consumption of 'self-help' material in private spaces (Fleming & Spicer, 2003). As a result, colonial tropes of black incompetence are perpetuated to reinforce racial stereotypes that further exclude black professionals (Dar & Ibrahim, 2019; Nkomo & Al Ariss, 2014). Fanon (2008) reminds us that the pathologizing forces that inflict black bodies are not produced within themselves but are produced and circulated in the society and its institutions, a process he called *sociogenesis*. These organisational pathologies are likely to be internalised by the 'colonised' body, keeping the colonised body in constant self-conflict (Fanon, 2008). Through rhetorical ethics, private sector organisations perpetuate colonial psychological violence, colonising the minds and imaginations of black managers who still bear bleeding colonial wounds, thus enacting (re)colonisation and denying reparations and restitution.

In sum, this study cautions that, although organisations perform 'rhetorical ethics' gestures to avert criticism regarding their 'colonial' organisational practices that dehumanise and exploit black managers, critical scrutiny of these dishonest practices is encouraged. This study exposes their moral contradictions or what Dussel and Ibarra-Colado (2006) call an 'ethical vacuum'. And, instead of 'righting' their past and present 'wrongs', these organisations enacted rhetoric ethics to conceal colonial

violence, revealing their 'colonial amnesia' (April, 2021). Fanon (1967) warns that even "the appointment of 'reliable' [*tokenised blacks*] to execute gestures is a deceptive action that deceives no one" (p. 34, emphasis added). The African adage warns us: "dishonest words (actions) are food for rotten spirits". This proverb teaches us that dishonest actions (or enunciations) harm the perpetrator, as it corrupts their soul and leads to loss of integrity. Similarly, Césaire (2000) warns that colonisation dehumanises both the colonised and coloniser as it inflicts harm on the colonised, but at the same time erodes the 'soul' of the perpetrator, the coloniser.

6.3.6. Decolonial Options to Transform Repressive Organisational Cultures

As stated earlier, private sector organisations are fertile sites for enacting political struggle to dismantle coloniality entrenched in the workspace. To counter that coloniality and its invisible operations, anti-colonial and decolonial scholars have called for decolonisation or decoloniality. In the struggle to root out coloniality, Maldonado-Torres (2007) invites us to consider what he calls the 'decolonial turn', which he describes as "making visible the invisible and about analysing the mechanisms that produce such invisibility" (p. 262). Maldonado-Torres (2007) emphasises that the 'decolonial turn' should be led by those who bear the brunt of coloniality. In the Namibian context, a decolonial turn at the institutional and organisational levels would expose the continued racial injustice and pro-colonial violence perpetrated by private sector organisations. Nkomo (2011a) suggests that these interventions should include holding organisations accountable for failing to transform repressive organisation cultures. In particular, these interventions would entail demanding decolonial reparative justice (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). Thus, as stated earlier, this study calls for Namibian private sector organisations to be held accountable for past and present colonial injustices, which these organisations continue to perpetuate and benefit from with impunity. To this end, decolonial interventions should be facilitated by the State and local social or cultural organisations and movements in conjunction with international mobilisations.

Another possible 'decolonial turn' at the organisational level could include exposing private sector organisations to ethical and humanising management and organising practices (Dussel & Ibarra-Colado, 2006). As Armah (1984) teaches us,

"the guarantee of democratic economics and social organisation is not material abundance but human consciousness—intelligence working in tandem with integrity" (p. 55). However, these humanising managing practices or decolonial turn aspirations will only bear fruits of meaningful transformation if stirred through 'historical consciousness' as the first step towards decolonisation. In the Namibian context, historical consciousness entails organisations acknowledging their colonial history of participating and benefiting from slavery, genocide, apartheid, and the labours of enslaved people, including women and children (Olusoga & Erichsen, 2010; Sarkin, 2011). Acknowledging this history is a genuine part of restitution and reparation and acknowledging colonialism as part of their history will motivate organisations to 'right' their past and present wrongs by working with the victims (in a non-dominant way) towards reparations and healing. Crucially, part of healing and reparations requires that organisations vow to discontinue the denial of their colonial history (Cooke, 2003; Mollan, 2019; Muhr & Salem, 2013). This study iterates that organisations' acknowledgement of the past and present colonial violence, followed by atonement for colonial violence, should be the basis of decolonial reparative justice that can give birth to true equality and freedom for all (April, 2021; Muhr & Salem, 2013). To emphasise, private sector organisations should be held accountable by making atonement and reparations for past and present colonial violence they continue to reproduce, and for the benefits accrued from colonial crimes which they continue to accrue from ongoing coloniality (Tuck & Yang, 2012).

However, this study acknowledges that oppressive organisational cultures are organised by logics of coloniality that are historically entrenched within the private sector. Thus, transformative decolonisation of organisations should be a decisive process enacted alongside broad societal level decolonial processes to dismantle all forms of coloniality, including social, psychological, epistemic, spiritual and economic.

6.3.7. Summary of Organisational (Meso-Level) Factors Shaping Black Manager's Experiences in Accessing Top Management Positions

Findings of this study indicate that organisational structures, cultures, processes and practices are imbued with logics of coloniality that form an implicit pro-colonial regime at the organisational level, thus (re)producing racialised power asymmetries in the

organisations. The data of this study indicate that the coloniality regime was sustained and upheld at the organisational level through mechanisms and practices such as the formation of white coalitions, racially segregated management positions, racialised promotion practices, and tokenistic practices. These unethical and pathological practices and mechanisms, which are part of what the researcher has labelled 'managing to colonise', undermined the ascendancy of black managers to top management levels. Consequently, some ambitious participants submitted to the repressive organisational regime as a way to access top management positions and resources. As a result, black managers attained senior management roles at a cost that includes performing docility to racial oppression and sacrificing their dignity (Canham, 2014; Dar, 2019). This study suggests that (re)produced coloniality at the organisational level fostered a racially repressive pro-colonial regime tied to the societal and institutional level coloniality — maintained to secure white economic domination. For instance, participants suggested that the power yielded by white executive managers was exercised to 'colonise' organisation resources and those resources were deployed towards sustaining the pro-colonial regime, which provided material and symbolic benefits to white employees.

Lastly, this study found that organisations use deceptive and dishonest practices, what could be best described as 'rhetoric ethics' (Ani, 1994), to hide and sustain colonial organisational practices. These practices projected an external image of morality and ethical standards while continually perpetrating 'colonial' violence against black managers. This finding exposed organisational dishonesty, contractions and moral deficits.

This section recommends anticolonial and decolonial interventions to address colonial organisational practices that inflict harm on black managers.

6.4. Micro-level Factors Shaping Black Managers' Experiences in Accessing Top Management Positions in Namibian Private Sector Organisations

6.4.1. Introduction

This section discusses the findings from the data analysis to answer the third sub-research question: *What interpersonal and intergroup (micro-level) factors shape the experiences of black managers in accessing top management positions within Namibian private sector organisations?*

First, it is vital to acknowledge that individuals are inseparable from their social context (Liu, 2020). As this section will demonstrate, interpersonal and intergroup experiences in organisations are essentially socio-historically created inequalities that are filtered through and influenced by organisational culture and practices (Bapuji, 2015).

6.4.2. The Weight of the White Gaze

Data analysis in this study revealed how black managers at all management levels experienced stereotypes and prejudice that undermined their credibility as managers. Participants reported that these stereotypes manifested in their constant monitoring or surveillance by white peers and white 'bosses'. The majority of participants reported experiencing the 'monitoring eye' of white superiors and peers who constantly sought to find under-performance, mistakes, and errors to confirm their alleged black incompetence. Any performance issues legitimised downgrading from their current roles and prohibited future promotions.

MOS scholars have pointed out that surveillance is a mechanism of domination in organisations (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Wasserman & Frenkel, 2019). In this study, surveillance of black managers reflects continuities in the colonial and apartheid patterns of domination fixated on controlling, disciplining and punishing black bodies (Ruggunan, 2016; Canham, 2019). Canham (2019) reminds us that the historical infantilisation of black bodies justified white paternalistic control and discipline. Moreover, the constant surveillance by white colleagues was experienced as akin to

the white gaze[34], described by Fanon (1967) as the crushing weight of colonialism. From an anti/decolonial standpoint, the power inherent in the white gaze is coloniality of power; it objectifies the black subject as morally defective, inferior sub-humans, thus imposing 'coloniality of being' on the black subject (Maldonado-Torres, 2007). In the organisational context, the white gaze is arguably enforced by institutional and societal entrenched coloniality – in that it seeks to govern, control and 'shrink' black managers to make their bodies sites for white domination. As Sithole (2016) notes, to gaze is to exercise power over the black subject.

The following sections discuss the consequences of the white gaze experienced by black managers in the private sector.

Consequences of the White Gaze

- ### *Constant Pressure to Prove Oneself*

Most study participants reported that awareness of their subjection to the white gaze led them to assert their credibility by resorting to increased work performance (increased efforts and hours) and raising their intellectual capital, such as getting advanced academic and professional qualifications. These efforts to conform to the white gaze demonstrated what Glass and Cook (2020) termed 'performative contortion', which they described as extra labour performed by black employees to receive the approval of influential white managers in hopes of accessing better opportunities. This additional performative labour could undermine authenticity and the well-being of the performer (Deitch et al., 2003; Glass & Cook, 2020; Liu, 2017b).

Some black managers felt the need to increase their credibility, not just for themselves, but to dispel the myth of black people as incapable of higher thought and action. This pressure to account for oneself and one's entire race echoes Fanon's (2008) conception of the 'epidermal racial schema'[35], which holds black bodies

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[34] For Fanon (2008), the white gaze is colonising, and he describes the gaze as the crushing weight of colonialism. Yancy (2008) describes the white gaze as possessing power, which is drawn from whiteness. Thus, to gaze is to exercise power over the black subject (Sithole, 2016).

[35] Fanon (2008) figuratively describes the 'epidermal racial schema' as mythology constructed by whiteness, whose effects he describes as: "… made me responsible at the same time for my body, for my race, for my ancestors" (p. 92).

accountable for their whole race. Similarly, Nkomo and Al Ariss (2014) point out that, in the US organisational context, at least, white employees are usually viewed as '*raceless*'. In contrast, black employees are made accountable for their entire race group.

An anti/decolonial perspective shows how the white gaze imposed colonial violence on black bodies through 'historico-racial' and 'epidermal racial' schemas—mythologies created by whiteness to sustain colonial difference functioned to devalue or disregard black managers' professional knowledge, skills and qualifications. Study participants felt compelled to secure the approval of white managers by performing to coloniality of power. This echoes Fanon's (2008) statement that: "There is a fact: whites consider themselves superior to black men [human]. There is another fact: Black men want to prove to white men, at all costs, the richness of their thought, the equal value of their intellect" (p. 10). However, this study's research findings showed that performative efforts to appease white scrutiny left the white gaze unappeased since it is anchored in the unrelenting coloniality of power.

