

**DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY FOR MILITARY SKILLS  
DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM RECRUITS: A CROSS-CULTURAL APPROACH FOR  
THE SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL DEFENCE FORCE, AIR FORCE BASE  
GYMNASIUM, LIMPOPO PROVINCE.**

**by  
MAMOGOBO ROSINAH MAMABOLO**

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**SUPERVISOR: Dr J Le Roux  
CO-SUPERVISOR: Prof T Muswede**

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## DECLARATION

I Mamogobo Rosinah Mamabolo, declare that the research report entitled '**Diversity management strategy for military skills development system recruits: A cross-cultural approach for the South African National Defence Force, Air Force Base Gymnasium, Limpopo province**', hereby presented to the university of Limpopo, for the qualification Doctor of Philosophy in Communication Studies, is my own work. All sources referenced and quoted in the text have been indicated and accordingly acknowledged by means of comprehensive references. This study has not been submitted for any qualification at any other institution.



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Signature

April 2025

Date

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate my efforts to my late father, Nakeng Ezekiel Mamabolo, my kids and to my partner.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor and co-supervisor for their endless support, encouragement, inspiration, recommendations and for making this research study a success. Thank you for picking me up and continuing with me towards the completion of the study. I further extend my gratitude to the members below.

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## ABSTRACT

The post-apartheid era in South Africa created an environment where people of different socio-economic and racial orientations can work together on an equal basis. Thus, citizens come to the work environment with diverse socio-cultural values, which influence their perceptions of communication within any given organisational context. The South African National Defence Force (SANDF) training environment comprises diverse socio-cultural aspects including race, language, class and gender, where recruits are trained in one environment despite their socio-cultural differences. This calls for effective intercultural and cross-cultural communication during Basic Military Training (BMT) within the SANDF. This study explored the impact of diversity on BMT among recruits in the SA Air Force Gymnasium, Hoedspruit in the Limpopo province and aimed to develop a cross-cultural communication strategy for diverse Military Skills Development System (MSDS) recruits undertaking BMT training at the SA Air Force Gymnasium. To understand the nature of diversity and its effect on workgroup communication and progress, the study employed Oetzel's (2005) Effective Intercultural Workgroup Theory, Kim's (1988) Cross-cultural Adaptation Theory and Burgoon, Stern and Dillman's (1995) Interaction Adaptation Theory.

A qualitative research method was employed for this study. Purposive sampling was used to select the SA Air Force Gymnasium due to the diversity characteristics of its recruits. Quota sampling was used to acquire BMT recruits, instructors and squadron managers based on their language, race and gender aspects desirable for the study. Data were collected through three focus group discussions which consisted of 30 MSDS (BMT) recruits, semi-structured interviews with five instructors and two squadron managers as well as participant-observation. A reflexive thematic analysis was used to generate discursive themes and analyse the findings of the study. Additionally, Microsoft (MS) Excel was used to manage the numerical (demographic) data of participants.

This study revealed that BMT emerges with diverse recruits from different gender, racial, cultural, linguistic, religious affiliation and African spirituality backgrounds which are carried out to cross-cultural interactions and therefore result in cross-cultural communication tensions, misunderstandings, misperceptions and misconceptions amongst the diverse communicators. Diversity manifestation elements (gender, culture, race, language and religious and African spirituality beliefs) are perceived as

significant factors which result in cross-cultural communication barriers. Amongst others, the study revealed that there is an interdependent relationship between cognition, lived experiences, culture and communication. Culture is automatically brought to the cross-cultural communication process of diverse recruits leading to ineffective cross-cultural communication. Additionally, the level of cross-cultural communication knowledge and lived experiences of military personnel determine the failure or the success of cross-cultural communication. Various cross-cultural communication strategies which include diversity educational programmes, acculturation, interpretation, regulatory frameworks and campaigns are perceived as effective strategies and approaches to effective cross-cultural interactions during BMT.

**Keywords: Cross-Cultural Communication, Culture, Diversity, Cross-cultural communication strategy.**

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

AA	:	Affirmative Action
AFB	:	Air Force Base
ANC	:	African National Congress
APLA	:	Azanian People Liberation Army
AU	:	African Union
BMATT	:	British Military Assistance and Training Team
BMT	:	Basic Military Training
CAF	:	Canadian Armed Forces
CAR	:	Central African Republic
CDTM	:	Chief Directorate Transformation Management
CGSS	:	Command and General Staff School
CPA	:	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
Cpl	:	Corporal
DAS	:	Director of Air services
DA	:	Democratic Alliance
DCSU	:	Defence Cultural Support Unit
DLIFLC	:	Defence Language Institute Foreign Language Centre
DoD	:	Department of Defence
DRC	:	Democratic Republic of Congo
DTIO	:	Directorate of Targeting and Information Operations
EEO	:	Equal Employment Opportunities
EFF	:	Economic Freedom Fighters
EIWCT	:	Effective Intercultural Workgroup Communication Theory
EOCD	:	Equal Opportunities Chief Directorate
F Sgt	:	Flight Sergeant
GSWA	:	German South West Africa

JLDP	:	Junior Leadership Development Programme
KAIPTC	:	Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre
KZSPF	:	KwaZulu Self-Protection Forces
MSDS	:	Military Skills Development System
NATO	:	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NCO	:	Non-commissioned officers
NGP	:	National Gender Policy
MK	:	uMkhonto weSizwe
MPLA	:	People’s Movement for the Liberation of Angola
MoD	:	UK Ministry of Defence
PAC	:	Pan Africanist Congress
PIP	:	Psychological Integration Programme
RAF	:	Rwandan Armed Forces
RCCS	:	Royal Canadian Chaplain Service
RDF	:	Rwanda Defence Force
RPA	:	Rwandan Patriotic Army
RSA	:	Republic of South Africa
RSM	:	Regimental Sergeant Major
SA	:	South Africa
SA Army	:	South African Army
SAAF	:	South African Air Force
SADF	:	South African Defence Force
SAMHS	:	South African Military Health Services
SAN	:	South African Navy
SANDF	:	South African National Defence Force
SAP	:	South African Police
SA WAAF	:	South African Women’s Auxiliary Air Force
Sgt	:	Sergeant

SPLA	:	Sudan People's Liberation Army
SWAPO	:	South West African People's Organisation
SWA	:	South West Africa
SQN	:	Squadron
TREC	:	Turfloop Research Ethics Committee
UDF	:	Union Defence Force
UNITA	:	National Union for the Total Independence of Angola
UN	:	United Nations
U.S.A	:	United States of America
UNSCR	:	United Nations Security Council Resolution
U.S	:	United States
USSR	:	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VIP	:	Very Important People
WO	:	Warrant Officer
WO1	:	Warrant Officer Class 1
WPS	:	Women, Peace and Security
ZANU	:	Zimbabwe African National Union
ZANLA	:	Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army
ZDF	:	Zimbabwe Defence Force
ZIPRA	:	Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army

## CHAPTER 1

### BACKGROUND AND ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The world over, communication remains an integral part of human life, which plays a crucial role in the effective management of various types of organisations across numerous fields. Its significance thrives on its ability as a “social interaction of creating meaning, exchanging, sharing ideas, information, opinions, facts and experiences between communicating parties (Abuarqoub, 2019).

According to Heinecken (2020), globalisation and the integration and inclusion policies brought about diversity, which created the need for cross-cultural communication in various workplaces. Aspects such as labour, education and training environments have become the primary areas of diversity, and the military context is no exception. The modern military system comprises uncertainties and constant changes that challenge the “warfighting standard of the past” decades (Heinecken, 2011: 26). Armed forces have become more diverse in terms of gender, race, language and culture with various forces being deployed and trained with or within other nations that feature cultural differences (Soeters & Van Der Meulen, 2007). The increasing diverse military and military recruitment processes pose a challenge to the traditional military institutional values, attitudes, beliefs and norms.

In South Africa, the 1994 integration and absorption of the South African Defence Force (SADF) and revolutionary armies into the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) evolved with a multi-cultural military context which brought about convergence among people from various ideological backgrounds and ethnic groups. This diverse work context requires diversity management as it demands that people work together to deal with diversity issues such as culture, language and cross-cultural communication between parties. Wellner (2000) describes diversity management as the process of recognising, understanding and accepting the differences and similarities of human characteristics that encompass age, class, ethnicity, gender, physical ability, language, culture, race, sexual orientation and religious inclinations.

Currently, the SANDF continues to recruit the youth to join the military through the MSDS Programme. The recruits undergo BMT which is the primary (foundation) training programme for the military. This is a training programme that prepares and transforms recruits from civilians into soldiers by imparting the culture, discipline and communication procedures of the military. The BMT is characterised by a daily communication exercise between BMT instructors, squadron managers and recruits to attain the desired goals of the programme. However, the recruits usually originate from different areas across the nine provinces of South Africa bearing various cultural, social and linguistic backgrounds. According to Pinch, MacIntyre, Browne and Okros (2004) and Bester and Van Der Merwe (2020), these diverse groups may have conflicting values and communication challenges characterised by language barriers, stereotypes, racism, ethnocentrism and prejudice among stakeholders (most of whom are BMT recruits), which must be managed carefully if cultural minorities are to be recruited and retained within the military. Therefore, communication plays an integral part of human interaction in the SANDF as a statutory organisation (Abuarqoub, 2019), further prompting the need for smooth and effective cross-cultural communication during BMT to manage diversity among recruits.

South Africa has implemented a National Defence White Paper (1996) and Defence Review (2015) that addressed issues related to diversity, diversity management and equal treatment of diverse members within the SANDF. However, cross-cultural communication strategies based on diversity and diversity management issues within the South African Armed Forces (specifically the SAAF Training Unit, Air Force Gymnasium) have not yet been implemented and thus remain a gap in the body of knowledge. Therefore, this study assumes a cross-cultural communication approach, to compose a cross-cultural communication strategy for Military Skills Development System (MSDS) Recruits during Basic Military Training (BMT) within the South African Air Force (SAAF) Gymnasium, Hoedspruit in Limpopo Province. The composed cross-cultural communication strategy aims to address the identified gap and enhance cross-cultural interaction and adaptation within the training unit, SAAF Gymnasium.

Effective communication is a cornerstone of operational success in any military organisation. In multicultural societies such as South Africa, where the armed forces comprise individuals from diverse linguistic, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds, the need for robust cross-cultural communication strategies becomes even more critical. While international literature offers a wealth of insights into how militaries in countries like the United States, Canada, and India manage intercultural communication, these contexts differ significantly from the South African experience. The South African National Defence Force (SANDF), shaped by a unique socio-political history and ongoing transformation efforts, presents a distinct environment where cross-cultural communication challenges are both complex and underexplored.

Although the existing body of research acknowledges communication challenges within the SANDF, much of this literature does not directly address the intercultural or cross-cultural dimensions of communication. For example, Hartley's (2001) study on barriers to formal communication in the SANDF, particularly in the context of the Tempe incident, provides an important historical foundation. However, this work is now over two decades old, and there is a noticeable absence of updated research that examines how these communication barriers have evolved in the post-apartheid era. The lack of continuity in this line of inquiry leaves a significant gap in understanding the current state of communication within the SANDF.

More recent studies have continued to explore communication within the SANDF, but often from perspectives that do not directly engage with cross-cultural dynamics. Theunissen (2022), for instance, focuses on military-media relations, offering valuable insights into how the SANDF interacts with the public and the press. However, this study does not delve into the internal communication challenges faced by personnel from diverse cultural backgrounds. Similarly, Watkins, Com and Meyer (2018) examine communication processes in the context of capability management, emphasising strategic and operational efficiency rather than interpersonal or intercultural communication. Bester (2024) contributes to the discourse by analysing cybersecurity awareness among SANDF officers, yet this work is situated within the digital communication domain and does not address face-to-face or operational communication across cultural lines. These examples illustrate that while communication within the SANDF has been the subject of academic inquiry, the

specific issue of cross-cultural communication remains insufficiently addressed. This oversight is particularly concerning given the SANDF's mandate to unify and integrate personnel from a wide range of cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The absence of focused research on this topic limits the SANDF's ability to develop effective communication strategies that foster cohesion, trust, and operational effectiveness in a multicultural environment.

This study seeks to fill this critical gap by investigating the nature and impact of cross-cultural communication within the SANDF. By engaging critically with both local and international literature, the research highlights the limitations of existing studies and positions itself as a necessary and timely contribution to the field of communication studies. The study not only builds on previous research but also extends it by offering a focused analysis of intercultural communication challenges and proposing context-specific strategies for improvement. In doing so, it aims to support the SANDF in enhancing internal communication and promoting a more inclusive and effective organisational culture.

## **1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM**

Some scholars have noted that managing diversity is a complex and multifaceted issue that “embraces the recognition and value of cultural diversity” (Human, 2005:14). This is usually affected by ethnic influences which originate from a broader social order, political and cultural imperatives. Diversity management remains a vital issue in societies, specifically in the armed forces and it manifests with cross-cultural communication challenges that arise due to individuals' linguistic, racial and cultural differences (Yadav & Lenka, 2020). Subsequently, “cross-cultural communication problems arise due to the confusion often caused by misconstruction, misperception, misunderstanding and misevaluation of messages from different standpoints arising from differences in the cultures of the sender and receivers of messages in societies (Yadav & Lenka, 2020). In South Africa, BMT recruits are not excluded from these problems as they originate from distinctive social groups that have different cultural heritages and traditions. Recruits join the MSDS programme with different social identities, cultural norms, values, characteristics, communication behaviours, experiences, skills, attributes, opinions, and talents. This situation often leads to cross-cultural communication barriers such as stereotypes, prejudice, ethnocentricity,

racism and discrimination. These differences affect communication flow which ultimately inhibits the attainment of the main purpose of BMT if not well managed. This concurs with Ikama (2010) and Samuel and Odor (2018), who reveal that diverse organisations in Nigeria and other countries such as Kenya and the United States of America (U.S.A) have experienced ineffective communication due to miscommunication, conflict, confusion, lack of morale and lack of teamwork within the workplace. In the case of BMT in South Africa, recruits operate in a multi-cultural, multi-racial, multi-linguistic and multi-religious environment (Air Force Gymnasium), which may create conflict or tension among trainees.

The above view prompts García-Carbonell and Raising's (2001) assertion that as the world becomes more global, bridging the cultural and linguistic gap through effective communication is of critical importance for diverse organisations. Similarly, Aririguzoh (2022) remarks that communication is a key tool for binding, sustaining and attaining societies' or organisational goals. In line with this observation, one of the BMT objectives is to foster teamwork and social cohesion amongst the recruits as a vital trait among soldiers. However, this becomes a difficult task to attain with heterogeneous groups who constantly experience cross-cultural communication breakdowns. Social cohesion and cross-cultural communication among recruits are therefore compromised when those who belong to a similar cultural group effectively engage with each other and disregard those from dissimilar cultural groups.

Although the existing literature acknowledges communication challenges within the SANDF, much of this literature does not directly address the intercultural or cross-cultural dimensions of communication. This study seeks to fill this critical gap by investigating the nature and impact of cross-cultural communication within the SANDF. This oversight is particularly concerning given the SANDF's mandate to unify and integrate personnel from a wide range of cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The absence of focused research on this topic limits the SANDF's ability to develop effective communication strategies that foster cohesion, trust, and operational effectiveness in a multicultural environment. For this reason, it is significant to work towards a cross-cultural communication strategy for diverse military training contexts in order to improve BMT efficiency and engender a smooth flow of cross-cultural communalism amongst the recruits.

### 1.3 SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

This section discusses the situational analysis on diversity management approaches, diversity manifestation elements, the impact of cultural diversity on cross-cultural communication and strategies and legislative frameworks for diversity in the military. The section further deliberates on the theoretical frameworks employed to guide the study.

#### 1.3.1 Diversity management approaches in the military

A demographically diverse organisation is often associated with various cross-cultural communication barriers or challenges which need to be managed effectively to improve the communication process and effective functioning of the organisation. Therefore, appropriate strategies and approaches need to be adopted to address such cross-cultural communication issues. This section discusses the two approaches to communication and diversity management in the military. The section focuses on Equal Employment Opportunities (EEO) and Affirmative Action (AA) approaches, which are considered key programmes to address inequality and are intended to promote diversity in the military.

##### ➤ **Equal employment opportunities for diversity management in the military**

The section discusses the military of the United States of America (U.S.A), Canada and the United Kingdom (UK) as well as the domestic military, SANDF. The selected international countries are discussed as they comprise diverse armed forces which require strategies to deal with the representation of designated members.

##### *EEO diversity management approach in the military: An international perspective*

The United States of America's organisations, including the military are generally viewed as diverse since they operate in environments of racial integration. The military of the country focuses on making prejudice and discrimination based on sex, age, race, colour, religion and national origin illegal (Gotsis & Kortezi, 2015; Yadav & Lenka, 2020). With this presented, the U.S.A. adopted the Title VII of the Civil Rights Act in 1964 which gave equal opportunities and rights to all individuals, regardless of race, language, gender and cultural differences. The EEO policies were also employed to

address cross-cultural barriers such as racial segregation and promote fairness and equality in the U.S. military environments (Yadav & Lenka, 2020). A study by Podsiadlowski, Gröschke, Kogler, Springer and Van Der Zee (2013) noted that to enhance diversity and diverse communication, the U.S.A. military adopted a colour-blind approach where individuals are treated equally regardless of their religion, age, culture, language, race and ethnic differences.

The Department of National Defence of Canada is acknowledged for transforming its military from a homogeneous to a heterogeneous work context. Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) perceive inclusion and diversity as a pivotal aspect to a proficient military. The Department of National Defence and the CAF have made progress in creating a representation of diverse members from 1993 to 2020 (Canadian Department of National Defence, 2022). The Employment Equity Act of 1997 was therefore implemented to manage diversity and promote equal opportunities for all members serving the CAF (Pierotti, 2020). Moreover, Winslow and Dunn (2002) reveal that the employment equity legislation promotes equal opportunities on the recruitment process and training for visible minority groups, women and aboriginal people. Mayer (2020) asserts that with the increase of diverse members in the CAF, employment equity equips members with the knowledge to value peoples' differences within the CAF.

#### *EEO diversity management approach in the military: a local military perspective*

Since its inception in 1994, the SANDF has been committed to creating a non-discriminatory, non-racial and non-sexist military culture. In order to attain this, the force underwent a transformation process which promoted the representativity of different individuals in all the different posts and mustering of the SANDF (White Paper on Defence, 1996; Heinecken & Van Der Waag-Cowling, 2009; Seloane, 2011; Prins, 2020). To support the change, South African Defence Review (2006; 2015) in line with the South African Constitution of 1996 introduced EEO and AA programmes which aim to foster inclusiveness and manage diversity within the SANDF. The programmes are to ensure that the SANDF constitutes different kinds of people and provides equal opportunities for all personnel by adopting and implementing fair recruitment and selection processes. Regardless of the members' biographic information, EEO

ensures that all members are treated fairly and that promotions are bestowed equitably (South African White Paper on Defence, 2006). According to Prins (2020), EEO and AA ensure that the structure of the SANDF reflects diverse demographics of South Africa at all levels, from recruitment to senior ranks and positions.

### ➤ **Affirmative action in the military**

Affirmative Action has been implemented by various countries to increase the “numerical representation at the workplace of historically underrepresented groups, such as women and racial/ethnic minorities” (Gotsis & Kortezi, 2015:13). AA “is any measure beyond simple termination of a discriminatory practice adopted to correct or compensate for past and present discrimination” (Murrell & Jones, 1996:78). This approach aims to ensure that applicants are fairly appointed for employment regardless of race, creed, religion, colour or national origin (Gomez & Premdas, 2013; Kuitunen, 2022). This section provides a brief literature review on AA programmes in the international and local military contexts.

#### *Affirmative action in the international military context*

Affirmative action has been previously used by the U.S.A. Department of Defence to address systematic inequalities, discrimination, and racism within the military. Primarily, the actions were used to address gender and race issues in the military recruitment process (Back & Hsin, 2019). The study by Crichlow and Gomez (2015) also emphasises that in the U.S. organisations and military forces in particular, AA policy and programmes were designed to increase under-represented ethnical minority groups in political and economic spaces.

In the California forces, AA was utilised to address military institutions and to prohibit them from unfair and discriminatory practices based on race and sexuality (California State Legislature, 2020).

AA was further implemented in Brazil, Northern Ireland, India and Malaysia with the primary aim of addressing ethnicity and gender inequalities and promoting the representation of diverse people in military organisations (Crichlow & Gomez, 2015; Kuitunen, 2022). This trend has been adopted in other countries globally, including

those in Africa and Asia, thereby creating different adoption levels of equality and equity in the different military contexts.

### *Affirmative action programmes in the local military context*

The AA approach was adopted by the SANDF in 1994. Similar to the EEO, the approach was adopted to change power relations, communication patterns and job efficiency as well as to address the past imbalances (inequalities) in terms of race, gender and disability in the Department of Defence (DoD) (Heincken & Van Der Waag-Cowling, 2009). According to the White Paper on Affirmative Action (1998), the strategies are meant to counter inequality and promote equality in organisations, including the SANDF in particular. Furthermore, they are implemented to put in place practices and programmes that promote the representation of all South Africans and ensure that all members acquire equal training and have access to employment opportunities within the SANDF.

In addition to the above, AA was a fundamental principle for legitimating the DoD and for the operational functioning of the SANDF (South African Defence Review, 2015). Subsequently, the SANDF implemented its own 'Equal Opportunity and AA' policy which aligns with the employment equity policies and maintains that military personnel must be treated fairly and be evaluated without biases based on their race, language, or cultural background (Motumi, 2007; Prins, 2020).

Smit (2006) postulates that AA is linked to the process of diversity management within the SANDF. This is evident in the SANDF/C PERS/1/98 (1998:15), a document that raises awareness on the issues of diversity management and implores that military personnel must be aware of the AA policy and diversity issues as well as respect people's differences when issuing orders and making decisions on various aspects within the military. Moreover, SANDF/C PERS/1/98 (1998:15) indicates that the AA should be utilised to improve performance within the South African military Arms of Services. Similarly, Beyad and Meyer (1994) in Smit (2006) perceive AA as a vital strategy to combat racism, address discrimination and promote equal job opportunities for diverse members of a particular society.

### 1.3.2 Cultural diversity and cross-cultural communication in the military

According to Aririguzoh (2022:2) “culture reinforces the economic, social and communal fabrics that regulate social cohesion”. The culture of the sender and the receiver of messages significantly influences how they communicate and engage with other people from different cultures (Aririguzoh, 2022). This section provides a discussion on the impact of cultural diversity on cross-cultural communication in international and local military contexts. Ikama (2010) in Samuel and Odor (2018) reveal that diverse military forces are characterised by various people originating from various cultural backgrounds which are associated with different cultural beliefs and communication behaviours. Due to these differences, armed forces experience ineffective cross-cultural communication which results in conflicts, tensions, lack of morale and lack of cohesion within the military (Ikama, 2010 in Samuel & Odor, 2018).

