



INSTITUTO
UNIVERSITÁRIO
DE LISBOA

Exploring the Influence of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Training: A Case Study of a Portuguese IT Company

Ana Catarina Seabra Gouveia de Oliveira

Master in Management

Supervisors:

PhD Marjan Sara Fonseca Jalali, Associate Professor,
Iscte - University Institute of Lisbon

Laura Tecedeiro Sequeira Falé, Chief Executive Officer,
FLECHA Diversity and Inclusion Consulting

September, 2024



BUSINESS
SCHOOL

Department of Marketing, Operation and Management

**Exploring the Influence of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
Training: A Case Study of a Portuguese IT Company**

Ana Catarina Seabra Gouveia de Oliveira

Master in Management

Supervisors:

PhD Marjan Sara Fonseca Jalali, Associate Professor,
Iscte - University Institute of Lisbon

Laura Tecedeiro Sequeira Falé, Chief Executive Officer,
FLECHA Diversity and Inclusion Consulting

September, 2024

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor, Marjan Jalali, whose guidance has been invaluable throughout this journey. When I didn't even know how to start this new academic chapter, she guided me at the exact moment I needed it, always with a smile and immense patience. Her insightful feedback and unwavering support helped me navigate challenges; I will always be grateful for this.

A special and profound thank you to Laura Falé, without whom this thesis would have been impossible. Her dedication, constant encouragement, and unique way of motivating me have been fundamental. Laura was a pillar throughout this process, and I cannot thank you enough for always being available to help and guide me.

To my beloved parents, thank you for always providing me with the opportunity to grow academically. Their unwavering belief in me has inspired me to strive for excellence and has shaped me into the person I am today. They have been my greatest supporters, and this accomplishment is as much yours as it is mine.

To my dear grandmother, whose pride in my academic journey has been a source of constant motivation. Every time I shared even the smallest achievement with you, your eyes filled with pride, reminding me that I was making you proud. Your love and encouragement have been with me every step of the way, and I know you are smiling with joy as I reach this milestone.

Finally, to my closest friends, Ana Viegas, Joana Falcato, Luigi Grosso, Maria Inês Afonso, and Tiago Chaves thank you for being such an important part of my life. It is with them that I have shared some of my happiest moments, and their presence has been a source of joy and balance during this process. They have all played a role in this accomplishment, and I am grateful to have each of you by my side.

Resumo

Este estudo investiga a influência de uma formação relacionada com a Diversidade, Equidade e Inclusão (DEI) no ambiente organizacional, com um foco específico na organização X, como um caso de estudo.

A pesquisa utiliza uma abordagem de métodos mistos, integrando questionários realizados antes e após a formação, entrevistas semiestruturadas e observações não participantes, para avaliar a influência da formação DEI nas percepções dos colaboradores acerca da inclusão, do sentimento de pertença e das relações intergrupais.

Os resultados indicam que, embora a formação em DEI promova atitudes mais favoráveis em relação à diversidade, persistem desafios como a ansiedade intergrupai e a percepção de insegurança- a sensação de medo ou vulnerabilidade que as pessoas têm diante de possíveis ameaças, mesmo quando não há um perigo real. A formação aumentou a consciência dos participantes sobre a inclusão, mas também revelou complexidades subjacentes nas dinâmicas da diversidade. Adicionalmente, a participação ativa da gestão aumentou significativamente a percepção da relevância e importância das iniciativas de DEI, sublinhando o papel crítico da liderança na facilitação de mudanças culturais. O estudo conclui que, apesar de a formação em DEI influenciar positivamente a cultura organizacional, a sua eficácia a longo prazo depende de esforços contínuos, do envolvimento ativo da liderança e de estratégias personalizadas que respondam às necessidades e desafios específicos da organização. Estes resultados oferecem percepções valiosas para a otimização da formação DEI, visando garantir resultados mais duradouros e impactantes.

Palavras-chave: Diversidade, Equidade; Inclusão, Percepções

Classificação JEL: M53, M14

Abstract

This study investigates the influence of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) training on the organizational environment, specifically focusing on company X as a case study.

The research employs a mixed-methods approach, incorporating pre- and post-training surveys, semi-structured interviews, and non-participant observations, to evaluate the impact of DEI training on employee perceptions of inclusivity, belonging, and intergroup relations.

The findings indicate that while DEI training fosters more favorable attitudes towards diversity, challenges such as intergroup anxiety and perceived insecurity- the subjective feeling of fear or vulnerability that people experience in response to potential threats, even if no real danger is present- persist. The training heightened participants' awareness of inclusivity and brought to light underlying complexities within diversity dynamics. Additionally, the active participation of management significantly increased the perceived relevance and importance of DEI initiatives, underscoring the critical role of leadership in facilitating cultural change. The study concludes that, although DEI training positively influences organizational culture, its long-term effectiveness is contingent upon sustained efforts, continued leadership engagement, and customized strategies that address the unique needs and challenges of the organization. These findings provide valuable perceptions into optimizing DEI training to ensure more enduring and impactful outcomes.

Keywords: Diversity, Equity; Inclusion, Perceptions

JEL Classification: M53, M14

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	1
1.1. Background of the study and objectives	1
1.2. Objectives	2
1.3. Research Questions	2
1.4. Structure of the Dissertation	3
2. Literature Review	5
2.1. Defining Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion	5
2.1.1. Diversity	5
2.1.2. Equity	5
2.1.3. Inclusion	7
2.2. DEI Training and Employee Perceptions of Inclusivity and Belonging	7
2.2.1. Inclusion/ Exclusion/ Re-inclusion	9
2.3. Enhancing the Effectiveness of DEI Training and Addressing Intergroup Anxiety	9
2.4. The Role of Management in DEI Training	11
2.5. Challenges and Obstacles in Implementing DEI Training specifically on LGBT Community	12
2.5.1. Transgender People in the Workplace	15
2.6. Diminishing Obstacles to DEI	16
2.7. Benefits of Effective DEI Implementation	17
2.7.1. Case Studies	17
3. Case Study Object	19
3.1. FLECHA's Characterization	19
3.2. Company X Characterization	20
4. Methodology	21
4.1. Research Design	21
4.2. Research Strategy	21
4.3. Data Collection and Analysis	22
4.3.1. Questionnaires	22
4.3.2. Nonparticipant Observation	25
4.3.3. Interviews	25
5. Findings and Discussion	29
5.1. HR Director Insights (before training session)	29
5.2. Questionnaires Result	30
5.2.1. Pre-Training Questionnaire - Environment Characterization	30
5.2.2. Pre-Training Questionnaire vs Post-Training Questionnaire - Attitudes Towards Diversity	34

5.2.3 Pre-Training Questionnaire vs. Post-Training Questionnaire - Intergroup Anxiety	37
5.2.4. Perceived Influence of the Training (Post-Training Questionnaire).....	40
5.3. Employee Interviews	43
5.3.1. Expectations, Outcomes, and Practical Benefits	44
5.3.2. Challenges and Areas for Improvement	44
5.3.3. Workplace Impact and Recommendations.....	45
5.4. After- Session	45
5.4.1. Nonparticipant Observation.....	46
5.5. CEO Reflections on DEI Training.....	48
5.6. General Discussion.....	50
6. Conclusions	53
6.1. Limitations.....	54
6.2. Future Research Suggestions.....	54
Bibliography.....	57
Annex	65
B- Pre-Training Questionnaire	65
C– Post-Training Questionnaire	68
D- Guide to the Phone Interviews	71
E- Email Interview of the CEO	72

List of Figures

Figure 4.1- Data Collection Summary.....	27
--	----

List of Tables

Table 5.1- Reliability Statistics of the Organization Affiliation Scale.....	31
Table 5.2- Reliability Statistics of the Perceived Inclusiveness, and Value Scale.....	31
Table 5.3- Reliability Statistics of the Perceived Care and Perspective Scale.....	31
Table 5.4- Reliability Statistics of the Perceived Listening, and Comfort Scale.....	32
Table 5.5- Mean and Percentiles for Pre-Training Responses.....	32
Table 5.6- Median, Mode and Std. Deviation for Pré-Training Responses.....	33
Table 5.7- Range and Variability of Pre-Training Responses.....	34
Table 5.8- Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test for Diversity Influence and Feeling.....	35
Table 5.9- Pre- and Post-Training Descriptive Statistics for Diversity Impact.....	35
Table 5.10- Pre- and Post-Training Descriptive Statistics for Diversity Feeling.....	36
Table 5.11- Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test for Diversity Challenges.....	38
Table 5.12- Descriptive Statistics for Diversity Challenges.....	38
Table 5.13- Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test for Diversity Insecurity.....	39
Table 5.14- Descriptive Statistics for Diversity Insecurity.....	39
Table 5.15- Post-Training Reliability Statistics of the Workplace Awareness Scale.....	41
Table 5.16- Mean and Percentiles of Post-Training Responses.....	42
Table 5.17- Median, Mode, Std. Deviation and Variance of Post-Training Responses.....	42
Table 5.18- Minimum and Maximum Scores for Post-Training Responses.....	43

Glossary of Acronyms and Abbreviations

DEI- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

ODT- Optimal Distinctiveness Theory

LGBT- Lesbians, Gays, Bisexual, and Transgender

HRM- Human Resources Management

ERGs- Employee Resource Groups

FLECHA- Diversity and Inclusion Consulting

LGBTQIA+ - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, and others

IT- Information Technology

IoT- Internet of Things

WGIS- Work Group Inclusion Scale

BTDS- Benefits and Threats of Diversity Scale

1. Introduction

In recent years, the challenge of creating genuinely diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplaces has become a critical concern for many organizations. Despite the growing recognition of the importance of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), the impact of these initiatives often falls short of achieving sustained, meaningful change. The global movement toward inclusive workplaces has highlighted systemic barriers that persist within organizations, especially in addressing complex diversity issues related to gender identity, sexual orientation, and cultural differences. An information technology (IT) company, has identified the need to address these challenges within its workforce, particularly through targeted DEI training. For anonymity purposes, the company will be referred to as company X.

One of the primary tools organizations use to address these disparities is DEI training, which aims to raise awareness, reduce unconscious prejudices, and promote equity in the workplace (Roberson, 2006). According to Kalev, Dobbin, and Kelly (2006), DEI training fosters more inclusive environments by attempting to change employee attitudes and behaviors. However, research suggests that the effectiveness of these programs can be inconsistent. Challenges such as employee resistance, insufficient follow-up, and intergroup anxiety can undermine their long-term impact (Ramos et al., 2016). This highlights the complexity of achieving meaningful change through DEI initiatives, particularly when the training does not extend into broader cultural shifts within the organization.

Company X, as part of its commitment to fostering an inclusive culture, partnered with FLECHA, a diversity consulting firm, to implement DEI training focused on gender identity, sexual orientation, and other diversity dimensions. The company's aim was not only to raise awareness, and reduce unconscious biases- the tendency to favor or disfavor a person, group, or idea unfairly, and enhance workplace inclusivity- but to foster deeper, systemic change that aligns with its strategic goals of inclusivity and belonging. While company X had pre-existing diversity policies, including mandatory training on allyship and unconscious bias, these efforts had not fully addressed the nuanced challenges faced by its employees in daily workplace interactions. This study seeks to explore the effectiveness of company X's DEI training, particularly in influencing employee attitudes, perceptions of belonging, and intergroup dynamics, with a special focus on challenges related to Lesbians, Gays, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) inclusion.

1.1. Background of the study and objectives

The core research problem this study addresses is the difficulty in achieving long-term cultural change through DEI initiatives, particularly in the context of an IT organization with a global workforce, as

a company that operates in a rapidly evolving and competitive sector, recognizes the strategic importance of fostering an inclusive and diverse workplace. DEI training is seen as one of the primary interventions to cultivate such an environment. However, there are ongoing questions about how effective these training programs are in not only raising awareness but also fostering lasting attitudinal and behavioral change.

Thus, the main objective of this study is to investigate the influence of DEI training on the organizational culture of company X. Specifically, this research seeks to examine whether DEI training improves employee perceptions of inclusivity, reduces intergroup anxiety, and promotes a deeper sense of belonging among employees, particularly those from underrepresented groups such as the LGBT community. However, despite the widespread adoption of DEI programs, their true influence remains controversial (Dobbin & Kalev, 2016). This research seeks to fill that gap by answering the principal question: *'What is the influence of DEI training programs on organizations?'*. Additionally, this study aims to understand the role of leadership in reinforcing DEI principles and driving the cultural transformation needed for sustainable inclusivity.

The relevance of this research lies in the growing emphasis on diversity in today's global workforce. However, to realize the full potential of these investments, organizations must understand not only the immediate outcomes of DEI training but also how it influences long-term organizational change. This research aims to contribute to the broader discourse on diversity management and organizational behavior by addressing these issues.

1.2. Objectives

In line with these considerations, the study pursues the following objectives: to evaluate how DEI training influences employee perceptions of inclusivity and belonging within company X, to assess whether DEI training helps reduce intergroup anxiety and fosters more positive attitudes toward diversity, particularly concerning gender identity and sexual orientation, to explore the role of management in supporting DEI training and its impact on how employees perceive the relevance and importance of DEI initiatives within the organization, and to provide recommendations for improving the long-term effectiveness of DEI programs, focusing on sustained leadership involvement and tailored strategies for specific diversity challenges.

1.3. Research Questions

In particular, the following research questions are posed:

- How does diversity and inclusion training influence employee perceptions of inclusivity and belonging within an organization?

- How can the effectiveness of DEI training on employee attitudes toward diversity and reduction of intergroup anxiety be enhanced?
- How does the presence of management in diversity training sessions influence the perceived relevance and effectiveness of such training among employees?

1.4. Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation is organized into six chapters. The first chapter introduces the research problem, questions, objectives, and rationale for investigating DEI training at company X. The second chapter presents a comprehensive literature review, covering the theoretical frameworks of DEI, its impact on employee attitudes, intergroup dynamics, and the critical role of leadership in fostering an inclusive environment. The third chapter describes the organizational context, including a detailed overview of company X and FLECHA's consulting approach. The fourth chapter outlines the methodology, detailing the mixed-methods approach adopted for this research, including the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data. Chapter five presents the findings and discussion, analyzing how the DEI training influenced employee perceptions and organizational culture. Finally, chapter six provides the conclusions and recommendations, offering insights into how company X can optimize its DEI programs to produce lasting, meaningful change.

By focusing on company X as a case study, this research aims to contribute to the broader discourse on diversity management and organizational behavior. Understanding how DEI training influences employee attitudes and organizational culture is vital not only for the company but also for other organizations looking to adopt more inclusive practices.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Defining Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

DEI has become a foundational concept in modern organizational practices, reflecting both the growing awareness of social responsibility and the demand for a fairer, more representative workplace (Nishii, 2013). The definition of these terms has evolved significantly, informed by various scholars and social movements. As Ahmed (2017) highlights, diversity is no longer confined to visible characteristics like race and gender but now encompasses a broader range of traits, experiences, and identities. Similarly, the notions of equity and inclusion have grown in importance, shifting the focus from mere representation to fostering fairness, belonging, and the elimination of systemic barriers.

2.1.1. Diversity

The concept of diversity has evolved over the years, reflecting broader societal changes and an increasing recognition of its complexity and importance (Ahmed, 2017).

R. Roosevelt Thomas (1990) expanded the definition of diversity to include dimensions beyond race and gender, such as age, sexual orientation, and physical abilities. Taylor Cox Jr. (2001) further broadened this by incorporating both inherent traits (e.g., race, gender) and acquired traits (e.g., education, work experience). Later, Michàlle E. Mor Barak (2011) emphasized the importance of combining diversity with inclusion, arguing that diversity alone is insufficient without fostering an environment where all individuals feel valued and integrated.

Quinetta M. Roberson (2019) refined this perspective by distinguishing between diversity and inclusion. She defined diversity as the presence of differences and inclusion as the practice of leveraging these differences to create a fair, equitable, and welcoming environment. Roberson's work emphasized the need for organizations to recognize diversity and implement practices that ensure all employees can contribute fully to the organization's success, fostering an inclusive environment where different perspectives, skills, and experiences are valued and leveraged. This approach not only promotes equity and belonging but also enhances innovation, problem-solving, and overall performance within the workplace.

2.1.2. Equity

Equity, as defined by Bell (2012), extends beyond diversity by ensuring fairness and impartiality in the treatment of all individuals, particularly those from underrepresented or marginalized groups. It involves identifying and eliminating barriers that have historically prevented equal access to opportunities, resources, and benefits. While diversity focuses on representation, equity strives for

parity and justice, aiming to create conditions where everyone can thrive regardless of their background.