- ***Nervous Condition Induced by the White Gaze: "Always Looking Over My Shoulder"***

The data of this study demonstrate that the white gaze imposed everyday demands on black managers that were stringent and relentless and induced anxieties and extreme pressure to perform. These anxieties manifested as self-monitoring and hypervigilance under the watchful white gaze (Ahmed, 2007a; Song, 2017). For example, a participant said, Tawana: "I always have to look over my shoulder". This constant self-monitoring, hypervigilance, and fixation on their job performance are detrimental to the actual job performance. The efforts spent affirming credibility reduced the resources needed to successfully fulfil their roles (Kenny & Briner, 2010).

Anticolonial scholar and psychiatrist Frances Cress Welsing (1991) suggested that the objectifying effect of the white gaze on black people is tied to the systematic process of *inferiorization*[36]. Drawing on Fanon, Cress Welsing (1991) describes

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[36] Cress Welsing (1991) defines *Inferiorization* as "the conscious, deliberate and systematic process utilised specifically by a white supremacy social system to mould [black people and other people of colour] within that system into 'functional inferiors' "(p. 241).

inferiorization as a process that keeps the oppressed in a state where they are effectively immobilised to challenge the system. Borrowing Cress Welsing's (1991) conception of *inferiorization*, one could argue that the white gaze fixed on black managers functions to locate black managers in positions where they feel unable to challenge their racial oppression, thus leaving intact coloniality and white supremacy in the workplace.

This viewpoint resonates with MOS scholarship on workplace incivility, which suggests that racial and other forms of incivility, such as gender and religion, are historic socio-economic mechanisms through which dominant social group members (white managers) assert their status, boost personal and collective self-esteem, and protect their privilege access to resources and opportunities (Cortina, 2008; Daniels & Thornton, 2019; Smith et al., 2020; Soylu & Sheehy-Skeffington, 2015).

In sum, this study proposes that racial oppression, mediated by the white gaze fixed upon black managers, is rooted in, enforced by, and embedded within organisations, filtered through from the societal and institutional levels. This view resonates with studies that argue that workplace racial incivility is socio-historically created and not necessarily rooted in individual behaviour, even though it manifests and is experienced at the interpersonal or intergroup level (April & Syed, 2020; Cortina, 2008; Motsei & Nkomo, 2016). Therefore, I argue that attempts by black managers to subvert the white gaze at the interpersonal or intergroup level through intensified personal efforts, such as improving job performance, are likely to be unproductive without decolonising and dismantling the 'colonial' power structure that enforces that white gaze. This is because, in my view, coloniality is akin to a monster or ogre in African folklore; the monster has an insatiable appetite, regardless of how much black bodies give their blood, sweat, tears and semen in sacrifice to the ogre (coloniality), it will still demand more. In African folklore, the solution to this problem was for people threatened by this ogre to find a way to devour it.

- ***Black-on-Black Colonial Violence Produced by the White Gaze***

The data of this study further suggests that black managers reporting to black superiors experienced added performance pressure from black senior or executive managers. They explained their belief that senior black managers were also subjected

to the same pressure or fear of the white gaze. This finding suggests hidden ways in which coloniality inherent in the white gaze may operate within racialised organisations to colonise black bodies through other black bodies. Here, this study indicates that coloniality does not require white bodies to be enacted; it can be internalised and transmitted through black bodies and thus retain white dominance in the organisation and broader society.

Thus, this study suggests that as a colonising tool, the white gaze could be internalised by some black executive managers, who in turn enact the gaze on subordinate black managers in service of the white power structure. Furthermore, this points to a hidden mechanism through which coloniality (as a pattern of colonial power) works through black bodies – by coercing black managers to uphold and reproduce white dominance. However, the organisational white power structure that black bodies participate in its maintenance act limits black bodies' ascendancy to top management roles. This finding resonates with studies that suggest the malleability of white supremacy or whiteness and how it may function through hidden power mechanisms to reproduce white organisational dominance (Cox Jr & Nkomo, 1990; Al Ariss et al., 2014; Nkomo & Al Ariss, 2014).

6.4.3. Workplace Professional Relationships and Interactions

Positive professional relationships are critical for employees to ascend to management levels, leading to improved job satisfaction and workplace well-being (Colbert et al., 2016). However, study data reflect less positive workplace relationships and interactions between black managers and their white counterparts. The following section delves into the peculiarities of the workplace coloniality regime as they shape professional relationships between black managers and their white counterparts (subordinates, peers and hierarchal superiors).

Relationship with White Subordinates
Study data suggests that black managers' relationships with their white subordinates (mainly younger) were generally tense and marked by avoidance and resistance. According to study participants, white subordinates resisted and avoided accepting

black authoritarian figures and preferred to develop proximity to white senior and executive managers instead. This finding echo Biko (2004) when he noted that "a white child… he is brought up within white schools, institutions, and the whole process of racism somehow greets him at various levels, and he attempts to have an attitude against blacks…" (p. 149). Thus, following Biko, I would argue that 'white' resistance to black managers' authority can be perceived as grounded in whites' socialisation in a society where social relations and race roles are rigidly defined by colonial difference. As noted earlier in this chapter, historically, white subordinate resistance to black managers' authority is also traceable to colonial-era workplaces and domestic settings in Namibia. For instance, during apartheid, adult black domestic and farm workers were ordered to respect and refer to young/children in the white family as *Klein Baas*[37] (Sylvain, 2001). Colonial history enforces colonial difference (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018), ascribing black managers with lower social status than their white subordinates, affecting the relations between black managers and their white subordinates. As Magee and Galinsky (2008) point out, a person may be ascribed a higher status than someone holding formal power in specific contexts. As a result, white subordinates may experience reporting to a black manager as anomalous and may respond by disregarding black managers' authority.

Furthermore, study data reveal that amidst resistance from white subordinates, black managers expended additional labour and effort compromising to improve poor manager-subordinate relationships. Glass and Cook (2020) argued that black managers enacted 'performative contortion', which entailed exerting additional labour to secure acceptance as credible managers; this also represented a way to protect their credibility. More crucially, this current study suggests that the low quality of black manager-white subordinate relationships reflected poorly on the management capabilities of black managers and reinforced racial stereotypes that functioned to discredit or deny the promotion/advancement of the black manager.

Relationships with Same Status White Peers

The data of this study demonstrate that black managers' relationships with their white peers (on the same job level) were generally less favourable, which participants

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[37] *Klein Baas* is an Afrikaans term which could be directly translated to "Small Boss" (Sylvain, 2001).

attributed to racial stereotypes, prejudices, unhealthy competition and intimidation, which reflected the urge for domination from their white peers. Black managers were treated as inferiors or subordinates by their white peers at the same management levels. Participants explained that this condescending behaviour manifested in formal and informal interactions and communications. Furthermore, study participants attributed the socialisation of whites as socially superior members of society as the underlying reason for their white intimidation and condescension.

Ulus (2015) argued that the desire to control the same status racial "Other" is driven by anxiety in the perpetrator. Adopting Ulus's (2015) reasoning, it is plausible that the desire to dominate black peers could be caused by white managerial anxiety that black peers might take white managers' high salaried management positions. As Liu (2020) cynically points out, "white supremacy has taught us to be suspicious of black people, as their actions are always for shoring up power for personal gain" (p. 105).

Viewed through an anti/decolonial lens, this implies that coloniality informed the colonial power difference, as Mignolo and Walsh (2018) put it, between black managers and their white peers. Similarly, talking about black-white relationships, Biko (2004) stated that: "In all aspects of the black-white relationships, now and in the past, we see a constant tendency by whites to depict blacks as of an inferior status" (p. 102). As described earlier, colonial difference facilitates coloniality of being, function to cast black bodies in the 'zone of non-being'. In the zone of non-being, a person's rights and humanity are denied (Grosfoguel, 2016). Likewise, Lowe (2008) describes the tendency of whites to treat blacks as subordinates or objects as a manifestation of 'colonial object relations'. Lowe (2008) defines 'colonial object relations' as inherited from the psychological legacy of colonisation and slavery that places blacks under the white gaze as objects of white domination. For example, object relations can be traced in the configuration of black adults as perpetual children (Canham, 2019). This study demonstrates how tense relations between black managers and their white peers at the interpersonal level emerged from power asymmetries defined by colonial difference, anchored in coloniality entrenched at organisational, institutional and societal levels.

Relationships with White Hierarchical Superiors

Among the study participants, most black managers—particularly those at middle and senior management levels—had limited access to white executives compared to their white peers and experienced poor-quality relationships with white superiors. This study aligns with Wyatt and Silvester's (2015) and Thomas's (2001) studies, which similarly reported that in the UK and US contexts, respectively, low-quality relationships between black professionals and white executive managers created a schism that limited black professionals' access to influential white mentors or sponsors, who could help them advance to executive management levels with ease. This current study further demonstrates, as similarly illustrated by Wyatt and Silver (2015) and Thomas (2001), that limited support and development opportunities tied to access to essential sponsorships opportunities (e.g., mentoring, knowledge, coaching, networking) are necessary for professional upward mobility were limited for black managers in the private sector. This study also suggests that an implicit strategy limited black managers' access to developmental resources, while resources were channelled to "scaffolding" white managers to top management positions.

Concluding Remarks on Intergroup/Interracial Professional Relationships

This study demonstrates how racialised social distancing rooted in colonial, and apartheid segregationist policies persist in structuring black-white relations and interactions in Namibian private sector organisations. According to Mbembe (2017), "the fierce colonial desire to divide and classify, to create hierarchies and produce difference, leaves behind wounds and scars. Worse, it created a fault line that lives on" (p. 7). Mbembe further asks: "Is it possible today to create a relationship with a black man that is something other than that between a master and valet? (2017, p.7). Across all intergroup interactions, this study suggests that the "fault line that lives on" articulated by Mbembe (2017) is the coloniality of power. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013b, p. 18) insists that coloniality of power is "one of the main levers of colonial modernity and has continued to sustain the notions of the inferior-superior motif in the intersubjective relations of whites and blacks".

This research supports other scholarship that suggests that relationships are essential for ascending to top management positions (Colbert et al., 2016). My research indicates that power asymmetries informed by colonial difference lead to less

positive, less meaningful and less trusting interracial or intergroup professional relationships between black managers and their white counterparts on different organisational hierarchal levels (subordinates, peers, and superiors). More strikingly, the data from this study suggest that the poor quality of black-white interracial workplace interactions and relations threatened black managers' managerial authority, capabilities, and perceived competencies as subordinate whites resisted. Workplace relationships between black and white managers were marked by intimidation and incivility as whites pushed back and undermined mutual trust and respect. These findings are consistent with other studies that have argued that colonial power differences reproduced in organisations corrupt interpersonal cross-racial relationships by undermining mutual trust and respect (Canham, 2019; limki, 2018; Ulus, 2015).

6.4.4. Relationships with White Customers and White Business Partners

Another theme from this study concerned several reported cases by participants who said they had experienced racial discrimination, prejudice, and mistreatment from white clients and business partners outside their organisations. Study participants reported experiences of white clients/business partners not wanting to recognise them or engage them as managers. Therefore, one could argue that 'historico-racial' and 'racial epidermal' schemas imposed by the white gaze on black managers happen both within and outside the workplace. Following Fanon (1967), Ahmed (2007) argues that bodies are inscribed with histories, which surface on their skin. This study has illuminated how racial historical myths and stereotypes surface on the skin of black managers in their encounters with white clients and business partners, who view black managers with colonial scepticism.