Dash, Dash and Satpathy (2021) further articulate that cultural diversity contributes to cross-cultural communication barriers and diversity management challenges within the military. Culturally diverse individual characteristics affect the way people think, perceive and communicate (Tsui & Gutek, 1999; Aririguzoh, 2022). Although the primary aspect of communication is to convey meaning, the challenge is that culturally diverse people attach different meanings to different messages. This is owed to the fact that communication symbols are culture-based and are interpreted differently in diverse cultures (du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014). Ispas and Tudorache (2018) opine that cross-cultural communication is not only affected by verbal communication but is also affected by non-verbal cues which appear from people’s cultural sense and are therefore interpreted differently across diverse military cultures evolving with diverse service members. Layers of experiences and learned behaviours constantly shape and directly influence individuals’ interpersonal, intercultural and cross-cultural communication. This concurs with Bandura (1989) cited in O’Connor (2010) who noted that failure and success in social interactions primarily depend on the learned behaviour and observational experiences of individuals.

Moreover, Hofstede’s framework for assessing culture (1994) is of a view that dimensions of culture (individualistic vs collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, masculine vs feminine and power distance) are not universal and thus affect the intercultural or cross-cultural process of members. For instance, O’ Connor (2010) indicates that in the U.S. military, young recruits possessing less cross-cultural competencies

experience cross-cultural barriers which are driven by learned cultural peculiarities. Moreover, Ikama (2010) reveals that Nigerian, Kenyan and South African Armed Forces operate in a diverse work context which is not exempt from cross-cultural communication barriers, which result in cross-cultural communication limitations and/or challenges.

### 1.3.3 Cross-cultural communication and diversity management strategies in the military

Butler and Denton (2021) indicate that different strategies have been implemented to deal with the issues of diversity and cross-cultural communication in the armed forces. This section presents a preliminary literature review on the strategies employed to promote cross-cultural interactions and diversity management between diverse people within the military. According to VanVuuren (2008) and Ikama (2010) the basic strategy for effective cross-cultural communication and diversity management is to understand and accept that workplaces comprise diverse individuals who originate from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds with both visible and non-visible differences. It is imperative for members of a given organisation to understand that diversity may increase the productivity of an organisation and for this to occur, members must be authentic, empathetic and flexible in terms of intellectuality and communication (VanVuuren, 2008; Ikama, 2010). Wangombe, Wambui, Muthura, Kamau and Jackson (2013) further state that diversity and cross-cultural communication can be managed and promoted through some of the following strategies outlined below.

Developing a recruitment communication strategy which focuses on diversification; developing rules and guidelines which are fair and suitable for all cultures; providing employees with two-way communication patterns, information and a platform for grievance; training recruits on diversification and investing in cultural sensitivity training; “modelling good behaviour and enforcing cultural sensitivity management training and appropriate conflict management training for management staff” (Wangombe et al., 2013:202); encouraging teamwork and opening (horizontal) communication across sections; raising awareness about diversity and cross-cultural communication through various suitable communication and media platforms;

promoting acculturation and interpretation and seeking employees' feedback and organising events or campaigns to minimise experienced challenges (Wangombe et al., 2013; Ermolaeva & Sisson, 2023).

#### 1.3.4 Manifestation of diversity in the military

Over the past decades, scholars have observed that the world is becoming more globalised and operating on the basis of heterogeneous factors, which comprise various labour forces and organisations occupied by diverse individuals or groups of people. This section explores diversity management by underscoring that, for one to compose a cross-cultural communication management strategy, manifestations of diversity within various military workplaces need to be studied (Urbancová, Hudáková & Fajčíková, 2020). Despite the broadness in the manifestation of diversity within the military, this section discusses gender and religion in both international and local military spheres (refer to section 3.2 for detailed diversity manifestation elements).

##### ➤ **Gender manifestation in the military**

During the 1st World War, “the armed forces used to be characterised by a patriarchal culture where men were the central subject in both recruitment and conscription” (Persson & Sundevall, 2019:1040). However, the augmented deferment of recruitment and the “introduction of the market-army” led to women recruitment in the military. This section discusses a preliminary literature review on the manifestation of gender in international and local armed forces.

##### *Gender manifestation: An international military perspective*

Historically (during 1949), women were excluded from partaking in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) armed forces due to cultural, psychological, physical and practical constraints. This was revealed in a qualitative study conducted by Braithwaite and Lim (2021) on women in the NATO armed forces.

The study confirmed that the involvement of women in NATO was compromised due to religious factors and culturally rooted gender beliefs. The traditional military consisted of male troops who culturally believed that the involvement of women in the military could be offensive to the society. Serving men further believed that women's

involvement in the military as a previously all-male dominated workplace - might affect communication between contingents and create strain in a coalition, hindering work efficiency, effective work relationships and effective military operations (Braithwaite & Lim, 2021).

The above shortcomings were later acknowledged, and NATO became inclusive during World War II, a period where armed forces started to recruit women. The armed forces then experienced a cultural shift aiming to accommodate women in the military environment (Harrell & Miller, 1997). However, when compared to the civilian workforce, women in the military constitute a minimum percentage and continue to face numerous challenges (Braithwaite & Lim, 2021).

Watson (2019) argues that women are not suitable candidates for the military, especially for combat purposes. Due to women's physical characteristics (menstrual cycle, pregnancy and weak upper body), limited capabilities to perform military tasks are encountered. This creates emotional reactions due to the perceived "injustice of gender norming the physical fitness and training standard" (Watson, 2019: n.p).

A qualitative study conducted by Braithwaite and Lim (2021) in the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) revealed that the presence of gender differences comes with inconsistent organisational communication and unprofessional behaviour, which may affect the CAF's professionalism. Some male personnel continue to culturally believe that men cannot report to women while some men sexually harass these women (Braithwaite & Lim, 2021). Sharing the same sentiment, the NATO Scientific and Technology Organisation (2021) found out that women in the military experience sexual assault and sexual harassment.

The Technical Evaluation Report on impacts of gender differences compiled by Sicard (2015) and De la Torre-Castro (2019) on social, cultural and psychological aspects of gender integration in the military indicates that gender diversity in some NATO (Netherlands, Canada, U.S.A, Czech Republic, Germany, Bulgaria, Turkey) military forces affect the unit morale, readiness and cohesion. Cultural barriers continue to persist concerning women serving in the armed forces (Sicard, 2015; Haring, 2020). Science and Technology Organisation Research Task Group HFM-269 (2020) thus recommended that military organisations transform and recognise gender diversity

during training through legal regulations, thereby contributing to a positive diverse culture in the military.

Since the 1940s Swedish military experienced staff shortages due to a low birth rate. The military initiated to recognise women who will serve in the military and civilian posts. However, an investigation on women's power was made and it was later concluded that "women could not be considered for the occupations in question, because they were not conscripted" (Persson & Sundevall, 2019:1042). Therefore, the Swedish military had no support for "gender-neutral conscription" (Persson & Sundevall, 2019:1043). Ten years later, the country began to portray itself nationally and internationally, as a leading nation in gender equality, where women were then recruited and trained to be combatants (Persson & Sundevall, 2019).

#### *Gender manifestation in the military: A local military perspective*

The post-apartheid era has focused on transformation within the military system and gender diversity has been one of the critical focus areas of the development. Gender transformation in the South African military promotes gender equality, where both men and women are recruited and treated as equal players within the system. It develops a non-sexist, non-discriminatory and non-racial institutional culture as required by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996 (Seegers & Taylor, 2008; Monethi, 2013). Gender is perceived as a diverse manifestation issue which creates a distinction between male and female combatants. The SANDF is a military force "committed to achieve equality between men, women and people of all races by providing the prohibition of racial, gender-based and all other forms of discrimination" (Vyas-Doorgapersad & Bangani, 2020:1). Prior to 1994, the force was known as the South African Defence Force (SADF) - a military force which did not consider gender or racial inclusion of indigenous people within the military. However, the SANDF has recognised gender equality and has increased previously disadvantaged women representivity in the military (VanBreda, 2016).

A study conducted by Heinecken and Van Der Waag-Cowling (2009) reveals that the SANDF has brought about change and development in terms of gender profile within the military. The study indicates that female representation has increased since the dawn of democracy. In 1994, "the proportion of women serving in the SANDF

increased from an average of 11% to 13% in 2000 and to 19.5% in October 2007” (Heinecken & Van Der Waag-Cowling, 2009:526). Moreover, the Defence Force provides support for women to serve in any mustering provided by the SANDF (VanBreda, 2016). Despite the support, the SANDF has not reached 50% of women representation in the military, especially in senior management positions (Dube, 2023).

### ➤ **Religious diversity within the military**

The world consists of multiple cultural and religious identities. Culturally and religiously, there is a vast diversity in various workplaces across the globe, including the military (Maluleke, 2001; Beyers, 2010). By workforce tradition, religion has been seen as a private matter with less or no consideration given to its diversity in the workplace. Beyers (2010:2) describes religion as “the continual participation in traditions [myths and rituals] passed on from one generation to the next”. Therefore, religion is a cultural system and a “fundamental core characteristic of many peoples’ identity - providing a guide for behaviour at home, in society and in the workplace” (Etherington, 2019:1; Turner, Geertz, Petersen, & Maryanski, 2020).

Historically, military organisations were characterised by secular bureaucracies which operated without religious foundation and rules (Levy, 2020). Nevertheless, Granberg-Michaelson (2015) articulates that de-secularisation in the military is driven by the process of migration which increases the intensity of religious reinforcement across the globe and particularly in the military culture. Similarly, Levy (2020) shares the same sentiment that migration evolves with different religious practices which have increased their influence in the military since the post-Cold War era, leading to expanding diverse religious affiliations interfering in the military affairs and provoking political debates (Hassner, 2016; Levy, 2020). This section maps a brief literature review on religious manifestation of diversity in the international and national military spheres.

### *Religious diversity: An international military perspective*

Since World War II, different religious practices became present in the U.S. Armed Forces where people of various religious groups (for instance, Muslims, Christians, Protestants, Catholics and Mormons) integrated into the force. However, it received less attention and was ignored by scholars, politicians and diplomats who later recognised that it impacts individuals' attitudes and behaviours (Nelson & Guth, 2023). Scholars began to engage in religious studies to better comprehend its impact on organisations (Smidt, Kellstedt & Guth, 2009).

Nelson and Guth (2018; 2023) have provided a comprehensive analysis of different views and the impact of religious practices on U.S. military organisations and operations. The analysis revealed that religion is influenced by partisanship and ideology which influence the attitude and behaviour of military personnel. With varying religious beliefs in the U.S. military, Pomaville, Gorka and Shaw (n.d) and Haller (2021) revealed that different personnel with different religious affiliations, including atheists experience constant tensions and violence towards one another. Therefore, the U.S. policies of diversity implemented "legal-religious-state relations" which aim to promote soldiers' rights to religious affiliation (association) of their choice (Cook, 2014:181 in Hassner, 2014).

Canada is mostly dominated by European immigrants who belong to the Christian affiliation. This has created a narrative that Canada originates from 'Christian values' of Anglo-Protestant and French Roman Catholic which "form the core of military ethos" (Richardson, 2015:9). Therefore, Christian values and traditions dominate the Canadian military, society, government and institutions. These values are challenged by the diverse religious affiliations which penetrated into the CAF after the World War II when the force became religiously inclusive of personnel who belong to Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Atheism and Sikhism affiliations (Richards, 2015).

Richardson (2015) contends that CAF members who belong to minority religious groups are forced to participate in religious ceremonies which are dominated by Christian values, thus creating uncomfortable space for such members who belong to minority religious affiliations. With this mentioned, the CAF made efforts to be inclusive and accommodative of non-Christian affiliations. For instance, the CAF held a consecration of the National Military Ceremony which composed of different religious

groups within the CAF inclusive of Christian, Buddhists, Jewish, Sikh, First Nations and Muslim traditions (Richardson, 2015).

Moreover, the Royal Canadian Chaplain Service (Royal Canadian Chaplain Service (RCCS) worked in conjunction with different bases to accommodate other groups by transferring from ecumenical to interfaith and opening doors for non-traditional faiths. The RCCS further adopted a natural prayer and refrained from the Christian word 'God' to 'sacred source of all life'. Approval of uniform alterations of Sikhs, acceptance of ceremonial braids for Aboriginal servicepersons and an appropriate prayer space for Muslims have become essential in the CAF (Richardson, 2015). Subsequently, religious inclusion remains a challenging factor for non-religious (atheists) and women who continue to be forbidden from Roman Catholic priest duties (Richardson, 2015). This evolves with cross-cultural inequalities which need to be managed and addressed in the general society.

#### *Religious diversity: A South African military perspective*

The increasing number of different employees in the South African military has led to religious diversity in addition to race, ethnicity, culture, gender and language issues which need to be managed effectively (Veldsman, 2013). In the SANDF, religious affiliation is emerging as a workplace issue thrust by demographic trends (Heinecken, 2011; Day, 2005 in Carrim, 2016). Carrim (2016) points out that in health institutions (for instance, the South African Military Health Services), a catholic nurse may refuse to perform an abortion due to his/her religious belief pertaining to the issue. Moreover, some Muslim employees are forced to leave their job site when a family member has passed away. Religiously their burials are conducted on the same day the individual passes on and this creates cross-cultural conflicts between the SANDF commanders and the employees who belong to these different religious groups (Carrim, 2016:15; Ferreira, 2017). These scholars postulate that religious affiliation is a diversity manifestation that evolves with cross-cultural barriers within the SANDF and therefore needs to be effectively addressed. Given these variations, this study intends to bridge the academic gap by composing a cross-cultural communication strategy to promote cohesion and acceptance of different religious beliefs within the SANDF.

## **1.4 BRIEF SYNOPSES OF THEORIES IN THE STUDY**

In order to guide the study and to understand the nature of diversity, its impact on cross-cultural communication as well as the strategies used to promote effective cross-cultural communication and positive input and outcomes of BMT, this study employed the Effective Intercultural Workgroup Communication Theory (EIWCT), Cross-Cultural Adaptation theory and the Interaction Adaptation theory.

### **1.4.1 Effective intercultural workgroup communication theory**

The effective intercultural workgroup communication theory “explains how cultural variability and diversity influences organisational communication processes and the subsequent outcomes that occur in workgroups” (Oetzel, 1995:327). It stipulates that the characteristics of individuals and cultural level have effects on effective workgroup communication (Oetzel, 2005; 2017). The theory was developed in an attempt to identify the limitations of diverse workgroup models that emphasised on task communication and do not include the effect of culture and diversity on such workgroups. This theory is employed in an attempt to understand the participants’ historical experiences, cultural beliefs and the effect of culture on diversity during BMT. The effective intercultural workgroup communication theory proposes that negative contextual factors experienced by a culturally diverse group may lead to ineffective communication and the distinction between the individualist and collectivist members could result to conflict in the workplace (Oetzel, 1995; 2017).

### **1.4.2 Cross-cultural adaptation theory**

Cross-cultural adaptation theory refers to acculturative outcomes and a dynamic process whereby individuals adapt to unfamiliar cultural settings. The theory is based on a “general system perspective which assures that individuals adapt to change and challenges from a given environment and try to maintain equilibrium within the system by utilising various forms of communication” (Kim, 2017:2; Liu, 2017). For the purpose of this study, cross-cultural adaptation theory was used to understand the adaptation processes and strategies used by BMT recruits throughout their inclusive training programme.

### **1.4.3 The interaction adaptation theory**

The Interaction Adaptation Theory explains the behavioural adjustment that occurs between individuals. The theory postulates that individuals can adjust to various situations presented by an environment. Individuals from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds adjust to one another during the interaction process (Ebesu-Hubbard, 2015). Similar to cross-cultural adaptation theory, the interaction adaptation theory was employed in the study with an attempt to understand the transition or the adaptation process which occurs during cross-cultural interactions.

Cross-Cultural Adaptation and Interaction Adaptation Theory share the same assumptions by maintaining that individuals always have a platform to adapt to one's cultures and to form a third culture which could be adopted by both parties. This increases work efficiency and effective communication within a work environment, a situation that may suit BMT in the South African context (Kim, 1976; Burgoon, Stern & Dillman, 2007; Burgoon, Dunbar & Giles, 2017).

## **1.5 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS**

This study is based on various terms that form an integral part and provide contextual meaning for the study. Therefore, this section defines the key core terms which are used in this study.

### **1.5.1 Culture**

Geertz (1973:89) observed that culture is a “historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about their attitudes towards life”. Geertz (1973) further argues that culture is a means by which individuals express and share their ideas and/or lived experience and views of life. It is a way in which individuals communicate. Similarly, Meso (2023:9) views culture as a comprehensive, intricate system of behaviour and communication, which is:

“a multifaceted concept that has often been used to refer to a group of people who share similar views and interpretations of their world ... from a communication perspective, culture consists of shared experiences, negotiated meaning, and provides a way to deal with ambiguity and uncertainty”.

Culture is shared amongst a group of people who reside together and guides how they communicate and behave amongst themselves (Geertz, 1973; Meso, 2023) and is transmittable from one generation to the next (Geertz, 1973). Johnson and Johnson (2013) also posit that culture is a way of living and learned behaviour acquired from an individual social or societal group. Moreover, Kupur (2020: n.p) refers to culture as the “human-made environment” which comprises various social behaviours that are transmitted from one generation to the other. It is within the notion of communication and behavioural guidance that culture is understood and adopted within the context of this study.

### 1.5.2 Communication

This study infers that communication is fundamental to all social activity as a means of conveying information from one individual to another and the creator of mutual understanding amongst interlocutors. Communication is the process of transferring meaning or information from one individual to another. Sanchez and Guo (2005) and Keyton (2017) argue for the transmission of common understanding from one individual to another. Thus, for one to be understood as intended is an essential part of communication and communication occurs only when understanding of intended information has passed among the interlocutors. Communication is commonly referred to as the process of sending and receiving messages or an exchange of messages and information from one individual to another. Above information transmission activity, communication is also viewed as the process of “exchanging ideas, attitudes, information or emotions between two or more members through verbal and non-verbal means” (Ahmad, 2020:n.p).

Sharing the same sentiment, Adu-Oppong and Agyin-Birikorang (2014:208) believe that “communication in the workplace is critical to establishing and maintaining quality working relationships in organisations” and it is the creator and catalyst of thoughts exchange, “ideas, emotions and understanding between sender(s) and receiver(s)” of messages. Moreover, the scholars believe that this highlights the importance of “establishing and maintaining quality working relationships in organisations” (Adu-Oppong & Agyin-Birikorang, 2014:208).

Communication is central for all activities during BMT amongst MSDS recruits, instructors, squadron managers and other stakeholders. It is relevant in planning or executing military training activities such as drills, parades, musketry (shooting) activities and leading or organising and monitoring any activity. This implies that any person's communication skills affect both personal and group effectiveness (Brun, 2010; Summers, 2010). It is therefore necessary for both recruits and instructors to strive to become effective communicators. Effective communication is "an art and must be practised effectively at a workplace for better output and achievement of goals of an organisation" (Adu-Oppong & Agyin-Birikorang, 2014:208). Similarly, effective communication is a prerequisite for a successful BMT to take place. However, effective communication remains a major constraint during BMT and military operations in general (Harrington, Reedy, Ausink, Bennett, Bicksler, Jones & Ibarra, 2017). Most of these challenges often result from members' cultural variations, the following subsection presents some of these challenges through the contextualisation of culture and cross-cultural communications.

### 1.5.3 Cross-cultural communication

Communication emphasises the message or information exchange from one individual to another and the understanding of such a message remains crucial during the communication process. It further suggests that being constantly engaged in encoding and decoding messages does not ensure that effective communication takes place, nor one is an expert in communication. Therefore, communication does not occur if the thought received differs from the one intended; thus, the sender has only spoken. Given that communication involves the transmission of a common message and understanding from one individual to another (Sanchez & Guo, 2005; Keyton, 2011); it is also worth emphasising that for one to understand and to be understood, effective communication needs to occur between the communicators.

According to Leanard, Van Scotter and Pakdil (2009:851), communication occurs in "specific social and cultural contexts with unique normative beliefs, assumptions, and shared symbols". Although the imbedded nature of cultural effects on communication across cultures is often overlooked (Weisinger & Trauth, 2003), in some organisations its effects are unavoidable. Both the social context and cultural differences have an

impact on communication effectiveness amongst interlocutors of different cultural backgrounds. This emanates from the view that the social and cultural setting has an impact on how interlocutors interpret and understand communicated messages.

Szeluga-Romańska and Modzelewska (2013:1) noted that “all communication takes place in the matrix of culture, therefore difference in culture is the primary obstacle to intercultural communication” and that cross-cultural communication occurs when individuals from dissimilar cultures communicate with each other. Cross-cultural communication refers to a “transactional, symbolic process involving the attribution of meaning between people from different cultures” that occurs on multicultural grounds (Szeluga-Romańska & Modzelewska, 2013:2).

Similarly, cross-cultural communication means the transmission of information and meaning between people of various linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Yuna, Xiaokun, Jianing, & Lu, 2022). It is the interaction and communication process among people of varying cultures and involves “information dissemination and interpersonal communication as well as the flow, sharing, infiltration and transfer of various cultural elements in the world (Del Giudice, Nicotra, Romano & Schillaci, 2016 in Yuna et al., 2022:1). Cultural infiltration is unnegotiable and unavoidable and the need to share dissimilar cultural elements becomes natural when individuals of dissimilar cultures engage amongst themselves in a social setting like the BMT programme.

In various multicultural organisations such as the SAAF of the SANDF, cross-cultural communication is a daily norm, but there are communication challenges that occur amongst new members of the organisation because of their cultural and linguistic backgrounds. As a result, the efforts of establishing and maintaining quality working relationships during BMT through effective communication amongst MSDS recruits of diverse cultures is often challenged.

Leanard et al. (2009:850) argue that “communication processes occur in specific cultural contexts, with unique normative beliefs, assumptions and shared symbols”. Thus, when members of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds interact, communication becomes complex (Meso, 2023). This communication complexity becomes a barrier to both efficient and effective cross-cultural communication and organisational performance. Hence, this study attempts to compose a cross-cultural

communication strategy for diverse MSDS recruits to provide guidelines to improve the effectiveness of communication. This is driven by the view that the need to share knowledge and transfer the intended message or meaning, gives rise to the need for the development of strategies to appropriately address cross-cultural communication challenges as they occur during BMT.

#### 1.5.4 Communication strategy

A communication strategy refers to the blueprint designed and implemented by an organisation to accomplish its mission (Hallahan, Holtzhausen, VanRuler, Verčič, Sriramesh, 2007). It is a purposive use of communication to “convey a clear and unitary message intended for a well-defined audience in the most efficient manner” with the aim of fulfilling the intended aim and objectives of the organisation (Duralia, 2018:93). The Oxford English Dictionary (online) defines a strategy as “the art or practice of planning or directing the larger movements or long-term objectives of a battle, military campaign ...”. Therefore, a strategy is a plan of action established to achieve a clearly defined long term goal (See section 3.9 for more information on this aspect).

#### 1.5.5 Diversity management

South Africa is popularly known as a rainbow nation with racially diverse sections of society. Following the dawn of democracy, the integration of the revolutionary armies and the SADF into the SANDF opened doors for all citizens to join the army regardless of their racial identity. As a result, a diverse/multicultural South African military was born with its merits and limitations. In the South African military diversity continues to grow in terms of gender, religion, educational background, sexual orientation, race and ethnicity. “Diversity is when differences in race, ethnicity, language, nationality, religion and sexual orientation are represented within a community” (Amadeo, 2013). In the military context, it is understood in terms of “having different attributes, experiences and backgrounds of soldiers, civilians and family members that enhance global capabilities and strength” (Byongsam, Zheng & Yeol, 2020:298).