In the mid-2010s and early 2020s, the concept of equity continued to evolve reflecting a growing recognition of the need to address systemic disparities and ensure fair treatment across various domains, including global justice.

Byrd and Scott (2014) defined organizational equity as creating a workplace environment where all employees can thrive, regardless of their background. They emphasized the need for organizations to implement policies and practices that promote fairness, such as equitable hiring practices, career development opportunities, and inclusive leadership. Byrd and Scott (2014) argued that achieving equity requires a commitment to continuous improvement and accountability in addressing disparities.

Carter and Phillips (2021) defined equity as the fair treatment of all employees, ensuring that everyone has access to the same opportunities and is not disadvantaged by systemic barriers. They emphasized the importance of data-driven approaches to identify and address disparities within organizations. Their work called for ongoing assessment and adjustment of policies to create an environment where all employees can thrive (Carter & Phillips, 2021).

Equity Theory focuses on the balance between an employee's inputs (efforts) and outcomes (rewards). When employees perceive an imbalance compared to others, they may adjust their behavior, such as reducing productivity or job quality, which can lead to absenteeism or resignation (Miner, 1980; Greenberg, 1999). The theory helps explain how perceptions of fairness affect motivation and performance, as employees are more motivated when they feel equitably treated. According to Adams (1965), when employees feel under-rewarded, they experience dissatisfaction and may reduce their input. Over-rewarded employees may feel guilt or remorse, prompting them to increase their efforts.

While Equity Theory traditionally addresses salary and promotion disparities, its application to gender, racial, and other forms of inequality requires further consideration. For instance, the emotional and psychological impacts of perceived inequities in these areas may differ from those related to financial compensation or career advancement. Research suggests that the perception and reaction to various forms of inequity, such as gender or racial disparities, can involve distinct emotional responses and coping mechanisms, underscoring the need for a more comprehensive approach to equity (Steele, 2010).

2.1.3. Inclusion

Inclusion can be defined by Shore, Cleveland, and Goldberg (2003) as the degree to which an employee perceives that he or she is an esteemed work group member through experiencing treatment that satisfies his or her needs for belongingness and uniqueness. By the late 20th century, scholars and practitioners began to emphasize the qualitative aspects of inclusion. For instance, Loden (1996) stressed the importance of implementing diversity policies that extend beyond mere representation—defined as the mere presence of individuals from underrepresented groups without necessarily addressing their involvement, influence, or the quality of their experience—to tackle deeper cultural and organizational issues. This perspective paved the way for a more holistic understanding of inclusion, recognizing the need for systemic change and the active involvement of all organizational members.

In 2014, Bernardo M. Ferdman provided a detailed definition of inclusion, describing it as creating an environment where everyone is treated with fairness and respect, has equal access to opportunities and resources, and can fully contribute to the organization's success. This definition underscores the importance of bringing diverse individuals into the organization and not just about representation but also about ensuring that they can participate fully and contribute meaningfully considering equity.

Ferdman (2014) argues that while diversity refers to differences within a given setting, inclusion is about creating a culture that embraces and leverages these differences. In this sense, diversity is the mix of different backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences, and inclusion makes that mix work. By fostering an inclusive environment, organizations can capitalize on the benefits of a diverse workforce, enhancing creativity, innovation, and overall performance (Ferdman, 2014).

These three concepts form the foundation of a workplace culture that supports innovation, collaboration, and growth by valuing and leveraging the full spectrum of human differences (Miller & Katz, 2002).

2.2. DEI Training and Employee Perceptions of Inclusivity and Belonging

DEI training programs are crucial for fostering a positive work environment where employees feel valued and included. According to Shore et al. (2011), when employees perceive fairness and a sense of belonging, they are more engaged and committed. Brewer's (1991) Optimal Distinctiveness Theory (ODT) also highlights the balance employees seek between belonging and maintaining individuality. Effective DEI training addresses these needs, creating a culture where diverse identities are recognized and valued, promoting inclusion, and reducing workplace marginalization.

The ODT explains tensions associated with “human needs for validation and similarity to others (on the one hand) and a countervailing need for uniqueness and individuation (on the other)” (Brewer, 1991, p. 477). Brewer argued that individuals seek to balance these two needs through an optimal level of inclusion in groups to which they belong. To fulfill a fundamental human need for belongingness (defined as the need to form and maintain strong, stable interpersonal relationships (Baumeister & Leary, 1995)), people associate social identities with particular groups and seek acceptance into those groups. Acceptance and the sense of connection with others that it creates prevent the isolation that may occur if one becomes highly individuated (Pickett, Silver, & Brewer, 2002).

Individuals attribute positive characteristics to other members of their in-groups and display in-group favoritism (Brewer, 2010). Loyalty, cooperation, and trustworthiness among group members enhance individual members' security (Brewer, 2007). However, if members of groups are perceived as too similar, then individuals become interchangeable, and the need for uniqueness, defined as the need to maintain a distinctive and differentiated sense of self, is unfulfilled (Snyder & Fromkin, 1980).

According to Van Dick and Haslam (2012), individuals may identify with social groups as a way to satisfy their needs for both belongingness and uniqueness. When the needs for belonging and uniqueness are placed in jeopardy, ODT studies show that individuals will try to achieve the balance they seek (Correll & Park, 2005; Pickett & Brewer, 2001). In situations in which individuals' needs for belongingness or uniqueness are activated, efforts to restore the balance include self-stereotyping, intergroup differentiation, intergroup similarity, and placing greater value on a particular social identity (Jetten, Spears, & Manstead, 1998; Pickett, Bonner, et al., 2002; Pickett, Silver, et al., 2002). These studies highlight how strong individuals' motivations are to maintain an optimal satisfaction level for both needs.

Building on ODT, this definition departs from existing inclusion research by explicitly focusing on belongingness and uniqueness (Shore et al., 2011).

Feelings of inclusion are believed to stem from perceptions of fairness, respect, recognition of value, and a sense of belonging. When employees experience inclusion, they not only perceive fair and respectful treatment but also feel that their contributions are acknowledged and valued and that they are an integral part of the group (Shore, Cleveland, & Goldberg, 2003). The initial level of inclusion hinges on equity and involvement, wherein employees assess whether the organization treats them fairly in comparison to other reference groups (e.g., male versus female) regarding compensation, rewards, and other aspects.

2.2.1. Inclusion/ Exclusion/ Re-inclusion

Comprehending the intricacies of inclusion and exclusion is an initial step toward fostering them. The pursuit of inclusion stems from fundamental human needs, including the desire for belongingness, the drive to uphold a positive social identity, and the aspiration to preserve one's individuality within a broader social framework (Ferdman & Davidson, 2002; Mor Barak, 2000; Mor Barak, 2011; Shore et al., 2011).

Exclusion yields adverse psychological and behavioral consequences for individuals, groups, and organizations. The cycle of exclusion, fueled by emotions such as anger, resentment, and frustration, perpetuates further exclusion and eventually culminates in conflict. Excluded individuals may respond with aggression or deviant behavior, exacerbating the situation which is an output of the Equity Theory (Twenge & Baumeister, 2005; Hogg, Fielding, & Darley, 2005). Challenges to belongingness and self-esteem may prompt efforts towards reconciliation or re-inclusion within their social groups. Reconciliation involves mending relationships and resolving conflicts, while re-inclusion entails efforts to regain acceptance and reaffirm one's identity within the group. These efforts are driven by a desire for connection and belonging, and they can foster stronger relationships and personal growth (Twenge & Baumeister, 2005; Hogg, Fielding, & Darley, 2005).

Contrarily, threats to control and existential significance are situations where individuals feel their sense of control, or their existence is challenged, like spreading rumors in the workplace that may lead to retaliatory actions as individuals seek to regain control over others (Williams & Govan, 2005). Interestingly, marginalized individuals often strive to align themselves more closely with the accepted norms, values, behaviors, and identities that are prevalent within the group they belong or aspire to belong to address the looming threat of exclusion and secure their inclusion (Pickett & Brewer, 2005). The driving force behind this behavior is the innate need to belong, leading those who are on the fringes of the out-group to exert considerable effort to distance themselves from any perceived similarities with them (Pickett & Brewer, 2005).

The balance between individuality and group belonging is key to creating an inclusive work environment where employees feel both valued and unique (Brewer, 1991).

2.3. Enhancing the Effectiveness of DEI Training and Addressing Intergroup Anxiety

Enhancing the effectiveness of DEI programs and addressing intergroup anxiety are significant challenges that organizations must overcome to ensure the long-term success of their initiatives (Dobbin & Kalev, 2016).

Goldstein and Ford (2002) emphasize the importance of a systematic approach to developing and delivering training programs, suggesting that these efforts should be tailored to meet specific organizational needs. Customized DEI training that addresses the unique dynamics of each workplace is critical, as one-size-fits-all approaches often fail to produce long-lasting change. Effective training programs increase awareness of diversity issues and equip employees with practical strategies for dealing with unconscious biases (Dobbin & Kalev, 2016).

Furthermore, research shows that DEI training is most impactful when combined with continuous learning opportunities. Dobbin and Kalev (2016) argue that a single training session is insufficient to address complex and deeply ingrained diversity, equity, and inclusion issues. They advocate for continuous learning through ongoing training sessions, mentoring programs, and employee networking opportunities. This sustained engagement ensures that employees can continuously develop their skills and awareness, leading to a more inclusive workplace culture.

In addition, organizations need to assess their DEI programs regularly to ensure their effectiveness. Goldstein and Ford (2002) highlight the necessity of evaluating training outcomes, enabling organizations to make data-driven improvements to their DEI initiatives. The authors argue that metrics such as employee satisfaction, performance, and retention rates provide critical insight into the success of DEI programs.

Ramos et al. (2016) define intergroup anxiety as a psychological barrier that can perpetuate social tensions and prevent positive intergroup interactions. This anxiety often stems from fears of being judged, misunderstood, or discriminated against, which can hinder effective communication and collaboration within diverse teams.

DEI training plays a crucial role in reducing intergroup anxiety by fostering greater understanding and empathy among employees. Roberson et al. (2003) argue that well-designed diversity training programs can significantly alleviate intergroup anxiety by addressing the underlying sources of discomfort, such as stereotypes and unconscious biases. These programs provide participants with tools to navigate intergroup interactions confidently, promoting mutual respect and reducing the fear of negative judgment.

Moreover, continuous DEI training ensures that employees are consistently exposed to the skills needed to engage with diverse colleagues effectively. As Ramos et al. (2016) suggest, ongoing exposure to diverse environments and individuals reduces anxiety over time, as employees become more comfortable interacting with those from different backgrounds. By creating a safe space where

participants can openly discuss sensitive issues, DEI training encourages empathy and understanding, further reducing the sources of intergroup anxiety.

These theoretical insights demonstrate that effective DEI programs not only promote inclusivity but also address deeper social and psychological barriers, such as unconscious biases and intergroup anxiety, creating a sustainable and inclusive work culture (Ramos et al., 2016; Roberson et al., 2003).

2.4. The Role of Management in DEI Training

To obtain effective DEI programs it is important to consider the pivotal role of management in driving DEI efforts by embedding these principles within the organizational culture, according to Ferdman and Deane (2014). Leadership is not only responsible for endorsing DEI but also for actively promoting and integrating it across all facets of the business (Nishii, 2013). Without the direct involvement of management, DEI training risks becoming a standalone effort rather than a driver of sustainable organizational change. Scholars have emphasized that leadership sets the tone for creating an environment that values diversity, fosters equity, and ensures inclusivity (Shore et al., 2011).

Edmondson (1999) introduced the concept of *psychological safety*, a critical factor in cultivating an environment where employees feel safe to take risks, share their ideas, and voice concerns without fear of negative consequences. In the context of DEI training, psychological safety enables participants to discuss sensitive topics such as race, gender, and identity openly, without the fear of reprisal or judgment. This is particularly important as DEI discussions often challenge deeply held beliefs, and without such safety, participants may be reluctant to fully engage.

Shore et al. (2011) argue that the success of DEI initiatives is contingent upon *strong leadership commitment*. Leaders must go beyond passive endorsement and take active steps to integrate DEI principles into their decision-making processes, behaviors, and actions. This includes visibly championing diversity initiatives, ensuring equal opportunities for all employees, holding themselves and others accountable for inclusive behavior, and embedding diversity-related policies into the organization's framework.

Nishii (2013) underscores the importance of *fair employment practices* in fostering inclusive environments. Transparent promotion criteria, unbiased performance evaluations free from any undue influence, prejudice, or favoritism, and equal access to training opportunities are foundational to ensuring fairness within an organization. Managers are responsible for upholding these principles, ensuring that employees, regardless of their background, have equal opportunities for growth and success.

Ferdman and Deane (2014) further argue that integrating *DEI principles into the organizational culture* is essential for sustainable diversity efforts. Management plays a crucial role in embedding these principles, ensuring that diversity and inclusion are viewed not as separate initiatives but as core components of the organization's identity. This includes continuous diversity training, cultural competency programs, and initiatives promoting cross-cultural understanding and employee collaboration.

Additionally, *accountability* is vital for the success of DEI efforts. As Nishii (2013) points out, leaders must ensure that DEI goals are regularly tracked and measured. Metrics such as hiring trends, employee satisfaction, and retention rates provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of DEI initiatives. Management's active participation in these assessments is crucial to ensure progress and alignment with DEI objectives.

Lastly, the *role of leadership* in shaping organizational norms extends well beyond the mere implementation of practices. Leaders' behavior profoundly impacts their employees, who often mirror their actions and attitudes as indicators of what is acceptable within the workplace. When leaders display unprofessional conduct, such as using inappropriate language, it can create a perception among employees that such behavior is permissible. Consequently, employees may replicate these behaviors, underscoring the critical influence of leadership in establishing and maintaining workplace standards and norms (Kerns, 2016).

Leadership's proactive involvement is essential for the long-term success of DEI initiatives. It creates an inclusive workplace environment that enhances the well-being and productivity of all employees.

2.5. Challenges and Obstacles in Implementing DEI Training specifically on LGBT Community

Creating diverse, equal, and inclusive work environments comes with challenges, particularly when addressing issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity, specifically transgender individuals – whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth – inclusion. These aspects of identity often face challenging obstacles as they confront deeply entrenched societal norms and prejudices, such as discrimination and lack of understanding (Kendi, 2019). According to Badgett, Durso, and Schneebaum (2013), Lesbians, Gays, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT), individuals frequently encounter pervasive discrimination, harassment, and a profound lack of understanding from colleagues, managers, and organizational leaders in the workplace, severely hindering their full participation and integration.

These challenges are not merely peripheral issues but constitute some of the most significant barriers to achieving true diversity and inclusion. McFadden (2015) emphasizes that many organizations

struggle to implement policies that support LGBT employees, often limiting their efforts to superficial compliance- hosting awareness events without substantial efforts to create a truly inclusive workplace culture- rather than fostering a more profound cultural change. This superficial approach often leaves the underlying prejudices unaddressed, perpetuating a hostile environment for underrepresented employees.

Although the LGBT acronym encompasses Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, and Transgender individuals, it is crucial to distinguish between gender identity and sexual orientation.

Gender identity refers to an individual's internal sense of their gender, which can be male, female, a combination of both, or neither, and is distinct from the sex assigned at birth (Schilt & Westbrook, 2009). This concept includes cisgender individuals, who align with their assigned gender at birth, and transgender individuals, who do not. Non-normative identities, such as those of transgender, homosexual, and bisexual individuals, often diverge from societal norms and face significant discrimination and marginalization. Additionally, people with disabilities encounter systemic barriers and social stigmatization, compounding the challenges they face in daily life (Butler, 1990; Garland-Thomson, 2005).

Heteronormativity is a specific aspect of normativity that refers to adherence to established social norms and standards that dictate acceptable behavior and identities within a society (Chang, 2007).

Normative identities conform to these norms and enjoy societal acceptance and privilege. For instance, cisgender individuals, heterosexual individuals, and able-bodied individuals do not have significant disabilities affecting daily life (Butler, 1990).

Sexual orientation pertains to the pattern of emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction one feels toward others. It concerns whom one is attracted to and includes orientations such as heterosexual individuals who are attracted to people of the opposite gender, homosexual individuals who are attracted to people of the same gender, and bisexual individuals who are sexually and/or romantically attracted to more than one gender (Herek, 2004).