Research participants have illuminated how the entrenched coloniality structure in Namibian society and its associated ideologies and persistent mythologies condemned black 'colonial' subjects to "social death", rendering black subjects socially undesirable (Patterson, 1982). Thus, through the anticolonial/decolonial lens, social death can be perceived as an outcome of coloniality of being, which positions black subjects at the base of social hierarchies and diminishes their capabilities in the eyes of white clients and white business partners. Coloniality is imposed on black

managers, denying their full humanity, both inside and outside their workplaces (Jack & Westwood, 2011; Jammulamadaka et al., 2021; Liu, 2017a). Discrimination from white clients/business partners adds to the daily struggle of black managers, who come under the white gaze in their workplaces; constant surveillance exacerbates harm to black managers' sense of well-being and job performance, ultimately affecting their ascendancy to top management positions.

At the time of writing, there was virtually no research in MOS that paid attention to the relationship between black managers or marginalised employees and white business partners or white clients and the possible impact of these external relations on black managers or managers from marginalised groups.

6.4.5. Relationships Between Black Executive Managers and Black Subordinate Managers

Evidence from my data analysis pointed to how the prevalent powerlessness or limited power among black executives limited their ability to sponsor and support lower-level black managers to reach the executive management level. Black executives were less likely to use informal organisational procedures to help more junior black managers ascend to executive management levels. On the contrary, their white counterparts mobilised resources through informal processes to 'scaffold' white junior managers.

This study has demonstrated how black executive managers' workplace powerlessness limited the support they could provide to lower-level managers. In addition, the hidden and invisible workings of coloniality acted to limit black executive managers' decision-making power, e.g. making an appointment to executive levels.

This study shares the view of Dar and Ibrahim (2019), who argued that the black body is "an affective body within a libidinal economy where its sense and sense-making are reconfigured and potentially manipulated through white power" (pp. 1244-45). Taking an anti/decolonial position demands critically interrogating discourses of 'blacks-not-supporting-blacks' in white-dominated organisations, manifested as the 'crab in a barrel syndrome' (Miller, 2019). Such discourse is victim-blaming and hides the coloniality of power behind the marginalisation of black professionals. Biko (2004) described this victim-blaming as "a soporific to the blacks while salvaging the

consciences of the guilt-stricken white" (p. 70). As Dar et al. (2020) remind us, "we exist in societies that obscure the facts of white violence" (p. 4). This study, therefore, avoids victim-blaming and instead scrutinises the coloniality of power embedded within organisational structures that prevent black executive managers from supporting black subordinate managers' advance to executive management levels.

6.4.6. Psychological and Emotional Well-being Consequences of the Everyday Struggle with Coloniality

Psychological Consequences
The data of this study suggest that black managers at all management levels experienced threats to their psychological and emotional well-being because of daily encounters with colonial racism and white supremacy. Participants' psychological threats were experienced in terms of stress, depression, anger, and emotional labour, against which study participants seemed to have few outlets for their pent-up emotions. Several disclosed that their job performance and competence were threatened, and their opportunities for promotion or mobility were limited.

Participants' experiences support studies showing how colonial violence expressed as racially discriminatory and oppressive practices affects black employees' welfare, work performance, esteem, and health (Alleyne, 2004, 2005; Deitch et al., 2003; Kenny & Briner, 2010). Moreover, as stated earlier, this study cautions that colonial violence endured by black managers could extend beyond their job into their social and family lives. Thus, this study iterates that contemporary private sector organisations not only deepen social inequalities but, with impunity, play direct or indirect roles in worsening black people's colonially fragmented social lives.

Confidence, Silence, and Self-Alienation
Another concern that emerged from the study's data was the issue of self-confidence among black managers at all management levels. Several participants indicated that disempowerment and alienation made them less likely to take initiatives or risks in their roles because they did not anticipate support from white superiors and white peers. Moreover, several black managers reported that their voices were not often listened to or their opinions dismissed in meetings or official engagements.

Several middle and senior managers were discouraged from initiating or contributing to specific tasks since their views were often disregarded. Moreover, resonating with Myeza and April (2021), this research indicates that study participants became less assertive, which led to self-alienation.

Akin to self-alienation is akin to what Cress Welsing (1991) described as *inferiorization* noted earlier. Self-alienation may also result from self-depreciation, which Paulo Freire (2017) describes as a common characteristic of the oppressed, entails the "internalisation of the opinion of the oppressor hold of them." (p. 37). This 'self-depreciation', as Freire explains, derives from being repeatedly told that minorities are "good for nothing, know nothing and incapable of learning anything" to the point whereby the oppressed become "convinced of their unfitness" (Freire, 2017, p. 37). Arguably, in organisation settings, disempowered black managers may tend to 'shrink' themselves or self-alienate as a result of self-depreciation or *inferiorization*, subsequently maintaining white hegemony, as white managers seize the opportunity to assert their superiority over black managers who are forced to 'shrink' themselves.

Thus, this study is in alignment with scholars who have asserted that coloniality (re)creates workplace power asymmetry that manufactures colonial and psychological violence on black managers, fostering self-alienation, lack of assertiveness or docility, which re-centres white supremacy and white privilege in the organisation (Nkomo & Al Ariss, 2014; Liu, 2017a; Liu et al., 2021).

6.4.7. Agency, Coping Mechanisms, Resistance and Emancipation Praxis

As highlighted earlier in this chapter, data indicated that socio-economic inequalities are created and recreated by the 'coloniality of economy' (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018), which consolidates and facilitates economic power into white hands and disempower the majority of blacks. In the organisational setting, coloniality of the economy undermines the agency of economically dispossessed black managers. They consequently submit to oppression as a coping/survival mechanism or as a way for them to earn access to promotions and organisational resources.

The data further highlighted how black managers who chose docility over resistance nevertheless saw themselves as change agents, believing that enduring oppression was a sacrifice they made in expectations of future organisational change. They thought that their sacrifices might increase the number of black bodies at the executive management levels in the future. Participants also believed that their visibility at the executive management level would inspire black employees in the lower ranks to work toward reaching the senior management level. This sacrifice could be commendable, for it shows the sacrifices that black managers make for the sustenance of their families and to create opportunities for other black professionals. However, this study contends that sacrifices that entail victims adapting or compromising to the workplace coloniality serve to entrench coloniality. Sacrifice and docility are unlikely to change the status quo (Barros, 2010). Still, they may essentially threaten black managers' well-being and their communities, as Biko (1978) warned of the potential socio-psychological risks, particularly for black males who opt for docility in the face of racial oppression. Biko worried that an oppressed docile black man "looks with awe at the white power structure and accepts what he regards as the inevitable position. Deep inside him, his anger mounts at the accumulating insult, but he vents it in the wrong direction – on his fellow black man in the township ..." (Biko, 1978, p. 30–31). Fanon (1968) similarly alerted us to how colonised black people could turn the colonial violence enacted against them onto their families and neighbours. Thus, following Biko and Fanon's logic, the current study reiterates the possible far-reaching socio-psychological consequences that docility or non-resistance to colonial violence could have on black managers, their families and communities. Myeza and April (2021) showed how black professionals in South African organisations displayed signs of deep pain and rage inherent in apartheid violence and cautioned that enduring workplace racial domination could trigger the intergenerational colonial trauma that black managers likely carried in their bodies.

Coping and Compliance Mechanisms: Racial Oppression as an Enabler?

Surprisingly, data analysis indicates that a few black managers came to view their racial oppression as an enabler, believing that oppression or the white gaze motivated them to work harder, which led to them improving their job skills. These problematic perceptions should be viewed in Namibia's historical and socio-political context, where generations of black people had to survive under colonialism. As Maldonado-Torres

(2007) notes, the racialised 'Other' often use language "shaped by [the] understanding of the world as a battlefield in which they are permanently vanquished" (p. 249). Invoking Fanon, Song (2017) argues that black and other people of colour may come to accept the invincibility of whiteness – such as the belief that nothing can be done to change the oppressive racial system. Acceding to its control suggests the manifestation of internalised inferiority, reinforces the status quo and negates emancipatory or decolonisation efforts. Similarly, anticolonial scholar and psychologist Amos Wilson (2014) contends that the pervasive inability of black people to oppose white oppression is a 'self-defeat'[38] behaviour that serves to maintain white supremacy.

Taking an anti/decolonial approach enables one to propose that internalised inferiority reflected in the reluctance to oppose oppression could be a legacy of fear evoked during the colonial-apartheid era (Fanon, 1967; Biko, 1978; Césaire, 2000). Césaire (2000) described this colonial fear when he declared: "I am talking of millions of men in whom fear has been cunningly instilled, who have been taught to have an inferiority complex, to tremble, kneel, despair, and behave like flunkeys (servants)" (p. 43). To this end, this study posits that viewing racial oppression as an enabler is problematic as it could deny black managers the need to claim agency, thus further embedding coloniality. Moreover, as observed earlier, coloniality is persistent in the messages of inferiority it transmits to black managers. With no agency, the possibility of decolonising/dismantling coloniality is unlikely to be achieved (Song, 2017. Therefore, black managers who resort to working harder and long hours under the illusory sense that their adversity is beneficial – that it improves their skills and competence are at risk of having their work-life balance (Ozbilgin et al., 2011), psychological and emotional well-being threatened (Alleyne, 2004, 2005; Wilson, 2014).

Although non-resistance to oppression could be understood as a survival mechanism for black managers, this study recommends that such mechanisms should

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[38] Amos Wilson (2014) points out that, under white domination, black 'self-defeat' behaviour is usually labelled as 'normal' behaviour characterised by "habitual thought patterns and behavioural tendencies which render them pliable to white authoritarian/authoritative social control with minimal resistance; which induce blacks to accept their subordinate status as natural, perhaps actually to misperceive their oppression as freedom"(p. 102).

not be encouraged, for non-resistance may have far-reaching visible and invisible psychological effects (Alleyne, 2004, 2005; Wilson, 2014). Furthermore, non-resistance strategies are likely to reinforce coloniality and white supremacy (Dar, 2019; Liu et al., 2021; Wilson, 2014). The question to then ask is: what should be done to help black managers oppressed by coloniality in the Namibian private sector? The next segment offers a recommendation grounded in anticolonial and decolonial thought.

6.4.8. Resisting Coloniality: Anticolonial and Decolonial Agency

The data derived from the research study indicates that not all black managers passively accepted racial oppression and domination; some engaged in resisting coloniality in their ways. For example, one-third of study participants, mainly from middle and senior management levels, enacted micro-emancipation strategies in different registers that included challenging and speaking against the racial status quo and speaking to other black employees to raise their awareness of workplace racial injustices.

This finding is not surprising because Africans and African diasporic people have always resisted colonisation. For example, the struggles for independence of African states, the Mau Mau rebellion, and the Haitian revolution are historical evidence of resistance to colonisation.