Martin (2014:89) maintains that diversity affects multicultural organisations in several ways, where “the negative effects can include miscommunication, creation of barriers

and dysfunctional adaptation behaviours. Positive effects can include building a sound knowledge base with in-house talent, which can make for smoother integration of the organisation into foreign cultures". Therefore, managing diversity in multicultural military organisations remains a key need to solve the identified problems, maximise employees' attitudes for efficient military operations and facilitate a cross-cultural interaction of individuals with different backgrounds, extraction, ethnicity, genders and religions (Namira, Kusumaningrum, Selvia, Riyanto, 2020).

A diverse labour force can be constructive when successfully managed but could also be disastrous and defeat the goal of skills transfer in trainings like the BMT if it is not properly managed. According to Rahman (2019) and Kulik (2014), diversity management refers to the strategic process utilised to challenge cross-cultural communication barriers and minimise cross-cultural attitudes and opinions to enhance equality between the minority and majority groups. This process thrives through implementing policies and programmes which aim to create a balanced and equitable organisational context for previously disadvantaged groups in the military.

## **1.6 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

### **1.6.1 Research Aim**

With the purpose of managing diversity amongst BMT participants, this study aims to compose a cross-cultural communication strategy for diverse MSDS recruits undertaking BMT at Air Force Gymnasium, Hoedspruit, Limpopo Province.

### **1.6.2 Research Objectives**

- To determine the nature and manifestation of diversity during BMT;
- To evaluate the impact of cultural diversity on cross-cultural communication during BMT;
- To assess cross-cultural communication strategies and approaches adopted to manage diversity across cultures during BMT;
- To develop a communication strategy to manage diversity across cultures during BMT in South Africa.

## **1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The significance of the study relates to its potential to contribute to and extend the scientific body of knowledge (LoBiondo-Wood & Haber, 2002). This study adds to the body of knowledge in military, education, government and private organisations. Various civilian stakeholders and the armed forces will be acquainted with the concept and the nature of cross-cultural communication, diversity manifestation and cross-cultural communication management strategies. Implementing the study recommendations may help the SANDF better understand cross-cultural communication barriers and aid the force in developing or introducing a cross-cultural communication regulatory framework to enhance and instil cross-cultural knowledge between recruits and other stakeholders involved in BMT.

The study educates and raises awareness and cognisance for the public. It provides the public with diversity and diversity management information which will raise unity within South African organisations. The study further suggests solutions that BMT instructors and public managers can apply in their daily operations. It contributes to the body of knowledge in the field of public administration and management, human resources, communication sciences and social sciences in general. It also provides the foundation for both students and researchers in the diversity and cross-cultural communication field to build on related topics for future research. The study further provides practitioners in practice with diversity communication management strategies and techniques that serves the intended purpose. Finally, the study provides knowledge to other internal and African countries undergoing defence transformation and diversity management process.

## **1.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Ethics are vital aspects that should be adhered to when conducting research. The following ethical aspects were considered during the study

### **1.8.1 Informed consent**

The researcher ensured that consent is given from each participant. A clear consent form which explains the aims, objectives and the nature of the study was provided to each individual. Individuals were not forced to partake in the study.

### **1.8.2 Permission to undertake the study**

Permission was requested from the Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC) of the University of Limpopo. The researcher also requested permission to undertake the study with BMT recruits from the SAAF Headquarters (gatekeeper) and the SAAF gymnasium, Hoedspruit. Letters to request for permission were written and sent to the respective offices. Permission was then granted from the Department of Defence, Chief of Defence Intelligence.

### 1.8.3 Anonymity and confidentiality

During the study process, no participant identity was revealed. Participants were informed about anonymity and confidentiality. They were informed and assured that no participants name and information will be revealed. Collected data from participants was used for research purposes only and it was accessed by the researcher and the supervisor.

### 1.8.4 Respect of participant's rights and dignity

All research participants have legal and human rights which should not be violated by any research or study project. The researcher respected each participant regardless of age, race, language and educational level. All participants were treated equally and with utmost respect.

### 1.8.5 Plagiarism

This research was conducted with proper acknowledgement and credit by means of citations and references. All information is appropriately referenced and cited according to the author(s).

## **1.9 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY CHAPTERS**

### **Chapter 1: Contextual overview**

This chapter provides the introduction and contextual background of the study. The chapter gives a brief overview of the study and discusses the research problem, preliminary literature review, theoretical frameworks and research objectives. The chapter further provides a preliminary research methodology followed during the

construction of the study. Additionally, the chapter presents the significance of the study and last, the ethical considerations of the study are deliberated.

## **Chapter 2: Evolution of the South African military: a historical perspective**

This chapter focuses on the review of the historical overview of the South African military from the colonial to the democratic or inclusion era. The chapter provides a historical background from UDF to the South African Defence (SADF) and lastly to the diverse South African National Defence Force. The chapter further discusses a brief overview of the South African Air Force (SAAF).

## **Chapter 3: Manifestation of diversity: management, challenges and strategies in cross-cultural communication**

Chapter 3 presents the literature review of the study. It provides local and international military reviews and reports on diversity manifestation elements along with their challenges to cross-cultural communication, diversity management and cross-cultural communication approaches as well as the regulatory frameworks governing diversity in military organisations. The chapter further outlines the steps of communication strategy development and reviews cross-cultural communication strategies and the impact of cultural diversity on cross-cultural communication. Moreover, the theoretical framework of the study is discussed in this chapter.

## **Chapter 4: Research methodology**

This chapter provides the research method for the study. It deliberates on the research design, research paradigm, sampling, sampling technique, population and the target population utilised for the study. Data collection methods, techniques (tools) and data analysis methods are further discussed in the chapter. Moreover, the chapter presents the quality criteria and ethical procedures followed in the study.

## **Chapter 5: Presentation and interpretation of data**

This chapter provides analysis and interpretation of findings. The chapter graphically analyses the demographic details of participants. It further provides findings and analyses of data through pre-defined themes, emerging themes and subthemes.

## **Chapter 6: Summary of findings, conclusion and recommendations**

This chapter presents the summary of findings, conclusion and recommendations for future research as well as limitations of the study. The chapter further presents the developed cross-cultural communication strategy which should be utilised to promote cross-cultural communication and diversity management during BMT.

### **1.10 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER**

This chapter presented the introduction, background and motivation of the study. South Africa is a multi-cultural country which comprises diverse individuals who originate from diverse cultural, religious, racial and linguistic backgrounds. These factors pose challenges to the flow of cross-cultural communication and the management of diversity within military organisations. Therefore, this chapter deliberates on the aim of the study which is to compose a cross-cultural communication strategy which can be employed to address the presented challenges emanating from diversity. The chapter further discusses the preliminary literature review based on the manifestation of diversity aspects which pose further challenges to the organisational communication process and diversity management. Approaches to diversity and strategies for diversity communication are deliberated. To achieve the intended aim and explore cross-cultural communication experiences and challenges encountered by military personnel and recruits during training, a qualitative research method which incorporates the interpretivism research paradigm and triangulation method of various data collection methods and analysis employed in the study are deliberated. The chapter provides the lenses of the research methodology elements and data analysis methods and procedures utilised for the study. Quality criteria and ethical considerations are further presented. Moreover, a brief discussion of the theories used to guide the study are presented in the chapter. The next chapter outlines the historical evolution of the South African military.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **EVOLUTION OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN MILITARY: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter provides the historical trajectory of the South African military from 1910 to 2022 by discussing the pre-colonial military era, cutting through the apartheid era, up until the democratic dispensation of the new democratic government system which comprises diverse cultural, religious, ethnic and linguistic groups. The purpose of this chapter is to explore how the South African military has evolved from the colonial era to the inclusive democratic military force. The chapter provides a background and historical perspective of the Union of South Africa (1910) and the Union Defence Force (UDF) which operated under the state of the Union in 1912. The section is followed by a discussion on the SADF of 1957. The SADF is a military force that functioned under the apartheid or white-dominated government system. The apartheid government rules and policies which provided a guide for the SADF were challenged by the interim constitution (1993), liberation armies and the former homeland armed forces which suggested to integrate and form a developed and inclusive defence force. In 1990, negotiations for the integration of various forces into a single innovative defence force were further made by the SADF and the key liberation forces which comprised the armed wing of the African National Congress (ANC) - Umkhonto weSizwe (MK) and the Azanian People's Liberation Army (APLA) of the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) (discussed in section 2.2.3 and 2.2.4). The armed negotiations, the 1994 elections and the democratic transition led to the formation of the SANDF in 1994 (discussed in section 2.2.4). SANDF brought about vital transformation in the South African military and has undergone an essential change and development with regard to the military structure, functions, role, race and gender (Lamb, 2004).

For the purpose of this study, the chapter further discusses the role and historical perspective of the South African Air Force (SAAF) which forms the primary basis of the study and is regarded as the home of Air Force Gymnasium- Hoedspruit.

The discussion of the evolution of the South African military is based on the following structure:



Figure 2.1 The development of the South African military (Self designed by Microsoft word)

## 2.2 EVOLUTION OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN MILITARY

This section provides a historical overview of the South African military. It deliberates on the development of military forces with regard to the UDF, SADF and the SANDF.

### 2.2.1 The formation of the Union of South Africa and the UDF

The Union of South Africa was formed in 1910 as a dominion of the British Empire. Between 1899 and 1902, the British Army fought a bitter colonial war against the Boers in South Africa. The war had complex origins, having been sparked by over a century of hostilities between Britain and the Boers. The question of who would dominate and benefit most from the lucrative Witwatersrand gold mines was of immediate concern. After some setbacks and a lengthy period of guerrilla warfare, the British eventually prevailed, but not without implementing controversial strategies (Pretorius, 2000).

The UDF was developed from the integration of the four colonies of the Cape, Transvaal, Natal and the Orange River colony (Veldtman, 2018). The Union operated with a constitution which did not comprise the Bill of Rights and its constitutional process was influenced by the “British constitutional system which was in favour of the British system” (Nthai, 1998: 148). The Union of South Africa did not contain any provision of the defence force until 1912 when the establishment of Act 13 of 1912 was put in place and the Union government proposed for the development of a defence force. The Defence Act (Act No 13 of 1912) made “provision for an Active Citizen Force, Permanent Force and a Cadet Organisation” (De la Rey, 1990: 33). The Act

stipulated that every European citizen aged between sixteen and seventeen years was obliged and permitted to undergo military training while non-European individuals were excluded from the military system. The Act exempted the indigenous people of South Africa from the interest of fighting wars (Dorning, 1987; Veldtman, 2018). On the 1st of July 1912, the colonial military post of the Cape Defence Force, the Inspector (Transvaal) and the Commandant of the Militia (Natal) were “formally abolished” and the UDF headquarter was established in Pretoria (Erasmus, 1987:3). The 1st of July 1912 was marked as the birth date for the Union Defence Force. The force focused on unitary defence organisation which became the key priority of the government (Erasmus, 1987).

The UDF operated with policies that focussed on the following key pillars (Bentz, 2012: 178):

- The focus area of the government’s policy on defence was that of protection against an external threat.
- The possibility of an external invasion of the Union by a foreign power was deemed to be extremely unlikely and it was much more likely that the UDF would be called upon to react to large-scale instances of native violence in southern Africa, as happened, in May 1935, when African mineworkers in Lusaka, Northern Rhodesia, went on strike to protest against increased taxes, imposed by the British Colonial Government. This strike was violently suppressed by the authorities and sensitised the South African Defence Council members to the possibility of large-scale native unrest.
- It aimed to provide military training to a section of the white male population of South Africa.
- The government committed itself to prevent and suppress internal unrest. Any military involvement in this regard would be directed against “native” uprisings and rebellions.

To serve in the UDF, the Boer Republics and the former British Colonies were selected to undergo a military course in a South African military school in Bloemfontein and the UDF advancement started to take place in 1913. The UDF established a permanent force on 1 April 1913 and the new Cadet organisation, Citizen Force and Coast

Garrison were established on 1 July 1913. 2 infantry brigades, 3 mounted brigades and a Cape Corps battalion along with artillery service were raised by the Union (Erasmus, 1987).

The UDF experienced its first action during the Witwatersrand strike which was led by the South African Federation of Trades, in January 1914. During this period, the Union was called upon to pacify the strike and to ensure the country's stability (Geyer, 2014). In August 1914, the UDF experienced a crisis in the "form of the outbreak of the great war" also called WWI (Erasmus, 1987:4), where it was thus expected to partake in the war and to "subdue the Afrikaner Rebellion" (Geyer, 2014:136). The British government requested the Union government to seize control of the German South-West Africa (GSWA - modern Namibia) and to deny them access and the use of the "territory's strategically vital harbours and wireless stations" (Erasmus, 1987:4). The UDF's existence was further threatened by the Dutch (Boers) rebellion in the Orange Free State and Western Transvaal- currently known as the Republic of South Africa- during 1914 where 30 000 men mobilised to suppress the revolt. With this experience, the Union Force employed negotiation methods and military action which led to the downfall of the revolt in mid-December 1914 (Erasmus, 1987; Wessels, 2015; Veldtman, 2018).

In early January 1916, a South African battalion landed in Alexandria and later engaged in a pitched battle at Agagia, Southeast of Sidi Barrani on the 25th of February 1916. The UDF was further involved in a battle of the Somme whereby a fight for Bernafay Wood, Delville Wood, Trones and Longueval Wood occurred from the 5th to the 20th of July 1916. In October 1916, the SA Brigade was in action in Butte de Walencourt. Further encounters were undertaken in the battles of Arras (April 1917) and the 3rd battle of Ypres (September- October 1917). Parties that partook in these battles experienced vital casualties during the fights. The brigade participated in the final Allied breakthrough which ended the war in 1918 in France (Erasmus, 1987).

The second war outbreak (World War II) was later experienced and led to the massive increase of the UDF. The Army Cadet Force (ACF) established various divisions which participated in the war. The first division was designed to serve in North and East Africa, the second division aimed to serve in North Africa and the third division

intended to serve in the Union. Support Corps (SA Veterinary Corps, SA Tank Corps), units (Mountain units) and a host of other combat units were formed. In 1940, the first division of the UDF was shipped to East Africa to assist the “hard-pressed British Forces in endeavouring to hold the 800-mile front against the advancing Italians” (Erasmus, 1987:10). The first division was further ordered to advance across the Chalbi desert to the Abyssian frontier with the aim of “outflanking the Italian positions on the Mega-Moyale escarpment” in January 1941 (Erasmus, 1987:10).

In June 1941, 1 SA division gathered at Mersa Matruh-Egypt- to distillate on “improving the Matruh defences and on training in desert warfare tactics” (Erasmus, 1987:11). Towards the end of June, 2 SA division went to Egypt and was deployed to El Alamein to construct a defensive position in desert training. SA divisions were used to assist and strengthen the 8th Army’s defence positions against the German counter-offensive in Libya during March 1941. The SA Infantry Brigade was further transferred to Tobruck to take over the Fortress protecting the harbour town in 1941 and returned to the Union at the beginning of 1943 (Erasmus, 1987).

In mid-1942, the UDF took part in the British invasion of Madagascar. The SA brigade partook in a long-scale operation which aimed to capture the “Southern half of the Island from its Vicky French occupants” (Erasmus, 1987:12). The operation led to the submission of the Vicky Governor which occurred on the 2nd of November 1942, and SA troops returned to the Union after mission accomplishments. On 1 February 1943, the SA armoured division was forced to participate in the invasion of Italy planned by the Allied High Command, whereas the division operated in the mountainous countryside (Altamura-Matera-Gravina area) for attack position and defence warfare against potential opponents (Erasmus, 1987). The ever-increasing internal and external threats to the Union required structural transformation designed to improve the military system. Thus, various transformations led to the formation of the SADF which was then perceived as an effective defence force for the Republic of South Africa (Erasmus, 1987; Van Der Waag, 2015).

### 2.2.2 The establishment of the SADF

The years between 1957 and 1959 can be “characterised as a time of consolidation for the defence force, during which the post-war process of reorganisation and change

was carried through to its logical conclusion” (Erasmus, 1987:18). The defence Act No 44 of 1957 made amendments and improved the 1912 UDF, the improvements presented by the Act led to the formation of the SADF (1957) and made “provision for the inclusion of the commandos in the SADF” (Erasmus, 1987; De la Rey, 1990: 39). The SADF was a white-dominated establishment developed to defend South Africa against any internal or external unrest and to protect South African citizens and their property (De la Rey, 1990; Scott, 2002; Lamb, 2004). Furthermore, the defence force operated under the Afrikaner government which focussed on racial discrimination against their African counterparts and employed destructive, repressive and semi-democratic policies which were undertaken without public scrutiny (Lamb, 2004).

The primary aim of the 1957 Defence Act was to legislate multiple changes “which gave the defence force a South African character” and respectively re-designed the active citizen and permanent force, new emergency regulations and uniforms and badges for the Air Force, Army and Navy (Erasmus, 1987:18). Between the years 1948 and 1959, the defence was restructured and a decision to improve the efficiency and readiness of the SADF was made by the government and SADF high command. On the 8th of December 1962, an expansion for the South African Army was approved and additional units were established. Further steps were taken to improve the combat readiness of the SADF, and a system of Full-time Force (FTF) units was established in January 1962. The FTF was established to “overcome the disadvantages of the CF with its long period of inactivity, complicated and lengthy mobilisation procedures” (Erasmus, 1987:19).

Moreover, the warfare transformed from conventional warfare to different forms of unconventional warfare and insurgency. Six combat groups that aimed to execute unconventional warfare were established in January 1961 (known as the 11 and 24 combat groups) and on the 1st of April 1963 (known as the 15 and 10 combat groups) (Erasmus, 1987).

The SADF further offered assistance to the white colonial government in Southern Rhodesia (currently known as Zimbabwe), Angola and Mozambique during the series of wars experienced across the countries in the years between the 1970s and 1980s. In 1975, the SADF was ordered to participate in the “Angolan Civil War on the side of

the nationalist movements fighting the Communist-backed People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) to prevent the "Civil War from spreading to the South West Africa (SWA)" (Erasmus, 1987:21). With the support for the movement of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), the SADF further fought against the South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO), Namibia's former liberation movement, but the SWAPO onslaught against Namibia/SWA escalated and the SADF defended the people of SWA from terrorist attacks and intimidation strategies of the SWAPO. During 1978 and 1983, the SADF began to employ offensive strategies that involved "cross-border primitive raids" against the SWAPO (Erasmus, 1987:21). This was performed through strikes and attacks at the organisation's rear SWAPO bases and disrupting the logistic communications and other facilities in Angola. The SADF was further utilised as a central tool to influence the foreign relations of the country and the neighbouring states. Between the years 1981 and 1987, the Republic of SA government ordered and forced SADF to attack and bomb African National Congress (ANC) headquarters and bases in Botswana, Mozambique, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Lesotho (Erasmus, 1987; Le Roux, 2005; Lamb, 2018).

Given the combat experience of the SADF, it can be argued that the force has participated in several conventional wars and attempted coups. It has offered military assistance to the 'Border War' (also referred to Namibian War of Independence, 'Bush War' or the War for Southern Africa) undertaken between the period 1966 and 1989, Angolan Civil War (1975-2002), Korean War (1950-1953) and has participated in the 1986 economic blockade of Lesotho and the Seychelles coup attempt of 1981 (Scott, 2002; Van Der Waag, 2015; Wessels, 2017).

### 2.2.3 The development of the liberation armies

This section discusses the history of the South African liberation (revolutionary) armies. It provides a brief overview of the armed struggle with regard to the origin, transformation and dissolution of the uMKhonto we Sizwe (MK) and the Azanian People's Liberation Army (APLA).

### ➤ **uMKhonto we Sizwe forces**

During the 1950s, the ANC led the trade unions, community organisations and political parties under the banner of the Congress Alliance. The alliance aimed to achieve democracy, redistribution of wealth and racial equality through non-violent passive resistance and mass protest (in the form of stay-at-home strikes, civil disobedience, labour protest and boycotts) methods. The congress alliance believed that political change could be achieved through non-violence tactics. However, in the early decolonisation process, a “demand for racial equality and democracy in South Africa became urgent” (Davis, 2018: 4) and a rival organisation over the principle of non-racialism, the PAC was established in 1959. During the same year, the PAC and the ANC attempted to discredit the populist credentials of their rivals. The situation escalated on the 21st of March 1960 when the PAC launched an anti-pass campaign where individuals gathered around the Sharpeville police station to protest pass laws. Protesters were fired upon by the police and 69 of them were killed while many were wounded. The government impeded the ANC and PAC members by arresting, harassing, and detaining some of them. This led to the 1961 committee whereby the ANC working team met to discuss the issue of violence presented by the government. The committee (team) decided that the ANC should embark on a thirty-year intermittent armed struggle against the apartheid government. The new organisation (the MK) that aimed to challenge the apartheid rule was then established on the 16th of December 1961 (Davis, 2018; Veldman, 2018). The arrival of the MK was announced through the bomb explosion near major government offices and infrastructure and through posters and leaflets. The MK led armed struggle aimed to “minimise the possibility of civilian casualties and maximise damage to government symbols and disrupt economic property” (Davis, 2018:5).

The armed struggle revealed that the violence presented by the government was inevitable and it was useless to preach peace and non-violence when their protests were met with violence by the security forces (Davis, 2018). The reaction presented by the South African Police (SAP) and the SADF during the 1976 Soweto uprising led to the migration of the majority of Black youth who moved to various countries for military training. Training was received from Angola, Uganda, Cuba, and the Soviet

Union during the early 1970s and further education was received from Dakawa - the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College in Tanzania (ibid).

The military strategy of the MK was drawn from the strategy and the political policy of the ANC. The strategy operated with a non-racial character which was drawn from the ideology of non-racialism of the ANC. Moreover, a microcosm of the diverse population was displayed by the MK's culture, institutional make-up and traditions (Williams, 2001; Veldtman, 2018). In the mid-1990s, the MK ended its activity and integrated into the SANDF in 1994 (Davis, 2018).

### ➤ **Azanian People's Liberation Army**

The "repressive action of the government against peaceful Sharpeville demonstrations and killings influenced the PAC (1959) to adopt a militant and violent stance of resistance" (Veldtman, 2018:100). The PAC was banned by the government in 1960 and most of its senior leadership fled to exile whereas some were arrested. In early 1961, the PAC decided to establish the underground cells and engaged in armed struggle in September 1961. The paramilitary wing of the PAC (Poqo - 'pure' or 'alone') was later established and renamed the APLA in 1962. In 1970, APLA members went for military training in Ghana, China, Tanzania, Nigeria, Zaire, the United Kingdom, Yugoslavia, and Canada. Later in 1991, the liberation party launched Operation Great Storm which intended to displace white farmers and fight for land expropriation for black Africans. White farmsteads in the Eastern Cape and Free State provinces were robbed and attacked resulting in several farm deaths (Le Roux, 2005; Veldman, 2018; Taylor, n.d: n.p).