According to Paludi (2012), a part of the discrimination that might occur between the two groups (normative group vs. underrepresented group) can be explained by the disparity in perceptions between individuals of different social identities, like heterosexuals and sexually underrepresented groups, which underscores how their respective social experiences shape their worldviews. For instance, the viewpoint of an underrepresented group differs from that of a normative due to varied social interactions influencing their understanding of their sexual identity, which can create actions or remarks that are not consciously intended to be hurtful or offensive, insults, or invalidations that

communicate derogatory or harmful messages to individuals based on their membership in marginalized groups that are considered as microaggressions. In contrast, aggressions in the workplace are overt and intentional acts that cause harm, distress, or intimidation to others. These can include verbal abuse, physical violence, threats, or other hostile behaviors directed at individuals or groups (Sue, 2010).

While microaggressions may seem minor or insignificant on their own, their cumulative impact can be profound, contributing to a hostile work environment and undermining the well-being and productivity of marginalized individuals (Nadal, 2013). Understanding and addressing both microaggressions and aggressions in the workplace are crucial for fostering an inclusive and respectful organizational culture where all employees feel valued and respected (Thomas, 2020).

When microaggressions occur, this clash of perspectives emerges as the perpetrator disregards or trivializes the microaggression while the target acknowledges its harmful impact. These messages can be conveyed through actions, words, or environmental cues, often from unconscious prejudices or stereotypes. Implicit prejudices are acquired and reinforced through socialization processes, cultural norms, and exposure to stereotypical representations (Devine, 2017). These prejudices manifest as automatic associations and subtle cognitive prejudices that affect judgments and behaviors in various domains of life, including education, employment, healthcare, and interpersonal relationships. Devine (2017) distinguishes between explicit (conscious) and implicit (unconscious) forms of prejudice, highlighting that individuals may sincerely endorse equality and fairness yet unknowingly harbor prejudices that lead to discriminatory outcomes.

For instance, in a workplace scenario, a lesbian employee might encounter a microaggression from a heterosexual colleague who remains unaware of it, despite the lesbian employee recognizing it. As the heterosexual colleague belongs to the predominant sexual orientation group, more valued, and the societal norm, their interpretation of the incident may overshadow the perspective of the lesbian employee, who belongs to the underrepresented sexual orientation group (Sue et al., 2007). This dynamic allows individuals from the dominant group, such as heterosexuals in this case, to shape the workplace's social norms, including standards of acceptable behavior. Consequently, a power imbalance arises between heterosexuals and underrepresented groups, particularly notable in workplaces lacking policies that protect sexual minorities from discrimination (Paludi, 2012).

This example represents only a fraction of the numerous ways underrepresented groups encounter microaggressions in the workplace. They are often subjected to multiple microaggressions daily, with the cumulative effect potentially leading to severe consequences. It has been suggested that such microaggressions can adversely affect their well-being, contributing to heightened symptoms of

depression and anxiety (Nadal et al. 2011). Studies indicate that fostering safe and supportive organizational environments for underrepresented groups can mitigate sexual orientation discrimination, increasing job satisfaction and commitment within this demographic (Button, 2001; Griffith & Hebl, 2002; Ragins & Cornwell, 2001).

According to ILGA Portugal, between 2020 and 2022, the Observatory for Discrimination Against LGBTI+ Individuals received 469 reports through confidential and anonymous questionnaires. These reports pertain to incidents resulting from prejudice, discrimination, and violence based on sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or real or perceived sexual characteristics of the victims. All reported incidents occurred exclusively within Portuguese national territory (ILGA Portugal, 2023).

2.5.1. Transgender People in the Workplace

Although LGBT workplace inclusion has progressed significantly, there remains a significant gap for transgender workers compared with lesbian, gay, and bisexual counterparts (Beauregard et al., 2018; Ozturk & Tatli, 2016). Transgender individuals are more exposed to discrimination and vulnerability, facing unique challenges such as heightened levels of harassment, inadequate healthcare coverage, and complex legal barriers, which necessitate targeted and robust inclusion efforts to address their specific needs effectively (Budge, Adelson, & Howard, 2013).

Being transgender in the workplace can expose individuals to prejudice and discrimination. Half of them have hidden their identity at work, fearing discrimination (Stonewall, 2018), which profoundly impacts the mental health and job performance of transgender individuals, making it exceedingly difficult for them to thrive in their workplaces (Ozturk & Tatli, 2016). For instance, Flores et al (2016) show that transgender employees often struggle with employment due to societal stereotypes and organizational norms- these issues, including microaggressions like misgendering and exclusion, harm job satisfaction and well-being. Hostile work environments worsen these problems, leading to increased harassment and psychological distress (James et al., 2016).

For instance, a study by the National Center for Transgender Equality (2015) highlighted that transgender employees often encounter barriers in hiring and promotion, with many reporting being passed over for jobs due to their gender identity. These experiences underscore the challenges faced by transgender individuals in accessing equal opportunities in employment.

Grant et al. (2011) identified several significant forms of discrimination that transgender employees commonly encounter in their workplaces. One of the key findings was the prevalence of verbal harassment, where transgender individuals reported being subjected to derogatory remarks, slurs, and

offensive comments about their gender identity. This verbal hostility creates a hostile and unwelcoming atmosphere and undermines the professional confidence and morale of affected employees (Grant et al., 2011).

A study made in Portugal by Batista (2024) showed that men have a higher level of negative attitudes towards trans people, as well as a higher level of negative feelings and behaviors, compared to women and religious people have a higher level of negative attitudes towards trans people and consequently high levels of transphobia and/or genderism.

Human Resources Management (HRM) research on trans workers is limited, yet it is potentially vital in creating supportive conditions to engender trans inclusion. One way that HRM practitioners can create these conditions is through training (Salter & Migliaccio, 2019).

By fostering environments where all employees feel valued, respected, and able to bring their authentic selves to work, organizations can attract and retain diverse talent, enhance employee engagement, and ultimately drive greater innovation and success. Berdahl's (2006) work highlights the benefits of embracing diversity and challenging heteronormativity as essential components of a thriving and inclusive workplace.

2.6. Diminishing Obstacles to DEI

Training programs aim to enhance individual and organizational performance through systematic content development and delivery (Goldstein & Ford, 2002). Effective training is customized to meet organizational needs and utilizes diverse learning methods and evaluation techniques (Noe, 2010).

Diversity training is crucial for raising awareness of unconscious biases and providing strategies to address them (Roberson et al., 2003). Well-structured programs also improve intergroup relations and reduce workplace conflict (Bezrukova et al., 2012). To maximize effectiveness, diversity training should be combined with mentoring and networking opportunities (Kalev et al., 2006).

A needs assessment, encompassing organizational, operational, and personal analyses, is essential for designing effective training programs (Goldstein, 1991; Ostroff & Ford, 1989). This assessment identifies training needs and outcomes, ensuring alignment with organizational goals (Cox, 1994; Thayer, 1997).

Continuous DEI training is vital for addressing complex issues like race, gender, and identity, and for fostering genuine inclusivity (Dobbin & Kalev, 2016; Ford & Fisher, 2021). Ongoing training enhances understanding, application, and effectiveness, contributing to long-term success and organizational growth (Smith & Bell, 2019; Johnson & Nguyen, 2020).

Effective DEI training improves workplace climate, boosts financial performance, and supports inclusive leadership (Hughes, 2007; Greenhaus et al., 2009). By providing practical strategies and addressing unconscious attitudes, DEI training fosters an inclusive culture and enhances organizational effectiveness- which refers to how well an organization achieves its goals and objectives while efficiently using resources (Bezrukova et al., 2012; Cox & Blake, 1991).

2.7. Benefits of Effective DEI Implementation

“I am valued, and I truly belong” is the aspirational mantra of any member of an inclusive organization. As discussed earlier, the social and economic merits of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) within organizations are evident. However, their true potential is realized when they work together synergistically, amplifying the benefits they individually bring (Deloitte, 2023).

Institutions like Harvard Business School (2023) and McKinsey (2023) have expanded the definition of diversity to encompass various attributes, including cultural background, educational experience, and cognitive diversity. Harvard Business School emphasizes that diversity involves creating an environment where all employees feel valued and respected, which leads to increased morale and innovation. McKinsey's reports highlight the business case for diversity, linking it to improved financial performance and greater employee engagement. For instance, the report "Diversity Wins: How Inclusion Matters" (2020) emphasized the link between diversity, inclusion, and business success. Analyzing data from over 1,000 large companies in 15 countries, McKinsey found that companies in the top quartile for gender diversity on executive teams were 25% more likely to experience above-average profitability. For ethnic and cultural diversity, the likelihood of outperformance was even higher, at 36%. They consider diversity to include a broad range of attributes and argue that inclusive practices are essential to fully realize the benefits of a diverse workforce where individuals from different backgrounds, cultures, demographics, and perspectives work together within an organization (Page, 2017).

2.7.1. Case Studies

Ferdman (2014) emphasizes that companies with diverse and inclusive cultures are better equipped to adapt to changing market conditions and meet customer needs. This aligns with findings from several prominent organizations, such as Google and Microsoft, which demonstrate how embracing diversity and fostering an inclusive environment can drive innovation and creativity. According to Bock (2015), Google's employee resource groups (ERGs) have provided forums for underrepresented employees to share ideas and collaborate across teams, leading to the development of products such as Google Maps. Bock (2015) further notes that these ERGs contributed significantly to

organizational innovation by ensuring that diverse perspectives were represented in decision-making processes.

Adobe has also taken steps to promote diversity and equity, particularly through a company-wide pay equity review in 2018 (Adobe, 2018). The review led to salary adjustments aimed at closing gender and racial pay gaps, ensuring that employees performing similar roles received equitable compensation. McKinsey (2020) supports this by indicating that companies with proactive approaches to equity tend to outperform their peers in terms of employee engagement and financial performance.

Microsoft has made significant strides in diversity and inclusion through its inclusive hiring initiatives, which have expanded its talent pool and enhanced product development (Nadella, 2017). As Nadella (2017) highlights, these initiatives were integral to the development of inclusive design features in Microsoft Office, which were informed by insights from a diverse user base, including individuals with disabilities. These efforts, according to Page (2017), exemplify how diverse teams contribute to innovation by bringing varied perspectives that lead to the creation of products suited to a wider audience.

The success of these companies underscores the findings of Deloitte (2023). Their Global Human Capital Trends report highlights that organizations with diverse and inclusive cultures are twice as likely to exceed financial targets and six times more likely to be innovative and agile. Their research underscores that companies with a strong focus on inclusion experience higher employee satisfaction and retention, which ultimately translates into improved financial outcomes. These findings align with McKinsey's (2020) research, which also demonstrates a positive correlation between diversity and organizational profitability.

In contrast, companies that treat DEI as a superficial or isolated effort tend to fail in achieving these benefits (Ferdman & Deane, 2014). These companies may implement training programs but do not ensure sustained leadership involvement or long-term strategic planning. Dobbin and Kalev (2016) argue that leadership commitment is critical to embedding DEI principles into an organization's culture and achieving long-term change. Without this commitment, DEI efforts often remain symbolic and fail to address the deeper systemic issues that hinder inclusivity (Shore et al., 2011).

3. Case Study Object

This research was generated to find how training programs about diversity and inclusion can influence an organization. In this research, we will analyze the impact of a training program about DEI specifically related to gender identity and sexual orientation, on the workers' and leaders' perspectives conducted by FLECHA, in an Information Technology (IT) organization, which will be analyzed further. Despite some existing research, the findings may not universally apply to IT companies allowing deeper insights.

In November 2023, FLECHA, the company that provides training programs about DEI, agreed to participate in this study to analyze the impact of this service on one of its clients. Company X was the most suitable client, and later, in January 2024, the training program was conducted and started to be analyzed.

The core values of these organizations can impact the findings of this research, so it is essential to know and characterize them (Bratton, 2020).

3.1. FLECHA's Characterization

FLECHA is a consulting project dedicated to helping organizations create a diverse and inclusive environment where all individuals feel valued. The project highlights that appreciating and motivating individuals leads to higher job satisfaction, increased productivity, and improved talent retention. FLECHA promotes greater awareness and empathy, which helps create a more collaborative and harmonious workplace.

This project offers various services, including Diversity and Inclusion Diagnostics, Conscious Leadership Training, HR and Employee Training, Webinars, Inclusive Communication Consulting, Sensitivity Consulting, and Lectures. In 2023 alone, FLECHA trained over 200 individuals in several profit and non-profit organizations in non-normative identities, inclusive language, and gender-neutral language.

Laura Falé and André Tecedeiro lead the project. Laura Falé is a consultant, speaker, reviewer, and strategist for inclusion, identity, and gender diversity. André Tecedeiro specializes in inclusive language and gender inclusion and has participated in numerous debates, talks, and conferences, advocating for the visibility and rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, and others (LGBTQIA+) individuals.

Actively inclusive organizational policies have widespread effects. They enhance the company's reputation as clients and the community recognize its commitment to diversity and inclusion,

promoting a positive brand image. These policies also attract talents from diverse backgrounds, enriching the company's workforce with various perspectives and experiences.

3.2. Company X Characterization

Company X is part of a global IT solutions and digital services provider with 104 offices and more than 7,000 employees in 27 countries. The company serves over 10,000 clients worldwide.

Company X employs almost 200 specialists and accelerates the digital transformation of its clients through an international network of specialized centers, leading sector teams, and strategic partnerships. These partnerships include major technology companies like Cisco, Microsoft, and Dell Technologies. Leveraging extensive technological expertise and industry knowledge, the company helps its clients achieve their business goals through the efficient and sustainable use of technology. Company X aligns the strategic vision of its clients with its technological expertise in key industry drivers such as cybersecurity, cloud, Internet of Things (IoT), and data analytics.

The company's vision is to accelerate its clients' progress, keeping them relevant in the digital economy and directly contributing to their success. They are committed to social responsibility, aiming to bring positive change to clients, employees, society, and the environment through education, thereby building a better world. The company places significant emphasis on DEI, viewing these as essential for a healthy, creative, and effective business. One of the focuses of Company X 's social responsibility is its employees. The company strives to create an inclusive and diverse global team and to provide a collaborative environment where everyone can feel included and inspired to share their talents and ideas.

As we can see, FLECHA's expertise in diversity diagnostics, leadership training, and inclusive communication aligns with company X's mission to create a collaborative environment that can be beneficial to reveal deeper insights into the benefits of diversity and inclusion.

4. Methodology

4.1. Research Design

Once a research problem has been formulated, an appropriate research design and conceptual structure within which the research will be conducted need to be defined. The preparation of such a design allows for more effective research, so as to yield maximal and most pertinent information, as efficiently as possible (Tegan, 2021). Given the relative novelty of the topic, and the associated sparsity of information, particularly within the Portuguese context, an exploratory study was carried out. According to Mouton (1996), exploratory studies aim to establish facts, gather new data, and determine meaningful patterns or themes in a relatively unknown research area, hoping to gain new insight into the phenomenon being researched, as was the case in the current study.

As previously noted, this study aimed to gain insights into experiences with diversity training programs and their organizational impacts. A case study research was carried out, in order to obtain an in-depth view of a diversity training intervention in a single company, and a mixed methods approach was utilized, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomena at hand.

4.2. Research Strategy

Exploratory research design can be defined as research conducted to investigate an undefined problem and better understand it (Asika et al., 2004). The goal of exploratory research is not to provide final and conclusive answers to research questions but to explore the research topic in varying depths and is only sometimes generalizable to the general population. However, its outcomes answer questions like what, how, and why (Bernd, 2017). It also helps to determine the best research design, data collection method, and selection of subjects to gate social phenomena without explicit expectation (John, 2015). It has been stated that exploratory research is the preliminary research that serves as the foundation for more conclusive research (Asika, 2004; Akhtar, 2016; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016).

The research employs a case study approach. Yin (2009) argues that in all fields, the need for case studies comes from the desire to understand complex social phenomena. Case study research provides great strength in investigating units consisting of multiple variables of potential importance (Reis, n.d.). It allows investigators to retain a holistic view of real-life events, such as organizational and managerial processes which are essential for achieving organizational goals, improving efficiency, and ensuring that resources (human, financial, and material) are used effectively (Yin, 2009). Merriam (1994) argues that case studies allow one to get as close to one's area of interest as possible through direct observation in the natural environment and because one gets access to subjective factors.

Gomm, Hammersley, and Foster (2000) argue that case study research can investigate causal processes “in the real world” rather than artificially created settings and tend to have a broader web to catch information (Merriam, 1994).