Participants reported that managers who resisted colonial violence were labelled as "troublemakers" and targeted for punishment. The sacrifices these few participants made and the cost of enacting resistance against workplace domination and oppression often cost them their livelihoods (Alvesson & Willmott, 1992). However, as Fleming and Spicer (2008) point out, power cannot exist without resistance in organisational settings. Likewise, Chowdhury (2019) argues that marginalised groups are not naïve and are bound to resist oppression. The data reflects that participants who sought to fight workplace racial injustices were perceived as threats and were further marginalised and punished for resisting oppression. This finding echoes Fanon's (1967) assertion that the colonised who resist the white gaze "finds himself to be a target, looked at, and judged" (p. 36). Historically, the coloniser

justified the mass murder of Africans who resisted colonisation. A case in point is Namibia's genocide victims who dared defend their land and property from German settler dispossession, which prompted colonialists to ratify mass murder and forced Namibians into concentration camps to discipline the colonised.

A question then arises, how can oppressed black managers in Namibian private sector organisations be supported in their everyday struggle against the dehumanising effects of coloniality and white supremacy? The following section addresses this question.

6.4.9. Anticolonial and Decolonial Emancipation Possibilities: Invoking Black Consciousness as Praxis

This research has demonstrated that, although resisted by a minority of black managers, the oppression of black managers in institutions and organisations deprived most study participants of control over their well-being and lifestyle. Chowdhury (2019) aptly states that white supremacy deprives black people such that "their daily lives and freedoms of expression are affected adversely" (p. 289). This study has shown how oppression is rooted in colonial continuities (coloniality of power). Since this study has shown private sector organisations to be a historically white-dominated space enabled by traditions of colonial violence against black bodies. This renders private sector organisations perfect sites for a political struggle for oppressed black professionals to enact personal and collective emancipation. To counter the colonial oppression of black people during apartheid, revolutionary leader Biko (2004) made a clarion call for Black Consciousness[39] as an emancipatory tool essential to free blacks from the violence of the apartheid regime and reclaim their humanity. Similar to other African anticolonial scholars and activists, Biko (2004) understood rescuing and healing the African psyche from the clutches of colonialism to be the first step towards decolonisation. For Biko (2004), critical consciousness is

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[39] According to Biko, Black Consciousness expresses group pride and the determination by the blacks to rise and attain the envisaged self […]. At the heart of this kind of thinking is the realisation by the blacks that the most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed (2004, pp. 101-102).

essential for self-determination—the freedom goal that Black Consciousness advocates, as reflected in his statement:

> Black consciousness seeks to show the black people the value of their own standards and outlook. It urges black people to judge themselves according to these standards and not be fooled by white society, who have whitewashed themselves and made white standards the yardstick by which even black people judge each other (2004, p. 33).

Similarly, Paulo Freire (2017) called for *Conscientisation*[40] or critical consciousness as a crucial step toward the emancipation of the oppressed.

Mignolo and Walsh (2018) view self-determination as a decoloniality[41] praxis that offers an opportunity for ethical and anti-oppressive collective solidarity among people struggling against coloniality to reclaim their voices and humanity and build an alternative world. As stated in Chapter 3, several contemporary African anticolonial scholars maintain that Black Consciousness remains relevant in post-independence South Africa, and I would include Namibia. Black consciousness is necessary for forging solidarity among the economically oppressed black majority. It is a political framework to dismantle colonial-apartheid continuities and white supremacy, thus enabling oppressed black people to thrive and not just survive (Maart, 2014b; More, 2012). In support of Black Consciousness as imperative for self-determination, Sithole (2016) argues that "the black subject exists in exclusionary structures of reality, which renders the existence of such a subject as a non-existence… the black subject must wage his or her own struggle and refrain from being controlled by the liberal ethos, and also to think in terms of politics outside the imagination of the white liberal register" (p. 27).

Fanon (1967, p. 105) reminds us that "it is the colonial peoples who must liberate themselves from colonialist domination". This study situates Black

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[40] Paulo Freire (2017) define *Conscientisation* as the cultivation of critical awareness among the oppressed to their oppressive situation, and then helping them to take action to change their situation.
[41] Decoloniality is the countering of persistent colonial power structures with the realisation that the achieved normative political liberation without economic, cultural, epistemic and spiritual liberation is an unfinished project (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013b). Mignolo and Walsh (2018) see decoloniality as "a way, option, standpoint, analytic, project, practice, and praxis" (p. 5).

Consciousness as a rational, ethical and anti-oppressive decoloniality praxis that supports black managers in the Namibian private sector in their struggles to subvert the persistent violent and dehumanising colonial white gaze. Moreover, the recommendation of consciousness-raising among oppressed black managers is aligned to MOS scholar Barros's (2010) view of individuals "as having the potential to be conscious agents able to reflect on and understand their reality, as influenced by shared meanings and values acquired through interaction within a shared culture that may also hold contradictory values" (p. 170). Consciousness-raising aligns with what Bell and Nkomo (2001) refer to as "armouring", which they cite as a resistance strategy for equipping black women struggling with racism in corporate America to enhance their perception of their dignity, self-worth, and sense of beauty in the environment that repeatedly signal messages that devalues them. To this end, this study recommends that consciousness-raising rooted in Black Consciousness should entail politically 'weaponizing' black managers—alerting and sensitising them to connect their everyday workplace racism experiences to the historical and political underpinnings of coloniality of power. This is necessary to instil individuals with power and agency to facilitate their challenge to oppression at interpersonal and organisation levels (McCarthy & Moon, 2018).

Paulo Freire (2017) reminds us that emancipation "is acquired by conquest, not by gift" (p. 21). Despite the risks associated with emancipatory efforts, such as increased oppression, this study recommends that black managers be "armoured" with the courage to facilitate emancipatory dialogue to raise critical awareness among black employees (Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Raelin, 2012). This emancipatory exercise can inspire collective action[42] to change oppressive conditions at the interpersonal level in an ethical and anti-oppressive fashion (Chowdhury, 2019; Zanoni & Janssens, 2007). However, some management scholars have argued that without changing the organisational, social and ideological structures in which oppression is rooted, individual or micro-level emancipatory efforts will be limited in their effectiveness (cf. Canham, 2019; Huault et al., 2012). Conversely, these micro-emancipatory efforts may still be necessary first steps towards emancipation (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002;

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[42] However, Raelin (2012) cautions that engagement in emancipatory dialogue must be done in a non-imposing way that does not elicit another form of colonisation on the already colonised subjects.

Chowdhury, 2019) as they set the stage for the "demand of radical transformation of not only the workplace but also society more generally" (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992, pp. 435–8).

In sum, this study's proposal for Black Consciousness as a viable decolonial praxis against racial oppression represents a contribution to an emerging stream of theorising in MOS that calls for consciousness-raising of organisation and society members, both the oppressed and oppressors, as a way to resist oppression and realise liberation or emancipation possibilities (cf. Auger et al., 2018; Chowdhury, 2019; McCarthy & Moon, 2018; Mirvis, 2008). Another stream of MOS scholarship on emancipation has noted the benefits of individual and collective liberation, such as increased authenticity, self-realisation, and autonomy (Alvesson & Willmott, 1992; Barros, 2010). However, except for a few, such as Chowdhury (2019), MOS scholars have thus far overlooked the need to theorise or propose emancipatory options for racialised and marginalised employees in organisations. This absence could be attributed to what Hudson et al. (2015) refer to as 'taboo' topics—those topics considered off-limits in MOS research. To fill this gap in the literature on consciousness-raising in MOS and to overcome the taboo, this study echoes Biko's call for Black Consciousness from an anti/decolonial standpoint to open up new streams of theorising on emancipation or consciousness-raising for the oppressed organisation members, particularly those struggling with anti-black racism in organisations and society.

6.4.10. Summary of Micro-Level Factors Shaping Black Managers' Experiences in Accessing Top Management Positions

This study suggests that the white gaze mainly mediated black managers' interpersonal and cross-racial intragroup experiences. Furthermore, the study concludes that the white gaze imposed what decolonial theorists call the 'coloniality of being' on black managers, devaluing their perceived competence and capacities and undermining their credibility as managers. To protect themselves from the white gaze, most black managers exerted immense pressure to prove their credibility and that of their race—an incessant everyday reality of coloniality that threatened their psychological and emotional well-being. Furthermore, the white gaze functions as a

disciplining mechanism to configure black managers as docile, 'palatable' and governable subjects of no threat to the coloniality of power structure (Canham, 2014; Dar, 2019). As a result, docile black managers were rewarded with some access to promotions and organisation resources. Thus, black managers were compelled to contort themselves into the white power structure and scarify their dignity as a survival strategy and means to access top management positions.

This study illuminates the entrenchment of the logic of coloniality in organisations and society to the extent that occupying a management position (regardless of management or salary level) did not cushion black managers from the violence of the white gaze. As discussed earlier, at an interpersonal level, coloniality was expressed through the white gaze that viewed black managers through an 'historico-racial' schema—historically created racial mythology inscribed on allegedly inferior and backward black bodies. These myths justified beliefs about black managers' poor managerial skills, insufficient professional knowledge, and lack of qualifications, thus rendering them non-credible managers. Consequently, this research illustrates how the white gaze—charged by coloniality, structured cross-racial workplace relationships characterised by domination, subordination, and lack of trust. These ambivalent antagonist cross-racial workplace relationships worked against the best interests of black managers, who already hold low social status and power, furthering their marginalisation.

In accord with Canham (2014), Dar (2019), and Glass and Cook (2020), this study similarly demonstrated how black managers were forced to conform to the coloniality of power structure in their workplaces to attain proximity to influential white executives who held power to facilitate their promotion or professional advancement. By extension, the 'performative contortion' (Glass & Cook, 2020) black managers performed entailed non-resistance or tolerant acceptance of racial oppression. One could argue that their non-resistance or docility represents an 'unspoken' criterion on which they were evaluated for rewards or wages of whiteness—such as promotion to management positions where they likely retain powerless status.

However, this study found that not all black managers submitted to the coloniality regime; some resisted it by performing a range of micro-emancipatory acts

that involved speaking out against the status quo. Even with limited power, some black managers refused to submit to racial domination passively. This finding echoes the historical African and diasporic African spirit of resistance against colonialism, such as those manifested in slave revolts and apartheid resistance uprisings. Sadly, those few black managers who resisted racial domination were further subjected to marginalisation as punishment, thus inhibiting their ascendancy to the C-suite. I argue that this form of punishment is akin to 'disciplining the coloniser', which resonates with the German genocide of Namibian ethnic groups, particularly the Herero, Nama and San, who dared to resist the colonial invasion of their land.

Another significant finding of this study is that the limited power accorded black managers weakened the support they could provide to lower-level black managers. Thus, this finding starkly contrasts with the notion of 'crabs in a barrel syndrome', which uncritically purports that black professionals do not support other black professionals (Miller, 2019). On the contrary, this study cautions that the notion of 'crabs in a barrel syndrome', if observed uncritically, could serve as a 'victim-blaming' colonial trope that ignores or fails to see how the operation of coloniality of power disempowers black executives, thus negating any possible support they could offer to other black managers; likely to be viewed as unwillingness to support black subordinate managers mistakenly.