Furthermore, the PAC embarked on a "moist strategy of a protracted people's war" (Mashike, Mokalobe, Lamb & Cock, 2003:7) where APLA surrounded and disrupted various rural areas where sporadic attacks took place against the members of the government security. To build "strong power bases amongst the rural peasantry", the wing developed links with various liberation movements which include the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and SWAPO as well as mainland China known as the People's Republic of China (Williams, 2001:6; Veldtman, 2018:101). In the late 1980s, APLA attacked security force members from urban townships such as Alexandra. Between 1992 and 1994, APLA established bases in Transkei and launched various

attacks against the military, police and civilian targets. Eventually, APLA concluded its mission and integrated into the SANDF in 1996 (Mashike et al., 2003).

#### 2.2.4 Negotiations for a transformed military in South Africa

The SANDF was formed through multiple military negotiations which commenced in May 1990. A negotiation conference took place in Lusaka (Zambia) where MK representatives met with 46 SADF officers. Both parties recognised their different traditions and backgrounds and approved that a South African Armed Force that is modern, balanced, technologically advanced and that promotes non-partisan, gender and racial equality should be established (Erasmus, 1987; Mashike et al., 2003). This was driven by long-term discrimination which had denied military opportunities for the majority of black people in the country (Mashike et al., 2003; Magadla, 2023).

In December 1991, various forces (homeland armies, guerrilla and liberation armies) further assembled at the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) to negotiate the future of South Africa. However, glitches were experienced due to various divergent views from the military forces. Regardless of the challenges, consensus on various critical issues was reached in 1993. The negotiations which focused on the “control of the defence force during the transition, the creation of a new defence force and the integration of the various armed forces into the new defence force” initiated between the SADF and the MK and a transformed national armed force (SANDF) was then created in 1994 (Mashike et al., 2003:8; Magadla, 2023).

#### 2.2.5 The formation of the SANDF

Stepleton (2010:X) notes that “previous military factors such as the defeat experienced in Angola in the late 1980s, and the interim constitution of 1993 were central in bringing about today’s democratic South Africa”. The interim constitution (1993) called for the establishment of a modern, balanced and technologically advanced force (SANDF) which was formed on the 27th of April 1994. The SANDF is a military system that permits all South Africans from various races to identify with their defence force. It brought about change and development which considers all South Africans as equal beings, and it has created a new military culture and ethos by transforming from a

principally “white-dominated organisational culture to a black-dominated culture” (Wessels, 2010:148).

The SANDF reflects on the societal demographics through equal opportunity policies and AA implemented by the government. The presented defence force emanated with the transformation of defence policy, posture, structure and adaptation of a new force design (Van Der Waag, 2015). The transformation process was further supported by Sections 224 to 228 of the 1993 South African interim Constitution and was sanctioned in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996.

Section 224 (3) of the interim constitution (1993) elucidated that “no other armed force, armed organisation or service may be established in the Republic of South Africa other than:

- As provided for in the constitution;
- A force established by or under an Act of Parliament for the protection of public property or the environment; or
- A service established by or under law for the protection of persons or property.

The SANDF was further formed from the integration of statutory and non-statutory forces (NSF) which comprise the conventional SADF, the guerrilla and the liberation armies of the ANC (MK), the Kwa-Zulu Self-Protection Forces (KZSPF), and APLA as well as the former independent states (homeland armies) known as the Transkei, Ciskei, Venda and Boputhatswana Defence Force (Lamb, 2004; le Roux, 2005; Van Der Waag, 2015). The integration system of rationalisation and demobilisation was employed to modify the defence personnel in terms of education, training and race (Van Der Waag, 2015).

The government implemented military policies and approaches which aimed to address the past social and economic inequalities caused by the apartheid system (Heinecken, 2007). Military policies and legislations were refined through the South African Constitution (1996), South African Defence on White Paper (1996) and the South African Defence Review (1998). Measures to ensure civil supremacy over military were further introduced and a significant process of institutional transformation

and downsizing of the South African Military establishment was initiated” (Lamb, 2018:3). The above referred policies and strategies are unpacked in section 3.4.

The integration process presented challenges to the SANDF and it was perceived as a one-sided process. The APLA and the MK had to go before the panel to answer some questions and undergo tests before they could be accepted for integration. The APLA and MK members felt like they were joining the SADF instead of integrating into a single defence force. MK combatants further demanded immediate amalgamation into the SANDF. In 1995, the affected forces undertook protests in Durban and Cape Town and complained about harassment and racism, the slow progress of cultural change within the new structures, lack of diversity, inappropriate training and the use of Afrikaans language (Heinecken, 2007). As will be evident in the successive sections of the study, this aspect hinges on issues of diversity, which the study focuses on in the South African military.

The SANDF supports security, stability and peace missions in South Africa and Africa as a whole. In 1998, the Botswana Defence Force and the SANDF participated in reversing a military coup in Lesotho. The SANDF has also offered general military assistance since the 1990s, it participated in African Union (AU) and United Nations (UN) peacekeeping operations in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan, Uganda, Comoros, Mozambique, Burundi, and the Central African Republic (CAR). The defence force has locally been utilised to “secure South Africa’s borders from illegal immigration and smuggling of drugs and guns” (Scott, 2002: n.p). SANDF personnel were further deployed in Qumbu (Eastern Cape) in 1996 to fight stock theft. During the 1994 and 1999 elections, the SANDF assisted in the registration and voting process of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC). In 2008, it played a critical role in responding to the wave of xenophobic attacks in Gauteng, Kwa-Zulu Natal and Mpumalanga Provinces (Heincken, 2007; Wessels, 2010; Veldman, 2018; Mashike et al., 2003). More recently, the SANDF has detailed the extent of its contribution to Operation Ntletla (27 August 2020), which helped to combat the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic during the lockdown period (Bester, Els & Olivier, 2020). Moreover, the SANDF assisted in stabilising the Kwa-Zulu-Natal floods (which occurred in May 2022) by repairing infrastructure and providing affected members with

blankets and food parcels through what was known as Operation Chariot (DefenceWeb, 2022).

## **2.3 THE ROLE AND BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN AIR FORCE**

The SAAF forms the primary social context of this study as it focuses on composing a cross-cultural communication strategy for diverse BMT recruits at the SAAF Gymnasium. Therefore, this subsection provides a historical background and strategic importance of the SAAF as one of the SANDF's arms of the Services.

### **2.3.1 The role of the South African Air Force**

The SAAF is the SANDF's air arm of service that serves as a key component of the nation's defence infrastructure. As the second-oldest independent air force in the world, the SAAF holds historical, strategic, and operational significance within both national and regional contexts (South African Air Force, 2024). The SAAF is primarily responsible for safeguarding and monitoring South African airspace. It supports ground forces extremely through combat operations, airlifts and reconnaissance. The air force maintains national sovereignty by detecting, preventing and defending against airborne threats (Du Plessis, 2023). Moreover, it makes it easier to quickly deploy troops and equipment throughout the nation and abroad, increasing the SANDF's strategic mobility (South African National Defence Review, 2023).

The SAAF also contributes significantly to humanitarian operations and regional peacekeeping. Amongst others, it has supported disaster relief efforts in Southern Africa and provided aircraft and people to United Nations missions, particularly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (United Nations Peacekeeping, 2022).

### **2.3.2 Brief history of the South African Air Force**

The UDF Act of 1912 made provision for the establishment of the South African Aviation Corps. The Commandant-general of the Citizen Force, Brigadier General Beyers was sent to England and other parts of Europe to observe and report on the use of aircraft in the military. The General was impressed and returned to the Union where he recommended for the establishment of the SAAF and aviation schools in the country (Erasmus, 1987). The SAAF is a military air arm that was established under

the UDF on the 1st of February 1920, the date on which Lieutenant Colonel Sir Pierre Van Rynveld was appointed as Director of Air Services (DAS). The establishment of the SAAF was facilitated by the imperial gift offered by the British government. The government donated 100 war-surplus aircraft, steel frameworks for 20 permanent hangars, aviation fuels, oils, lubricants and a multitude of other materials to the SAAF. In 1921, AFB Swartkop was identified as the location for the first SAAF aerodrome. The base flew its first operational mission during the 1922 Rand miners' strike which led to a series of violent clashes between the strikers and the South African Police. The SAAF further aided by bombarding the strikers' position and flew reconnaissance missions in Springs, Benoni, Boksburg, Johannesburg and Brakpan. A total number of 48 police force and UDF members were killed. 2 SAAF aircraft were damaged, and 2 members were killed while the other 2 were wounded. Operational missions were later flown against the indigenous people (Bondelswart-Hottentots) of SWA whereby 3 SAAF aircraft were involved in accidents. In 1925, Experimental Air Mail Services were conducted by eleven DH.9 aircraft between Durban and Cape Town (Erasmus, 1987; De la Rey, 1990; Taylor, n.d).

Between the late twenties and early thirties, the SAAF experienced financial difficulties which led to depression and pressure on the Defence budget, however, various transformations and alterations took place at the Aircraft and Artillery Depot at Robert Heights. A licence to build Westland Wapitis was obtained during this period. In order to develop the aviation industry, the SAAF established the Transvaal Air Training Squadron in 1928, and Active Citizen Force artisans and pilots were trained at the institution. The SAAF experienced a significant effect on the efficiency and training facilities in 1935, whereby the UDF expanded, and the Air Force was amplified to seven squadrons and further bases and stations which include Waterkloof Air Station (Currently known as AFB Waterkloof), Durban (AFB Durban) and Bloemfontein station (AFB Bloemspruit) were established (De la Rey, 1990; Taylor, n.d).

Furthermore, the SAAF contributed to the UDF's war effort in 1939. During the outbreak of the war, new flying schools were established in Pretoria, Germiston, Bloemfontein and Baragwanath. The training command was also established to administer the SAAF's overall training programme (De la Rey, 1990). One of the greatest contributions to the Allied war effort was the Joint Air Training Scheme (JATS)

in which 33 347 Royal Air Force, SAAF and other allied personnel qualified as pilots and aircrew at 38 air schools around South Africa. This led to an escalating number of SAAF military aircraft and pilots during September 1941 (De la Rey, 1990).

On the 10th of May 1940, the SAAF established the South African Women's Auxiliary Air Force (SA WAAF) to train women who would serve in the organisation. As a result, women from SA and the Middle East served in both technical and administrative duties during the Second World War (Erasmus, 1987). By the beginning of 1942, SAAF squadrons played a vital role in empowering the Desert Air Force of the United Kingdom. Moreover, the SAAF participated in the Boston Shuttle Service in North Africa where 18 aircraft from the 12 and 24 squadrons threw 100 bombs toward the Afrika Korps as it "relentlessly pushed the 8th Army back towards Egypt" (Erasmus, 1984:14). The squadrons further played a crucial role in harassing the German Forces who eventually retreated during the year. In early 1944, the SAAF contributed to the Allied air operation over Italy and provided support to the Warsaw resistance movement of Europe in August and September 1944. (Erasmus, 1987).

In August 1954, the SAAF further offered protection service for Allied shipping along South Africa's coastlines where it flew 15 000 coastal reconnaissance sorties. Moreover, during 1966, the force provided support for Portuguese forces during their fight against the liberation forces. A low-intensity fight against the SWAPO forces, Soviet-supported Angolan and Cuban forces was performed by the SAAF in 1975. The defence arm also undertook the South African Police and Army support missions against the South African liberation forces and its neighbouring countries during the latter part of the 1970s and 1980s (Taylor, n.d).

The SAAF further contributed to the largest mechanised war operations in the late sixties and early seventies, particularly as the border war in SWA began to intensify. The force was called to participate in Operation Savannah of 1975 in Angola where flying patrols, supply runs, and reconnaissance missions were performed, and helicopters, light aircraft, and transport aircraft were deployed to support ground forces (De la Rey, 1990). Moreover, the SAAF provided air support during Operations Sceptic (June 1980) and Klipkop (July 1980) which occurred in Angola. During this period, the

SAAF lost a flight mechanic and the Alouette III helicopter which was shot down (Erasmus, 1987; De la Rey, 1990).

In August 1981, De la Rey (1990) indicates that the SADF launched the largest South African Armed Forces mechanised operation called Operation Protea - Angola. During this period, the SAAF strike aircraft provided ground attacks on the Angolan air defence system and the People's Armed Forces of Liberation of Angola radar sites. It offered close air support and provided casualty and troop evacuation during the ground forces' attacks performed in Ongiva and Xangongo. "Light aircraft flew communications missions and artillery fire control missions while transport aircraft were responsible for resupply runs" (De la Rey, 1990:197). A SAAF helicopter was shot down and two members were killed during the operation (ibid).

Additionally, air support was given to a mechanised force where the MiG-21 Angolan Air Force was shot down by a SAAF Mirage during Operation Daisy launched in November 1981. In 1982, the SAAF contributed to Operation Super and Meebos in Southern Angola. During Operation Super, 75 soldiers flew to a SWAPO base and performed a surprise attack which led to 201 deaths of terrorists (Erasmus, 1987). Moreover, in July 1982, various air strikes occurred against SWAPO's control and command system during Operation Meebos. On the 5th of January, the SAAF experienced setbacks when the SAAF Puma helicopter was shot down and three crew members were killed. Three Air Force members and twelve paratroopers were shot in another SAAF Puma helicopter in August of the same year. During 1983 and 1984 the Air Force gave air support to the ground and security forces and flew reconnaissance missions during Operation Phoenix undertaken in South West Africa (Namibia) and Operation Askari, Angola (Erasmus, 1987; De la Rey, 1990; Taylor, n.d).

Taylor (n.d) further revealed that the SAAF played a vital role in humanitarian and rescue missions across Africa. In 1991, it assisted Malawi's flood relief operation and deployed Oryx helicopters to assist during the Mozambique flood relief in February 1996 and 1999 (during Operation "MONOZITE"). In February 1998, the SAAF operated and assisted the Department of Foreign Relations in a flood disaster support mission in Tanzania during Operation "PAMPU". The SAAF was once again involved in another flood rescue experience in Mozambique in 2000 (Operation "LITCHI")

(Taylor, n.d). It played a crucial role in transporting South African Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) personnel and equipment in operation “JAMBU” (1994) during the inauguration of the first SANDF Commander-in-Chief. The air arm provided support for Mozambique elections in Operation “AMIZADE” and offered airlift support to Rwandan refugees. The SAAF further offered support to the United Nations missions “MONUC” and “MONUSCO” in Operation “MISTRAL” and further support to mission “ONUB” in Burundi from 2001 until Operation “FIBRE” of 2006. In 2003, SAAF helicopters supported the European Union mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo and supported the African Union mission “AMISEC” in Comoros Island (Taylor, n.d). Various combat aircraft which comprised of the Hawk Mk 120 advanced jet trainers, Super Lynx Naval helicopters, Agusta A109LUH light helicopters and JAS 39 Gripen multi-role fighters were utilised throughout the 2010 FIFA World Cup Competition held in South Africa in Operation “KGWELE”. In 2013, the Hercules SAAF aircraft accompanied by the Gripen flew the body of the late former President Nelson Mandela to the Eastern Cape (Qunu), as part of Operation “UXOLO” (Taylor, n.d).

SAAF aircraft further supported the South African Navy in conducting anti-piracy patrols which were made in the Mozambique Channel in Operation “COPPER” during 2011 and 2015. Additionally, the SANDF contributed to the combat of the Covid-19 pandemic where various SAAF bases played a key role in aiding to fight the spread of the disease. The SAAF formed a Temporary Air Base (TAB) at Air Force Base Swartkop in 2020 for quarantine purposes for members who were from deployment and those confirmed to be positive. Currently, the SAAF continues to support the African Union and United Nations peacekeeping missions locally and internationally. The force provides support to the national and provincial departments, parastatals, the South African Police Service (SAPS) and other organisations in the country (Taylor, n.d). The force operates with the following bases and units presented on the map below.

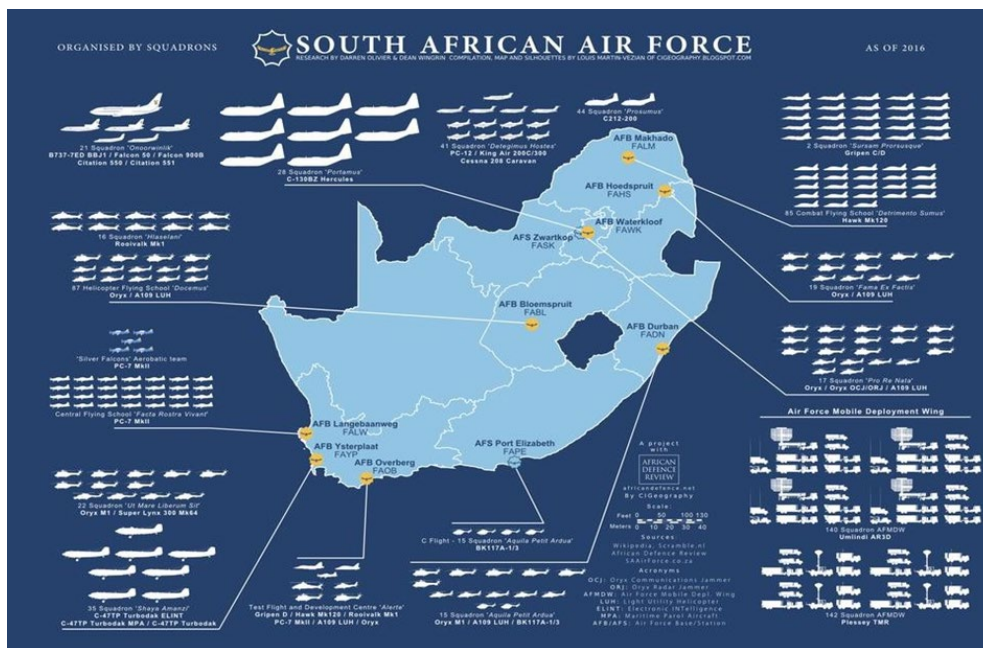


Figure 2.2 South African Air Force bases and unit map (Taylor, n.d)

## 2.4 CONTRIBUTION OF THE CHAPTER TO THE STUDY

This chapter provides a comprehensive narrative on the historical background of the South African military from a segregated to an inclusive force. Given the limited accessible literature on the history of the South African military and that some data are kept in the SANDF museum located within military bases, such materials are not easily accessible to members of the public. However, as a member of the SANDF, the researcher had privileged access to this material and deemed it important to familiarise the reader with such history by contextualising it to the study. It provides a critical perspective for understanding the military transition from uniformity to diversity in a post-colonial era. According to Špiláčková (2012:23), “pre-understanding [of phenomena] is rooted in the tradition for enabling orientation into the natural world” of reality. Therefore, a historical background to the evolution and transformation of the South African military is critical to the understanding of the role and relevance of the SANDF in its contemporary form. The chapter helps the study as a basis upon which the researcher can develop a comprehensive cross-cultural communication strategy for BMT recruits based on the lessons derived from the protracted and illustrious trajectory undergone by the South African military for a period spanning a century and beyond. This is important because a clear interpretation and understanding of the

history is required to engage the current diversity and cross-cultural communication challenges experienced in the current military environment.

## **2.5 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER**

This chapter has provided a historical background to the South African military towards the comprehension of the broader context of the South African military. It has discussed the military transformation of the force from the colonial, apartheid and post-apartheid systems. The chapter highlighted how the negotiations for the formation of an advanced defence force evolved towards amalgamation into a “single coherent beaurocratised defence force” (Wessels, 2010: 150) after 1994, known as the SANDF. The chapter concludes by discussing the historical overview of the South African military aviation force (SAAF).

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **MANIFESTATION OF DIVERSITY: MANAGEMENT, CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES IN CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents literature review, which focuses on cross-cultural communication and diversity experiences in extensively diverse armed forces. The chapter commences by addressing the manifestations of diversity experienced in the military. Manifestation elements of diversity are categorised into four sub-sections, which include gender, race and ethnic manifestation, culture and language (linguistic) and religion diversity manifestation. Diversity manifestation elements emanate with diversity challenges which are further discussed in section 3.3. The section indicates that diversity emanates with various implications, tensions and discrimination issues that call for the development of management strategies presented in section 3.7. The chapter further discusses the approaches and legislative frameworks used by various countries to address issues emanating from diversity challenges (refer to section 3.4). The Affirmative action programmes, equal employment opportunity programmes and other development programmes used to address the imbalances of the past and to promote fairness and equality within military organisations are discussed in this section. Moreover, the chapter deliberates on the cross-cultural and linguistic competencies identified as key components (strategies) to a successful diverse organisation. The critique of diversity strategies and approaches are further outlined in sections 3.5 followed by section 3.6 providing a review on the impact of diversity on cross-cultural communication. The chapter also presents a comprehensive communication strategy, a brief overview of strategic communication and guidelines (steps) used to develop a comprehensive communication strategy (see Table 3.1 and Figure 3.2).

The chapter further addresses the concept of culture and communication and their interdependent relationship in terms of how one element has a significant impact on the other. This will indicate how the cultural background of individuals affects the way they communicate and interact with other diverse groups (Logan-Terry & Damari, 2015). The Interaction adaptation theory, cross-cultural adaptation theory and the effective intercultural workgroup communication theory are discussed to support the

identified statement and further emphasise the effect of culture on the interaction climate, adaptation process and cross-cultural communication process in diverse organisations (section 3.9). Lastly, the summary of the chapter is presented.

## **3.2 MANIFESTATIONS OF DIVERSITY IN MILITARY ENVIRONMENTS**

Various scholars reveal that diversity manifests in multiple ways and the manifestation elements of diversity evolve with different communication styles, attitudes, leadership styles and emotional intelligence between men and women from different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds (Heinecken, 2017; Dash, Dash & Satpathy, 2021). Heinecken (2011) indicates that the manifestation of diversity can be categorised as racial diversity, religious, linguistic, gender, age and cultural diversity manifestation. This section provides a literature review on the manifestations of diversity and their impact on the communication process of military forces in both international and local regions.

### **3.2.1 The emergence of gender in the military contexts**

Gender refers to the socially constructed traits of males, females, girls, and boys (Miñao, 2024). This encompasses interactions between people as well as the cultural norms, behaviours and roles that come with being a woman, man, girl or boy. Gender is a social concept that differs from culture to culture and can evolve over time (Miñao, 2024). According to Reisner, Choi, Herman, Bockting, Krueger and Meyer (2023), there are broad philosophies surrounding gender across the globe. Western and African traditions view gender as binary, involving only males and females and how they are supposed to behave. These Western and African traditions are challenged by resistance from people who perceive their gender differently from the sex assigned to them at birth (Reisner et al., 2023). Ussher, Allison, Perz, Power and Out (2022) argue that gender is divided into diverse categories ranging from cisgender, transgender and non-binary. Transgender comprises people of diverse gender identities including lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer and intersex (LGBTQI) people. Conversely, cisgender includes individuals who describe their gender in terms of the Western and African binary conceptualisation of male and female while non-binary comprises members who identify as genderless or both male and female (Reisner et al., 2023). This study focuses on cisgender individuals referred to as male and female. The rationale for this

focus is that the SAAF's institutional structures, training protocols and cultural expectations in the context of BMT are predominantly structured around cisgender (binary gender) norms. These frameworks have historically categorised recruits and personnel based on male and female roles, responsibilities and communication dynamics. This delimitation does not negate the importance or validity of transgender or non-binary experiences but rather reflects the study's scope and objective to provide context-specific insights that can inform future strategies.