The case study research includes interpretive qualitative elements alongside quantitative methods. According to Robert K. Yin (2018), an interpretive approach in case study research emphasizes understanding the meanings and perspectives of individuals within their real-life context. Yin (2018) highlights that the interpretive approach involves the researcher immersing themselves in the setting and interacting with participants to grasp the nuances of their experiences and viewpoints.

In addition, quantitative data was also gathered. A mixed methods approach better ensures that the research not only delves into the participants' nuanced, subjective experiences but also quantifies certain aspects to identify patterns and correlations (Yin, 2018).

The research questions determined the selection criteria for the case study object, namely, we were looking for an organization that required a diversity training program (or programs) and would be open to give insights on the perceived impact of that training. Company X met these criteria, and FLECHA was the company providing the training.

4.3. Data Collection and Analysis

As is typical in case studies, data was collected using a mixture of techniques (Yin, 2009) between January and June 2024.

4.3.1. Questionnaires

Questionnaires are one of the most commonly used instruments for quantitative data collection; they can now be made online, making them very easy to access, with results available to the researcher in real time (Umesh, 2021).

According to Creswell (2014), using pre-and post-training test measures in quantitative research is essential to assess changes over time. He highlights that such an approach allows researchers to establish a baseline and then measure the impact of an intervention by comparing pre-intervention and post-intervention data.

In this research, two types of questionnaires were used: a pre-training questionnaire and a post-training questionnaire. Participation in both was entirely voluntary, with no obligation for respondents to complete them. First, a pre-training questionnaire was administered before the presentation training session started. The trainer sent a link to the participants which generated 13 answers (the entire universe) establishing a baseline understanding of the participants' initial perspectives on diversity

and inclusion. Then, a second questionnaire was applied two weeks later, through a link that was sent to the director of HR of company X, who shared it with the participants, which generated 5 answers. Creswell (2014) argues that the period during the pre and the post questionnaire allows participants to reflect on and apply the training concepts in their daily work environment.

The questionnaires used in this study were based on two established scales, both of which were adapted to better suit the specific focus of the research. The first scale, the Work Group Inclusion Scale (WGIS) (Ferdman, Avigdor, Braun, Konkin, & Kuzmycz, 2010), was originally developed to assess individuals' perceptions of inclusion within small work groups or teams. It measured how included employees felt in terms of belonging, participation, and their ability to contribute to group activities. For this study, the WGIS was adapted to assess inclusion not only at the group level but across the entire organization. This adjustment broadened the scope of the original scale to capture employees' experiences of inclusion within the larger organizational structure, thus reflecting their overall experience, rather than focusing solely on their inclusion within a specific work group or team.

The second scale used was the Benefits and Threats of Diversity Scale (BTDS) (Hofhuis, van der Zee, & Otten, 2016), originally designed to measure employees' perceptions of both the positive and negative aspects of diversity, with a primary focus on ethnic or cultural diversity in the workplace. The original BTDS included sub-dimensions for benefits, such as Social Environment, Knowledge Development, and Creativity, and sub-dimensions for threats, including Intergroup Anxiety, Communication Problems, and Identity Threats. This study focuses on one sub-dimension from each: Social Environment from the benefits category and Intergroup Anxiety from the threats category.

The Social Environment sub-dimension was selected because of its relevance to the overall work climate and how diversity is perceived to impact interpersonal relationships within the organization. On the other hand, Intergroup Anxiety was chosen from the threats category to explore the discomfort or anxiety that might arise when employees interact with colleagues from diverse backgrounds. These two sub-dimensions were considered most relevant to the organizational context of the study, offering a focused understanding of how diversity impacts both positive social dynamics and potential challenges related to intergroup interactions. Other sub-dimensions were not included in this analysis as they were less directly related to the research objectives and the specific organizational environment under investigation.

The pre-questionnaire was structured around three constructs. The first was *Environment Characterization*, which included eight items, *Attitudes Towards Diversity*, and *Intergroup Anxiety*, including four items each. The post-questionnaire also featured three constructs, two of which

mirrored those in the pre-questionnaire: *Attitudes Towards Diversity* and *Intergroup Anxiety*. Additionally, the post-questionnaire introduced a new construct, *Training Influence*, which comprised five items.

All responses were measured on a one to seven Likert scale, allowing participants to express their level of agreement or disagreement, with 1 representing 'Strongly Disagree' and 7 representing 'Strongly Agree.'

Since the *Environment Characterization* includes eight items, it was more effective to combine these into four variables for easier analysis. This approach enhances the intuitiveness of interpreting the data in the tables. The first variable, Organizational Affiliation, consists of items that have strong relationships with each other: "I belong to my organization" and "I feel connected to my organization".

The second variable, Perceived Inclusiveness, and Value, includes the items: "I consider the work environment I am in to be inclusive" and "I am treated as a valued member in my organization".

The third variable, Perceived Care and Perspective, encompasses: "I feel that my organization truly cares about me" and "When my colleagues' perspective becomes too limited, I am able to introduce a different point of view".

Finally, the fourth variable, Perceived Listening, and Comfort is composed of: "I feel heard, even when my opinion is not similar to that of my colleagues" and "When I am at work, I feel comfortable expressing my opinions that differ from those of my colleagues".

The construct *Attitudes Towards Diversity* comprises two variables, including four items. The first variable, Pre Diversity Impact/Post Diversity Impact, consists of: "According to Buch (2008, p. 1), diversity: for some, it means tolerance, acceptance, or attitude, and for others, inclusion, race, and gender. Do you believe diversity has a positive effect on the work environment?" and "Diverse teams are more creative".

The second variable, Pre Diversity Feeling/Post Diversity Feeling, includes the items: "Working in diverse teams makes me feel comfortable" and "Diversity makes this an interesting place to work".

The construct *Intergroup Anxiety* comprises two variables, including four items. The first variable, Pre Diversity Challenges/Post Diversity Challenges, includes: "Diversity makes it more difficult to understand colleagues" and "Diversity leads to uncomfortable situations".

The second variable, Pre Diversity Insecurity/Post Diversity Insecurity, consists of: “Diversity makes it difficult to judge what others are thinking” and “Diversity causes insecurity in interactions with colleagues”.

The construct *Training Influence* in the post-questionnaire comprises three variables, including four items. The first variable, Personal Influence, is composed of: “The training increased my personal commitment to contributing to a more inclusive work environment”.

The second variable, Workplace Awareness, consists of: “I feel that the training highlighted the importance of diversity and inclusion at work” and “I am more aware of actions that can contribute to a more inclusive environment”.

The third variable, Relevance of Management, includes: “I feel that the presence of management in training sessions like this is relevant”.

4.3.2. Nonparticipant Observation

A nonparticipant observation was valuable to this dissertation since four months after the two-day training sessions, FLECHA provided another activity called “breakfast” to give continuity to the diversity training where the main goal was to discuss some concepts about inclusion and diversity in the workplace within the workers and the leaders who voluntarily participated.

Nonparticipant observation involves observing a person and deducing conclusions based on their reactions to various parameters (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). There is no direct communication with the subject in such a study (Richard, 2018; Umesh, 2021).

4.3.3. Interviews

According to DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006), semi-structured interviews are often the sole data source for a qualitative research project. Given the essence of this project, interviews can be crucial, as they allow for a deeper exploration of perceptions and impacts that other methodologies- such as surveys or questionnaires- would not fully capture. While surveys provide quantifiable data on perceptions, they might not offer insights into the reasoning behind these perceptions or the personal experiences that shape them. Interviews add value by delivering rich, qualitative data that reveal underlying motivations and nuances in participant attitudes that are often missed in more structured data collection methods (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

These interviews are typically organized around predefined open-ended questions, with additional questions arising from the dialogue between the interviewer and the interviewee. Thus, the interviewer is familiar with the topics that need to be addressed but can determine how these topics

are introduced, with only the start of the interview being outlined. The interview guide was built following the principles outlined by DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006), where the first question directly addressed the central research question, followed by 5 to 10 specific questions that explored various aspects of the research. The first question asked interviewees about their general perception of the DEI training, followed by questions exploring how the training influenced their personal views, team dynamics, and workplace inclusivity. The guide ensured that we explored all relevant dimensions, including how the training session impacted perspectives after four months and whether these changes were sustained over time.

An interview guide is used so that if the interviewee does not spontaneously address any of the topics, the interviewer can prompt them. This approach is considered appropriate for delving into a specific field or assessing the development of an established domain (Ghiglione & Matalon, 1977).

In-depth individual interviews allow for detailed study of social and personal issues, focusing on human action and its complexity by examining individuals' worldviews, intentions, and beliefs (Albarello, 1997). Semi-structured interviews, as described by Bogdan and Biklen (1994), offer researchers the opportunity to analyze and compare information gathered from different individuals. In this study, semi-structured interviews may prove beneficial for confirming or enriching specific aspects related to the research subject (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Particularly, they hold the potential to illuminate how DEI training might influence the perspectives of both workers and leaders over time. The insights gained from these interviews could complement the findings from post-training questionnaires and provide a deeper understanding of the participants' emotional responses and reflections on organizational changes.

Before the training session, an email interview was conducted with the HR Director of company X. This interview gathered insights about why the organization required the training, as well as the leadership's expectations for its outcomes.

Four months after the training session, follow-up phone interviews were conducted with participants who had voluntarily provided their contact information after completing the initial questionnaire. Each of these four phone interviews lasted between 15 and 40 minutes, and was audiotaped with the participants' consent, and then transcribed verbatim. The decision to wait four months was made to give participants enough time to apply the training in their daily work environments, allowing for a more accurate assessment of its long-term effects.

Table 4.1- Interviews with Participants

Name	Date	Time	Gender
Participant 1	13/05/2024	30 min	Female
Participant 2	14/05/2024	17 min	Female
Participant 3	17/05/2024	15 min	Male
Participant 4	22/05/2024	40 min	Male

Finally, after the “breakfast” activity, an email interview was conducted with the CEO of company X. This interview aimed to capture the CEO’s perspective on the overall impact of the training program, building on the earlier insights from both the HR Director and the participants.

The figure below resumes the data collection conducted in this research:

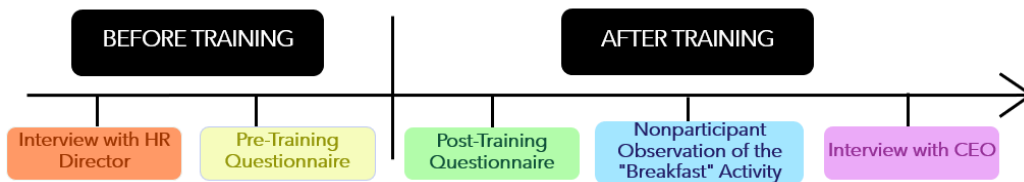


Figure 4.1- Data Collection Summary

5. Findings and Discussion

This chapter aims to analyze the impact of diversity training programs on an organization, without concentrating on their consequences. By examining the collected data, we seek to interpret the results and provide meaningful insights.

5.1. HR Director Insights (before training session)

This study started with the goal of understanding how DEI training can impact an organization, by analyzing the case of company X, where such a training session was carried out.

Our first point of data collection was the company's HR Director, on whose initiative the training was held and who carried out all the communications with the training provider, FLECHA. The aim was to understand what had led her to request this training and what her expectations were regarding it.

According to the HR Director, the idea came to her after attending a public training session organized by FLECHA, during which she felt that company X could benefit from such training. She thought a training session on inclusion and gender identity to address the growing need for effective, inclusive communication with employees and other stakeholders would be essential to develop awareness among employees about diversity issues, thereby promoting a more respectful and inclusive work environment, which the company aspired to.

The final decision to conduct this training was also influenced by the feedback from the company's Social Responsibility Committee- this committee typically engages in activities that align with the company's values and commitment to social and environmental issues- which highlighted the need for such training the diverse interactions the company engages in both internally and externally.

According to her, it was decided that participation in the session would be voluntary except for the Human Resources and Marketing teams. The objectives of the training session were defined by the HR department and communicated to FLECHA including increasing awareness of diversity, equity, and inclusion of sexual and gender diversity, enhancing consciousness regarding these topics among employees, and promoting inclusive communication practices.

The HR Director noted that the company's commitment to these objectives is reflected in its regular surveys on how diversity and inclusion topics are felt in the company X work environment by its employees which have yielded positive results, aligning well with industry benchmarks. However, after analyzing some details of the survey, the general content may lead to overly optimistic results that do not accurately reflect the organization's reality. Additionally, a lack of awareness among employees regarding DEI issues can contribute to the creation of a superficial environment that

appears diverse, equitable, and inclusive but lacks the genuine depth that training sessions can provide.

Regarding the existing policies of the company related to inclusion and gender identity, she also highlighted the presence of the Social Responsibility Committee which is responsible for advocating actions that promote inclusion and diversity aligned with the global directives and two mandatory training while onboarding: Allyship and Understanding of Unconscious Biases.

She expected the voluntary nature of the training session to mitigate potential resistance among employees. This expectation highlights her concern that some employees may be dissatisfied with the training. This dissatisfaction may stem from underlying prejudices and resistance to change within the organization.

Finally, the HR Director outlined plans to update internal regulations and codes of conduct in response to insights gained from the training session. Additionally, she indicated that there are intentions to implement gender-neutral language in internal communications and to consider celebrating significant dates such as LGBTQ+ Pride Month. These initiatives will be contingent upon feedback and guidance derived from the training experience.

The insights from the HR Director of company X underscore the importance of leadership in driving DEI initiatives, as supported by Nishii (2013) and Shore et al. (2011). The HR Director's proactive engagement with DEI training reflects the critical role leadership plays in fostering an inclusive organizational culture. As Ferdman & Deane (2014) suggest, leadership involvement is key to embedding DEI principles into the company's identity, ensuring that diversity efforts are more than just superficial actions. This interview highlights that leadership commitment is not just symbolic but essential in steering meaningful cultural change within organizations.

5.2. Questionnaires Result

In the second stage of our data collection company X employees completed pre-training and post-training questionnaires to assess the effectiveness and impact of the diversity and inclusion training sessions facilitated by FLECHA.

5.2.1. Pre-Training Questionnaire - Environment Characterization

The pre-training questionnaire introduced the concept of Environment Characterization, which was measured by four variables: Organizational Affiliation which will measure the feeling of belonging; Perceived Inclusiveness and Value which will measure the perceived inclusiveness and value by the employees of the organization; Perceived Care and Perspective which will measure the perceived care

of the organization with them; Perceived Listening and Comfort which will measure if the workers feel heard and comfortable giving their insights into the organization. Responses were measured on a 1 to 7 Likert scale, allowing participants to express their level of agreement or disagreement.

In order to evaluate the internal consistency of each variable composed by the items of the questionnaire it was conducted a reliability analysis of the Organization Affiliation variable resulted in a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.908, indicating excellent internal consistency among the two items.

Table 5.1- Reliability Statistics of the Organization Affiliation Scale

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,908	2

The reliability analysis of the Perceived Inclusiveness and Value variable resulted in a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.844, indicating good internal consistency among the two items.

Table 5.2- Reliability Statistics of the Perceived Inclusiveness, and Value Scale

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,844	2

For the Perceived Care and Perspective variable the reliability analysis resulted in a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.847, indicating good internal consistency among the two items.

Table 5.3- Reliability Statistics of the Perceived Care and Perspective Scale

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,847	2

The reliability analysis of the Perceived Listening and Comfort variable resulted in a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.726, indicating acceptable internal consistency among the two items.

Table 5.4- Reliability Statistics of the Perceived Listening, and Comfort Scale

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,726	2

Descriptive analyses were carried out for the four variables in the study. We were interested in participants' perceptions of the company in terms of belonging, inclusivity, care, and comfort within the company.

For the Organizational Affiliation variable, the mean score was 6.38, for the Perceived Inclusiveness and Value variable the mean score was 6.42 and for Perceived Care and Perspective and Perceived Listening and Comfort variables the mean score was 6.23. In general, participants seemed to view the company positively, as very inclusive and caring, and felt high levels of affiliation

The workers highlighted strong positive feelings towards the company environment. The percentiles and the presence of high modes (7.00) for several constructs show that a significant number of participants rated their experiences at the upper end of the scale.

Table 5.5- Mean and Percentiles for Pre-Training Responses

Statistics					
		Organizational Affiliation	Perceived Inclusiveness and Value	Perceived Care and Perspective	Perceived Listening and Comfort
Mean		6,3846	6,4231	6,2308	6,2308
Percentiles	25	6,0000	6,0000	5,2500	5,7500
	50	6,5000	6,5000	6,5000	6,0000
	75	7,0000	7,0000	7,0000	7,0000

To understand the central tendency and distribution of responses, we calculated the median, mode, and standard deviation. The results for Organizational Affiliation showed a median of 6.50, with a mode of 6.00. The standard deviation was 0.62, indicating relatively low variability in responses.