Finally, this study recommends Black Consciousness, as articulated by Biko (2004) and Fanon (1967), as a viable decolonial praxis that should be enacted for consciousness-raising among black managers to support their everyday struggles to subvert the white gaze (an expression of coloniality) at both organisational and interpersonal levels. Although this is a risky and challenging task, it is a worthwhile effort for its potential to inspire collective emancipatory actions that can ultimately liberate both blacks and whites, to create what Fanon (2004) refers to as a 'new human'. However, this study recommends that emancipatory measures at the individual and organisational level be enacted parallel to broader societal decolonial interventions by government, social and cultural organisations or movements, working in conjunction with other local and international mobilisations, to heal the bleeding colonial wounds. Ideally, once authentic decolonisation is achieved locally and globally, there is hope that transformation and social justice will follow.

Chapter 7: Conclusion and Recommendations

7.1. Introduction

Through an anticolonial and decolonial lens, this PhD study explored factors shaping black managers' experiences in accessing top management positions in Namibian private sector organisations. The main research question guiding this project is: *What are black managers' experiences in accessing top management positions within Namibian private sector organisations?*

This chapter outlines the study's key findings, theoretical contributions, practical implications, limitations, and future research recommendations.

7.2. Key Findings

This section outlines key findings from the study. Specifically, it addresses the first sub-research question: *How do social contextual (Macro-level) factors shape the experiences of black managers in accessing top management roles in Namibian private sector organisations?*

The following sections briefly outline those key findings based on the discussion presented in the previous chapter.

7.2.1. Macro-level Influential Factors

Colonial Histories Continuity

Namibia joined many other former colonies in their quest for sovereignty and achieved independence in 1990. Yet, colonial patterns remain deeply inscribed in society and continue to shape social and economic relations. This study argues that historically informed racial mythologies and beliefs, discourses and practices around blackness create what Fanon (2008) calls an 'historico-racial' schema, which justifies black managers' marginalisation and racial oppression and limits their opportunities to access top management positions. To borrow from Ahmed (2009), the histories and mythologies of blackness as non-human (baboons), *kaffirs*, enslaved labourers, as commodities or 'stock'—as they were referred to in genocide concentration camps (More, 2017; Olusoga & Erichsen, 2010), is inscribed on the bodies of black managers. The study has shown, for example, how remnants of these racial mythologies, such

as black Namibians' being outside of humanity, as closer to baboons than humans, circulated during the period of German settler colonialism and later under apartheid. These ideologies have a lingering afterlife in society, reflecting the collision of the colonial past with a supposed post-colonial present. The colonial continuities constitute what decolonial scholars call the "Coloniality of Power" or 'coloniality', in short. Thus, this study examines an element of coloniality, that is, the 'coloniality of being', which is imposed on black managers in workplaces; it is employed in contemporary white discourse to construct black managers as unfit for holding top management roles or, when appointed to top management, as unsuitable for critical positions in sectors such as IT and finance management. These racist assumptions are rooted in colonial-era ideologies of race, from which emerged discourses and stereotypes of black people as inferior to white people, purported by white supremacist ideologies such as the *Baasskap.* Under *Baasskap,* whites regarded blacks as serfs or low status, low-paid or unpaid workers destined to labour in the service of whites in perpetuity. These racist ideologies retain power and still shape present workplace relations and interactions in the contemporary Namibian private sector.

Archival records reveal that black adults and children were deployed as enslaved labour—some sold as commodities in the African slave trade by the ancestors of some modern-day organisations established by German settler-colonists. These European intruders installed an iniquitous system built on a racial hierarchy that gave whites the most powerful social status and dominion over Namibians, over whom they imposed their rule. Understanding this history helps to explain how, consciously or unconsciously, ideas about black inferiority persist and are employed as a rationale for denying black Namibians the right to occupy certain positions and to curtail their rights to oppose oppression within and outside of the workplace. The lingering colonial tropes, such as black inferiority, unreliability, and laziness, are used as the basis on which black managers are subjected to unequal treatment and "access discrimination" in their workplaces.

Thus, this study agrees with management history scholars, such as Cooke (2003), who argued that histories of slavery, genocide, and apartheid reside in contemporary organisations, which are sites for the reproduction of colonial discourses and practices that both rationalise and sustain racial inequalities. Through these

discursive practices—the legitimised reproduction of violent colonial oppression, disempowerment and exploitation—the (re) colonisation of black managers is achieved.

It is essential to nuance our understanding of the present experiences of black managers within these 'colonial' workplaces. This study iterates the caution that ahistorical and acontextual MOS research, in which history and context are usually ignored and silenced in analysing experiences of black managers or other marginalised employees, risks empty theorisation (Nkomo, 2011b).

Coloniality of the Economy: Economic Nationalism and the Politics of White Anxiety

When, in 1990, Namibia achieved political independence, it did not gain economic freedom, and hence its liberation project remains incomplete (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). This study concurs with previous research conclusions that white actors (influential executives) deliberately enforced economic protectionism over their colonially inherited wealth, thus creating the coloniality of the economy. In the Namibian context, economic coloniality was propagated through white nationalistic economic organising that reproduces the economic dispossession of the majority black populace. Study participants attributed this nationalistic political behaviour to *swart gavaar (black fear)*—white minority anxiety driven by their fear of losing economic power to the black majority—having lost colonial administrative power at independence. This fear continues, sufficiently potent to justify the disempowerment of the black majority, through the hoarding of economic power in white hands, thus creating and reinforcing the coloniality of the economy.

As stated earlier, the coloniality of the economy contributes to socio-economic inequalities and, by extension, the loss of self-determination for the black majority. Subsequently, this research suggests that racialised economic disparities at the societal level (re)produced power differences at the organisational level that inscribed black managers with low power and status. Social level economic oppression of black people placed black managers (regardless of their position or salary) in economically precarious situations, reducing their agency to resist workplace racial domination.

Economic Vulnerability: Effects of Economic Coloniality

This research concludes that the low economic status of black managers motivated them to ascend to top management positions. Yet, the same driver—economic precarity—was the cause of their subjection to white domination. Many black managers came from low-income families and/or poor economic backgrounds, consequent to the general economic disempowerment of black Namibians. Their financial responsibilities toward their families and communities forced them to continue working in oppressive workplace conditions that undermined their psychological well-being. And since they had fewer job opportunities than their white peers, most black managers found themselves trapped in organisations that exploited them. This study showed that the coloniality of the economy is the basis of the oppression of the 'colonised' (Quijano, 2007). It concludes that directly or indirectly, the economic coloniality bears on black managers' professional advancement in the private sector. Significantly, this study supports other research conclusions showing that racialised economic inequalities are (re)produced in organisations and with deleterious consequences for marginalised or 'minoritised' employees within those organisations (Pullen et al., 2019; Romani et al., 2021).

Religious beliefs

An unexpected theme to emerge from the data was that of religion, more specifically, that religious belief could motivate black managers to pursue top management positions. Yet, religious beliefs seemed to essentially support white efforts to undermine the agentic struggles of black managers to resist workplace coloniality. It should not be forgotten that western religious teachings were used to justify white rule and black acquiescence to their oppressive domination. Religion was a powerful tool to coerce black people into submission or non-resistance to colonialism and enslavement. Religion still plays a determinant role in present-day 'colonial' workspaces to bolster black subjects' (re) colonisation.

Socio-legal factors

The data of this study demonstrate that Affirmative Action (AA) legislation embodied particularly in the Employment Equity (EE) Act of 1998 served as an enabler that facilitated the ascension of some black managers to management positions. However, progress in diversifying the private sector was slower than expected, as the top

management tiers remained white-dominated. Study participants attributed the slow progress in transforming the private sector to resistance or backlash from white executives who circumvented full compliance with the EE Act or took advantage of the amended EE Act of 2007—that act designated white women as a previously disadvantaged group by hiring or promoting more white women than black women in general and black male managers into top management roles, thus maintaining white domination of the top management ranks. As Acker (2006) points out, this study also posits that resistance to transformation at the organisational level is a form of legitimising coloniality, thus maintaining the status quo.

The study also argues that the National Equitable Economic Empowerment Bill (NEEEB) proposed by the government of Namibia to address the ever-widening economic gap between the black majority and white minority populations might serve as a legal tool to bring forth transformation in the private sector and society—if grounded in authentic decolonial praxis to attain reparation, restitution and justice. According to OPM (n.d.), the NEEEB is geared towards transforming the economy, which disproportionally remains in white hands, and correcting white non-compliance with AA laws. Although there were mixed feelings from participants concerning the NEEEB, across the board, participants saw the bill as capable of bringing some level of transformation to the private sector.

Coloniality in the Namibian Private Sector

This study shows that the coloniality of the economy was mainly reproduced and sustained at the institutional level—the private sector—through collective efforts, through collusions of power, among white-owned organisations to maintain and perpetuate economic domination; coloniality of the economy. In other words, this study suggests that the private sector—a historically white institutional space and source of economic power—is maintained as a colonial outpost that is used to continue the reproduction of historically imposed socio-economic disparities. Furthermore, several existing private sector organisations benefited not only from the actual commission of colonial crimes against humanity but were complicit in abetting these crimes (Olusoga & Erichsen, 2010; Wilkins & Strydom, 2012). Among these colonial crimes was private firms' participation in the genocide of 1904 to 1908. As historical records show, private firms used enslaved labour from the genocide concentration camps. Moreover, some

private firms actively invested in and owned their private concentrations camps to satisfy their demand for slave labour (Olusoga & Erichsen, 2010). Thus, I argue that persistent racial inequality in the private sector is historically entrenched.

This study reveals that the white domination and monopoly control of the private sector, particularly the economy, is legitimised and endorsed by white-dominated top management teams. The study contends that the numerical domination of white gatekeeper executives yields them the power to facilitate and maintain coloniality of the economy at the social and institutional levels. Study participants noted institutionalised exclusionary practices enacted within the contemporary Namibian private sector; these included racially biased sponsorships and philanthropic practices and business-to-business interactions, i.e. racialised supply chain practices. I labelled these institutionalised management practices as '*managing to colonise*' practices.

This study illustrates that the coloniality of the economy at the institutional level is enacted through a culture of economic exclusion, which has created two main consequences:

(1) ***Black Managers Mobility***: Data evidence reveals a form of what Copper et al. (2020) refer to as 'normative collusion' enacted by white executives to eliminate black managers' competition for top management positions in the private sector. In turn, the hoarding of power in white hands limited mobility opportunities for black managers. As a result, institutional bias against black managers limited their professional advancement opportunities or ascendancy to top management roles within the contemporary Namibian private sector.

(2) ***Black businesses (In)Visibility***: The data reveal that dominant white control of the private sector contributed to the low visibility/invisibility of black-owned organisations in the private sector. Evidence from participants indicates concerted efforts to impose barriers to black entrants to the market and the hoarding of opportunities that excluded black-owned businesses. Ultimately, the invisibility of black-owned companies entrenched white domination and black economic disempowerment, signifying the operation of economic coloniality (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Quijano, 2007). Furthermore, the data

reveals that the low visibility of black-owned organisations has contributed to the limited mobility of black professionals in the private sector since there are fewer black-owned businesses to counter white monopoly control of the sector, as stated earlier, which leaves coloniality uninterrupted.