Van Der Meulen and Soeters (2007) projected that a worldwide process of modernisation has been driving cultural change that encouraged the upsurge of women in the armed forces. In agreement with this view, Lowen and McDonald (2022) noted that new opportunities have been brought about by the political developments, education and advancement of technology, which have increased military diversity in terms of the presence of males and females, referred to herein as cisgender in this study. During the 1980s, the promotion of gender heterogeneity and inclusion of women became a topic of interest in different organisations and the military in particular. During this period, the military strived to address social justice concerns associated with gender imbalance by recruiting women to serve in the male-dominated military environment (Van Der Meulen & Soeters, 2007; Heinecken, 2017). Amongst other military organisations, the identified concerns were addressed by the U.S., Israel, Canada and South Africa to transform their forces from gender uniformity to gender diversity by recruiting women, transgender and non-binary members into their forces. This section reviews the diverse cisgender (gender) perspectives of these military forces.

#### ➤ **Gender: An international perspective**

This section presents the evolution of gender as a manifestation of diversity in the international military. It reflects on selected diverse international armed forces that have leveraged diversity and encountered cross-cultural communication on a daily basis. The U.S.A., Israeli and Canadian Armed Forces are embedding gender diversity into their programmes and policies while emphasising fair and equal inclusion of diverse members (Lowen & McDonald, 2023) hence their discussion in this section.

### *Gender in the U.S.A. military*

Before and during World War I (1914-1918), the U.S.A. military was dominated by male personnel serving in different posts of the force. This was encouraged by the U.S. War Department believing that combatant duties must be performed by men. Since 1901, women were officially employed and appointed in traditional feminine positions including laundresses, cooks and nurses. Regardless of lack of excessive manpower during World War I, women were not considered for military service (combatant) positions, instead, they continued to serve in traditional feminine positions including administration and healthcare centres (Van Der Meulen and Soeters, 2007; Haring, 2020). In World War II (1939) opportunities for women increased in the armed forces. The U.S. implemented regulatory frameworks promoting women to serve in military service positions. About 400,000 women were recruited and served in non-combatant positions, while few served as aircraft mechanics, intelligence functionaries and riggers. Moreover, women from all ethnic and racial groups were permitted to serve in combat theatres internationally (Noakes, 2006; Moore, 2020). Moore (2020) projects that due to the U.S. Women's Armed Services Integration of 1948 and Public Law 90-130 permitting women to serve in permanent military positions, the percentage of women escalated, and they were given a formal right to enter various military combatant and non-combatant positions.

Segal, Segal and Reed (2015) revealed that on the 9th of February 2012, the U.S. military force became more diverse in terms of gender. The Department of Defence integrated women into the U.S. military by opening 14,000 posts to women, this increased the number of women soldiers in the U.S. Armed Forces. Patten and Parker (2011) further state that transformation in military policy and the length of conflict in Afghanistan and Iraq increased the capacity of women in the U.S. military. Different women from distinguished ethnic and age groups were recruited and exposed to different mustering and services including combat services (Patten & Parker, 2011).

Haring (2020) further indicates that the rise of women in the U.S. forces was driven by the United Nations (UN) resolutions (United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) and the Women, Peace and Security (WPS), which provided women with equal participation to serve in international peace and security missions. The U.S DoD

further supports and encourages women to serve in the military by promoting gender equality in all military sectors including humanitarian operations (Haring, 2020).

Despite the policies and resolutions promoting gender equality in the U.S, military, change remains resistant. Men continue to dominate the force with women remaining in a fractional minority group. Women encounter cultural and structural challenges related to discrimination in the U.S. military. The presence of women in the military leads to excessive gender-based and sexual violence, assault, marginalisation and low promotion rates (Haring, 2020). For instance, a workplace and gender-related survey on sexual harassment and assault was conducted during the period of War on Terror (2002 to 2012) in the U.S. The findings revealed that about 1% to 3% of male soldiers reported sexual harassment while 8% to 9% of female soldiers experienced and reported sexual harassment cases. Sexual harassment cases ranged from 5% to 7% for males and 22% to 31% for females (Stander & Thomsen, 2016). Erwin and Cseh (2023) further conducted in-depth interviews with twelve senior U.S. military servicewomen who reported that gendered misconduct, including sex-based discrimination, sexual assault and sexual harassment, “reflected the simultaneous visibility and invisibility of women in military service” (Erwin & Cseh, 2023:402).

### *Gender in Israeli Defence Force (IDF)*

Israel is one of the nations that conscripted women into their armed forces since 1948. It is one of the countries that consider gender equality and perceive military service for women as compulsory (Harel-Shalev, 2021). The IDF is regarded as a people’s army as it requires safety and security from a diverse range of citizens including males and females (Mishra, Mohanty, Jeswani & Panda, 2022). According to Van Creveld (2000), in 1948 the Israeli government excluded women from the battlefield (combat roles) and permitted them to serve in support services such as administration and technical duties of the defence force. This duty imbalance was created by the concerns of sexual assaults and rape experienced by women on the battlefield and the traditional belief that men need to protect women (Van Creveld, 2000).

However, the political developments, regulatory frameworks, cultural norms promoting gender equality and shortage of ‘manpower’ challenges within the IDF necessitated women to serve in different sections and mustering provided by the force (Ben-

Shalom, Lewin & Engel, 2019; Haring, 2020). Mishra et al. (2022) indicated that IDF is one of the gender-equal forces in the globe. "Military service through conscription remains a civic duty in Israel and it has resulted in Israel having the largest percentage of women serving in the military" (Haring, 2020:93).

Ben-Shalom et al., (2019) revealed that women have been recruited into the IDF since 1948 and have played a critical role in the IDF feminist positions. The view of women as passive individuals who need protection and who are suitable for office-based duties changed during 1990 when the IDF started to perceive them as people who can benefit the system and aid in attaining its aim and objectives.

Regardless of Israel's conscription and high rate of women participation, women experience sociological prejudice related to pregnancy and traditional and cultural beliefs regarding women's related duties. This challenge stems from the view that women are and continue to be a liability on their male counterparts rather than a view that women soldiers are capable of and can offer security to the nation (Mishra et al., 2022). Moreover, Haring (2020) indicated that IDF does not apply similar conscription rules to males and females. Women receive extra exemptions compared to men and are further provided with a shorter period of service. "Promotions for women lag behind men and few women become senior military leaders" (Haring, 2020:99). In the IDF, 51% of women are junior officers. This remains a gap in military institutions and thus calls for the implementation of policies on promotions and elimination of structural and cultural barriers (Haring, 2020).

### *Gender in the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF)*

Winslow, Browne and Febbraro (2007) indicate that during the end of World War II, restrictions which excluded women from the military were removed in the CAF. During this period, the force commenced to recruit women to communications, medical support, administration and logistic divisions. To further support gender inclusion and enhance operational readiness, the Minister of National Defence Force advocated for women's inclusion in the Canadian military in 1987. Moreover, Canada's defence policy and National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security emphasised the requirement to increase service women in the CAF (Biskupski-Mujanovic, 2022). Recently, women are recruited in various military divisions such as combat and aircrew

occupations of Canadian military units and bases (Winslow et al., 2007; Gill & Febraro, 2013).

Similar to most gender integrated military organisations, the CAF experiences issues related to sexual misconduct (Johnstone & Tait-Signal, 2023). The CAF's desire to enhance women's participation, credibility and create a safe working environment for all service men and women has been eroded by sexual misconduct allegations against CAF leadership (Biskupski-Mujanovic, 2022). Hajizadeh, Aiken, and Cox (2019) reported that sexual misconduct in the CAF contributes to gender inequality, unsafe and unhealthy work environments, sexual health issues, mental health issues, depression and substance abuse to the majority of service women. According to Burke and Brewster (2021), women's reports on sexual misconduct in the CAF resulted in sexual assault investigations since 2021. For instance, in 2021 the CAF's former Chief of Defence Staff, Jonathan Vance was investigated for sending a titillating email to his female subordinate and having an affair with Kellie Brennan, who was also his subordinate (Burke & Brewster, 2021). Connolly (2022) followed the investigations and revealed that Vance pleaded guilty to the obstruction of justice in March 2022.

In 2018, Statistics Canada revealed that 70% of regular servicewomen were victims of sexual assault and discriminatory behaviour in the form of sexual comments, inappropriate discussions about sex life and sexual jokes (Cotter & Savage, 2019). Out of 40 participants in a sexual misconduct interview conducted by Burke and Brewster (2021), 14 women reported to have experienced sexual assault in the CAF. These assaults are created by the unequal gender balance and the hierarchal structure of the military. Moreover, Hajizadeh et al. (2019) highlight those military cultural ideals of rank structure, dominance, aggression and hyper-masculine attitudes and values result in a culture of sexual misconduct. Additionally, Taber (2018:104) and Taber (2022) indicate that,

The "embedded ideology of the 'warrior' that values a militarised hyper-masculinity and sexualised culture goes hand in hand with denigrating and discriminating against women and men who are perceived as not masculine enough" (Taber, 2018:104). CAF military culture is marked by the communal character of life in uniform, hierarchy and discipline and control...as such, members are expected to conform to military authority, culture and tradition (Taber, 2022).

To address sexual misconduct, the Standard for Harassment and Racism Prevention (1994) was implemented and the Defence Administrative Orders and Directives (2020) further emphasised that, “sexual misconduct must never be minimised, ignored or excused”. The Department of National Defence (2021) also launched Operation Honour to address issues related to sexual misconduct and provide support to the victims of sexual misconduct (Biskupski-Mujanovic, 2022:149).

Gender diversity in international military organisations remains a diversity issue that emerged with change resistance towards cultural and/or traditional beliefs about masculinity and feminist duties. Gender integration also led to a high rate of sexual misconduct and assault towards most servicewomen. Various policies have been implemented by different international military forces, however, change resistance and sexual misconduct continues to exist in international military forces. Moreover, gender imbalance of males and females in terms of position and rank structure exists in international forces. This remains a gap in military organisations and thus calls for the implementation of additional gender related policies.

### ➤ **Gender in the military: A regional perspective**

There are general similarities in how diversity in African armed forces has developed, particularly with regard to political representation, gender integration and ethnic inclusion. The military of Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana, the Democratic Republic of the Congo Armed Forces, the Rwandan Army, South Sudan and the Zimbabwe Defence Forces have all shown certain similarities regarding underrepresented groups (Anderson & Killingray, 1991; Beswick, 2010; Stearns, 2012; Okoli & Orinya, 2013; Ogbonnaya, 2021; UN Women, 2022). However, this study selected and discussed the armed forces of Nigeria, Kenya and Ghana.

Recent studies indicate that gender diversity has emerged as an important factor to promote inclusivity in various African regions. Various African countries have implemented policies to encourage gender equality in the armed forces. This transition is reflected in operational frameworks, international peacekeeping operations and defence policies of different African military forces. Ghana Armed Forces established a thorough gender policy in 2024 with the goal of eradicating discriminatory behaviours and guaranteeing equitable representation by institutionalising gender mainstreaming

in all military operations (Ghana Armed Forces, 2024). Similarly, Nigerian Armed Forces and Kenya Defence Force implemented gender legislative frameworks which aimed to promote representation and address gender disparities within its structure (UN Women, 2021).

Regardless of the implemented gender inclusion policies, military institutions continue to experience diversity challenges emerging with gender. Asante and Attom (2022) indicate that in Ghana Armed Forces, inclusion challenges are deeply rooted in systematic barriers and socio-cultural norms that affect women's participation in different sectors, including the military. Unequal cultural perceptions of men and women and military institutional practices shape gender dynamics and emerge with cross-cultural communication challenges between men and women within the military.

Similar to Ghana Armed Forces, cross-cultural communication challenges in Nigerian Armed Forces and Kenya Defence Force are ingrained in patriarchal norms, sociocultural traditions and institutional biases that shape views of female roles in the military. Previously, the Nigerian Armed Forces were characterised as a masculine organisation that valued masculinity over femininity. This emerged with stereotypes that labelled women as incapable of operating in combat related roles, they were also labelled as weak and thus were viewed as suitable candidates for administration, nursing and catering positions thereby limiting women career advancement in the military (Yakubu, 2023; Olubiyo (2024). These gender imbalance roles created communication barriers and a power imbalance that affects cohesion and decision making (Eze & Chukwuemeka, 2022).

Patriarchal traditions that characterise military service as a masculine endeavour have long dominated the Kenya Defence Force. Women's upward mobility within the ranks and access to specific roles are restricted by this pervasive gender bias (Bouka and Sigsworth, 2021). In contrast to combat or strategic leadership responsibilities, women are overrepresented in support professions like clerical, nursing or logistics, which perpetuates gendered occupational segregation and communication silos (Bosibori, 2021). Gendered experiences within the Kenya Defence Force are significantly shaped by cultural expectations and societal standards. Women are typically expected to provide care in many Kenyan communities, and military participation is frequently

seen as unsuitable or incompatible with femininity (Ombati, 2015). Because male colleagues may be skeptical or unaccepting of female workers, these cultural beliefs cause friction within the workforces and hinder candid and efficient communication (Bosibori, 2021).

The literature indicates that African armed forces are inclusive, however, they remain male-dominated African militaries. Different transformation and inclusion policies have been implemented to foster gender inclusion, particularly in countries like Ghana, Nigeria and Kenya. Cultural barriers and cross-cultural communication barriers challenge the equitable gender representation in such forces. Therefore, continued research and strategies are required to assess long-term outcomes, ensure sustainable and equal gender integration as well as enhance cross-cultural interaction across African military organisations.

#### ➤ **Gender: A South African perspective**

The SADF was a male-dominated force that was “accentuated by the male conscription policy during the 70’s and 80’s” (Van Wijk, 2005: 69). The SADF operated with gender and racial imbalances, however, societal and political pressures like the liberation struggles brought about transformation which focused on equal rights for all and brought about gender manifestation in the South African military (Heinecken, 2013). The South African constitution and assertive affirmative action programmes further support the maximum participation of women in various working environments. The South African liberation armies, which fought for human rights and the promotion of non-sexism, also gave rise to gender integration and transformation in the military where the majority of women commenced to serve and to be placed in all military ranks and branches. Heinecken (2013) further indicates that deployment tasks require a conciliatory approach to security. To fulfil the task, women are required, and they are highly recommended to serve in the military and be deployed for peacekeeping missions. These tasks provide women with an opportunity to be trained and to serve in various military positions (including combat service) (Motumi, 1999; Heinecken, 2007; 2017).

According to Dube (2023), the SANDF transformed from gender uniformity to gender heterogeneity. The DoD’s proactive push for gender equality led to 30% female

representation in all ranks of the SANDF (DoD, 2019 in Dube, 2023). However, the force remains a male dominated environment and has not transformed into an equal gender environment. Due to retirement, natural attrition and resignations, women serving in the SANDF declined from 30% between 2019 and 2020 leaving the SANDF with 27.85% of the female population, with 23.49% serving in senior management positions and 56.67% serving in lower and middle ranks (DoD, 2020; Dube, 2023).

Regardless of gender transformation, the SANDF maintains the masculine traits within its arms of services. The force requires women to embrace masculine characteristics and strengthen the masculine military tradition. As a result, this masculine pressure encourages gender inequality and adherence to the SANDF's established norms (Hienecken, 2017).

Gender integration in the SANDF further evolved with sexual misconduct experienced by female personnel in internal and international military operations. Over the years, the female troops of the defence force stationed across the continent have been linked to cases of sexual exploitation and abuse, ranging from rape to taking advantage of women. In 2017 there were approximately nine cases documented against South African peacekeepers and in 2018, there were four (Fleischmann, 2019; DoD, 2020).

Moreover, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South African troops were implicated in over 33% of allegations of sexual misconduct by peacekeepers. Specifically, since being deployed to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South African peacekeeping forces have been embroiled in paternity disputes stemming from sexual misbehaviour. These issues are escalated by lack of military accountability and coordination on sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) issues between South African law and the UN. A major breakdown in the legal system has thus resulted to the dismissal or overturning of numerous cases (DoD, 2020).

Gender transformation policies have been implemented and fostered for gender inclusivity in local and international armed forces. However, Gender integration remains a challenge in both international and local military. Military organisations persist as male dominant environments with an unequal gender distribution of males and females. The majority of females continue to serve in lower military ranks and positions. Additionally, masculine traits remain a critical tradition and culture of the

military regardless of gender diversity. Military institutions require women to remain masculine throughout their military careers. Sexual misconduct is further perceived as an issue in both local and international forces. Women experience sexual harassment and misconduct from their male counterparts. Therefore, local and international military experience similar issues that open gaps that need to be addressed by both local and internal military forces.

### 3.2.2 Racial and ethnic diversity manifestation in the military

This subsection acknowledges how patterns of immigration and contemporary transportation technologies have constituted to more ethnic and racially diverse military organisations globally. The subsection presents a literature review on racial and ethnic representation in different international and local military forces.

#### ➤ **Racial and ethnic diversity manifestation: An international perspective**

##### *Racial and ethnic diversity within the Canadian Armed Forces*

Canada is ethnically diverse with immigrants from external countries across the globe, emerging as visible minorities in the country (Waruszynski, 2022). Immigrants were recognised as visible minorities in the 1984 Royal Commission Report on Equality in Employment. The Employment Equity Act of 1986 permitted federal corporations to employ immigrants categorised as visible minorities across the country (Li, 2000). As such, in 1986 Census of Canada regarded Blacks, Chinese, West Asian and Arab, Filipino, Southeast Asian, Korean, other Pacific Islanders, Indo-Pakistani, Japanese and Latin American, excluding Chilean and Argentinian people as visible minorities added to the Canadian population and employed in different workplaces across Canada (Statistics Canada, 2019). However, visible minority groups and indigenous people of Canada encounter racial discrimination across the country (Waruszynski, 2022; Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2019).

Historically from the late 15th century, colonialism played a critical role in implementing systematic discrimination practices and policies that have and continue to oppress indigenous people and visible minorities in Canada (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2019). Regardless of the government programmes and policies designed to eradicate racial discrimination in Canada (for instance, the Canadian

Human Rights Act of 1982, Constitution Act of 1982 and Employment Equity Act of 1995), the identified groups still experience racial discrimination in the work environments and Canadian community as a whole (Waruszynski, 2022). In addition, the Canadian Race Relations Foundation (2015) highlights that Canada has a “racist history that has been embedded in modern-day policies” that continue to segregate indigenous people and visible minorities. Waruszynski (2022) further states that in Canada racism has been rooted in systematic structures, laws, policies and programmes that have created prejudice, discrimination, white privilege, inequalities, stereotypes, power struggles and acts of injustice against indigenous people and visible minorities.

Winslow et al. (2007) indicate that Canadian Armed Forces have and continue to discriminate against indigenous people and visible minorities. Knight (2021) concurs that a strict barrier that draws a line between the recognised racial groups and the minority groups is maintained in the Canadian forces, especially the Canadian Air Force. “Systematic racism and prejudice” still exist in the country and particularly in military organisations (Knight, 2021:n.p). Visible minority groups continue to experience unfair and unequal treatment from the dominant groups (Knight, 2021; Waruszynski, 2022). However, Knight (2021) recommended that to eradicate racial behaviour and discrimination against indigenous and visible minority groups, the military should revisit their policies and recruitment strategies and implement diversity support and equality systems.

A Regular Force members’ diversity survey conducted by Berry (2006) indicated that racial barriers exist in the Canadian Armed Forces. The survey revealed that Regular Force members, especially males, had negative attitudes towards the minority ethnic groups and they had a strong belief on the scale of authoritarianism. The members cannot handle equality and diversity as they highly believe that minority racial or ethnic groups must be separated from the dominant racial group. Authoritarianism and its use of hierarchical social arrangements appeared to be critical (Berry, 2006).

The Army Organisational Culture Survey (2003) showed similar results which indicate that Canadian Army personnel are traditionalists and have negative attitudes towards racial minorities. The survey (2003) indicated that the majority of male counterparts

showed no interest and lacked support for affirmative action towards the minority groups. They maintained their cultural tradition and supported racial and sexual stereotypes. In contrast, female personnel were more liberal and showed interest in the issue of diversity. They were also supportive of the issues of integrating indigenous people and visible minority groups into the Canadian Forces. The survey further specified that male regular force members of the Army had a high rate of superiority and ethnic intolerance (Army Organisational Culture Survey, 2003). Waruszynski, MacEachern, Browne and Woycheshin (2022) conducted a qualitative study with indigenous and visible minority military members to understand their experiences of harassment and racial discrimination in the Canadian Armed Forces. The study revealed that the Canadian Armed Forces structure fosters a diverse military and promotes the representativity of different cultures and races within the force, however, the majority of participants complained about racial challenges and insensitivities encountered in different bases, units and wings of the Canadian military. Amongst others, it was revealed that minority groups experience offensive and discriminatory jokes, misconceptions and stereotypes from the dominant or right-wing extremist groups, such as, a Neo-Nazi group referred to as 'The Base' (Waruszynski et al., 2022). Due to the unfair treatment experienced by the visible minority groups, the Canadian Armed Forces implemented the forces' ethos of 2022 which states that:

Those who are inclusive reject racism, sexism, heteronormativity, homophobia, xenophobia or any other form of hateful, discriminatory or hateful behaviour, conduct and association. They take a proactive approach to prevent, stop and report such conduct and support those affected. Inclusive leaders and team members take deliberate steps to identify and challenge inequalities both within their teams and within the institution (Department of National Defence, 2022).

To further eradicate racial attitudes and behaviours, the Canadian Armed Forces Diversity Strategy (2016) highlights the need to promote diversity and inclusion among its personnel, including its ranks. The strategy indicates that for the Canadian Armed Forces to effectively operate in different multicultural operations across the Canadian landscape and international regions, diversity must be embraced in Canadian bases, wings and units for personnel to learn and better understand and appreciate pluralistic societies and cultures (Department of National Defence, 2016).

### *Racial and ethnic diversity in the Israeli Armed Forces*

Israel defines itself as a “Jewish state and homeland for Jews worldwide” (Sabar, Babis, Lifszyc-Friedlander & Ben-Shalom, 2024:3). Jews are considered permanent members of the country and are expected to serve in the military services of Israel. The country also consists of Arabs who are perceived as indigenous (minority) members of the country. During 1990, Israel experienced a high rate of immigrant workers from Latin America, Africa and the Philippines. Israeli immigration policies qualified the members for Israeli citizenship, however, they (immigrants) experienced deportation and were denied access and employment in the army. In 2006 and 2010, the government granted permanent residency to almost 1500 children who were born in the country (also regarded as the minority groups) and were later recruited into the military services of Israel (Herzog, 2023; Sabar et al., 2024). This made the IDF the most diverse and inclusive organisation (Lomsky-Feder & Ben-Ari, 2013; Esensten, 2019).

Levy and Sasson-Levy (2008) and Sasson-Levy (2013) thus indicate that the presence of diverse ethnic or racial groups in the IDF resulted in socio-ethnic groupings which led to ethnic inequalities, unfairness, exclusion and marginalisation. Contradicting with the above scholars, Sabar et al. (2024) revealed that minority groups serving in the IDF rarely experience prejudice, unfair and unequal treatment. The IDF creates a sense of togetherness and synergy and it is based on motivation and personal achievements rather than ethnic and racial categories of its employees (Sabar et al., 2024). Moreover, Mazumder (2019) indicated that the IDF establishes relationships amongst diverse ethnic or racial service men and women, thus increasing tolerance towards the minority groups.