For Inclusiveness and Value, the median was also 6.50, but the mode was 7.00, showing a higher concentration of responses at the upper end. The standard deviation was 0.76, reflecting moderate variability.

Care and Perspective had a median of 6.50 and a mode of 7.00, with a standard deviation of 0.90, the highest among the variables, suggesting greater variability in participant responses.

Finally, for Listening and Comfort, the median was 6.00, with a mode of 7.00, and a standard deviation of 0.78, indicating some variability but less than that of Care and Perspective.

Table 5.6- Median, Mode and Std. Deviation for Pré-Training Responses

Statistics				
	Organizational Affiliation	Perceived Inclusiveness and Value	Perceived Care and Perspective	Perceived Listening and Comfort
Median	6,5000	6,5000	6,5000	6,0000
Mode	6,00 ^a	7,00	7,00	7,00
Std. Deviation	,61758	,75955	,90405	,78037
a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown				

To understand the range and variability of participant responses we calculated the minimum and maximum scores, as well as variances for each variable.

The variance for Organizational Affiliation was 0.381, indicating a low level of variability in the responses. This suggests that the majority of respondents provided similar ratings, showing consistent perceptions about their feeling of belonging in the organization. The minimum value recorded was 5.00, which suggests that even the lowest ratings are moderately positive, with no respondents giving a low score. The maximum value of 7.00 shows that some respondents rated their Organizational Affiliation at the highest possible level, indicating very strong positive perceptions.

For Perceived Inclusiveness and Value, the variance was 0.577, which is slightly higher, implying a broader range of responses compared to Organizational Affiliation. This suggests that while some respondents may strongly feel included and valued, others had more moderate views. The minimum rating was 4.50, indicating that some respondents were slightly below the midpoint in their rating. However, the maximum rating of 7.00 suggests that there are respondents who felt fully included and valued.

The variance for Perceived Care and Perspective was 0.817, reflecting even greater variability in the responses. This indicates that respondents had differing views about how they think the organization cares about them. The minimum value was 4.50, meaning that the lowest ratings are near the middle of the scale, while the maximum value of 7.00 indicates that some respondents felt very strongly that they were cared for and their perspectives were considered.

The variance for perceived listening and comfort was 0.609, showing moderate variability in the responses. The minimum value was 4.50, suggesting that even the lowest ratings are above the neutral point, while the maximum value of 7.00 indicates that some respondents felt fully listened to and comfortable sharing their opinions at work. This suggests that, while there was some variation in responses, most respondents provided moderately to highly positive ratings in this area.

Table 5.7- Range and Variability of Pre-Training Responses

Statistics				
	Organizational Affiliation	Perceived Inclusiveness and Value	Perceived Care and Perspective	Perceived Listening and Comfort
Variance	,381	,577	,817	,609
Minimum	5,00	4,50	4,50	4,50
Maximum	7,00	7,00	7,00	7,00

The high levels of perceived inclusivity, care, and organizational affiliation reported in the pre-training questionnaire reflect the already positive workplace environment at company X. These results align with Shore et al. (2011), who argue that inclusive environments enhance employee engagement and commitment. However, as Roberson (2019) suggests, diversity without intentional inclusion can be insufficient. The findings emphasize that while company X has made strides in fostering inclusivity, further efforts are needed to address deeper systemic issues that go beyond surface-level diversity.

5.2.2. Pre-Training Questionnaire vs Post-Training Questionnaire - Attitudes Towards Diversity

To assess possible changes resulting from the training, the pre and post-training questionnaire featured two common constructs: Attitudes Toward Diversity and Intergroup Anxiety, which will be analyzed further. The concept of Attitudes Towards Diversity was measured by two variables: Pre Diversity Influence/ Post Diversity Influence and Pre Diversity Feeling/ Post Diversity Feeling. Responses were measured on a 1 to 7 Likert scale, allowing participants to express their level of agreement or disagreement.

The descriptive statistics provided allow us to compare the results of the pre-training and the post-training questionnaires for the concept of Attitudes towards Diversity, specifically of the two variables: Diversity Influence that will measure the impact of diversity at the workplace in the worker's perspective, and Diversity Feeling that will measure how the workers feel about working at a diverse workforce.

A Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test was carried out to compare perceptions of the impact of diversity on companies before and after the training program.

The results show that post-training scores for diversity influence and diversity feeling were (marginally) lower than pre-training scores ($Z = -1.841$, $p = 0.066$). Although the p-value of 0.066 was slightly above the common threshold of 0.05, indicating that the changes observed are not statistically significant at the 5% level, this falls within the range sometimes referred to as marginal significance.

Table 5.8- Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test for Diversity Influence and Feeling

Test Statistics ^a		
	Pre Diversity Influence – Post Diversity Influence	Pre Diversity Feeling – Post Diversity Feeling
Z	-1,841 ^b	-1,841 ^b
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	,066	,066
a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test		
b. Based on negative ranks.		

For the Pre Diversity Influence variable data include 13 valid responses, with a mean score of 6.35, a standard deviation of 1.48, and a range from 2.00 to 7.00.

The Post Diversity Influence variable data include 5 valid responses, with a mean score of 6.10, a standard deviation of 0.74, and a range from 5.00 to 7.00.

We see a slight decrease in the mean score from 6.35 pre-training to 6.10 post-training. This change, while small, indicates a slight decline in the perceived impact of diversity following the training. However, the standard deviation decreased from 1.48 to 0.74, indicating that participants' responses became more consistent after the training, clustering more closely around the mean.

Table 5.9- Pre- and Post-Training Descriptive Statistics for Diversity Influence

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Pre Diversity Influence	13	6,3462	1,47739	2,00	7,00
Post Diversity Influence	5	6,1000	,74162	5,00	7,00

We also wanted to measure the feelings towards diversity before and after the training. For the Pre Diversity Feeling variable data include a mean score of 6.23, a standard deviation of 1.30, and a range from 2.50 to 7.00. The Post Diversity Feeling variable data include 5 valid responses, with a mean score of 5.60, a standard deviation of 1.14, and a range from 4.00 to 7.00.

The mean score decreased more noticeably from 6.23 pre-training to 5.60 post-training. This suggests a reduction in the positive feelings towards diversity following the training. The standard deviation also decreased slightly from 1.30 to 1.14, suggesting a minor increase in the consistency of responses, although the range indicates that some participants rated their feelings towards diversity lower after the training.

Table 5.10- Pre- and Post-Training Descriptive Statistics for Diversity Feeling

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Pre Diversity Feeling	13	6,2308	1,30089	2,50	7,00
Post Diversity Feeling	5	5,6000	1,14018	4,00	7,00

These findings present a nuanced picture of the training program's impact on Attitudes toward Diversity. While the average scores for both constructs slightly decreased post-training, the reduced standard deviations indicate that participants' views became more homogeneous. This could suggest that the training had a clarifying effect, possibly helping participants to develop a more consistent understanding of diversity, even if it did not universally enhance their attitudes as initially expected by the HR Director. The reduced number of respondents on the post-questionnaire should also be taken into consideration on the impact of the results since it was a voluntary act; this smaller number was potentially answered by the respondents who gained more knowledge about the topics and consequently gained the consciousness of their complexity. As we can see the training sessions already had a meaningful influence on the perceptions of the workers however in practical terms the impact was not yet felt by them which leads us to think that the initial goal set by company X of an immediate change on the trainees did not have into consideration the complexity of the topics discussed.

To gain deeper insights into the participants' experiences and perceptions of post-training, qualitative follow-up interviews were carried out, the results of which are presented in section 5.3. Employee Interviews.

The slight decrease in Attitudes Toward Diversity post-training may initially appear counterintuitive but is consistent with the literature on DEI training, which highlights the complexity of addressing unconscious biases (Roberson et al., 2003). As Ramos et al. (2016) suggest, increased awareness can sometimes lead to greater discomfort as employees confront their biases, leading to more nuanced and critical views of diversity. This highlights the importance of continuous learning, as one-off training sessions may expose deeper issues that require ongoing dialogue and reflection (Dobbin & Kalev, 2016).

5.2.3 Pre-Training Questionnaire vs. Post-Training Questionnaire - Intergroup Anxiety

The concept of Intergroup Anxiety was measured by two variables: Pre Diversity Challenges/ Post Diversity Challenges and Pre Diversity Insecurity/ Post Diversity Insecurity. Responses were measured on a 1 to 7 Likert scale, allowing participants to express their level of agreement or disagreement.

The descriptive statistics provided allow us to compare the results of the pre and post-training questionnaires for the variable of Intergroup Anxiety, specifically focusing on the two variables: Diversity Challenges which will measure how challenging diversity can be in the worker's perspective, and Diversity Insecurity that will measure how diversity makes the respondents feel insecure.

In order to uncover the changes we decided to calculate the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test results to provide insights into the statistical significance of changes in Intergroup Anxiety, focusing specifically on the Diversity Challenges variable and the Diversity Insecurity before and after the training program.

As we can see above, for the Pre Diversity Challenges/ Post Diversity Challenges variables, the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test yields a Z value of -0.405 and a p-value (Asymptotic Significance 2-tailed) of 0.686. The negative Z value indicates that, on average, post-training scores are slightly lower than pre-training scores for this construct, but the p-value of 0.686 is well above the common significance threshold of 0.05. This suggests that the observed changes in Diversity Challenges scores are not statistically significant. The high p-value implies that there is insufficient evidence to conclude a significant difference between pre-training and post-training scores for Diversity Challenges.

Table 5.11- Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test for Diversity Challenges

Test Statistics ^a	
	Pre Diversity Challenges – Post Diversity Challenges
Z	-,405 ^b
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	,686
a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test	
b. Based on negative ranks.	
c. Based on positive ranks.	

The Pre Diversity Challenges variable data include a mean score of 3.00, a standard deviation of 1.96, and a range from 1.00 to 7.00.

The Post Diversity Challenges variable data include 5 valid responses, with a mean score of 3.00, a standard deviation of 1.37, and a range from 1.00 to 4.50.

Comparing these two sets of data, we see no change in the mean score, which remained constant at 3.00 pre-training and post-training. This indicates that the perceived challenges of diversity were not significantly altered by the training. However, the standard deviation decreased from 1.96 to 1.37, indicating that participants' responses became more consistent after the training, clustering more closely around the mean.

Table 5.12- Descriptive Statistics for Diversity Challenges

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Pre Diversity Challenges	13	3,0000	1,95789	1,00	7,00
Post Diversity Challenges	5	3,0000	1,36931	1,00	4,50

We also wanted to measure the insecurity felt towards diversity before and after the training. For the Diversity Insecurity variable, the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test provided a Z value of -0.730 and a p-value of 0.465. The negative Z value indicates that post-training scores are generally higher than pre-training scores, reflecting an increase in perceived insecurity related to diversity. However, the p-value of 0.465 is also above the threshold of 0.05, indicating that the increase in perceived insecurity is not statistically significant. The results suggest that the observed changes in Diversity Insecurity scores are not statistically significant either.

Table 5.13- Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test for Diversity Insecurity

Test Statistics ^a	
	Pre Diversity Insecurity – Post Diversity Insecurity
Z	-,730 ^c
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	,465
a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test	
b. Based on negative ranks.	
c. Based on positive ranks.	

For the Pre Diversity Insecurity variable data include a mean score of 2.96, a standard deviation of 1.89, and a range from 1.00 to 7.00.

The Post Diversity Insecurity variable data include 5 valid responses, with a mean score of 3.50, a standard deviation of 1.12, and a range from 2.00 to 5.00.

The mean score increased from 2.96 pre-training to 3.50 post-training. This suggests a rise in the perceived insecurity related to diversity following the training. The standard deviation also decreased from 1.89 to 1.12, suggesting a notable increase in the consistency of responses, with participants' views becoming more homogeneous post-training.

Table 5.14- Descriptive Statistics for Diversity Insecurity

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Pre Diversity Insecurity	13	2,9615	1,88703	1,00	7,00
Post Diversity Insecurity	5	3,5000	1,11803	2,00	5,00

These findings present a nuanced picture of the training program's impact on Intergroup Anxiety. While the average score for Diversity Challenges remained unchanged, indicating that the training did not significantly alter participants' perceptions in this area, the reduced standard deviation suggests a clarifying effect, possibly helping participants develop a more consistent understanding of diversity challenges. In contrast, the increase in the mean score for Diversity Insecurity suggests that participants felt more insecure about diversity after the training which can be justified by the consciousness gained by the training. The reduced standard deviation indicates that participants' views became more consistent, which might imply that the training influenced them to align their views more closely, even if those views leaned towards greater insecurity.

The observed increase in perceived diversity insecurity post-training warrants further investigation to understand the underlying reasons. To gain deeper insights into the participants' experiences and perceptions post-training, it would be beneficial to conduct qualitative follow-up interviews that will be analyzed further.

Overall, the training program had a mixed impact on the Intergroup Anxiety construct. It led to more consistent perceptions of diversity challenges but also resulted in an increased sense of insecurity regarding diversity. This highlights the complex nature of diversity training and underscores the need for ongoing assessment and refinement to effectively address the various dimensions of Intergroup Anxiety. The reduced number of respondents on the post-questionnaire should also be taken into consideration on the impact of the results since it was a voluntary act; this smaller number was potentially answered by the respondents who gained more knowledge about the topics and consequently gained consciousness of their complexity, similarly to the previous construct “Attitudes towards Diversity”.

These findings suggest that the training program did not result in statistically significant changes in either the Diversity Challenges or Diversity Insecurity variables. However, the non-significant results do not rule out the possibility of subtle effects or trends that might emerge with a larger sample size or different data variations, like the “Attitudes towards Diversity” construct.

The mixed impact of the training on intergroup anxiety, where challenges remained constant but perceived insecurity increased, aligns with findings by Ramos et al. (2016) and Brewer (2010), who argue that diversity training can initially heighten awareness of intergroup tensions. This increased insecurity reflects the discomfort employees may feel when faced with complex diversity dynamics. Such outcomes support the need for sustained DEI interventions that go beyond raising awareness and focus on long-term behavior change (Roberson et al., 2003).

5.2.4. Perceived Influence of the Training (Post-Training Questionnaire)

The post-training questionnaire introduced the concept of the Training Influence, which was measured by three variables: Personal Influence which will measure how workers perceive the influence of the training in themselves; Workplace Awareness which will measure how workers perceive the influence of the training in the work environment and Relevance of Management which will measure how important is for workers the presence of their leaders in the training. Responses were measured on a 1 to 7 Likert scale, allowing participants to express their level of agreement or disagreement.

In order to evaluate the internal consistency of each variable composed by the items of the questionnaire it was conducted a reliability analysis for the Workplace Awareness variable shows a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.929, indicating excellent internal consistency for the set of items.

Table 5.15- Post-Training Reliability Statistics of the Workplace Awareness Scale

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,929	2

Since the Personal Influence and Relevance of Management variables are composed of one item it is not relevant to calculate its Cronbach's Alpha.

We were interested in participants' perceptions of the company in terms of the influence of the training in the company. In general, participants evaluated the training positively.

For Personal Influence, the mean score was 6.40, indicating a generally high rate on how the training influenced the respondents on their general thoughts toward DEI topics. The 25th percentile was 5.50, suggesting that a quarter of the respondents rated their influence slightly above average. The median (50th percentile) was 7.00, meaning that half of the respondents gave the highest possible rating. The 75th percentile also stranded at 7.00, indicating a strong consensus in the upper range, where a significant portion of respondents rated a very high influence of the training in their personal thoughts.

The Workplace Awareness variable, scored a mean of 6.30, reflecting a generally positive awareness of workplace dynamics. The 25th percentile was 5.50, suggesting that a quarter of respondents rated their awareness just above the midpoint. The median (50th percentile) was 6.50, indicating that the majority of respondents have a moderately high level of awareness. The 75th percentile, at 7.00, shows that the top quarter of respondents rated their workplace awareness at the highest level.

For Relevance of Management, the mean was the highest among the three variables, at 6.60, signifying that respondents perceive the presence of leaders to be highly relevant in DEI training. The 25th percentile was 6.00, showing that even the lowest quartile provided positive evaluations of management relevance. Both the median and 75th percentile were at 7.00, demonstrating a strong consensus among respondents, with many giving the highest possible rating for management's relevance.