Importantly, this study suggests coloniality of the economy is institutionalised and a potent weapon through which the black majority is economically disempowered. The present exclusionist institutional culture is arguably part and parcel of the same colonial apparatus that systematically denied black Namibians control over the economy of their 'internal' nation.

This research posits that the economic oppression of the black majority bears on black managers' professional advancement or mobility within the private sector. Moreover, this study illuminates the political role of influential white executives whose actions serve to obscure discriminatory exclusionist practices. I call this practice *managing to colonise*, enacted to align the private sector to its historical purpose—a racial capitalist source of white domination. In sum, this study contends that the private sector remains an apparatus of colonial capitalism, maintained by white executives, playing a political role in upholding the coloniality of the economy and subsequently (re) colonising the economically precarious black managers.

This study cautions that coloniality will continue to be (re)produced unless we confront these institutional realities, and black managers integrated into these institutions will continue to be subjected to dehumanisation and exploitation. To this end, this research proposes decolonising the private sector through authentic anticolonial and decolonial praxis grounded in reparative justice. This study recommends that anticolonial and decolonial praxis include embedding workable strategies to support black economic empowerment by dismantling racialised barriers to the private sector, thus facilitating the possibility of fair economic participation for all and, by extension, allowing for genuine liberation of all (April, 2021; Pullen et al., 2019).

Recommendations: Decolonisation Praxis

This study contends that the continued focus on surface-level issues, such as the lack of black managers in top management positions in the private sector, is unproductive. On the contrary, the study recommends paying attention to the invisible colonial

structures, particularly at social and institutional levels, as the root cause of the reproduction of racialised socio-economic inequalities. To this end, this study recommends designing and implementing an anticolonial and decolonial political project grounded in authentic and holistic praxis committed to dismantling coloniality in all sectors of contemporary Namibian society. These interventions are the first steps toward securing reparation and restitution to address the ongoing consequences of coloniality. Reparations should include measures to facilitate healing and undoing the epistemic violence of coloniality in the African psyche.

At the institutional level, anticolonial and decolonial praxis should entail dismantling colonial structures that continue to create barriers for black-owned enterprises to operate successfully within the private sector. Essentially, authentic, not metaphorical, decolonisation (Tuck & Yang, 2012) of the private sector is necessary to attain reparative justice, restitution, self-determination, and equality.

Notably, the anticolonial and decolonial lenses adopted in this study illustrate that the past resides in the present. Thus, to forge a clean break with the past and to create a more human future, the current generation must grapple with difficult questions; mainly how to hold accountable those who were complicit in the colonial violation of human rights and who not only continue to benefit from economic crimes enacted during the colonial and apartheid-eras but reproduce colonial violence through systematic concealed mechanisms. Essentially, decolonisation should also entail ending institutional cover-ups that have the aim of "silencing the past" (Trouillot, 2015); that past (*the present past*) undergirds the persistent racial inequalities that are manifest in the marginalisation and oppression of black managers.

7.2.2. Meso-Level: Influential Organisational Factors

The key findings in this segment help answer the second sub-research question: *What organisational (Meso-level) factors shape the experiences of black managers in accessing top management positions within Namibian private sector organisations?*

This study suggests that, in contemporary Namibian private sector organisations, racially unjust organisational cultures are upheld and endorsed by

white-dominated top management teams that permitted and legitimised racially unjust organisational processes and practices. Crucially, this study identifies influential white executives as key actors who are complicit in maintaining coloniality by enacting management behaviours motivated by a white supremacist political agenda to uphold coloniality, a practice which I termed '*managing to colonise*'. This study further demonstrates that the practices enacted in *managing to colonise* normalised oppression and exploitation of black managers at all management levels and consequently reduced their access to organisational resources and professional development opportunities.

Further, this research illustrates how black managers had to navigate organisational coloniality regimes that demanded they perform docility in order to assimilate into the management structures. Evidence suggests that when black managers conformed to the 'colonial' script by performing obedience/docility, they were more likely to be promoted to top management positions. April & Singh (2018) describe this as 'empowered powerlessness', where black managers are deprived of authentic power as would befit the positions they hold. This is especially so in decision-making processes, such as who to appoint to the executive level or how resources should be distributed, i.e. budgeting. This study has shown the underlying political and historical root causes of black managers' empowered powerlessness. It concludes that accessing top management positions for black managers is a matter of political contestation. Colonial settlers created a system based on the alleged racial difference that kept the original inhabitants of the land subordinated to the rule of the newcomers. In the twenty-first century, these racial ideologies and practices persist. Within the private sector, it is manifested in the inability of black managers to own and exercise agency, rendering them powerless and vulnerable to racial oppression.

The study suggests that the powerlessness and under-representation of black managers at the top levels limit the inspiration/aspirations of subordinate black managers. In addition, participants showed how it limited their access to developmental opportunities, such as mentoring and sponsorships. Interestingly, black executives were more likely to offer black subordinates formal development opportunities provided or initiated by organisations, though they were less likely to support their informal development by guiding them to informal sources of

development; which has been proven to be more effective than formal development opportunities (Wyatt & Silvester, 2015).

Practices and Mechanisms Legitimising Organisational Racial Injustices

This research has demonstrated how organisations legitimised and naturalised repressive organisational cultures through mechanisms such as (1) top management's lack of commitment to organisational transformation; (2) complicit silence on issues of race and racism in the workplace; (3) impotent or hollow diversity and inclsuion policies that are undermined by deeply entrenched workplace coloniality regimes; (4) white backlash against transformation, including shaming and opposition to compliance with equity policies. Overall, the study suggests that these organisational level mechanisms functioned to uphold coloniality and were tied to the implicit political agenda to maintain white economic domination at the institutional and societal levels.

Organisation Practices and Procedures

The study showed how organisational practices fostered repressive corporate cultures that included racially biased hiring and promotion practices that overlooked black professionals or set high job requirements, such as more years of experience from black managers, but not demanded from white professionals. In contrast, white peers of the same age, with the same or less experience, we're likely to be hired.

The study also found that organisations practised what I call '*transaction tokenism'*, that is, the exploitative hiring or promotion of black executives with political capital (with proximity to black political elites and regulators) and familiarity with the majority of black employees in lower ranks, to perform roles beneficial to the organisation, such as bargaining or lobbying on behalf of the organisation. However, those token black executives were still disempowered, evident by their exclusion from the tables of decision-making power and their inability to reap the same benefits from organisational resources as their white counterparts.

The study further points to the logic of coloniality that underlies the practice of racially segregated management positions, whereby some key top management jobs in sectors such as IT and finance management are mainly reserved for white professionals. This study revealed how organisational processes and practices

embedded with coloniality limit the upward mobility or professional advancements of black managers, who are devalued and considered unfit to hold top management positions. These beliefs persist so that even when black managers receive opportunities to ascend to top management ranks, they are still construed as unworthy of occupying certain top management positions reserved for white bodies—what limki (2018) referred to as the 'coloniality of work'. Coloniality of work refers to the colonial power that underlies the designation of labour based on colonial difference. In the Namibian context, I argue that coloniality of work did not happen in a vacuum but as part of a broader political strategy tied to the societal and institutional level to maintain white economic power (coloniality of the economy).

Finally, this study also pointed to how coloniality functions to determine the distribution of organisational resources such as support, knowledge, and development opportunities based on colonial/racial difference. Participants spoke of how influential white executives exercised power to 'colonise' organisational resources. Those resources were provided to junior white employees to 'scaffold' them up the ranks, thus reinforcing workplace white privilege (Liu, 2017a; Nkomo & Al Ariss, 2014). This study shows white executives used resources, such as exclusive executive knowledge, to 'scaffold' subordinate white managers to top management levels faster than their black counterparts. Thus, the study shows how coloniality operated through white executives to reproduce white dominance and white privilege in private sector organisations.

Rhetorical Ethics: Mechanism Enacted to Conceal Coloniality

This study contends that organisations engaged in what Marimba Ani (1994) calls 'rhetorical ethics' to obscure and maintain coloniality in the workplace. Ani (1994) defined rhetorical ethics as deceptive practices that involve gesturing moral values to hide the symbolic 'colonial' violence perpetrated against the racialised 'Other'. This study suggests that 'rhetorical ethics' function to obscure coloniality. Although hidden, coloniality dehumanises black managers. Through deceptive and hidden practices, the organisation pathologized black managers who, in turn, internalise those pathologies as their shortcomings (Fleming & Spicer, 2003). They come to view themselves as incompetent, and in response, they engage in a perpetual struggle for self-improvement. These organisational pathologies also form the basis for

stereotypes that are relied on to further the marginalisation and subjugation of black managers—although hidden, uncovering these rhetorical ethics reveals organisational moral deficits, contradictions, and dishonesty (Dussel & Ibarra-Colado, 2006).

To this end, this study contends that, within white-dominated organisational environments, black managers' access to top management is a political struggle where black bodies encounter everyday white violence that compels them to conform to corporate 'colonial' scripts. Private sector organisations are 'colonial' sites deeply embedded with coloniality, where remnants of colonialist beliefs about black people are drawn on to denigrate and deny black managers' full human rights or ethical value (limki, 2018). Crucially, this study contends that the promotion of black managers into top management positions for the sake of increasing the black 'body count' in top management teams is not necessarily beneficial or positive for black managers; tokenism invariably involves the dehumanisation, exploitation and loss of agency of black managers over their organisational lives and well-being (Chowdhury, 2019). In sum, this research contends that the private sector is a colonial apparatus functioning to maintain white economic domination, thus perpetuating structural violence by cementing economic inequalities through racial capitalist pursuits and hiding this violence through what Marimba Ani (1994) calls 'rhetorical ethics'. This 'colonial' violence is profoundly harmful in its psychological effects, and perpetrators should be identified and held accountable.

Recommendations for Decolonisation at the Organisational Level

The current study recommends that private sector organisations be decolonised, which entails dismantling the foundational structures upholding coloniality at the organisational level. Similar to Nkomo (2011a), this study calls upon state-run agencies and bodies, such as social justice movements and culture organisations, to hold private sector organisations accountable for the past and present colonial violence as part of the decolonial reparative justice towards authentic decolonisation, reparation and restitution. As part of decolonial efforts to transform private sector organisations, this study calls for organisations to reckon with their colonial histories, which continue to shape workplace relationships. Most corporations in the Namibian private sector continue to benefit from colonial violence that extracted Namibian resources. Thus, this study calls upon organisations to work towards atonement and

reparations and to disavow the denial, obscuring and erasure of past and present colonial violence (Cooke, 2003; Cornelius et al., 2019; Mollan, 2019; Muhr & Salem, 2013). Finally, the study iterates that authentic decolonisation at the organisational level should be enacted in alignment with the societal level (even global) level decolonial inventions to promote humanistic practices that respect human life (Dussel & Ibarra-Colado, 2006) and spur genuine political and economic liberation for all (April, 2021; Muhr & Salem, 2013).