### *Racial and ethnic diversity in the United States Armed Forces*

Segal, Segal and Reed (2015) observed that foreign-born soldiers escalated in the U.S. during the American Civil War of 1861 and the wartime pressure which gave rise to ethnic and racial integration in the U.S. military. The U.S. military thus became diverse and experienced racial and ethnic diversity manifestation during this period. However, “ethnic minorities (African American - Asians, American Indians and Blacks) remain under-presented in the U.S. military” (Salem, Randles, Sapre & Finnegan,

2023:6), especially in leadership or commanders' positions. In 2023, 70% of the U.S. military comprised White men, while 17% and 13% comprised African American men (Asian, American Indian and Black) men. White women amounted to 60%, and ethnic minority women amounted to 40% (Salem et al., 2023).

The U.S. DoD implemented policies and approaches, such as the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA) approach and the EEO (for further details refer to section 3.4.1.2) to enhance ethnic inclusion and equality in their forces (Segal et al., 2015; United States report on diversity and inclusion, 2020). However, ethnic minority groups continue to encounter ethnic segregation in the U.S. military (Segal et al., 2015). They appear to experience high levels of discrimination and racial inequality, or disparity related to military career development as compared to White personnel (Salem et al., 2023). The majority of the members belonging to the ethnic minority groups are assigned to unskilled jobs, as they are restricted to serving in non-combat roles. This increased racial tensions between the ethnic minority and the host groups and further compromised organisational communication, work cohesion and readiness as well as impaired the morale of the minority groups (Kryder, 1996 in Lowen & McDonald, 2022).

#### ➤ **Racial and ethnic diversity manifestation: An African context**

Racial and ethnic diversity in African regions represent the countries' larger sociopolitical landscapes. The intricacy of ethnic relations in these nations are influenced by colonial influences, political systems and historical legacies that frequently permeates military formations, offering opportunities and difficulties for advancing inclusivity. This analysis focuses on the experiences of Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and Sudan or South Sudan, with implications for post-conflict military integration in contexts like South Africa.

#### *Racial and ethnic diversity in Kenya Defence Force*

Kenya Defence Force has long been seen as an ethnically diverse organisation. Initially, Kenya Defence Force recruitment policies were intended to reflect Kenya's diverse society. However, concerns over racial bias emerged under Daniel arap Moi's

leadership, especially with regard to the Kalenjin ethnic community, which was overrepresented in high military posts (Ruto, 2022). Despite making up only 10% of Kenya's population, Kalenjins were allegedly overrepresented in high and important military positions, which raised concerns about perceived ethnic bias in promotions and decision-making inside the military (Ruto, 2022).

Furthermore, the treatment of children born from intercultural relationships between Kenyan women and foreign soldiers, especially British personnel, intensifies the ethnic bias in the Kenya Defence Force. These individuals frequently struggle with identity issues and social marginalisation (Munyua, 2021). Civil society organisations such as the Kenya Human Rights Commission have thus supported efforts to address these issues, including recognising these individuals and their military accomplishments (Kenya Human Rights Commission, 2020). However, the force continues to experience obstacles in removing ingrained ethnic biases. According to Munyua (2021), perceived ethnic favoritism can cause cross-cultural communication barriers as marginalised groups may be reluctant to speak up out of fear of prejudice or retaliation.

### *Racial and ethnic diversity in Nigerian Armed Forces*

Nigerian Armed Forces reflects diverse ethnic groups of the country. The foundation of the military's inclusion strategy has been the federal character principle, which was established to guarantee fair representation among Nigeria's different ethnic groups. According to Agbaje (2019), this principle was created to prevent any ethnic group from dominating the country, to strengthen national unity and to encourage a sense of common ownership in the national defence force. However, Ogunleye (2020) argues that Nigerian Armed Forces receive ethnic criticism or bias due to colonial-era recruitment tactics that favoured the northern regions. Scholars such as Ogunleye (2020) and Sulaimon and Olayiwola (2021) revealed that northern ethnic groups are disproportionately represented, especially in leadership roles (Ogunleye, 2020). This practice continues to form perceptions of regional preference and has contributed to ethnic and religious biases in military deployments, which may escalate regional tensions (Sulaimon & Olayiwola, 2021).

Despite the fact that the Nigerian Armed Forces were created to represent the ethnic diversity of the country, regional and ethnic bias encouraged by colonial legacies and uneven application of the Federal Character Principle persist within the forces. Cross-cultural communication is therefore impacted by these structural mismatches, which affect trust, discussion and operational effectiveness. Strategies are therefore required to promote fair representation, cross-cultural training and policies that aggressively address both past injustices and current inequalities in order to create a military that is inclusive and communicative (Mwaura, 2020; Okafor & Nwachukwu, 2020; Agyekum, 2021).

#### *Racial and ethnic diversity in Ghana Armed Forces*

Ghana Armed Force is viewed as a professional military institution that has historically fostered to represent and maintain ethnic balance and equality. Ghana Armed Force is dedicated to ensure representation and national identity of different areas of Ghana (Agyekum, 2021). However, Baffoe (2022) revealed that regardless of the professional perception of the Ghana Armed Force, the force experiences concern regarding credibility, political interference and favouritism in military promotions. These issues highlight the larger difficulty of upholding a neutral military institution (Baffoe, 2022). Additionally, the institution's independence and capacity to promote successful cross-cultural communication are threatened by the identified political interference, credibility issues and biasness in military promotions (Baffoe, 2022).

#### *Racial and ethnic diversity in Rwandan Defence Force, Zimbabwe Defence Force, Sudanese Armed Forces and the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo*

Rwanda's post-genocide experience exemplifies a significant attempt at military integration, characterised by the transformative journey of the Rwanda Defence Force (RDF). Following the 1994 genocide, which resulted in the widespread displacement and extermination of Tutsis, the RDF was formed primarily from members of the Rwandan

Patriotic Army (RPA), a group of Tutsi exiles. Efforts to build the RDF emphasised national unity and reconciliation while prioritising professionalisation over ethnic identity (Longman, 2017; Reyntjens, 2018). The leadership aimed for a military

structure inclusive of former members of the Rwandan Armed Forces (RAF), demonstrating an understanding of the importance of ethnic representation in fostering a cohesive national identity. Despite enduring political undercurrents and ethnic imbalances, the RDF serves as a benchmark for military integration in post-conflict settings (Thaler, 2021; Ndikubwimana, Kathleen, Oriare, Jack & Charles, 2023).

In contrast, Zimbabwe's military integration post-independence in 1980 involved the amalgamation of disparate military factions: the Rhodesian Security Forces, Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA), and the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA). The integration was overseen by the British Military Assistance and Training Team (BMATT), which aimed to foster joint cooperation and phased demobilisation efforts (Krebs & Licklider, 2016; Thaler, 2021). However, underlying ethnic tensions, particularly between the Shona and Ndebele communities, complicated this integration, culminating in the violent Gukurahundi massacres during the early 1980s. The shortcomings of the Zimbabwe Defence Forces (ZDF) in achieving lasting cohesion arose from ongoing issues of politicisation and preferential treatment of certain ethnicities, evidencing the complicated relationship between military integration and post-colonial identities (Krebs & Licklider, 2016; Reyntjens, 2018).

The case of DRC presents a more fragmented scenario, in which attempts to integrate various armed groups have repeatedly faltered. Beginning in the late 1990s, efforts to unify former government and rebel forces into the Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo included strategies like "brassage" (mixing) and "mixage" (integration) to merge former adversaries (Thaler, 2021). Yet, persistent mistrust, the proliferation of armed groups such as the M23, and internal instability have undercut the potential benefits of these integration efforts, leading to significant challenges related to discipline, corruption, and ethnic factionalism within the military (Thaler, 2021).

Sudan and South Sudan provide yet another illustrative example of military integration grounded in peace agreements like the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) of 2005. The intent was to unify the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) with the Sudanese government forces to mitigate future conflicts (Reyntjens, 2018). However,

both nations have struggled with repeated violence, which can often be traced back to legacies of ethnic favouritism, political instability and inadequate frameworks for cohesive military integration (Krebs & Licklider, 2016). As with Rwanda, the military institutions in South Sudan and Sudan's ongoing conflicts highlight the critical need for inclusive practices that prioritise trust and accountability in rebuilding military capacities.

These diverse experiences across Africa highlight fundamental principles for successful military integration post-conflict. Cohesion appears to rely on sustained political will, external support, careful construction of inclusive integration frameworks, and a strong emphasis on military professionalism (Longman, 2017; Thaler, 2021). In contrast, superficial integration efforts, exclusionary practices, and a lack of accountability can exacerbate tensions and precipitate renewed conflicts. The lessons drawn from these African contexts provide essential insights for other post-conflict societies, including South Africa, stressing the significant importance of adhering to inclusive and equitable military reforms and continuously addressing underlying socio-political dynamics

➤ **Racial and ethnic diversity manifestation: A SANDF context**

The SADF was a “conscript force” which comprised the majority of white Afrikaans-speaking males, with a large white part-time component” (Heinecken, 2011:80). Marginalised Blacks were not recruited but they were permitted to serve as volunteers in operational roles. The racial composition of the SA military transformed in 1994 when the SANDF came into place. The SANDF became a representative military force that consisted of a racial profile of 69,7% Africans, 11,5 coloureds, 17,7% whites and 1.2% Asians during October 2007 (Heinecken, 2011).

Heinecken (2005) argues that the racial profile of the SANDF is representative, but it is not reflected in senior ranks and professional branches of the SANDF. A high number of White military staff is still visible at the middle management level with non-commissioned and officer ranks. However, the Department of Defence addressed the situation by empowering Blacks and providing course access for Black military personnel. Blacks (especially members from the non-statutory forces and guerrilla armies) were later promoted and appointed to senior military ranks (for example,

Brigadier General, Colonel and Major). However, this emanated with various stereotypes associated with incompetency (Heinecken, 2011). For instance, Heinecken (2005) revealed that a white officer who served in the Army combat services reported that the SANDF is losing its competency because the affirmative action promotes incompetent members into specific positions which require experience, knowledge and skill. Therefore, the SANDF could not retain suitably skilled personnel because of race and its historical background. The study further indicated that the SANDF members continue to group themselves in terms of skin colour (race) and this results in weak military discipline, limited work cohesion and efficiency (Heinecken, 2005). Regardless of the racial and ethnic representation of different ethnic groups in both international, regional and local military forces, race remains an issue that needs to be addressed in military forces. International, regional and local forces experience similar racial barriers associated with stereotypes, socio-ethnic groupings, discrimination and prejudice affecting work cohesion and cross-cultural interactions. Local and international studies indicate that members who were previously disregarded from joining the military due to race continue to experience criticism from the previously dominant groups (Heinecken, 2011; Segal et al., 2015; Kryder, 1996 in Lowen & McDonald, 2022; Waruszynski et al., 2022). However, Mazumder (2019) and Sabar et al. (2024) indicate that the IDF has a sense of synergy and limited racial issues whereas the CAF has implemented a diversity strategy to embrace diversity and reduce racial barriers (Department of National Defence, 2016). Therefore, the SANDF along with other international forces such as the U.S., Nigeria and Kenya should review their existing racial policies to address racial barriers and improve the implementation and evaluation of the current racial legislative frameworks.

### 3.2.3 Language and culture in military contexts

Language and culture are two inseparable elements. It is difficult to understand a given culture without understanding its language (Charyulu & Ganesh, 2018; Misechko & Lytniova, 2024). “Language expresses cultural beliefs and values with specific linguistic patterns and procedures strengthening the culture. It is a system of communication which is developed under culture, and it influences culture with its styles and interpretations” (Charyulu & Ganesh, 2018:43). Despite the fact that language is a component of culture, it communicates cultural values and ideas through

certain linguistic conventions and practices that support the culture (Charyulu & Ganesh, 2018).

Culture is defined as a “historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a symbol of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms through which men communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about their attitudes towards life” (Geertz, 1973:89). Language and cultural manifestation of diversity are shared amongst members of a given society and govern social behaviour of a particular societal group (Acar, Taura, Yamamoto & Yusof, 2011; Sapir, 2023). Given that language and culture are indivisible, this section simultaneously presents language and culture as manifestations of diversity in the local and international military.

➤ **Language and cultural practices: An international perspective**

*Language and culture in the Canadian Armed Forces*

Salem et al. (2023) indicates that military organisations of different countries, including Canada, are characterised by members who culturally identify themselves differently. “Cultural identity is a dynamic, multidimensional construct that refers to one’s identity, or sense of self, as a member of an ethnic group, language, religion, or gender”. Therefore, people’s beliefs and values are influenced by their cultural backgrounds (Salem et al., 2023).

Eichler and Brown (2023) indicate that diverse cultural factors manifest in the CAF and intersect with the culture of the organisation. Members of minority ethnic groups encounter culture clashes and further struggle to manage multiple cultural identities within the CAF.

*Language and Culture in the Ukrainian Armed Forces*

Ukraine’s language is classified as bilingual, dominated by Russian and Ukrainian bilingual speakers (Bilaniuk, 2016; Pidkuĭmukha, 2022). The majority (92%) of Ukraine citizens identify themselves as Ukrainian speakers while the minority groups (6%) identify as Russians and 1.5% identify as other language speakers (Pidkuĭmukha, 2022). With the dominating Ukrainian ethnic groups and speakers, the majority of

Russians and other ethnic groups adapt to the Ukrainian language and culture, resulting in Russian people abandoning their identity and “declaring that they do not want anything in common with the Russian Federation” (Pidkuimukha, 2022:2).

The Ukrainian Armed Forces also consist of diverse linguistic personnel with the majority of Ukrainian speakers followed by Russian and other language speakers. The majority of Ukrainian military personnel are therefore confused by the culture, identity and language they belong to, and therefore ascribe to the Ukrainian language as the dominant language used to communicate in their armed forces (Pidkuimukha, 2022). Pidkuimukha (2021) postulates that the use of the Ukrainian language and language distinctions have resulted to conflict experienced in Russia and Ukraine, with many Russian speakers implicitly or explicitly denying their Russian language and identify themselves as Ukrainians. In 2022 the number of Russian speakers in military forces have declined from 42% to 20% (Pidkuimukha, 2021). Language and cultural issues have therefore become an important component of war, and the Ukrainian language has evolved into a tool of resistance. This led to linguicide, which refers to the language policy that Russian intervention forces implemented against Ukrainians in the temporarily controlled territory of Ukraine (Pidkuimukha, 2021). Linguicide is the deliberate eradication of the Ukrainian language as the primary characteristic of the ethnic group (Pidkuimukha, 2021). This is accomplished through ejecting the language from public spaces, forcing Ukrainian citizens to integrate into the Russian language and culture, assimilation of the populace and other means (Kolesnykova, Corti & Buist-Zhuk, 2022). Scholars such as Shevchuk-Kliuzheva (2020) and Sokolova (2022) further mention that Ukraine’s language policy remains problematic and complex.

The above studies indicate that language remains complex in military institutions. The 21st-century military institutions are diverse; however, they use a single language to communicate and share information amongst personnel. This remains a gap in military forces and therefore requires strategies and recommendations to resolve the cultural and language issues experienced in such forces. The identified gap aided the developed cross-cultural communication strategy to take into account language barriers experienced in the armed forces and to suggest the use of native languages to address or eliminate cross-cultural communication barriers in the military.

### *Language and culture in the Indian Armed Forces*

India is a diverse society that comprises different convictions and cultural pluralism. The diversity of India can be observed from various angles of the country with various demographic differences. It is a multi-lingual, multi-ethnic, multi-racial and multi-religious country that develops its own composite culture and ethos of unity in diversity. India consists of 18 official languages and 155 dialects. The diverse nature of the country inspired authors to research on the country's history, identity and culture (Parmar, 2007; Rawat, Dogra & Mahanta, 2019).

A study by Parmar (2007) conducted in the Indian Armed Forces emphasises that India comprises heterogeneous cultural and social backgrounds. The military recruits originate from various regions, linguistic backgrounds, classes, family backgrounds, castes and religions. Despite India's cultural, racial, religious and gender differences, Indian soldiers have a high degree of acceptance and innovation of values and attitudes. The military imposes the military culture and homogeneity as their daily work routine and lifestyle. Contrary to other countries, Indian Armed Forces are effective in integrating various backgrounds and socialising recruits from various backgrounds. The military of India developed its sub-culture which is adapted by various individuals from diverse cultures as supported by the cross-cultural adaptation theory. The military personnel of the country share similar behavioural patterns and sub-cultural traits employed by the organisation (Parmar, 2007; Rawat et al., 2019).

Parmar (2007) further indicates that language and cross-cultural communication barriers are barely experienced in Indian Armed Forces. The military uses Hindi (Roman Hindustani) language to communicate. To close a linguistic gap during training, the military provides its troops with a Hindi language course, and they are expected to participate in various sessions. The official language training course is mandatory for their overall military training schedule. All officers and instructors are expected to instruct training using Hindi as a medium language of communication. This is ensured by the force to foster representativity and unity within the organisation. This course plays a critical role in building a fighting spirit amongst soldiers, cohesion, competition and motivation. Indian soldiers foster diversity integration and various officers and non-officers (Jawans) from various linguistic and cultural backgrounds end

up staying in a single society to create human relationships and unity outside the military organisation. This raises cognition, understanding and peace between Indian soldiers (Parmar, 2007).

➤ **Language and culture: A regional perspective**

The relationship between language and culture has drawn attention in multilingual and multiethnic military institutions of regional forces. According to Mensah (2019) and Uwen and Ekpe (2023), these armed forces' identity, cohesiveness and operational capabilities are still shaped by the effects of colonialism as well as indigenous cultural dynamics. In West and East Africa, military systems were formed by the British colonial government using centralised structures and English as the language of instruction. The dominance of English in military communication was one among the institutions that Ghana, Nigeria, and Kenya adopted after gaining independence (Mensah, 2019). English reinforces colonial linguistic hierarchy by displacing indigenous languages while also acting as a medium for international cooperation, operations and training. In the military, language is used as a social integration tool as well as a command instrument (Mensah, 2019).

Regardless of English as a medium of command in the African military, Nigerian Pidgin is a recognisable informal lingua franca among troops in Nigeria, a country with more than 500 languages. According to Uwen and Mensah (2022), Pidgin lowers linguistic barriers and promotes interpersonal contact and camaraderie among soldiers from diverse ethnic backgrounds without undermining English's status as the official language of military administration. Uwen and Ekpe (2023) further indicate that the Nigerian Army employs training songs as a language performance that captures the disciplined lifestyle and sociopolitical narratives of military life.

Additionally, the use of Swahili, which is acknowledged as a co-official language in Kenya, shows how military language policy has been locally adjusted. Swahili's wider cultural relevance in East Africa is reflected in its frequent use in public military operations, lower-ranking recruit training and national festivities (Ngugi, 2020). Swahili slogans and traditional music are common in Kenyan military parades, demonstrating how cultural expression strengthens national identity. Especially in multicultural cultures, these customs promote a feeling of cohesion and inclusion (Ngugi, 2020).

Effective cross-cultural teamwork is facilitated by these local lingua francas, which improve interpersonal understanding and build trust, particularly during joint missions or peacekeeping operations. However, they may inadvertently alienate people who are not familiar with them, especially recruits from underrepresented or minority language groups (Mensah, 2019).

The above regional literature on language and culture indicate that language and culture are essential to the operation of African Armed Forces rather than being incidental. While colonial legacies continue to have an impact, indigenous language and cultural practices have a substantial and developing place in military organisations, as experienced by Ghana, Nigeria and Kenya Armed Forces. When recognised and incorporated, these components support the military's effectiveness, legitimacy and unity in increasingly complicated sociopolitical contexts.

➤ **Language and culture: A South African perspective**

The traditional South African military Forces (UDF and SADF) emanated from a Eurocentric origin, specifically the British. The forces' traditional way of doing things was based on the Eurocentric or the British perspective. The SANDF came into existence in 1994 and transformed the South African military from Eurocentric to Afrocentric by integrating previously disadvantaged people into the South African Armed Forces. However, the majority of Africans continue to believe that the SANDF is not Africanised, and it still relies on the past traditions of the military (Veldtman, 2018). The study of Heinecken (2005) indicates that Africans who serve in the military feel that the organisation does not recognise their beliefs and cultural practices. African members experience tensions and problems (especially during training) concerning "lack of recognition by superiors of the importance assigned to certain cultural ceremonies, the need to attend funerals of extended family members and the desire to consult traditional healers" (Heinecken, 2005:84). Military members are not provided with the right to visit (consult) a traditional healer without taking a normal leave instead of sick leave. However, the SANDF took steps to address the traditional military by implementing policies and procedures that developed extra special leave for the force members, such as family responsibility leave (Heinecken, 2005). The concepts of individualism and collectivism are also a point of contention which leads

to cultural tension between different cultural groups. Culturally, whites have a strong sense of individualism, and they believe in individual achievements. On the contrary, Africans are collectivists in nature, they tend to attach “a high value of group conformity” and favour team or group work. Military courses require a strong sense of collectivism, this has become a base of frustration for White cultural members who prefer to be appraised on their own merits rather than that of a group or organisation (Hofstede, 1994; Hienecken, 2005).

Heinecken (2011) further stipulates that language also appears as a source of tension between members who originate from various cultural backgrounds. South Africa comprises eleven official languages with 23,8 % IsiZulu speaking, 17.6% IsiXhosa, 13.3% Afrikaans, 9.4% Sepedi, 8.2% English, 8.2% Setswana, 7.9% Sesotho, 4.4% Xitsonga, 2.7% SiSwati, 2.3% Tshivenda and 1.6% IsiNdebele speaking people. Language continues to be a diverse issue in South Africa where the majority of white individuals are unable to speak African languages. The English language is regarded as a medium of communication (even in the SANDF) which is employed as a primary language to send and receive the desired messages; however, some Africans experience linguistic shortcomings and find it difficult to express themselves adequately using the English language. This causes communication challenges and stereotypes associated with incompetency and displays a sign of intellectual inferiority (Heinecken, 2017). The study by Heinecken (2005:85) revealed that “language is an important source of power”. Due to the high rate of English language incompetency amongst the majority of African soldiers, it is preferred that a dominant language of a region may be employed as a medium of communication (for example, Afrikaans in the Western Cape, isiZulu in Kwa-Zulu-Natal and so forth) (Heinecken, 2005).

Language and culture remain a complex issue in military organisations. It is indicated that in the CAF, Ukraine forces and the SANDF, language and culture persist as issues that hinder effective diversity within the armed forces. Language emerges as a barrier to effective communication and work cohesion as military institutions rely on a single language to transfer messages. The SANDF uses English language and encourages members to use English as a medium of communication in the workplace. Similarly, Ukraine forces use Ukraine language. This creates language clashes, tensions and misunderstandings between speakers. Additionally, cultural variations create

problems as some are not valued or recognised within the military workforce. Contradicting with the above, the Indian Armed Forces embrace diversity acceptance and tolerance. The force appears as a diverse armed force that integrates various backgrounds and builds synergy amongst its personnel. Indian Armed Forces rely on a single language, Hindi, however, the force provides language (Hindi) courses to all recruits of the force and builds a sub-culture for its diverse members. To eradicate language and cultural problems, the SANDF should integrate language and cultural courses into its programmes and transform into a force that encourages tolerance, acceptance and adaptation in its transformation policies.