Table 5.16- Mean and Percentiles of Post-Training Responses

Statistics			
	Personal Influence	Workplace Awareness	Relevance of Management
Mean	6,4000	6,3000	6,60
Percentiles	25	5,5000	6,00
	50	7,0000	7,00
	75	7,0000	7,00

To understand the central tendency and distribution of responses, we calculated the median, mode, and standard deviation. The results were similar for the Personal Influence variable and the Management variable. The median score was 7.00, the mode was also 7.00 and the standard deviation was 0.89, reflecting some degree of variability in responses, though it remains relatively low. The variance was 0.80, supporting the observation of moderate variability.

In terms of Workplace Awareness, the median score was 6.50, the mode was 7.00, the standard deviation is 0.84, denoting some variability in responses, and the variance was 0.70, corroborating the moderate variability observed.

The high mean scores and the consistent median and mode values of 7.00 suggest that the participants generally perceive the training impact very positively. The relatively low standard deviations and variances indicate that these positive perceptions are consistent across the sample. These findings suggest that the training program was effective in enhancing participants' personal training impact, increasing their awareness in the workplace, and highlighting the relevance of management participation in the training.

Table 5.17- Median, Mode, Std. Deviation and Variance of Post-Training Responses

Statistics			
	Personal Influence	Workplace Awareness	Relevance of Management
Median	7,0000	6,5000	7,00
Mode	7,00	7,00	7
Std. Deviation	,89443	,83666	,894
Variance	,800	,700	,800

To understand the range and variability of participant responses we calculated the minimum and maximum scores. The minimum score for all variables was 5.00, while the maximum score was 7.00. This range indicates that while some participants rated the impact of the training slightly lower, the overall responses were skewed toward the higher end of the scale.

Table 5.18- Minimum and Maximum Scores for Post-Training Responses

Statistics			
	Personal Influence	Workplace Awareness	Relevance of Management
Minimum	5,00	5,00	5
Maximum	7,00	7,00	7

This study adds to the existing body of knowledge on DEI training by highlighting the complex nature of changing attitudes within organizations. The quantitative analysis, particularly in the sections comparing pre- and post-training results on "Attitudes Towards Diversity" and "Intergroup Anxiety," demonstrates that while DEI training fosters a more consistent understanding of diversity issues, it does not always lead to immediate positive changes in perception. Some participants reported increased insecurity around diversity post-training, suggesting that the training may have heightened their awareness of the challenges and sensitivities involved. These findings contribute to the theory by showing that DEI training can reveal underlying tensions and complexities that go beyond simple attitudinal shifts, aligning with the literature that highlights the importance of ongoing, rather than one-time, interventions to achieve lasting organizational change.

The positive feedback on the perceived impact of the training, especially in terms of management involvement, reinforces the literature's emphasis on leadership's role in shaping organizational culture (Edmondson, 1999; Shore et al., 2011). The high scores for the relevance of management in training sessions suggest that when leadership visibly supports DEI efforts, employees are more likely to view these initiatives as important and impactful (Nishii, 2013). This confirms that for DEI training to be effective, management must not only endorse but actively participate in these initiatives.

5.3. Employee Interviews

To better understand the impact of the training, four follow-up interviews were conducted, via telephone, with employees who had participated in the training session and voluntarily provided their contact information. The information gathered from the four interviews conducted offers a comprehensive overview that reveal underlying motivations and nuances in participant attitudes that are often missed in more structured questionnaires and can help us clarify some of their results.

These interviews provide insights into the participants' expectations, perceived benefits, and challenges encountered during the training which will help understand how their perspectives were influenced by the training and how that affected them.

5.3.1. Expectations, Outcomes, and Practical Benefits

All participants came into the training with expectations, though the level of specificity varied. Some sought a broader understanding of diversity, while others looked for practical tools. For example, Interviewee 1 hoped to gain insights into fostering inclusion across different perspectives, while the other interviewees were more focused on applying inclusive language in everyday communication. However, what stood out across the interviews was that all participants expected the training to expand their understanding and practical skills related to DEI issues.

Despite some participants, such as Interviewee 4, expressing that they didn't receive all the specific tools they were hoping for, the training was largely viewed as successful. A common sentiment was that it exceeded expectations by providing a more profound understanding of diversity. As one interviewee put it, "Although I didn't get exactly what I expected, the training gave me something even more valuable: an awareness of different identities and how to approach communication more thoughtfully" (Interviewee 4, 2024). This sense of broadened perspectives, even when specific outcomes weren't fully met, underscores the overall effectiveness of the training.

On a practical level, the training provided useful tools for fostering inclusion, particularly in workplace settings. Interviewee 3 noted that it demystified key issues such as gender equality, making the use of inclusive language in day-to-day operations, including emails and policies, much more straightforward. Interviewee 4, despite having hoped for more specific tools, felt more confident addressing clients of diverse identities, which was particularly helpful in their professional interactions. These benefits highlight how the training's impact went beyond mere theoretical understanding, enabling participants to apply what they learned directly in their professional and personal environments.

By merging expectations with outcomes and practical benefits, it's clear that the training successfully addressed both broad and specific goals. Participants gained not only a deeper understanding of diversity but also practical skills they could implement immediately.

5.3.2. Challenges and Areas for Improvement

One of the challenges participants faced was the difficulty of incorporating inclusive language into daily communication. Changing long-established habits, especially in a language as gendered as Portuguese, was seen as a complex task. As one interviewee noted, "The issue of inclusive language is something I still haven't fully absorbed" (Interviewee 2, 2024). This suggests that while the training laid the groundwork, continued effort is required to fully integrate inclusive practices into everyday interactions.

Some participants also felt that the training's short duration limited deeper exploration of key topics. Interviewee 4, for instance, remarked that they had expected more practical tools, particularly around inclusive language, and suggested that longer sessions would allow for more comprehensive discussions.

5.3.3. Workplace Impact and Recommendations

The impact of the training on the workplace was subtle but significant. Participants observed a reduction in inappropriate comments and an increased awareness of inclusivity. One interviewee commented on this shift, noting, “There’s less openness to offensive comments now, and people are more careful about what they say” (Interviewee 4, 2024). This passive policing of behavior suggests that the training not only raised awareness but also encouraged self-regulation among employees.

There was a strong consensus that such training should be mandatory for all employees, not just those already interested in DEI issues. Making the training compulsory would ensure that everyone shares a basic understanding of inclusivity, thereby fostering a more respectful and cohesive workplace culture. As one interviewee pointed out, “Those who didn’t participate remain unaware, while those who did are now more informed” (Interviewee 1, 2024). This would help create a baseline of awareness across the organization, enhancing the overall work environment.

The continued discussions around inclusivity after the training also suggest its lasting impact. Several participants mentioned that colleagues who hadn’t attended were now more interested, indicating that the training sparked broader reflection and dialogue within the company.

The employee interviews revealed a nuanced understanding of the DEI training’s impact, with many expressing the need for continued efforts and engagement. This aligns with the literature, which emphasizes that DEI is an ongoing process rather than a one-time intervention (Ferdman & Deane, 2014). The employees’ recognition of the training’s value but desire for more in-depth discussions reflects the broader need for organizations to embed DEI into everyday practices and decision-making, as suggested by Dobbin & Kalev (2016).

5.4. After- Session

Company X recognized the feedback from the training participants regarding the short duration of the diversity and inclusion sessions, which they felt limited the depth of discussion on complex topics. Employees expressed a keen desire to further explore and understand these important DEI topics, indicating that the training had sparked significant interest and desire for deeper engagement.

Understanding the positive impact the initial sessions had on the staff, the HR Director aligned with the top management members decided to act on this feedback. They reached out to FLECHA, the training provider, three months after the initial training to organize an after-session specifically designed to delve deeper into these complex issues.

5.4.1. Nonparticipant Observation

Company X has a tradition of doing a voluntary talk between the CEO and the workers, where they can submit anonymous questions for the CEO to answer in person. This happens during the morning in a breakfast environment, outside of the company facilities.

After the feedback received on the training session the HR Director decided to change the format of this regular breakfast event and incorporate DEI topics in it. She then contacted FLECHA, and the breakfast became an open conversation among Laura Falé and André Tecedeiro, the representative members of FLECHA, the workers, and the top management of company X.

A nonparticipant observation of this breakfast event was carried out (with top management permission), to gain further insights into the perspectives of both the workers and the members of the top management of company X on the issue of DEI and how it can influence the work environment.

Originally scheduled for May, the session was postponed to June by company X to align with Pride Month celebrations. It was held on the second of June of 2024 at the Altis Belém Hotel & Spa, with 16 participants, including Laura Falé and André Tecedeiro from FLECHA, and three top management members of company X, including the CEO and the HR Director. The participants were seated in chairs that were strategically put in a circle format to enhance an open and clear talk between the members.

Laura and André opened the session by discussing diversity, prejudices, the value of diverse perspectives, gender identity, and inclusive communication practices. Following the introduction of each topic, the workers were encouraged to share their opinions and personal experiences, creating a space for candid and meaningful exchanges.

The participants were characterized by the experiences they shared, with most coming from traditional and conservative backgrounds. It is interesting to note that a small minority, primarily those who had attended the previous training session and so had more knowledge and skills on the topics discussed, chose to take on a more observant role rather than actively participating, possibly to gauge the reactions and contributions of others who were less informed. This behavior can be interpreted as counterintuitive, as one might expect these individuals to engage more actively. Instead,

their choice to observe may indicate a strategic intent to gauge the reactions and contributions of less informed participants, rather than leading the discussion themselves.

One participant, a Brazilian woman, recounted an incident where a culturally insensitive joke made by a male colleague was directed at her, leaving her visibly affected while telling the story. Even in environments that demonstrate a clear commitment to fostering inclusivity and diversity, such unconscious incidents can still persist. While the participant was telling this event the face of the CEO was completely shocked since it was right after a comment that he made about how inclusive he thought the company was.

At a certain point, the HR Director said that when this type of training sessions are conducted most of the participants are women, which was triggering since 80% of company X's workforce is male. The HR Director's point was not mute, however, since in that very session, only four of the participants were male (vs. 10 female). The greater interest shown by women in DEI topics suggests that men may lack the sensitivity to recognize areas where their communication skills need improvement (McKinsey & Company, 2023), as demonstrated in the earlier discussion of the Brazilian joke.

It was also reported by a couple of participants that following the previous training session, some members of the top management (who had not attended the session) made jokes about inclusive language, demonstrating a lack of seriousness toward the topic, which was not a surprise for any of the participants.

After that prominent topic of discussion, it was perceived the importance of the CEO and leadership in fostering a more inclusive and diverse environment. One employee recounted how her HR Director's choice of attire directly influenced her own dressing habits. She remarked to the HR Director, "I only wear shorter skirts because I saw you wearing a short skirt." This highlights how leaders, through their dress, communication, and behavior, can significantly shape perceptions of what is considered appropriate within the organization.

The leadership team, including the CEO and HR Director, reflected on the feedback and narratives shared. They acknowledged a significant insight: those employees who had not attended the voluntary training sessions were likely those most in need of this educational experience. This realization led to a proposal to make future DEI training sessions mandatory for all employees, to ensure engagement across the entire workforce, promoting a more uniform understanding of DEI principles.

Furthermore, the leadership discussed the value of conducting an internal questionnaire to better understand the composition of their workforce. For instance, if the questionnaire reveals a significant

number of employees with disabilities, the organization could then implement training specifically focused on creating an accessible and inclusive environment for these employees. By understanding key demographics, such as gender identity, sexual orientation, and cultural backgrounds, the company can ensure that its DEI initiatives are not only broad in scope but also responsive to the particular needs of its workforce. According to Roberson (2019), diversity efforts are most effective when they are tailored to address the specific identities and experiences of employees, fostering a sense of belonging and inclusion. This targeted approach helps organizations address gaps in inclusivity and ensures that all employees- especially those from underrepresented or marginalized groups- feel supported and valued.

The session concluded with a Bingo game designed to explore participants' understanding of each other's diverse backgrounds. In this activity, participants filled out a sheet with various characteristics related to life experiences and then had to match these characteristics to their colleagues. The first person to complete all the blanks with the correct names of their colleagues was declared the winner. The extended time taken to complete the game suggested some difficulty in accurately identifying the backgrounds of their peers, indicating that participants may not be deeply familiar with each other's personal experiences.

This session and the discussions it spurred led to a pivotal shift in company X 's approach to DEI. The emphasis on open dialogue and sharing personal experiences showed how hidden microaggressions can be and the importance of these initiatives to uncover them.

The reflections gathered after the DEI sessions reveal that while employees appreciated the training, there was a clear desire for deeper engagement and follow-up. This supports the argument made by Ferdman & Deane (2014) that one-off DEI sessions are insufficient for driving long-term cultural change. The post-session reflections highlight the importance of continuous dialogue and practical application of DEI principles in day-to-day work, reinforcing the literature's call for sustained and iterative interventions to truly shift organizational culture (Dobbin & Kalev, 2016).

5.5. CEO Reflections on DEI Training

After analyzing the perspectives of the HR Director and workers regarding the training session, an interview was conducted with the CEO of company X to further enrich the analysis and gather his insights, providing a more complete understanding of the training's overall impact.

The CEO of company X, when questioned about the company's workplace culture describes it as one that, despite being in the IT sector, is characterized by a strong sense of community and familiarity among employees and leadership. From the CEO's perspective, the IT sector, where company X

operates, presents challenges in achieving gender equity and fostering diversity. This is largely due to the predominance of engineering qualifications, which traditionally attract more male students. As a result, company X has a significantly higher number of male employees compared to female employees.

Greenhaus, Callanan, and Godshalk (2009) highlighted the role of diversity training in fostering inclusive leadership behaviors, and according to the CEO, company X has implemented several conscious initiatives to promote inclusion within the organization, exemplified by their observance of LGBTQIAP+ Pride Month for the first time which resulted from the ongoing collaborations with FLECHA.

According to him, one of the primary challenges in advancing DEI within the company is ensuring equitable representation across various groups and holding leaders accountable for fostering an inclusive culture which includes maintaining transparency, ensuring equal opportunities, providing fair wages and benefits, and preventing discrimination.

Reflecting on the impact of the DEI training session held, the CEO noted a positive shift in employee perceptions and discussions around diversity and inclusion. The training facilitated more open and frequent discussions on these topics, extending beyond the formal training session. This resulted in a more open and secure environment where employees could freely exchange ideas and experiences. He believes that the training contributed significantly to reinforcing the company's inclusive culture, making all employees more aware of the company's commitment to these values.

In terms of enhancing communication and relationships among colleagues, the CEO emphasized that uniform knowledge, acceptance, and openness can be significantly helpful, stating, "If we are all on the same level of knowledge, acceptance, openness, and consideration, all verbal and non-verbal communication improves substantially" (CEO, 2024). He noted that the training helped improve both verbal and non-verbal communication within the company, promoting a more inclusive and respectful workplace. He also highlighted that understanding and respecting differences without judgment can help reduce conflicts among colleagues, thoughts that became more clear after the training. This is consistent with Bezrukova, Jehn, and Spell (2012), who found that well-structured training programs significantly improve intergroup relations and reduce instances of workplace conflict.

The CEO also outlined the crucial role of leaders in promoting an inclusive and diverse work environment, emphasizing that while diversity starts the journey, achieving equity and fostering inclusion are the ultimate goals for company X. Similarly to Mello (2015) who recognized that organizational performance is intrinsically linked to employee performance, and that training is

pivotal in enhancing employee motivation, satisfaction, and commitment to the job, the company X CEO also indicated that he thinks that the tangible benefits of a more inclusive and diverse work environment can foster greater innovation, better decision-making, and stronger financial performance. Diverse teams are better equipped to anticipate market changes, meet customer needs, and build long-lasting relationships with clients and partners. Moreover, a commitment to DEI helps attract and retain top talent, providing a competitive edge in the marketplace.

He believes that the DEI training met the company's expectations by fostering a more inclusive and diverse workplace culture. Company X plans to continue implementing best practices and addressing critical DEI topics to ensure the well-being of all employees and contribute to a more cohesive and equitable society.

The CEO's reflections on DEI training emphasize the critical role of leadership in sustaining these initiatives, as supported by Shore et al. (2011) and Ferdman & Deane (2014). The CEO's commitment to embedding DEI within the organization reflects the importance of having top management actively involved in these efforts. As Nishii (2013) notes, when leaders visibly champion DEI initiatives, it sends a strong message to the entire organization, ensuring that diversity, equity, and inclusion become core components of the organizational culture rather than peripheral efforts.