7.2.4. Micro-Level: Interpersonal and Intergroup Influential Factors

The Weight of the White Gaze

This study found that the white gaze fixed on black managers in contemporary private sector organisations is a manifestation of coloniality entrenched in contemporary Namibian society. It is (re) produced in organisations and manifests at the interpersonal or intergroup level. Thus, the white gaze's schemas create racist perceptions that empty black managers of knowledge, skills, and credibility as managers and reduce them to objects to be controlled and exploited. This means that the white gaze suspends all ethical treatment of people placed under its gaze (Maldonado-Torres, 2007). Although the white gaze manifests at the interpersonal level, this study illustrates that the white gaze is not merely white racial biases but a manifestation of 'coloniality of being' rooted in contemporary Namibia's historical and political context.

Data from participant interviews shows how the white gaze controlled and forced black managers to conform to the organisational white power structure; many black managers complied with that 'script', a survival mechanism that protected their credibility. Some survival strategies that black managers enacted include continual striving to improve their job performance and constantly investing in their human capital improvement. To subvert the white gaze, black managers redoubled their professional efforts, a strategy that proved unsuccessful as the goalposts were constantly changing. Since the white gaze is an everyday experience, black managers face constant demands to submit to its pressures, and consequently, many experienced performance pressures.

Of interest, the data illustrated how performance pressure was also transmitted through black bodies, as in black executive managers imposing job pressure on subordinate black managers. This finding revealed how the white gaze (coloniality) operated in invisible ways, circulating through black bodies to maintain itself and sustain white dominance structures. As a result, the gaze induced psychological pressures that undermined black managers' agency, self-confidence, sense of belonging and overall well-being, with risks of triggering historical trauma. Evidence suggests that the white gaze threatens authenticity and is thus detrimental to the professional development of black managers.

Cross-racial Workplace Relationships

The study found that the white gaze mediated professional relations between black managers and their white counterparts, whether subordinates, peers, or hierarchical superiors. These relationships were marked by unequal power ascribed to embedded organisational coloniality. For instance, resistance came from white subordinates who refused to accept the authority of black managers. Similarly, black managers experienced infantilising and "*inferiorising*" behaviour from their white peers and paternalistic relationships, demanding they be docile to appease their white hierarchal superiors. Black managers expended considerable emotional and physical labour on countering the resistance from white subordinates and contorting themselves to appease their white peers and hierarchical superiors. This study found that workplace relationships mirrored the colonial relationship of domination and subordination between the colonised and the coloniser, which subsequently undermined trust and respect between black managers and their white counterparts. Furthermore, study participants observed that these strained manager-subordinate cross-racial workplace relationships inadvertently reflected poorly on their "perceived" job performance, thus entrenching stereotypes of their inherent unfitness for management positions.

Notable also was that these unequal power relations of domination and subordination served to 'inferiorise' (Cress Welsing, 1991) and infantilise black managers, trapping them in a condition of oppression or subjugation or keeping them in their 'place'. These relationships made black managers less assertive and more reluctant to take risks or act on their initiative, making them more subordinate and vulnerable to their white peers' assertiveness and dominant mentality. This study

shows how coloniality operated to structure power differences in organisations and undermined trust and respect in the black-white workplace professional relationships and interactions. Moreover, black managers endured these ambivalent relationships as they were further excluded from the benefits offered to their white counterparts; they received less support and limited access to resources and networks or were forced into performing obedience or conformity to the white power structure as a survival mechanism.

Agency and Survival Mechanisms

The data in this study points to evidence that some blacks internalised an *inferiority complex,* as they seemed to rationalise coloniality as being beneficial to them. Surprisingly, though, one-third of participants remarked that the white gaze helped them improve their skills since it forced them to be on their toes. Arguably, this remark is problematic as it reflects a condition whereby disparaged victims of coloniality are compelled to adapt themselves to their oppression (Alvesson & Spicer, 2016; Maldonado-Torres, 2007). This study contends that survival mechanisms enacted without exercising resistance or agency against coloniality could be detrimental to black managers' well-being.

The study demonstrates how the exercise of agency is linked to the socio-economic status of black Namibians. As highlighted in the preceding section, the black majority are economically oppressed, which has implications for black managers who are placed in precarious positions; because of financial burdens exerted by culturally defined family responsibilities and fewer options to find employment opportunities than their white counterparts; as they had little choice but to stay in oppressive workplaces. Here, the study iterates that socio-economic oppression, such as low participation of black people in the economy, had an implication on the agency of black managers in the private sector, thus rendering them vulnerable to oppression and marginalisation.

Resistance: 'I have had enough'

The data of this study has shown that not all participants submitted to racial oppression. One-third of study participants enacted resistance against the oppressive organisational coloniality regime through different means, such as speaking out against workplace racial injustice. Evidence suggests that these participants realised

their oppression or became tired of performing under the unceasing white gaze, and they responded with ways of subverting the gaze. Their most common mode of resistance was by speaking out against racial inequalities in the workplace and advocating for Affirmative Action. However, data indicate that black managers who attempted to resist workplace coloniality were perceived as threats and were subjected to further marginalisation as punishment. This study argues that the punitive tendencies towards non-conforming black managers have historical resonance with the colonial genocide of black Namibians who dared to resist settler-colonial violence of land dispossession. To put it differently, these tendencies echo the coloniser's notion of disciplining the colonised.

As an emancipatory possibility for the subjugated black managers, this study recommends that black managers fortify their resistance against the white gaze and seek pragmatic ways to dismantle the coloniality of power—the system on which the white gaze is anchored. To assist black managers in their emancipation efforts against everyday coloniality, this study recommends 'armouring' black managers through consciousness-raising guided by the political framework of Black Consciousness as articulated by Biko (2004). This study views Black Consciousness as a decolonial praxis to subverting the white gaze in organisations. The following paragraphs summarise the rationale of Black Consciousness as decolonial praxis and its potential usefulness in the study context.

Recommended Anticolonial and Decolonial Praxis: Black Consciousness
Despite research that has revealed the dehumanising effects of coloniality and white supremacy on black and other marginalised employees in the global 'colonial' workspace (cf. Dar & Ibrahim, 2019; limki, 2018; Liu et al., 2021), the MOS field has virtually no scholarly voice on self-emancipatory possibilities for the oppressed and 'colonised' black employees. Thus, this study breaks with the taboo of not speaking on uncomfortable issues in MOS (Chrispal et al., 2020) by recommending critical consciousness-raising of black managers as to their oppressive conditions. This entails critically making colonially oppressed black managers aware of the historical and political source of their persistent racial oppression and 'weaponising' or armouring them with tools that instil a sense of pride in their blackness and self-determination, which are necessary to resist coloniality at the micro-level. In particular,

this study calls for grounding consciousness-raising in the Black Consciousness political framework as articulated by Biko (2004). This micro-level anticolonial and decolonial praxis could ignite a collective claim for liberation at the organisation and social levels. However, this study recommends that micro-level decolonial and anticolonial efforts be supported and supplemented by decolonial political projects at the societal levels aimed at dismantling coloniality to create equality, self-determination, and justice for all.

This study posits that including black managers in management teams without decolonising the organisation, institutions, and broader society is counterproductive and risky to black managers as their bodies become objects for dehumanisation and exploitation in service of self-enforcement of coloniality and racial capitalism pursuits.

7.3. Summary of Theoretical Contributions

Through an Anti/decolonial lens, this study has foregrounded the historical and political contexts underpinning the factors that shape the experiences of black managers in accessing top management positions in the Namibian private sector. Thus, this study makes contributions to MOS literature on the following levels:

(7) The research demonstrates how the interconnectedness of contextual social, institutional, organisational and interpersonal levels influencing factors operate in conjunction to shape the experiences of black employees at managerial levels in accessing top management positions in Namibian private sector organisations. I argue that disparities in racial representation at the top reproduce and reinforce racial inequality in the organisation. The persistent organisational racial inequalities are a microcosm of a bigger problem. The bigger problem this study unmasked is the coloniality of power (coloniality), which appeared to be the deep-rooted and underlying factor that shapes power and politics at multiple levels. Further, the study demonstrates the different and quotidian ways coloniality is (re)produced, maintained and obscured to embed it within society further, institutions, organisations and workplace relations and interactions. This research demonstrates how coloniality in its different forms renders black managers precarious, thus mitigating their agency, power,

performance and well-being, and ultimately access to top management positions.

(8) This research exposes the deep-seated causes or the behind-the-scene operations of historical continuities and politics of power that shape black managers' experiences in the contemporary private sector. Of the noted ways in which colonial continuities are manifested through absurd social race roles rooted in colonial ideologies such as *Basskaap*—an apartheid white supremacy ideology that designated blacks to be permanently servile to whites. Moreover, this study suggests that the private sector continues to be a colonial capitalist apparatus through which coloniality is fostered, reproduced, and legitimised by unwarranted historical white fear known as the *swart gaavaar* (black threat) entrenching socio-economic inequalities and perpetuating violence against black professionals.

(9) Unlike most MOS research, the anticolonial and decolonial approaches employed in this study helped develop an analysis that went beyond racial identity and surface-level manifestations of racial inequality to expose the root causes of persistent racial disparities. For instance, the study illustrated how obscured coloniality (re)creates organisational power asymmetries that foster surface-level manifestations of inequality, such as the 'glass-slipper' (Ashcraft, 2013) – the allocation or classification of job roles based on racial difference.

(10) This study further exposes psychopathological organisational behaviours reflected in practices of 'rhetorical ethics' (Ani, 1994) intended to obscure and maintain coloniality. This psychopathological behaviour is projected onto black managers to entrench racial myths and stereotypes, thus furthering the oppression and marginalisation of black managers. To that effect, this study argues that black managers' pursuit of access to top management positions in the white-dominated private sector is a 'colonial' and political struggle – where their black bodies, which are devalued, denied agency and dignity, are conscripted to uphold coloniality. Thus, this study does not support the integration or 'inclusion' of black managers in 'colonial' workplaces to

increase the 'body count' without simultaneously dismantling the colonial power structures embedded in those workspaces. Continuing to do so is detrimental to the well-being and dignity of black managers.

(11)   This research contributes two concepts to MOS literature and, as such, extends the debate on equality and justice in organisations and, by extension, the broader society in which they are embedded. The two concepts are; (1) *managing to colonise*, which refers to implicit management practices, mainly enacted by white executives, that are directed towards upholding coloniality at institutional and organisational levels and are tied to the political agenda to maintain white economic dominance   (2) *transactional tokenism*, which describes coercive and manipulative practices enacted by white executives to exert power to coerce black managers to perform roles depended on their blackness and political affiliations with black policymakers and industry regulators, to create benefits for the same organisation that continue to disempower and marginalise them.

(12)   The research exposed the relationship between black managers and outside white clients/partners to be a factor in shaping the experiences of black professionals. This issue appears to have received scant attention in MOS scholarship. This study examined how the white gaze operates as a medium through which coloniality is expressed and mediates relations between black managers and their white counterparts. Further, this study showed how the colonial gaze could be internalised by black bodies in service of maintaining coloniality and white power structures.