#### 3.2.4 Religious diversity in the military

Religion is a spiritual factor whereby members “search for positive meaning, protective factors and a predictor of successful adaptation in coping with adversity” (Abu-Ras & Hosein, 2014:179). The U.S. Report on International Religious Freedom (2012) views religion or spirituality as a resource associated with recovery and resilience. However, military personnel undergoing training and peacekeeping operations and missions are acquainted with different spiritual and religious beliefs emanating from different individuals of different cultures and spiritual beliefs. Some members thus experience spiritual struggle within this military work context (Cesur, Freidman & Sabia, 2020). This section provides a literature review on local and international studies related to religion in the military.

##### ➤ **Religious diversity: An integration of international and regional perspective**

Historically, the ethos, culture and operational efficacy of the armed forces in Africa have been greatly influenced by religion. The influence of religion is especially noticeable in the military settings of U.S., Israeli, Ghana, Nigeria, Somalia and Central African Republic. The military organisations of these nations reflect the religious diversity of their communities.

Marsden (2019) and Oluyemi (2021) argue that religious terrorism and conflicts occur due to the preferential treatment given to a particular religious group. Basedao (2017) posits that eight out of ten conflicts in the armed forces of the Sub-Saharan Africa regions (for instance, Somalia, Kenya, Nigeria and the Central African Republic) are

created by religious diversity. People differ concerning incompatible ideas related to theological and religious identity. In 1990, the “CAR, a Muslim rebellion ousted a Christian-dominated government; the ensuing turmoil escalated into bloody confrontations between Muslim and Christian militias and left thousands of civilians dead” (Basedao, 2017:2). The study further indicates that during 2016, religious armed conflict continued to escalate in Sudan, Nigeria, Uganda and Ethiopia. In Uganda, religious conflicts are experienced between the Christians and Muslim rebels. During the same period, the Sudan Islamic government was confronted by secular rebels. Similarly, Nigeria experienced a battle between the Muslim rebels and the religiously mixed and secular federal government. The armed forces of Ethiopia are currently faced with the conflict between the Christians and the Muslims in the Horn of Africa (Basedao, 2017; Basedau & Schaefer-Kehnert, 2019).

The U.S. Armed Forces are also included in this manifestation as they operate with diverse religious and spiritual practices. Promoting the issue of religion and spirituality, Pomaville, Gorka and Shaw (2014:1) indicate that the U.S. DoD Directive 1304.19 appointed military chaplains to “serve as the principal advisors to commanders for all issues regarding the impact of religion and spirituality on military operations and training”. However, the U.S. Armed Forces comprise diverse religious practices (such as those of Christians, Muslims, Catholics and so forth) which are in constant religious violence and extremism (Pomaville et al., 2014).

Parmar (2007) indicates that the Israeli perceive military service as an organisation that separates youth from religion. Members serving in the armed forces draw away from various individual apprehensions and religious values and form their own cultural and religious enclaves. In other words, various members from various religious backgrounds adopt a third religion (national-religious groups- the orthodox Zionists) developed within the service. The feeling of threat, division and ethnocentrism is thus experienced. To address the challenge, the study indicated that members are offered religious studies presented in pre-conscription religious colleges and through handbooks of religious conduct (Parmar, 2007).

Islam is widely practiced in the Ghana Armed Forces; however, the force is primarily a Christian organisation. According to Osei-Tutu (2022), Ghana Armed Forces

institutionalises religion to promote soldiers' spiritual health and foster military unity. Interdenominational religious services, such as Christian and Muslim prayers, are often organised and foster a sense of camaraderie among staff members. Ghana Armed Forces' incorporation of religious services is a crucial instrument for boosting morale and cohesiveness, particularly during prolonged deployments (Kwarteng, 2023). However, issues with religious tensions surface, especially in mixed-faith units, necessitating management techniques to preserve unit cohesiveness (Osei-Tutu, 2022).

Similarly, the Nigerian Armed Forces are experiencing "religiously motivated violence through terrorism and insurgency" (Pomaville et al., 2014:4; Ottuh & Omosor, 2022). Ottuh and Omosor (2022:37) revealed that the "lack of social control mechanisms that characterised traditional Nigerian societies in the precolonial era, such as kinship, religious inclusiveness, non-religious sentimental political systems and community wellbeing, led to the escalation of religious conflicts in postcolonial Nigeria". Religious diversity violence has been and continues to be a threat to the Nigerian military and Nigerian society as a whole (Bello, 2022). Violence has resulted from tensions between Christian and Muslim organisations, as well as between the Nigerian government and the Islamic Movement of Nigeria. These tensions have brought attention to the difficulties associated with religious diversity in the military (Adeyemi, 2022). According to Adeyemi (2022), these conflicts could make military discipline difficult since religious identity can occasionally converge with political and national divides, which could impact cross-cultural interactions and operational unity.

According to Hunsberger and Jackson (2005) and Kossowska and Sekerdej (2015) military chaplains play a critical role in promoting religious and spiritual beliefs, however, fundamentalism continues to breed conflict and intolerance between members of varying beliefs. This is evident in the study conducted by Exline (2013) which indicates that diverse organisational personnel experiences and spiritual and religious struggles lead to mental and physical health issues as well as the tension between members of various religions.

According to the literature, chaplains are crucial in promoting the wellbeing of military soldiers. Armed forces in various nations have acknowledged the value of spiritual

support in military operations. However, if not managed, religious differences can cause religious conflicts that undermine military unity and discipline. Therefore, continuous initiatives to foster tolerance and interfaith collaboration are essential to preserving a strong and cohesive armed force throughout these nations.

➤ **Religion as a diversity manifestation: A South African perspective**

South Africa is a multi-religious country with various religious denominations which are evolving and need to be recognised within the SANDF. In 2019, South Africa comprised 80% of individuals who affiliated with Christianity while Jews, Hindus, adherence to traditional indigenous beliefs and Buddhists constituted 4% (International Religious Freedom Report, 2019). The SANDF comprises various ministries of religion that are accommodated, supported and led by their church ministries (Masuku, 2020). The force encountered challenges during the early years (1652) of Christianity, where soldiers who participated in war and peacekeeping operations experienced religious challenges such as persecution and discrimination. Moreover, members of the force continue to operate in an increasingly multinational and multidimensional military training and operations including individuals from different cultural and religious backgrounds which in turn leads to enduring instability and conflict (Ferreira, 2017). Ferreira (2017) revealed that intercultural tensions in the SANDF originate from ethnicity and religion. This was raised by 94 SANDF members who actively participated in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the South Sudan peacekeeping operations (Ferreira, 2017). Moreover, in 2019 the International Religious Freedom Report (2019) indicated that religious tension arose between the SANDF and one of its officers from the South African Military Health Services (SAMHS) who was charged with disobedience after she refused to remove her religious headscarf not permitted to be worn along with her military uniform.

According to Le Roux and Palm (2018), Phiri and Nadar (2011) and Sahara-Ghana, Matemba, Addai-Mununkum, Nthontho and Museka (2023), religion is regarded as a driving factor of patriarchy.

Women in the SANDF stresses about patriarchy which emanates from the majority of the Christian religious denominations (Rule & Mncwango, 2010). Some “religious

leaders reinforce traditional gender roles and customary practices in the name of religious tradition and morality” (Le Roux & Palm, 2018: n.p).

Le Roux and Palm (2018) further indicate that religion has the power to enforce gender inequality or violations. Some religious beliefs promote gender stereotypes, inequality and the belief that women are meant for peacekeeping purposes. In such religions, women are perceived to be passive and should be silent on some structural violence (Nadar, 2004).

Furthermore, Le Roux (2014) reveals that religion is interrelated with culture. Religious practices are in most cases linked to the cultural practices of individuals and they are an indication of some societal and cultural injustices. Reinforcement of discriminatory cultural or social norms as natural or god-ordained can shape the post-conflict space in ways that may be harmful to women or lead to reversals in gains made by women over the conflict period” (Le Roux, 2014).

### **3.3 CHALLENGES OF DIVERSITY IN THE MILITARY**

#### **3.3.1 Sexual misconduct associated with gender in military**

Heinecken (2011) noted that recent military transformations of different international and local forces (such as Israel, Canada, the U.S., South Africa and so forth) permit women to serve in various military institutions. However, gender integration remains a critical issue in the military. Women continue to experience discrimination and prejudice in the identified forces. The integration of men and women in the military does not run smoothly in both local and international military. Armed forces experience a high rate of sexual harassment reports (further details discussed in section 3.2.1) and men still practice machismo and patriarchy (Van Der Meulen & Soeters, 2007; Haring, 2020). This is evident in the U.S., Canada and South African Armed Forces where military gender integration of women has led to high figures of sexual harassment reports (Heinecken, 2011; Erwin and Cseh, 2023). The U.S. military experienced and continues to experience a high rate of sexual harassment cases which raised public attention (Van Wijk, 2005; Moskos, 2001; Haring, 2020; Erwin and Cseh, 2023). Segal et al. (2015) further observed that the inclusion of women in the U.S. Armed Forces has been a gradual process that was opposed at different stages

by different people who believed that due to lack of physical strength, women would negatively affect the efficiency of the military and compromise the unit cohesion of such institutions.

### 3.3.2 Gender stereotypes

Khraban and Vyhivska (2024) indicate that, despite the transformations and advancement of the military in promoting gender integration and equality, gender stereotypes continue to exist in military institutions, resulting in social barriers that contradict individual's gender and professional identities. Societal gender ideologies associated with female body structure remain a major challenge for women in the military and therefore result in gender equality resistance (Van Wijk, 2005; Santtila, Pihlainen, Koski, Ojanen and Kyröläinen, 2019).

Society's description and stereotyping of the military (war is manly and only men can wage it) disregard women in the military (Van Wijk, 2005). They believe that women in the military invade the 'elite male testing ground' and impend the "society's concept of achieved manhood" (Van Wijk, 2005:53). The development of gender integration challenges the masculinity beliefs held by male soldiers. Gender integration of women into the male-dominated environment "undermines society's notion of masculinity (Khraban, 2024). Women are perceived to lack physical strength required for military training which comprise obstacle courses, carrying heavy equipment and weaponry, long march and long-distance run (Van Wijk, 2005). This is evident in the armed forces of Ukraine whereby women continue to be oriented towards traditionally feminine characteristics (Khraban, 2024). In the Ukrainian Armed Forces, these gender ideologies and stereotypes result in rejection of one's gender and foster women to strive for "a sense of self-balance between a woman and a warrior" (Khraban, 2024:78).

Women in the Swedish Armed Forces are not excluded from gender stereotypes associated with the military. Schröder (2017) indicated that female soldiers in the Swedish Armed Forces are faced with obstacles and societal stigmas (For instance, military organisations are for males) resulting in few women not furthering their careers in the force. Women experience regular harassment, discrimination and prejudice regarding their feminist traits (Persson & Sundevall, 2019). Moreover, Linehagen

(2018) revealed that military institutions ascribe to historical masculine qualities (physical masculine strength) which makes it difficult for women to pursue a career in the Swedish Armed Forces. Masculine factors continue to dominate in the Swedish Armed Forces, where women are forced to adapt to be regarded as soldiers (Riemer, 2023).

Franck (2023) argues that the CAF is one of inclusive institutions in the world operating with distinct ideologies that promote and maintain segregation. Service women in the CAF operate with power dynamics and gender hierarchy that affect daily social interactions (Franck, 2023). Franck (2023) further indicates history and cultural masculine traditions shaped how women are treated in the CAF. Women are judged for under performance by their male counterparts who assert that women are inferior and do not have the necessary combat motivation and physical stamina (Winslow et al., 2007; Franck, 2023).

Winslow et al. (2007) further stated that men claim that during CAF military training, women receive special attention and favouritism from instructors. A Canadian Department of National Defence pointed out that gender integration resulted in resistance that negatively affects the work cohesion and performance of Canadian Military Units (Winslow et al., 2007; Franck, 2023).

Despite inclusion policies, the roles and experiences of women in the military forces of Kenya are still shaped by gender norms. Deeply ingrained institutional procedures and cultural norms continue to hinder women's development in military hierarchy and sustain gendered divisions of labour. The career paths of women in the armed services in sub-Saharan Africa are still significantly affected by gender stereotypes. These stereotypes are deeply embedded in both societal norms and institutional military cultures, often framing military service as inherently masculine and thereby limiting women's participation, visibility and advancement in the military sector (Bouka & Sigsworth, 2023). Progressive constitutional and institutional reforms have structured the integration of women into the Kenya Defence Forces; however, gender stereotypes continue to have a substantial impact on deployment and advancement. Although women are prominent in logistics and peacekeeping tasks, Bouka and Sigsworth (2023) contend that their exclusion from combat operations restricts their

career advancement and perpetuates gendered job segregation. According to Ombati (2015), the Kenya Defence Force frequently assigns tasks based on traditional gender standards, which channels women into traditionally feminine occupations such as support services, communications and administration. Tensions related to issues of meritocracy and equal opportunities for gender differences also occur in various units of the South African military. Stereotypical views and traditional beliefs about men and women are perversely predominant throughout the military and women are obliged to adapt to masculine traits (Heinecken, 2017; Brownson, 2014). The SANDF has become a patriarchy-dominated environment, it remains with the dominant cultural ideology with several soldiers who believe that women are inferior, and men are superior. Women find it difficult to infuse alternative values, assert their voices and “bring about a more androgynous military culture” (Heinecken, 2017:203).

### 3.3.3 Communication challenges and diversity in the military

With the above-mentioned international and local diversity challenges evolving with gender integration, Dash et al. (2021) reveals that stereotypical challenges regarding leadership positions and communication patterns are also experienced in the military. Differences emanating from the diversity manifestation elements pose challenges to the communication process of the military organisation. Joshi, Wakslak, Huang and Appel (2021) noted that military men and women differ in their communication style. Women are found to use concrete communication (a communication style that discusses specific details, communicates the “how” of actions and plans and emphasise the details) while men depend on the abstract style of communication which describes things in a general manner, emphasise the bigger picture and explain the “why” and the large purpose of action (Joshi et al., 2021). With the presented communication dissimilarities, male communication styles and “behavioural preferences have been implicitly identified as one of the characteristics or requirements for leaders than female style to communicating and presenting ideas and challenges. Concrete communication is thus perceived as a barrier to women’s success and attainment of organisation reward” (Joshi et al., 2021:147).

Furthermore, Dash et al. (2021) opines that diversity manifestation, especially gender arises with different communication styles, emotional intelligence, attitude and

leadership styles between men and women. This can have a profound impact on the cross-cultural communication of the organisation and the career advancement of an individual. Women use an indirect communication style and believe in being polite when addressing issues. On the other hand, men are more direct and are perceived as good leaders of various organisations (Tannen, 1990; Dash & Dash, 2018).

Gray (1992) maintains that there are consistent differences in the communication style presented by men and women. These dissimilarities emerge with propagating stereotypes. Leaper (1991) indicates that men and women have varying communication styles. The study revealed that women are more patient and perceive communication as a tool that can be used to create relationships and maintain social lives. On the contrary, men use communication to manipulate or influence others. Basow and Rubenfeld (2003) further maintain that men exercise power through communication, while women are submissive and gracious in their interaction process. This results in tension and conflict between men and women who operate in a single organisation (Basow & Rubenfeld, 2003; Dash & Dash, 2018). Hence, humanity has over many years believed that men have the potential to exercise control and influence over others through various means of communication.

### **3.4 APPROACHES AND CONSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS TO DIVERSIFY MANAGEMENT IN THE MILITARY**

Various factors have led to the intensification of diversity within military forces where women, multiracial and multi-ethnic groups are recognised and are permitted to serve and render services to the military. However, cross-cultural attitudinal barriers and stereotypes still exist in such working environments. Schwarz (2023) argues that to achieve equality in the military, various measures and legislative frameworks are developed to protect or to advance and recognise persons affected by unfair discrimination. This section discusses the approaches and legislative frameworks employed by various military institutions to manage cross-cultural communication barriers and stereotypical issues which emanates with diversity in military contexts. Diversity regulatory frameworks and approaches aim to achieve similar goals and/or intentions, which is to address inequality and promote fair and inclusive military institutions. Therefore, they are discussed simultaneously in this section.

### 3.4.1 Approaches and regulatory frameworks to diversity management in the military: An International perspective

#### ➤ **Diversity management approaches and regulatory frameworks in the Canadian Armed Forces**

During the 1980's, the implementation of equal opportunity and human rights legislation which promotes diversity within labour forces was developed in Australia and Canada. Equal opportunity programmes considered women in the armed services and permitted them to serve in non-combat and combat career fields (Van Wijk, 2005; Waruszynski, 2022). The Canadian Human Rights Act (1985) was the driving factor of diversity in the Canadian Forces. The Act prohibits race, colour, sex, mental disability (dependence on drugs or alcohol), a pardoned conviction and national or ethnic origin discrimination. It focuses on "the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination" (Winslow et al., 2007:33). In 1985, the Parliamentary Committee on Equality Rights recommended that Canadian Armed Forces' trades and occupations be open to women. In February 1989, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal discovered that women continued to be discriminated against and were denied entry to combat-related fields. It was then suggested that the force must eliminate male requirements, integrate women in all forms of employment, implement gender-free selection standards and monitor the process internally and externally. The equal opportunity programmes were further reinforced by the Employment Equity Act of 1996 which emphasised that all Canadian citizens have the right to "discrimination-free employment and promotion" (Winslow et al., 2007:34). This Act was specifically designed for disabled people, racial minorities, women and aboriginal people (Waruszynski, 2022).

#### ➤ **Diversity management approaches and regulatory frameworks in U.S. Armed Forces**

In the U.S. military contexts, bases and units experienced representativity and inclusion of diverse personnel during the early 1980s. This was driven by equal opportunity programmes which were promoted by the Equal Opportunity Advisors (EOAs) who are responsible for monitoring race incidents and oversee patterns of race in promotions (Segal et al., 2015). Legislation has fostered for the integration of diverse

people within the above-mentioned armed forces. The U.S. Board on Diversity and Inclusion (2020) aims to enhance diversity and inclusion as strategic imperatives to ensure that the military across all grades reflects and is inclusive of the American people (U.S. Report on Diversity and Inclusion, 2020). The Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA) approach was further developed to encourage personnel to comply with the non-discrimination regulatory frameworks (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility Strategic Plan, 2022; Lowen & McDonald, 2022).

### ➤ **Diversity legislation in the UK Armed Forces**

Similar to the U.S. and Canadian Armed Forces, regulatory (legislative) frameworks have been employed to promote diversity and inclusion in the UK Armed Forces. The UK Race Relations Act (2000) and Equality Act (2010) played a pivotal role in enhancing diversity in the UK Armed Forces. International institutional frameworks (NATO) further placed measures to eliminate racism and discrimination towards minority groups and promote diversity and equality thereof. The 1998 Strategic Defence Review introduced a personal management improvement plan to promote equality opportunities and representivity within the UK Armed Forces. To enhance the ethnic population of the British, the report implemented a Tri-Service Equal Opportunities Training Centre to maximise the inclusion of women and the recruitment of the under-represented groups and further emphasised the ‘zero-tolerance policy’ on discrimination and harassment (Slapakova, Caves, Posard, Muravska, Dascalu, Myers, Kuo & Kristin, 2022).

The UK Ministry of Defence (MoD) further implemented measures to inclusion and to address barriers evolving with diversity through “implementing a wide range of measures aimed at ensuring a working environment that is positive and supportive of the needs of various minority groups, including mechanisms designed to deal with discriminatory behaviours and harassment, providing training in diversity to personnel and ensure that equal opportunities are integrated across the Force and ensuring the use of adequate diversity language to demonstrate commitment to a more inclusive organisational culture” (MoD, 2020 in Slapakova et al., 2022:72).

### 3.4.2 Approaches and regulatory frameworks to diversity management in the military: An African military perspective

Sub-Saharan African nations like Nigeria, Kenya and Ghana have made significant strides in recent years to diversify their military forces. In order to improve gender balance, ethnic inclusion and wider social representation, these reforms have taken the shape of international partnerships, training interventions, policy changes and constitutional mandates.

In Nigeria, initiatives to address ethnic and regional balance have surfaced and female inclusion has been the primary focus of diversity measures in Nigeria's Armed Services. Adopting the National Gender Policy (NGP) in 2021, which sets gender mainstreaming goals for all industries, including defence, has been one of the key strategies (Olubiyo, 2024). Moreover, the Nigerian Armed Forces implemented their own gender policy to offer sector-specific guidelines for hiring, advancement and workplace conditions (UN Women, 2021). Similarly, Kenya's Armed Forces have adopted a multifaceted approach to diversity. Kenya Defence Force is legally required to maintain ethnic inclusion and gender balance in accordance with the 2010 Constitution (Okech & Masinjila, 2021). The Ministry of Defence's Gender Mainstreaming Policy and the Defence Forces Act of 2012, which require equitable representation in military appointments and promotions is also adopted within the force. Ghana Armed Forces further implemented diversity inclusion policies. Amongst others, the force implemented gender policy in 2024. The policy, which was created in collaboration with the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC) and the Elsie Initiative, establishes goals for equal representation, safe workplaces, fair promotions and gender parity in the military forces of Ghana (Markwei, Ayisi & Osei-Bonsu, 2024).

### 3.4.3 Diversity management approaches and regulatory frameworks in the SANDF

The integration of diverse members into the SANDF evolved with discriminatory tensions. The South African Constitution (1996) thus required that the SANDF implement policies and approaches to address these issues (Dube, 2023). The South African White Paper on Defence (1996), South African Defence Review (1998; 2015), the Employment Equity Act (1998), the Policy on Equal Opportunity and Affirmative

Action (1998) and the Defence Act (No. 42 of 2002) were implemented to eliminate discrimination and promote equality and fair treatment of all members of the SANDF (Monethi, 2013; Heinecken, 2017; Mmakola, 2023).

To improve distinguishability and equality within the SANDF, equal employment opportunity (1998) and affirmative action (1998) also termed corrective action, positive action or black advancement were implemented and people from different races, including those from minority groups were promoted to senior positions of the SANDF (DoD, 2015). Affirmative action was “designed to address the past imbalances and ameliorate the conditions of specified groups who have been disadvantaged on the ground of race, gender and disability” (Uys, 2003 in Heinecken, 2011:32). The affirmative action and the equal opportunity approach enhanced diversity management, employment equity for women as well as religious and language accommodation and tolerance towards diverse members. The approaches further addressed gender or sexual misconduct against women, inequality and racial discrimination (Heinecken, 2011; Dube, 2023). Heinecken (2011) indicates that these approaches have played a crucial role in equalising cultural differences within the SANDF. After the 1997 integration of the liberation forces, the SANDF comprised of 14% of MK, 4% of TBVC, 1% of APLA and 81% of SADF officers. This transformed during 2007 and the percentage rate of the former officers of MK and APLA increased to 46%, the homeland armies increased to 7% and the SADF members decreased to 47% (Heinecken, 2011).

The affirmative action (1998) has benefited the majority of the former revolutionary officers (non-statutory forces) of South Africa. The approach has provided majority of loyal guerrilla fighters with high military ranks regardless of the required skills, age or work experience. Affirmative action and equal employment opportunity further challenged the pre-SADF policies and helped to recruit the majority of women in the SANDF during 1997. Women were allowed to serve in the Army (artillery, infantry and armoured), the Air Force (served as pilots) and in the Navy - on ships and submarines (Heinecken & Van Der Waag-Bowling, 2009; Heinecken, 2017). The DoD (2020) indicates that the implementation of the affirmative action and the equal employment opportunity approaches resulted in 27.85% of women representation in the SANDF during 2019 and 2020.