5.6. General Discussion

The findings of this study add meaningful insights to the existing literature on DEI training, particularly in how such programs influence employee attitudes and the broader organizational culture. The quantitative analysis, comparing pre- and post-training data on "Attitudes Towards Diversity" and "Intergroup Anxiety," demonstrates that while DEI training improves awareness, it doesn't always lead to immediate positive changes in perception. Some participants reported feeling increased insecurity post-training, possibly reflecting the heightened sensitivity to the complexities surrounding diversity, a phenomenon supported by previous research (Ramos et al., 2016). This aligns with the literature that suggests DEI training can uncover unconscious biases and reveal intergroup tensions, but these processes often result in temporary discomfort before any positive shifts in attitudes (Roberson et al., 2003).

Feedback from participants emphasized the need for extended, more comprehensive training sessions, especially around complex topics like inclusive language. Previous studies by Ferdman & Deane (2014) also highlight the importance of depth in DEI training, stressing that short, one-time interventions rarely generate sustained behavioral changes. Employees at company X, similarly,

suggested making DEI sessions mandatory and more in-depth, reflecting the broader call for continuous learning opportunities in DEI efforts (Dobbin & Kalev, 2016).

The study also underscores the critical role of leadership involvement in DEI initiatives. As Shore et al. (2011) argued, management's active participation in diversity programs is pivotal for success, and this was echoed in the feedback from company X employees, who responded positively to their leaders' involvement. The presence of leadership not only legitimizes DEI efforts but also reinforces the organization's commitment to inclusivity, setting a standard for others to follow (Edmondson, 1999). This resonates with Nishii (2013), who highlights that inclusive leadership is essential for embedding diversity into the organizational culture, ensuring DEI is seen not as a standalone effort but as part of the company's identity.

Interestingly, company X's openness to participate in external research reveals a high level of self-confidence in their DEI practices. This openness can be considered a form of self-selection bias, where organizations that are more confident in their inclusivity may be more willing to open themselves up for evaluation. In contrast, those less confident may avoid such scrutiny, as indicated by Dobbin & Kalev's (2016) observation that companies often hesitate to engage in rigorous DEI assessments unless already invested in inclusivity.

Moreover, the demand for additional DEI-focused sessions, such as the popular "Breakfast Session" initiated after the HR Director's DEI involvement, reflects what Ferdman (2014) describes as the domino effect of leadership-driven DEI initiatives. Once leadership sets the tone, it triggers a cascading interest across the organization, fostering a culture of continuous engagement with diversity issues. This shift in demand aligns with Optimal Distinctiveness Theory (ODT), as discussed by Brewer (1991), where employees strive to balance the need for belonging with the desire for uniqueness. DEI initiatives help employees navigate this balance, but they require ongoing dialogue to address the complexities involved.

While the findings indicate that the DEI training has had a clarifying effect- helping participants develop a more consistent understanding of diversity- there is still a long way to go. The slight increase in perceived insecurity post-training underscores the complexity of diversity issues and the necessity for sustained, iterative engagement. Bezrukova et al. (2012) suggest that well-structured diversity programs can reduce workplace conflict and improve intergroup relations, but these outcomes typically emerge after a period of adjustment, during which participants may experience increased anxiety as they confront previously unacknowledged biases.

In conclusion, this case study highlights the need for a multi-layered approach to DEI. A one-off training session is insufficient to foster a deep organizational change. The findings support the argument that DEI training is most effective when paired with leadership involvement (Shore et al., 2011), continuous learning (Dobbin & Kalev, 2016), and a long-term commitment to addressing systemic issues (Ferdman & Deane, 2014). Company X has taken important steps toward creating an inclusive workplace, but the road ahead requires sustained efforts and an ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of DEI initiatives.

6. Conclusions

This study examined the influence of DEI training on the organizational culture of company X, focusing on employee attitudes toward inclusivity and diversity, the role of management in DEI initiatives, and the challenges related to intergroup anxiety. Through a mixed-methods approach involving pre- and post-training surveys, semi-structured interviews, and non-participant observations, this research highlighted both the positive outcomes of the training and the complexities involved in achieving long-term organizational change. The findings indicate that DEI training successfully increased participants' awareness of diversity-related issues, particularly unconscious bias, and the importance of fostering an inclusive workplace environment. However, the training did not universally improve attitudes toward diversity, as demonstrated by the slight reduction in post-training scores for Diversity Impact and Diversity Feeling. This suggests that while awareness was heightened, participants became more critically reflective, recognizing the complexities of diversity more acutely than before.

One of the study's key takeaways is management's pivotal role in shaping the success of DEI initiatives. Management involvement significantly increased the perceived relevance of DEI efforts, underscoring the importance of leadership in embedding inclusivity within the organizational culture. The presence of leaders in DEI training sessions demonstrated a commitment to change, which likely contributed to employee engagement. However, despite these positive outcomes, challenges remain. Intergroup anxiety, particularly discomfort around colleagues from diverse backgrounds, persisted after the training. This indicates that a single DEI training session may be insufficient to address deeply ingrained biases and anxieties, emphasizing the need for sustained efforts and follow-up initiatives.

The findings from this study underscore several important implications for organizations aiming to improve their DEI efforts. While DEI training is a valuable starting point, it is clear that its long-term effectiveness depends on continuous, structured follow-up. Company X and similar organizations should consider adopting a broader DEI strategy that includes regular workshops, mentorship programs, and the establishment of Employee Resource Groups (ERGs). These initiatives can help reinforce the training's key messages and provide ongoing support for employees as they navigate complex diversity issues. Furthermore, the involvement of management was a critical factor in the perceived relevance of the training. To drive lasting change, leadership must go beyond participation in DEI sessions and actively promote inclusivity in day-to-day operations. Leaders should model inclusive behavior, set measurable goals for diversity and inclusion, and be held accountable for progress.

The persistence of intergroup anxiety suggests that more targeted interventions are needed. Future DEI programs should include components that specifically address this issue, such as creating safe spaces for open conversations, implementing peer-mentorship systems, or offering training that focuses on conflict resolution and empathy-building. These steps can help reduce discomfort and foster a more inclusive work environment. Moreover, the findings also point to the importance of customizing DEI training to the specific challenges and dynamics of the organization. One-size-fits-all training programs may not fully capture the nuanced needs of different teams or industries. In the case of this IT company, addressing both cultural and gender diversity was a key focus, but future iterations could delve deeper into specific identity groups, such as LGBTQIA+ inclusion, to offer a more comprehensive approach.

6.1. Limitations

Its contributions notwithstanding, as with any research, this study was not without its limitations. First, the sample size, particularly for the post-training questionnaire, was relatively small, which may have impacted the generalizability of the results. The voluntary nature of participation could have introduced a selection bias, as employees who were already more engaged with DEI topics were more likely to respond. Future studies should consider mandatory participation or larger sample sizes to obtain more representative data. Additionally, as this study focused on a single company, the findings may not fully apply to other organizations or industries. Company X's pre-existing commitment to diversity and inclusion may have influenced the results, as the organization already exhibited a relatively inclusive environment before the DEI training. Expanding this research to include multiple organizations across different sectors would provide a more robust understanding of DEI training's impact.

6.2. Future Research Suggestions

Building on the insights gained from this study, several avenues for future research are recommended. To better understand the long-term effects of DEI training, future research should adopt a longitudinal approach, tracking changes in employee attitudes and behaviors over time. This would allow researchers to assess whether initial improvements are sustained and identify the factors that contribute to lasting change. Future research should also compare different types of DEI interventions to determine which are most effective. For example, comparing the impact of workshops, e-learning modules, and mentorship programs would provide valuable insights into which methods produce the most meaningful and lasting changes in attitudes and behaviors. Additionally, studies should investigate how DEI training impacts employees from different demographic backgrounds (e.g., gender, race, sexual orientation). Understanding how various groups experience and benefit from DEI

training would allow organizations to tailor their programs more effectively and address the specific needs of underrepresented groups. Finally, future research should explore how DEI training affects broader organizational performance metrics, such as employee retention, innovation, and financial outcomes. Establishing a clearer link between DEI initiatives and organizational success would strengthen the business case for investing in diversity and inclusion.

This study highlights the potential of DEI training to positively influence organizational culture but also emphasizes that training alone is not enough. For DEI initiatives to achieve their full potential, organizations must commit to sustained, long-term efforts that are supported by leadership and tailored to the specific needs of their workforce. While DEI training at company X increased awareness and highlighted important diversity issues, the persistence of challenges such as intergroup anxiety underscores the complexity of fostering true inclusivity. By building on these insights and incorporating ongoing support mechanisms, organizations can create a more inclusive and equitable workplace, leading to long-term cultural transformation.

Bibliography

- Adams, J. S. (1965). Inequity in social exchange. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 2, 267–299. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601\(08\)60108-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601(08)60108-2)
- Ahmed, S. (2017). *Living a feminist life*. Duke University Press.
- Akhtar, M. D. (2016). Research design. In *Research in social sciences interdisciplinary perspectives*. ResearchGate. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/308915548>
- Asika, N. (2004). *Research methodology in the behavioral sciences*. Longman Publishers.
- Badgett, M. V. L., Durso, L. E., & Schneebaum, A. (2013). *The business impact of LGBT-supportive workplace policies*. The Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law.
- Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin*, 117(3), 497–529. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.117.3.497>
- Baxter, P., & Jack, S. (2010). Qualitative case study methodology: Study design and implementation for novice researchers. *The Qualitative Report*, 13(4), 544–559. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2008.1573>
- Beauregard, T. A., Ozturk, M. B., & Tatli, A. (2018). Gendered inclusion: Women’s experiences of equal opportunities in the workplace. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 25(2), 221–238. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12210>
- Bell, M. P. (2012). *Diversity in organizations*. Cengage Learning.
- Bernd, R. (2017). Theory and methodology of exploratory social science research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 5(4), 129–150. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2017.1301235>
- Bezrukova, K., Jehn, K. A., & Spell, C. S. (2012). The effects of diversity training on intergroup relations and organizational performance. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 33(1), 8-30.
- Brewer, M. B. (1991). The social self: On being the same and different at the same time. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 17(5), 475-482. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167291175001>
- Brewer, M. B. (2007). The importance of being we: Human nature and intergroup relations. *American Psychologist*, 62(8), 728–738. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.62.8.728>

- Brewer, M. B. (2010). Social identity complexity and acceptance of diversity. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 10*(2), 88-93. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327957pspr1002_1
- Bhasin, H. (2020). What is exploratory research? Types of exploratory studies in sales. *Marketing91*. <https://www.marketing91.com/exploratory-research/>
- Bock, L. (2015). *Work rules!:* Insights from inside Google that will transform how you live and lead. Grand Central Publishing.
- Byrd, M., & Scott, C. (2014). Diversity in the workplace: A synthesis of literature and agenda for future research. *Journal of Business Ethics, 119*(1), 21-33. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-013-1644-y>
- Budge, S. L., Adelson, J. L., & Howard, K. A. S. (2013). Anxiety and depression in transgender individuals: The roles of transition status, loss, social support, and coping. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 81*(3), 545–557. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0031774>
- Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. Routledge.
- Devine, P. G. (2017). Breaking the prejudice habit: Mechanisms, time course, and longevity. *American Psychologist, 72*(3), 249-256. <https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000105>
- Carter, A. B., & Phillips, K. W. (2021). Equity in organizations: Toward a critical understanding. *Organizational Psychology Review, 11*(2), 129–150. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2041386621992436>
- Chang, R. (2007). *Normativity and the metaethics of reasons*. Oxford University Press.
- Correll, S. J., & Park, B. (2005). The intersection of race and gender in the workplace. *Annual Review of Sociology, 31*(1), 147–169. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.31.041304.122503>
- Cox, T. Jr. (2001). *Creating the multicultural organization: A strategy for capturing the power of diversity*. Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Derven, M. (2014). Diversity and inclusion by design: Best practices from six global companies. *Industrial and Commercial Training, 46*(2), 84–91.
- DiCicco-Bloom, B., & Crabtree, B. F. (2006). The qualitative research interview. *Medical Education, 40*(4), 314–321. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2929.2006.02418.x>
- Dobbin, F., & Kalev, A. (2016). Why diversity programs fail. *Harvard Business Review, 94*(7–8), 52–60.

- Downey, S. N., van der Werff, L., Thomas, K. M., & Plaut, V. C. (2015). The role of diversity practices and inclusion in promoting trust and employee engagement. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 45*(1), 35–44.
- Edmondson, A. (1999). Psychological safety and learning behavior in work teams. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 44*(2), 350–383. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2666999>
- Ferdman, B. M. (2014). *Diversity at work: The practice of inclusion*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Ferdman, B. M., & Davidson, M. N. (2002). Inclusion: Beyond diversity and multiculturalism. In M. A. Paludi (Ed.), *Workplace diversity and gender equity: Beyond policies and practices* (pp. 35–62). Praeger.
- Ferdman, B. M., & Deane, B. R. (2014). *Diversity at work: The practice of inclusion*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Flores, A. R., Herman, J. L., Gates, G. J., & Brown, T. N. T. (2016). *How many adults identify as transgender in the United States?* The Williams Institute. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu>
- Ford, J. K., & Fisher, S. (2021). Diversity training: Perspectives on training effectiveness. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 106*(4), 599–612. <https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000874>
- Fredette, C., Bradshaw, P., & Krause, H. (2016). From diversity to inclusion: A multimethod study of diverse governing groups. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, 45*(1 Suppl), 28S–51S.
- Garg, S., & Sangwan, S. (2020). Literature review on diversity and inclusion at the workplace, 2010–2017. *The Journal of Business Perspective, 25*(1). Retrieved from <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0972262920959523>
- Garland-Thomson, R. (2005). Integrating disability, transforming feminist theory. *NWSA Journal, 14*(3), 1–32.
- Gerring, J. (2004). What is a case study and what is it good for? *American Political Science Review, 98*(2), 341–354. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055404001182>
- Goodman, N. R. (2013). Taking diversity and inclusion initiatives global. *Industrial and Commercial Training, 45*(3), 180–183.
- Goldstein, I. L., & Ford, J. K. (2002). *Training in organizations: Needs assessment, development, and evaluation* (4th ed.). Wadsworth.

- Grant, J. M., Mottet, L. A., Tanis, J., Harrison, J., Herman, J. L., & Keisling, M. (2011). *Injustice at every turn: A report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey*. National Center for Transgender Equality & National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.
- Greenberg, J. (1999). *The quest for justice on the job: Essays and experiments*. SAGE Publications.
- Greenhaus, J. H., Parasuraman, S., & Wormley, W. M. (2009). Race effects of organizational experience and career success: A field study of Black and White managers. *Academy of Management Journal*, 33(1), 64–86. <https://doi.org/10.5465/256352>
- Hammersley, M. (2012). Troubling theory in case study research. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 31(3), 393–405. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2011.631517>
- Hogg, M. A., Fielding, K. S., & Darley, J. M. (2005). Pro-social behavior: Group processes and intergroup relations. In *The Sage handbook of social psychology* (pp. 444-465). SAGE.
- Hughes, M. (2007). *Leadership in organizations: Approaches to understanding diversity*. Pearson Education.
- ILGA Portugal. (2023). Annual report on discrimination and harassment. Retrieved from <https://ilga-portugal.org>
- James, S. E., Herman, J. L., Rankin, S., Keisling, M., Mottet, L., & Anafi, M. (2016). *The report of the 2015 U.S. transgender survey*. National Center for Transgender Equality.
- Jetten, J., Spears, R., & Manstead, A. S. R. (1998). Defining intergroup relations: Social identity theory in social psychology. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 61(3), 122–137. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2787036>
- Johnson, T. L., & Nguyen, Q. (2020). *Contemporary approaches to diversity and inclusion in the workplace*. Routledge.
- Kaleel Jamison Consulting Group. (2016). Leveraging differences and inclusion pays off: Measuring the impact on profits and productivity. *The Kaleel Jamison Consulting Group*. Retrieved from <https://kaleeljcg.com>
- Kalev, A., Dobbin, F., & Kelly, E. (2006). Best practices or best guesses? Assessing the efficacy of corporate affirmative action and diversity policies. *American Sociological Review*, 71(4), 589–617. <https://doi.org/10.1177/000312240607100404>

- Katz, J. H., & Miller, F. A. (2016). Leveraging differences and inclusion pays off: Measuring the impact on profits and productivity. *The Kaleel Jamison Consulting Group*. Retrieved from <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/56b3ef5a20c647ed98996880/t/56f31c108259b5f28643b112/1458773010043/Leveraging+Differences+and+Inclusion+Pays+v3.pdf>
- Kendi, I. X. (2019). *How to be an antiracist*. One World.
- Kerns, C. D. (2016). *Essentials of leadership and management*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kossek, E. E., Lobel, S. A., & Brown, J. (2006). Human resource strategies to manage workforce diversity. In Konrad, A. M., Prasad, P., & Pringle, J. K. (Eds.), *Handbook of workplace diversity* (pp. 53–74). Sage Publications.
- Loden, M. (1996). *Implementing diversity*. McGraw-Hill.
- McFadden, C. (2015). *The inclusive workplace: Leveraging diversity for business success*. Routledge.
- Miner, J. B. (1980). *Theories of organizational behavior*. Dryden Press.
- Murphy, M. (2014, May 24). What are the benefits and drawbacks of case study research? *Social Theory Applied*. <https://socialtheoryapplied.com/2014/05/24/benefits-drawbacks-case-study-research/>
- Nadal, K. L. (2013). *That's so gay!* Microaggressions and the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community. American Psychological Association.
- Nadella, S. (2017). *Hit refresh: The quest to rediscover Microsoft's soul and imagine a better future for everyone*. Harper Business.
- Nair, N., & Vohra, N. (2015). Diversity and inclusion at the workplace: A review of research and perspectives. *IIMA Working Paper Series No. WP2015-03-34*.
- National Center for Transgender Equality. (2015). *The report of the 2015 U.S. transgender survey*. <https://transequality.org>
- Nishii, L. H. (2013). The benefits of climate for inclusion for gender-diverse groups. *Academy of Management Journal*, 56(6), 1754-1774. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2009.0823>
- Njoroge, C. N., & Yazdanifard, R. (2014). The impact of social and emotional intelligence on employee motivation in a multigenerational workplace. *International Journal of Information, Business and Management*, 6(4), 163-170.
- Noe, R. A. (2010). *Employee training and development* (5th ed.). McGraw-Hill/Irwin.