(13)   The research proposed pragmatic transformative strategies based on anticolonial and decolonial reparative justice to dismantle coloniality at the social, institutional, organisational, and interpersonal levels. This approach breaks the "taboo" in MOS that has silenced the theorisation of emancipation possibilities for (re) colonised or colonially oppressed employees. For instance, at the micro-level, the study advocates for conscious-raising rooted in Black Consciousness to support the economically oppressed black majority to attain self-determination and economic freedom—by dismantling coloniality at the

societal and institutional levels subverting the white gaze at the interpersonal level. In addition, this study contends that the economic liberation of the black majority will be necessary to liberate whites and thus create a 'new form of humanism', as envisioned by Fanon (2004).

(14)   Last but not least, this study has contributed to both the deployment of anticolonial and decolonial theories and decolonial methodological approaches to illustrate a pragmatic way of decolonising MOS knowledge production that goes beyond mere critiquing the persistent epistemic coloniality in MOS.

7.4. Practical Utility

This study also offers the following practical uses:

(1) This study recommends anticolonial and decolonial praxis at societal, institutional, organisation and interpersonal levels that will specifically target dismantling the often-hidden colonial structures. For instance, the study suggests raising the consciousnesses of black managers through Black Consciousness philosophy as an emancipatory possibility of subverting coloniality at interpersonal and intergroup levels. Black Consciousness-raising entails critically raising the awareness of the colonised black professionals so that they may better understand their subjugation and position of precarity as determined by the socio-political and economic interests of white executives at the helm of the Namibian private sector. Anticolonial and decolonial praxis recommended in this study would be helpful to cultural, social movement activists and government institutions engaged in social and institutional transformative works in Namibia.

(2) The research highlighted coloniality within organisations as the underlying cause of racial inequalities that manifest at the surface level as racial disparities in top management demographic representations. Thus, this finding alerts managers to the necessity to see beyond the surface-level issues and attend to deeper issues sustaining racial inequality. This study developed the concept of *managing to colonise*, which describes the conscious or unconscious implicit management practices intended to colonise resources and dominate and

oppress the racialised "other" for the sake of white domination. This finding will raise awareness among black managers to resist (re) colonisation and sensitise white managers to adjust their management behaviours towards more humane and ethical practices. In addition, the research further calls on organisations to confront their past histories as a starting point toward authentic decolonial transformation.

(3) This study appeals to racially oppressed managers to take action against coloniality and engage in emancipatory efforts to dismantle and subvert. In a similar vein, this research seeks to motivate those concerned with the authentic transformation of society and institutions by enhancing the agency of oppressed black managers in the Namibian private sector or similar contexts.

(4) This study offers a nuanced understanding of the interconnectedness of multi-level factors shaping the experiences of black managers, which could help raise the consciousness and agency of those affected by those elements and those who may seek to dismantle the structures producing these features to create better societies, institutions and communities.

(5) Finally, this study calls upon private sector organisations to engage with their colonial histories and to desist from the denial and silencing or erasure of this history. This is a moral duty imperative to begin the process of decolonisation, which will include reparation, restitution, and healing.

7.5. Limitations

This study adopted an anticolonial and decolonial lens to explore the experiences of black managers in accessing top management positions in Namibian private sector organisations. Although the approach I adopted in this study enabled me to uncover hidden political and historical sources of racial inequality, I do not wish to claim that the approach is the only way to conduct this type of study. In fact, there are multiple ways to do it.

The other limitation of the study regards the scarcity of literature on race in MOS. As Nkomo (2019) notes, the literature on race proliferated in other fields, such

as sociology, but there remains still limited engagement with race or racism issues in MOS. Worse, few studies employed anticolonial or decolonial theories or research set in the Namibian or African 'colonial' context, which posed a challenge in locating academic sources to support the analysis in this study.

This study explored the experiences of black managers at management levels in the Namibian private sector context through an anticolonial and decolonial lens. Although this study might resonate with the experiences of black managers in a context where the white minority group holds coloniality of power, the findings are not generalisable and transferable to all contexts. Additionally, there may be similarities in experiences between black managers and other black employees since coloniality affects all the 'colonised', although differently, this study explicitly concerns experiences and struggles with coloniality of black employees in management positions and its influence on access to top management positions. As such, its relevance is limited to understanding black managers' experiences within contexts that are close to that of Namibia.

7.6. Suggestions for Future Research

This study has identified fertile areas for future research. First, future research could explore the experiences of all black employees to compare and understand how coloniality affects different marginalised employees.

Second, the historical evidence that this study relied on is based on recorded history, which informed the processes of slavery in corporations as revealed in historical records. However, future studies could benefit from extensive archival research to explore the discourses on black employees during the colonial administration era and link those discourses to present realities in the private sector.

Third, since religious beliefs emerged as a theme in this study, it merits a need for more in-depth future studies on the role of religion in shaping the experiences of colonially oppressed employees. For example, perhaps through ethnographic inquiry, future research could uncover how different religious beliefs (both coloniser and indigenous religious beliefs) play a role in constructing or shaping black managers' views of themselves and their motivation to resist workplace oppression.

Fourth, another area fertile for research is an investigation of the influences of external organisational factors, such as interactions and relationships between black employees with white actors in the business' supply chain, i.e. white customers/clients/service providers/business partners, on organisational experiences of marginalised employees. As this study suggests, strained unequal relationships bear on black managers' experiences in organisations and deserve future examinations.

Finally, future research could study different industries within the private sector to expose how other particularities and structures specific to those industries are 'colonised' in different ways. For instance, we could explore the banking sector to examine how historically laid patterns, relations and actors play a role in continuing or discontinuing the coloniality of the economy.

7.7. Concluding Remarks

This study has shed light on the invisible and usually obscured coloniality of power embedded in society, institutions, and organisations that shape the experiences of black managers in accessing top management positions in the Namibian private sector. Notably, the study has shown the historical and political underpinnings fostering and sustaining coloniality. The study exposed actors (white elites) and organisations as reproducers of colonial violence. A surprising finding was that instead of seeking to correct the past and present colonial wrongs, the contemporary Namibian private sector remains 'colonised', pathologically (re)producing, legitimising, and concealing historical-oriented colonial violence with impunity. The nature, scope and causes and impacts of this violence are usually never identified, and these pathologies are likely to be projected onto black managers and other marginalised employees in efforts to continue to dehumanise and exploit them. However, I trust the decolonisation process, if not reduced to a metaphor as Tuck and Yang (2012) cautions but is instead pursued in authentic ways, could gradually chart a new path toward justice, equality and self-determination. Decolonisation is not an event but a process that will require both the colonised and coloniser to reckon with the fact that coloniality dehumanises both of them and thus act authentically to heal themselves (healing of the mind, body, spirit, and the social fabric) and restore their humanity. Fanon (2008) reminds us that

"it is through the effort to recapture the self and to scrutinise the self, it is through the lasting tension of their freedom that men [humans] will create the ideal conditions of existence for the human world" (p.181).

I hope this research encourages more meaningful research to uncover the hidden and deep-seated colonial structures in global 'colonial' workspaces. Once these structures are revealed, we can dismantle them with the decolonial spirit of creating more humane institutions and organisations that will facilitate a better life for all.

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Appendices

Appendix One: Storytelling Interview Schema

Orientation/Initiation:

Question 1: Please tell me a story or stories about your experiences as black professional in this organisation? I am particularly interested in knowing/ hearing your stories that speaks to:

1. The way societal and broader private sector issues shape your professional development, in term of ascending to top management levels. Or how you experience being an executive

2. The way your organisation shapes the challenges or opportunities in your professional advancement

3. Finally, your interactions/professional relations with other professionals of all races and titles.

Dialogue Time:

Follow up questions:

Question 1: Is there another story/Issue that you missed you can share that speak to your challenges/opportunities in your current role?

Question 2: Could speak more about that incident/event/occasion you mentioned

Questions 3: The incident/story that you shared, can you please share what was break through moment and what helped you break through?

Question 4: The incident regarding X that you shared, why do think that happened? Perhaps can we reflect deeper on that?

Questions 5: What do you think is the implication for that?

Question 6: What do you think can be done to improve or reduce the problem you mentioned regarding ….

Conclusion: Any final words or thoughts you would like to share?

Appendix Two: Ethical Clearance

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04/05/2020

Jacobs Sihela

Graduate School of Business

University of Cape Town

REF: REC 2020/05/001

The Career Lived Experiences of Black Managers in Namibian Private Sector Organisations

We are pleased to inform you that your ethics application has been approved. Unless otherwise specified this ethical clearance is valid until 31-May-2021 .

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.

2020.05.04
09:00:04 +02'00'

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Appendix Three: Information Sheet and Consent Form

Information Sheet

Research Study Title: The Lived Experiences of Black Managers in Accessing Top management Positions within the Namibian Private Sector

My name is Jacobs Sihela. I am a student at the University of Cape Town conducting a research study toward a doctoral degree and I would like to invite you to participate in this research study. Your participation is entirely based on your willingness and you are absolutely free to choose not to participate without any form of repercussion or disadvantage towards you. However, I will be grateful if you would assist me by allowing me to interview you. If you decide to participate, please read through the information below and the attached consent form. Please feel free to ask should you have any questions or need further information or clarity.

I am interested in interviewing black managers, from middle to executive management in order to understand their experiences in ascending to the executive management levels. The goal of the study is to collect stories from black managers that will help shade light on how black managerial professionals in the private sector experience upward mobility – how they react to opportunities and challenges on their professional advancement paths.

Should you decide to participate, please note that this study will be a face to face interview. This research has been approved by the UCT Commerce Faculty Ethics in Research Committee. The interview will take approximately an hour, and you will be free to take breaks should you wish to do so. Even after the interview has commenced, you can still withdraw from the study without a need to give a reason for doing so.

In this study, you will not be requested to supply any identifiable information, ensuring anonymity of your responses and your identity will strictly be kept anonymous.

Should you have any questions regarding the research please feel free to contact the researcher or the supervisor.
Researcher: Jacobs Sihela, Cell: +264 81 417 4150, Email: shljac003@gsb.uct.ac.za
Supervisor: Professor Kurt April, Phone: +27 21 406 1363, Email: kurt.april@gsb.uct.ac.za

Consent form

Thank you for considering participating in this research. Please read through the information sheet and notes below before signing this form. Signing to be done before interview session.

Research Title: The Lived Experiences of Black Managers in Accessing Top Management Positions within the Namibian Private Sector

- The person conducting the interview has explained to you the details of the research to your satisfaction and your rights before the interview process.
- If you have any questions about the information given to you or provided in the information sheet, please ask for clarity before signing this form. You will be given a copy of the consent form to keep for future reference.
- You have been made aware that the participation in this research is voluntary and your right to withdraw at any time.
- Please note that you maybe be contacted for brief follow-up questions after the interview but the follow up will be brief and short.
- There will be no payment or reimbursement for your participation in this research.
- You have been made aware of risks of harm that may be associated with this research? e.g. emotional upset, stigmatization and discomfort.
- You give voluntary consent to the researcher to audio-record the interview.
- Data collected from this interview will be treated with strict confidentiality and be will be stored in a computer secured with a password.
- The data from this interview will be published in a thesis and academic articles format. However, no personal information will be included in these publications.

Participant full name...

Signature..Date...

Researcher Signature.. Date...