- Olawale, S. R., Chinagozi, O. G., & Joe, O. N. (2023). Exploratory research design in management science: A review of literature on conduct and application. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS)*, 7(5), Article 7515. <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2023.7515>
- Ozturk, M. B., & Tatli, A. (2016). Gender identity inclusion in the workplace: Broadening diversity management research and practice through the case of transgender employees in the UK. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 27(8), 781–802. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2015.1042902>
- Page, S. E. (2017). *The diversity bonus: How great teams pay off in the knowledge economy*. Princeton University Press
- Page, S. E. (2020). *The diversity bonus: How great teams pay off in the knowledge economy*. Princeton University Press..
- Peters, J. (2019). Integration of sustainability into corporate strategy: A case study of the textile and clothing industry (Master's dissertation, ISCTE-IUL). ISCTE Business School, Department of Marketing Operations and General Management. <https://repositorio.iscte-iul.pt/handle/10071/29498>
- Phillips, K. W., & Loyd, D. L. (2006). When surface and deep-level diversity collide: The effects on dissenting group members. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 99(2), 143-160. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.obhdp.2005.08.004>
- Pickett, C. L., Silver, M. D., & Brewer, M. B. (2002). The impact of social inclusion and exclusion on individual self-esteem and self-concept. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 82(3), 379–393. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.82.3.379>
- Ragins, B. R., & Cornwell, J. M. (2001). Pink triangles: Antecedents and consequences of perceived workplace discrimination against gay and lesbian employees. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 86(6), 1244–1261. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.86.6.1244>
- Ramos, M. R., Hewstone, M., Barreto, M., & Branscombe, N. R. (2016). The role of group-based discrimination in forgiveness and reconciliation: Extending the social identity model of collective action. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 42(8), 1049-1066. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167216649601>
- Reis, R. (n.d.). Strengths and limitations of the case studies. *Tomorrow's Professor Postings*.

Retrieved from <https://tomprof.stanford.edu/posting/1013>

Roberson, L., Kulik, C. T., & Pepper, M. B. (2003). Using needs assessment to resolve controversies in diversity training design. *Group & Organization Management*, 28(1), 148-174. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1059601102250028>

Roberson, Q. M. (2019). Diversity in the workplace: A review, synthesis, and future research agenda. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 6, 1-25. Retrieved from <https://www.annualreviews.org/content/journals/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-012218-015243>

Saxena, A. (2014). Workforce diversity: A key to improve productivity. *Procedia Economics and Finance*, 11, 76-85. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2212-5671\(14\)00178-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2212-5671(14)00178-6)

Schilt, K., & Westbrook, L. (2009). Doing gender, doing heteronormativity: “Gender normals,” transgender people, and the social maintenance of heterosexuality. *Gender & Society*, 23(4), 440–464. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243209340034>

Shore, L. M., Cleveland, J. N., & Goldberg, C. B. (2003). Work attitudes and decisions as a function of manager gender. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88(1), 23-34. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.88.1.23>

Shore, L. M., Randel, A. E., Chung, B. G., Dean, M. A., Holcombe Ehrhart, K., & Singh, G. (2011). Inclusion and diversity in work groups: A review and model for future research. *Journal of Management*, 37(4), 1262–1289.

Smith, J. A., & Brown, L. M. (2024). Examining social identity and organizational behavior: A comprehensive review. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 30(2), 123-145. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2024.2364663>

Smith, R. A., & Bell, M. P. (2019). A new look at diversity, inclusion, and productivity in organizations. *Journal of Organizational Effectiveness*, 6(3), 243–258. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JOE-05-2019-0043>

Snyder, C. R., & Fromkin, H. L. (1980). *Uniqueness: The human pursuit of difference*. Springer.

Taylor, C. (2001). *Multiculturalism: Examining the politics of recognition*. Princeton University Press.

Thayer, P. W. (1997). *Training and development in organizations*. Jossey-Bass.

- Thomas, D. A. (2020). Inclusive organizations: A practical framework. *Organizational Dynamics*, 49(4), 100720. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.orgdyn.2020.100720>
- Thomas, R. R. Jr. (1990). From affirmative action to affirming diversity. *Harvard Business Review*, 68(2), 107-117.
- Turi, J. A., Khastoori, S., Sorooshian, S., & Campbell, N. (2022). Diversity impact on organizational performance: The moderating and mediating role of diversity beliefs and leadership expertise. *PLOS ONE*, 17(7), e0270813. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0270813>
- Van Dick, R., & Haslam, S. A. (2012). Social identity in organizational contexts: A critical review and application. *British Journal of Management*, 23(S1), S32–S39. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8551.2012.00806.x>
- Williams, K. D., & Govan, C. L. (2005). Reacting to ostracism. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 145(3), 27–41. <https://doi.org/10.3200/SOCP.145.3.279-300>
- Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Zahra, S., Iram, A., & Naeem, H. (2014). Employee training and its effect on employees' job motivation and commitment: Developing and proposing a conceptual model. *IOSR Journal of Business and Management*, 16(9), 60-68. <http://www.iosrjournals.org/iosr-jbm/papers/Vol16-issue9/Version-1/D016916068.pdf>

Annex

A-Email Interview of the HR Director Questions

- 1- Qual foi a principal motivação para recorrer a um workshop de inclusão e identidade de género, neste momento?
- 2- Houve algum evento em específico ou feedback dos funcionários que influenciaram essa decisão?
- 3- A participação no workshop é voluntária ou obrigatória? De que forma a empresa incentiva uma participação ativa?
- 4- Quais são os objetivos específicos que a empresa espera alcançar com este workshop?
- 5- Como avalia o ambiente laboral atual em termos de inclusão de género?
- 6- Existem desafios específicos que possam ser identificados e que possam ser abordados através deste workshop?
- 7- Tem conhecimento de algum episódio de discriminação entre os colaboradores?
- 8- Atualmente, as políticas da empresa abordam questões de inclusão e diversidade de género?
- 9- Há planos para atualizar ou expandir essas políticas após o workshop?
- 10- De que forma a empresa lida, atualmente com casos de discriminação de género?
- 11- De que forma a empresa planeia lidar com a potencial resistência de alguns funcionários em relação ao workshop?
- 12- Há planos para implementar políticas de linguagem neutra de género em documentos e comunicações internas?
- 13- A empresa planeia celebrar datas significativas, relacionadas à diversidade de género, como o Mês do Orgulho LGBTQ+?

B- Pre-Training Questionnaire

[Grupo I – Caraterização do Ambiente]

Considero inclusivo o ambiente de trabalho onde me insiro. (Sendo 1.Discordo totalmente e 7.Concordo totalmente).

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

Sou tratado como um membro de valor na minha organização, (Sendo 1.Discordo totalmente e 7.Concordo totalmente).

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

Eu pertenço à minha organização. (Sendo 1.Discordo totalmente e 7.Concordo totalmente).

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

Sinto-me conectado/a à minha organização. (Sendo 1.Discordo totalmente e 7.Concordo totalmente).

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

Sinto que a minha organização preocupa-se realmente comigo. (Sendo 1.Discordo totalmente e 7.Concordo totalmente).

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

Eu sinto-me ouvido/a, mesmo quando a minha opinião não é similar à dos meus colegas. (Sendo 1.Discordo totalmente e 7.Concordo totalmente).

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

Quando estou no meu trabalho, sinto-me confortável em exprimir as minhas opiniões que divergem das dos meus colegas. (Sendo 1.Discordo totalmente e 7.Concordo totalmente).

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

Quando a perspetiva dos meus colegas se torna demasiado limitada, eu sou capaz de abordar um ponto de vista diferente. (Sendo 1.Discordo totalmente e 7.Concordo totalmente).

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

[Grupo II – Atitudes em relação à Diversidade]

De acordo, com Buch (2008, p. 1) diversidade : “para alguns significa tolerância, aceitação ou atitude e, para outros, inclusão, raça e género. Considera que diversidade tem um efeito positivo no ambiente de trabalho. (Sendo 1.Discordo totalmente e 7.Concordo totalmente).

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

Equipas diversas são mais criativas. (Sendo 1.Discordo totalmente e 7.Concordo totalmente).

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

Trabalhar em equipas diversas deixa-me confortável. (Sendo 1.Discordo totalmente e 7.Concordo totalmente).

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

A diversidade torna este um local interessante para trabalhar. (Sendo 1.Discordo totalmente e 7.Concordo totalmente).

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	7

[Grupo III – Ansiedade Intergrupala]

A diversidade torna mais difícil o entendimento entre colegas. (Sendo 1.Discordo totalmente e 7.Concordo totalmente).

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	7

A diversidade leva a situações desconfortáveis. (Sendo 1.Discordo totalmente e 7.Concordo totalmente).

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	7

A diversidade torna difícil julgar o que os outros estão a pensar. (Sendo 1.Discordo totalmente e 7.Concordo totalmente).

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	7

A diversidade causa insegurança nas interações com colegas de trabalho. (Sendo 1.Discordo totalmente e 7.Concordo totalmente).

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	7

C– Post-Training Questionnaire

[Grupo I – Atitudes em relação à Diversidade]

De acordo, com Buch (2008, p. 1) diversidade : “para alguns significa tolerância, aceitação ou atitude e, para outros, inclusão, raça e género. Considera que diversidade tem um efeito positivo no ambiente de trabalho”. (Sendo 1.Discordo totalmente e 7.Concordo totalmente).

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

Equipas diversas são mais criativas. (Sendo 1.Discordo totalmente e 7.Concordo totalmente).

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

Trabalhar em equipas diversas deixa-me confortável. (Sendo 1.Discordo totalmente e 7.Concordo totalmente).

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

A diversidade torna este um local interessante para trabalhar. (Sendo 1.Discordo totalmente e 7.Concordo totalmente).

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

[Grupo II – Ansiedade Intergrupar]

A diversidade torna mais difícil o entendimento entre colegas. (Sendo 1.Discordo totalmente e 7.Concordo totalmente).

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

A diversidade leva a situações desconfortáveis. (Sendo 1.Discordo totalmente e 7.Concordo totalmente).

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

A diversidade torna difícil julgar o que os outros estão a pensar. (Sendo 1.Discordo totalmente e 7.Concordo totalmente).

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

A diversidade causa insegurança nas interações com colegas de trabalho. (Sendo 1.Discordo totalmente e 7.Concordo totalmente).

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

[Grupo III - Impacto da Formação]

A formação aumentou o meu compromisso pessoal para uma maior contribuição de um ambiente de trabalho inclusivo. (Sendo 1.Discordo totalmente e 7.Concordo totalmente.)

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

Sinto que a formação revelou a importância da diversidade e inclusão no trabalho. (Sendo 1.Discordo totalmente e 7.Concordo totalmente.)

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

Sinto-me mais consciente das ações que possam contribuir para um ambiente mais inclusivo. (Sendo 1.Discordo totalmente e 7.Concordo totalmente.)

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

Sinto que é relevante a presença de chefias em formações como esta. (Sendo 1.Discordo totalmente e 7.Concordo totalmente.)

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

D- Guide to the Phone Interviews

Olá, o meu nome é Ana Catarina Oliveira, estou inscrita no 2ºano do mestrado em Gestão no ISCTE Business School e estou a realizar entrevistas relacionadas com o programa de formação sobre diversidade e inclusão no qual participei na organização X, com o objetivo de avaliar o impacto da formação sobre diversidade e inclusão no meio laboral, para fins académicos.

A informação recolhida será de forma confidencial, sendo garantido o anonimato e por essa razão, é pedida completa sinceridade nas respostas.

A sua participação é totalmente voluntária e poderá abandonar ou recusar o estudo em qualquer fase do mesmo, esta entrevista demora cerca de 10 minutos para ser concluída.

Portanto, ao responder a esta entrevista, declara o seu consentimento informado para o presente estudo.

Aceita a gravação da mesma ?

Introdução

1.Lembra-se de ter participado na empresa X, numa formação acerca de inclusão e diversidade?

2. A formação foi dividida em dois dias, sente que a sua perceção acerca dos temas abordados mudou do primeiro dia para o segundo?

3. Falou de algum dos temas da formação em casa nessa noite?

4. Quais eram as suas expectativas relativamente à formação?

5. Sentiu que o programa correspondeu às suas expectativas?

6. Quais foram os aspetos mais úteis que o programa de formação lhe ofereceu, em termos profissionais e, em termos pessoais?

7. Sente que a formação lhe deu ferramentas para uma melhor interação entre colegas?
8. Sente que a formação pode ter uma influência positiva no ambiente de trabalho?
9. Houve algum aspeto do programa que achou particularmente desafiador? Se sim, o que foi e por quê? (Por exemplo: em termos conceptuais, achou que alguns conceitos apresentados eram demasiado complexos?)

Impacto do Programa:

10. Como se sentiu após o segundo dia de formação ?
11. Sente que a formação mudou a sua perspetiva sobre algum dos temas abordados? Se sim, de que forma?
12. Sente que mudou algum comportamento como resultado da formação? Se sim, qual?
13. Sente alguma mudança organizacional depois da formação? Se sim, qual?

Sugestões e Comentários Finais:

14. Considera relevante, em termos profissionais, este tipo de formação? Se sim, recomendaria a quem? A outras organizações? A pares da mesma empresa? Ao CEO?
15. Tem alguma sugestão de temas para futuras sessões de formação sobre diversidade e inclusão?
16. Há mais alguma coisa que gostaria de acrescentar ou comentar sobre sua experiência com o programa sobre a qual ainda não tenhamos abordado?

Encerramento:

Muito obrigada pelo tempo disponibilizado!

Se necessário, pode me contactar para este contacto telefónico para qualquer dúvida que possa surgir.

E- Email Interview of the CEO Questions

- 1- Como descreveria o ambiente de trabalho da empresa em termos de inclusão e diversidade?
- 2- Há ações conscientes para promover a inclusão na empresa? Em que se reflete?

- 3-Quais são os principais desafios que a empresa enfrenta no que diz respeito à inclusão e diversidade?
- 4-Sentiu alguma mudança na percepção dos colaboradores sobre a diversidade e inclusão após a formação?
- 5-Sente que a formação contribuiu para um ambiente mais inclusivo?
- 6-Considera que formações como esta, podem ser benéficas para a comunicação entre colegas e na forma como se relacionam?
- 7-Considera que formações como esta, podem ajudar a reduzir conflitos entre colegas?
- 9- Considera que um ambiente laboral mais inclusivo e diverso traz benefícios para a organização?
- 10-A formação correspondeu às expectativas da empresa em termos de promover uma cultura mais inclusiva e diversificada?
- 11- Há planos futuros para dar continuidade aos programas de formação relacionados com a inclusão e diversidade?