Heinecken (2011) states that affirmative action and equal employment opportunity are reactive strategies that focus on the moral and statutory imperatives that require workplaces to encompass women and other minority groups into the mainstream military practice. They are perceived as platforms where everyone is treated equally and can participate and raise their voices. The gender-neutral perspective which enforces equal opportunities to all individuals who meet the standard requirements, and the South African Constitution (1996) gave an extra incentive to the equal opportunities programme and “led to the final breaching of the male bastions of exclusivity, specifically the infantry, armour, air and seaward units” (Pienaar, 2004 in Van Wijk, 2005:70). The gender-neutral perspective maintains that women who serve in the military should be permitted to serve in any position and to be promoted to any rank within the military (Uys, 2003; Heinecken, 2017; Dube, 2023). To adhere to different international conventions that promote equality (such as the Beijing Platform of Action, United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 and the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination) and to further maintain equality in the SANDF, the DoD implemented the Gender Mainstreaming Policy which states that:

The desired end state is the equal representation of women and men in all decision-making throughout the Department of Defence to effect profound organisational and ultimately, societal transformation towards the realisation of de jure and de facto equality between men and women (DoD, 2008: 8).

South Africa further implemented the principle of equality which is deliberated in the Constitution (1996) Bill of Rights, Section 9(3). The section stipulates that ‘unfair discrimination, whether direct or indirect, on any grounds of race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth is prohibited’. The Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 2000 of 2003 further emphasise that unfair discrimination on disability, gender and race should be prohibited. The constitution redresses racial imbalances which exist in the public service through Section 195(i) which indicates that ‘the public administration must be broadly representative of the South African citizens, with employment and personnel management practices based on ability, objectivity and fairness’. The DoD further developed a language policy based on the ‘link’ and ‘thread’ languages. The policy

aimed to control and command the use of the English language as the medium of communication within the defence force (Heinecken, 2017).

Since 1994, a range of White Papers has been developed to ensure representativity in the South African public service. The South African White Paper on Defence (1996) transformed the public service based on the above-mentioned constitutional frameworks. They stipulated that AA is the main functionary to address the past imbalances and create a non-sexist and non-racist society. To achieve this, the White Paper on public service (1998) provided steps and guidelines which must be followed by the provincial administrations and national departments to implement their affirmative action programmes (Heinecken, 2017; Dube, 2023). The DoD White Paper (1996) confirmed that “to secure the legitimacy of the armed forces, the DoD is committed to the goal of overcoming the legacy of racial and gender discrimination and seek to create a defence force that is professional, efficient and broadly representative” (Heinecken, 2017: 80).

To further raise diversity awareness and promote employment equity in the SANDF, the Defence Equal Opportunity Management Institute (DEOMI) in Florida offered an Equal Opportunities Advisors course to the SANDF members during the mid-nineties, dealing with gender issues, sexual harassment and racial discrimination. Moreover, in 1997, the SANDF implemented the Equal Opportunities Chief Directorate (EOCD) currently known as the Chief Directorate Transformation Management (CDTM), mandated to promote the inclusion of diverse members reflecting diverse demographics of the entire South Africa (Monethi, 2013; Dube, 2023). During 1997, the directorate trained SANDF members on the issues of diversity and dealing with labour relations matters. The training was designed to raise awareness among designated officers on the origin, nature and implications of discrimination and to raise their cognition and understanding of affirmative and equal opportunity programmes. It dealt with the issues of communication across cultures, sexual harassment, sexism and religious discrimination, affirmative action, conflict management, power and discrimination as well as aspects relating to socialisation. Various members of the SANDF, specifically middle-ranking officers, Warrant Officers and Senior Non-Commissioned Officers were sent to attend the course (Heinecken, 2011).

To manage religious tensions within the armed forces, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) section 15 of the Bill of Rights states that, members must be entitled to freedom of religion. The South African Constitution (1996) stands against religious discrimination and it “establishes and governs the operation of the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities with the mission of fostering the rights of communities to freely observe and practice their cultures, religions and language” (International Religious Freedom Report, 2019:3). To further address and promote religious equality and reduce tension amongst members of the organisation, the Department of Justice (2018) developed a hate speech report that forbids any action of hatred or bias towards an individual based on the elements of religion, culture, race, gender or ethnicity (International Religious Freedom Report, 2019).

The identified approaches and policies indicate that the SANDF implemented approaches and legislative frameworks to promote equality, however, the SANDF remains a male-dominated institution with 27.85% of service women (Dube, 2023). Women continue to experience discrimination associated with their feminine traits (Mmakola, 2023). Moreover, communication (engagements), awareness and education on policies and approaches to diversity are provided to members of higher ranks while those of junior ranks continue to encounter cross-cultural barriers due to a lack of knowledge about such initiatives. Diversity emerges with cross-cultural communication engagements and challenges; however, diversity policies focus on the aspect of promoting and managing an equal and inclusive military. Legislative frameworks and approaches regarding cross-cultural communication which is required to share and transmit organisational messages amongst service men and women remains a gap in the SANDF. This study thus raises awareness about such limitations and/or areas that require attention and review from the SANDF.

### **3.5 CHALLENGES OF DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT IN THE SANDF: A CRITIQUE OF STRATEGIES AND APPROACHES**

Despite significant diversity transformations, approaches and regulatory frameworks in the SANDF, diversity, diversity management and cross-cultural communication issues persist within the SANDF. In 2002, affirmative action as a diversity

management approach in the SANDF received criticism from the majority of White officers who believed that the approach undermined the effectiveness and competency of the SANDF. The White officers assumed that women and Blacks recruited to the SANDF failed to implement their duties and responsibilities which is believed to be caused by the lack of education and military work experience (Heinecken, 2002). Additionally, Heinecken (2017) articulates that the AA and equal employment equity approaches strive to create an equal representation of both male and female soldiers within the SANDF, however, Kahn and Louw (2013) opine that regardless of the policies and approaches to diversity in the SANDF, the SANDF fails to reach 50% of women representation in senior managerial positions. The DoD (2020a) revealed that in 2019, women constituted 30% of the force, consequently, due to a subtle rate of retirement and resignation, women reduced to 28.85 in 2020. Women in combat constitute to 7.045% as opposed to their male counterparts who comprise 25.2% (More, 2021 in Mmakola & Sithole, 2023). The DoD (2015) further indicates that the process of accelerating women into the SANDF is delayed. The SANDF is not yet transformed in terms of diversity and racial lines, cultural traditions and gender still inform the organisation's decisions (Heinecken, 2017; Wilen and Heinecken, 2018; Dube, 2023). The identified statutory frameworks legally oblige the SANDF to create a non-racial, non-discriminatory and non-sexist organisational culture, however, the majority of the former statutory forces were promoted to higher ranks without skill or experience; this led to increased tensions between Black and White officers. White officers perceived affirmative action as an approach that brought about incompetent military force, the approach offered leadership positions to people with a lack of military skill and experience (Heinecken, 2011). To address the identified concerns, the affirmative action developed programmes to provide support and 'better equip' the minority groups with special training, mentorship, monitoring and evaluation systems within the SANDF (Dube, 2023).

A climate survey conducted by the DoD (2005) indicated that White and Coloured military personnel had negative perceptions towards the AA approach (DoD, 2006). The approach was perceived as unfair towards White people. The SAAF and the South African Navy experienced scarce skills in terms of pilots, sea-going officers, skilled technicians and engineers. Despite the scarce skills, White people were denied the opportunity to fill up the identified gaps. Moreover, the survey indicated that Coloured

people claimed that during the colonial years, they were discriminated against for not being “White enough” and affirmative actions continued to discriminate against them for not being “Black enough” (DoD, 2006; Heinecken, 2011: 37). Additionally, Heinecken (2017) and Duncanson and Woodward (2016) as cited in Wilen and Heinecken (2018) indicate that women in the SANDF believe that diversity approaches promote equality and fair treatment for all, however, women are expected to conform to masculine traits. This creates a gender inequality environment that continues to practice masculine norms in an integrated gendered environment (Heinecken, 2013; 2017). Like communication, the SANDF has become diverse with approaches and legislative frameworks promoting representativity and equality, thus lack of cohesion and cross-cultural communication tensions persist in the force (Monethi, 2013; Dube, 2023). This remains a gap in the strategies, policies and approaches to effective diversity management.

### **3.6 IMPACT OF DIVERSITY ON CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN MILITARY CONTEXTS**

All individuals, “regardless of culture have unique sets of experiences accumulated during their lifetimes, these experiences lead to the adoption of distinct expectations about how interaction works” (Logan-Terry & Damari, 2015, n.p). Culture and cross-cultural communication are interrelated and interdependent, therefore this section provides a literature review on the impact of culture on cross-cultural communication in the military contexts.

#### **3.6.1 Culture and cross-cultural communication in context**

Today’s contemporary organisations operate in a global and international environment because the 21st century business environment is expanding, and it includes people from different cultures and countries across the world. Since the 1980s, different organisations, including the military experienced a high rate of workers from different races, languages and cultures (Subramanian, 2016). Cultural differences which result in ineffective cross-cultural communication are thus experienced in these organisations. Different cultures rely on different values, therefore the reliance on a single value by a given culture may lead to cross-cultural communication problems with another person who does not culturally rely on a similar value and perceives it in

a different perspective (Aririguzoh, 2022). Cultural diversity has implications on the process of communication and managing communication in culturally diverse organisations has become a critical task. Communication is “influenced by unique world views of individuals’ cultures” (Subramanian, 2016:215). Words and expressions can have various implications and meanings for people originating from different cultural backgrounds. The issues of diverse cultures and variations in communicative norms need to be addressed and communicated effectively to different levels of employees operating in diverse organisations (Logan-Terry & Damari, 2015; Subramanian, 2016; Hussain, 2018). Military organisations are not excluded from these issues. Various armed forces from various countries undertake military training and participate in peace enforcement, stabilisation and humanitarian operations which require military personnel to meet and interact with individuals from different cultures (Žotkeviciūtė, 2018).

➤ **Culture and cross-cultural communication: An international military perspective**

Local and international military operations are inseparable from communication, culture and cultural awareness of other international countries and local areas. Military bases and units consist of diverse individuals who originate from various cultures. Personnel get to interact and share meaning with people from different cultural backgrounds. Soldiers undertaking military training and peacekeeping operations communicate with representatives and people of diverse cultures (Heinecken, 2011; Žotkeviciūtė, 2018). The U.S. Department of Defence became aware that military members of the 21st century need to communicate effectively with their comrades, strangers and partners in training, multinational operations, adversities and allies. The Department discovered that single language skills are not effective in facilitating successful interaction. A successful force is believed to have not only regional expertise and language skills but must also have cultural capabilities including cross-cultural communication competency. Cultural behaviours, norms and values influence cross-cultural interactions and result in cross-cultural communication problems, therefore, culture literate soldiers in the U.S. are required to eliminate these issues (Logan-Terry & Damari, 2015; Adler & Aycan, 2018).

Logan-Terry and Damari (2015) discovered that U.S. soldiers undertaking military training and operating in international missions have different linguistic skills and experience embodied cross-cultural communication (gestures and body formations) challenges due to diverse cultural values. For instance, non-verbal communication barriers were experienced between the U.S. soldier and an Indian local elder during peace support operations conducted in India. A soldier attempted to greet the Indian elder using a handshake, divergently the Indian party placed his hands together and bowed his head to greet back. Non-verbal communication - unspoken communication which includes eye contact and eye gaze, hand gestures and body positioning is a vital subject of cross-cultural variation that needs to be comprehended by diverse service men and women (Logan-Terry & Damari, 2015).

Cultural differences lead to strained relations with the local population and decrease mission effectiveness. The success of a military mission depends on the ability to communicate with other militaries, organisations and foreign individuals (Orna-Montesinos, 2017). Spanish soldiers are affected by the cultural differences of different individuals, they experience difficulties in developing intercultural communication competence and developing linguistic competence which leads to ineffective communication and impact on workplace adjustment and adaptation (Orna-Montesinos, 2017). The integration of the Spanish Armed Forces into supranational organisations made the English language a medium of communication and a shared workplace language in multilingual coalitions. This evolved with communication challenges and misunderstanding of meaning. Spanish soldiers experienced multilingual and multicultural challenges with the local population in conflict areas, other armies and various organisations and institutions involved (Orna-Montesinos, 2017).

Cultural challenges were further experienced during the Soviet-Afghan War when the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) sent its armed forces into the Soviet-Afghan War without considering the Afghanistan cultural, historic, national particularities, linguistic and religious issues of the local soldiers and individuals of the area. Various communication and cultural challenges were faced, and Afghans perceived the USSR Armed forces as strangers and armed invaders (Georgieva & Marinov, 2017). The rise of diversity in military forces evolves with cultural variations

that affect the cross-cultural communication of such institutions. The above studies indicate that culture and communication are interrelated. Diverse soldiers engage in diverse conversations and bring along their cultural variations in the communication process, thus creating miscommunication between the communicators (Hienecken, 2020). Therefore, different international military forces employed different strategies, policies and approaches to address and eliminate the experienced diversity issues (Refer to sections 3.4 and 3.7). However, strategies and policies to eliminate cross-cultural communication tensions remain a gap in military forces, as regulatory frameworks focus on addressing issues evolving with diversity manifestation aspects. However, such policies and strategies are failing to address cross-cultural communication tensions.

➤ **Culture and cross-cultural communication: A regional perspective**

For military institutions to function effectively and maintain internal unity, effective cross-cultural communication is essential, especially in culturally diverse countries such as Kenya and Nigeria. These nations face particular difficulties in promoting intercultural communication within their armed services due to their various ethnic, linguistic and cultural populations. Cultural factors continue to influence and obstruct interpersonal and institutional communication in spite of governmental initiatives for inclusivity and unity.

Kenya's military is comprising of over 40 ethnic groups, each with different languages and cultural practices. Despite the Kenya Defence Forces' efforts to maintain inclusivity through constitutional mandates and cultural awareness programmes, ethnic divisions hinder operational intercultural and cross-cultural communication. According to African Centre for Strategic Studies (2023), linguistic disparities frequently result in misunderstandings that compromise cooperative operations and command effectiveness within Kenya Armed Forces. Similarly, Nigeria's linguistic and cultural variations present communication barriers for the country's military. The lack of shared language and cultures within the force create challenges for troops to communicate effectively. Additionally, Olawale and Adeyemi (2023) revealed that communication failures with local communities may occur for forces stationed in linguistically unfamiliar areas, making civil-military cooperation more difficult and

raising the possibility of operational blunders. Such restrictions can undermine public confidence in the military as a unifying national institution.

The military forces in Kenya and Nigeria deal with enduring cultural issues that have an impact on military efficacy and cross-cultural communication. Regardless of implemented diversity policies, cross-cultural communication barriers emerging with cultural distinctions still exist within these forces. A multidimensional or cross-cultural communication strategy is therefore required to address these problems, including increasing cultural competency through training, broadening institutional communication methods and creating inclusive environments that capture the nuanced reality of contemporary African countries. These countries can improve operational preparedness, morale and cohesiveness by adjusting military procedures to cultural norms.

➤ **Culture and cross-cultural communication: A SANDF perspective**

The present military in South Africa comprises the integration of seven independent military forces into a single National Defence Force (SANDF). The SANDF is a diverse military force characterised by individuals from different tribes. Cross-cultural communication problems emerged with this transition, a phase whereby cultural differences led to cross-cultural tensions and attitudes within the force (Heinecken, 2011).

SANDF experiences an unprecedented cultural challenge which results in numerous subsystems of perceptions, expectations, attitudes, meanings, motivations and beliefs which are not shared by members of the organisation. Social interaction and communication become problematic between parts of the system owing to the differences. People's values, communication preferences, non-verbal clues, authority perceptions and expectations for group dynamics and hierarchy are all influenced by their cultural background. Members of the SANDF frequently carry unique tribal or community-based worldviews with them, which influence how they understand behaviour, language and social relationships. These variations impact unit cohesiveness and operational effectiveness by causing miscommunication, mistrust, and misinterpretations of both verbal and non-verbal cues (Choabi, 2022).

The SANDF has however implemented symbolic and institutional mechanisms aimed at promoting unity, such as the code of conduct, uniform regulations and integrated training models (Hartley, 1998). However, these attempts have had limited success in overcoming the deeply rooted cultural norms and personal identities that shape behaviour and communication styles. Daniels (2024) highlights ongoing issues in managing discipline, attributing them to entrenched organisational culture and leadership styles. This study suggests that despite efforts to foster unity, deeply embedded cultural identities and communication barriers continue to impede effective collaboration within the SANDF (Daniels, 2024).

The military system therefore fails to operate effectively due to cross-cultural communication breakdown created by different value systems (Heinecken, 2011; Choabi, 2022). The SANDF aims to “converge through a process of communication to build a united National Defence Force to create a stable defence force” (Hartley, 1998:38). However, cross-cultural interaction in the SANDF remains complex as cultural differences continue to create cultural misunderstanding, miscommunication and bias (Hartley, 1998; Heinecken, 2011). Addressing these challenges requires not only legislative frameworks but also requires effective cross-cultural communication strategies to raise cultural awareness and enhance understanding of cultural variations, thereby contributing to the growing body of literature that emphasises the importance of intercultural competence in diverse military contexts.

### **3.7 STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN THE MILITARY**

Aririguzoh (2022:9) mentions that “the crux of cross-cultural communication is developing effective ways to address and appreciate people’s differences”. This section outlines strategies employed to manage cross-cultural communication issues emanating from diversity in military organisations.

#### **3.7.1 Diversity education as a strategy for effective cross-cultural communication in the military forces**

According to Orna-Montesinos (2017), traditional approaches to teaching and raising awareness about culture as a ‘single monolithic product’ have been unsuccessful and

the development of modern communicative competence and diverse courses are perceived as critical to achieving the desired military operations and enhanced cross-cultural interaction thereof. Cross-cultural pronunciation, non-verbal cues, grammar and lexis are not the only factors in miscommunication, also the failure to adjust to the social and cultural context of language use creates further misconceptions. It is therefore vital to equip soldiers with the diverse cultural and linguistic competence required for effective cross-cultural communication through diverse educational programmes and courses (Henderson & Louhiala-Salminen, 2011; Orna-Montesinos, 2017). Hussain (2018) supports that through diverse educational programmes, cultural awareness and cross-cultural communication competency will be raised and military members will be able to operate in local and international military operations. Diversity educational programmes aid in comprehending the diverse nature of individuals from different cultural origins; hence the values, behaviour and non-verbal cues of various tribes are further understood (Žotkevičiūtė, 2014; Orna-Montesinos, 2017; Hussain, 2018).

In August 2011, the U.S. Secretary of Defence memorandum supported the above-mentioned statements by outlining the importance of cultural competency and foreign language skills, which are viewed as “enduring warfighting competencies that are vital to mission readiness in today’s dynamic global environment” (Mahmood, Alameri, Jawad, Alani, Zuerlein, Nakano, Anderson & Beadling, 2013:631). The memorandum required U.S. Armed Forces to understand the culture of international partners, local populations, comrades in arms and coalition forces and to effectively communicate with them. Cultural awareness and foreign language skills are vital competencies that can impact U.S. forces’ ability to comprehend the needs of other external nations and to modify activities to regional and local norms (Mahmood et al., 2013). Žotkevičiūtė (2014) emphasises that to effectively communicate, interact, understand, and operate in another cultural environment, military personnel need educational courses to raise culture-specific competencies, language competencies and cross-cultural competencies.

## ➤ Culture and language education

Cross-cultural competence incorporates knowledge on how to interpret different cultural situations from cultural points of view as well as how to interact and communicate with people from different cultural origins and how to adjust to one's cultural behaviour to achieve the desired aim. This element comprises knowledge about other cultures (cultural knowledge) and their values, norms and perceptual variations. It focuses on the ability to precisely understand and efficiently engage individuals from dissimilar cultural backgrounds to achieve the desired goal (Gallus, Gouge, Antolic, Fosher, Jaspardo, Coleman, Selmeski & Klafehn, 2014).

Cross-cultural competence and/or education underpins the pragmatic view that developing mutual understanding, comprehending the cultural environment and avoiding prejudice, intercultural conflict and discrimination are strategic elements for the advancement and transformation of both local and international security (Abbe, 2008; Žotkevičiūtė, 2014; Mackenzie & Miller, 2017; Orna- Montesinos, 2017).

The development of cross-cultural competence increases institutional strength, operational success and professional well-being which equips the military with successful (competent) interactions with sister services, adversaries, non-combatants (non-governmental organisations, civilians, international organisations and so forth), allies and comrades in arms (Žotkevičiūtė, 2018; Eden, Chisom & Adeniyi, 2024; Lee & Wechtler, 2024).

Language competency refers to the knowledge of a given language employed by the local military of the domestic country and in a certain international military terrain where an operation is conducted (Žotkevičiūtė, 2014). Language skills facilitate the ability to understand the elements of a particular culture and to engage in effective cross-cultural communication. Language competency further improves the manifestation of cross-cultural competencies of military personnel in domestic and international operations. It increases the possibilities of social communication between local militants, militants participating in foreign operations and the local civilians of the country where international operations are conducted (Žotkevičiūtė, 2014). This section presents a literature review on education related to diversity, language and culture in local and international military institutions.

## ➤ **Diversity, Linguistic and Cultural Education in International Military Forces**

### *Diversity, linguistic and cultural education and awareness in Spanish Armed Forces*

It is noted that various military personnel encounter difficulties when engaging with international armed forces and the identified locals. These military organisations utilise interpreters to assist through the communication process. The Spanish Armed Forces implemented English for Specific Purposes (ESP) learning materials to address linguistic issues and raise linguistic competency within their units (Žotkevičiūtė, 2014; Subramanian, 2016; Orna-Montesinos, 2017). Recent military studies advocate for the implementation of language and culture strategies which involve the development of language proficiency, culture awareness and regional knowledge and expertise. Therefore, the Spanish Armed Forces implemented training programmes focussing on language and culture (Abbe, 2008). Intercultural awareness-raising materials which aimed to raise comprehension and awareness about the influence of culture on the success of intercultural interaction were further implemented. The materials addressed the issue of flexible behaviour in host culture, understanding different cultural behaviours and being open towards cultural differences (Starosta, 2000 in Orna-Montesinos, 2017).

### *Diverse Education and cultural awareness and training in the United Kingdom Military Forces*

The UK Armed Forces developed an agency under the Directorate of Targeting and Information Operations (DTIO) in 2007. The agency gathered cultural information in international operations and trained military personnel about specific cultures before international operations. The Defence Cultural Support Unit further (DCSU) provided cultural education and training to military personnel at diverse levels and military advisors partaking in international military operations. The 1/09 of 2009 Joint Doctrine Note further indicated that cultural information, education and cultural exercises are of vital importance and should be available during the preliminary phase of military training. A guide for the Specialist Unit which aimed to raise culture awareness and support exercises related to culture consciousness for all British military was published in 2011 (Žotkevičiūtė, 2018).

Between 2011 and 2017, the UK military further implemented educational programmes (such as the “Joint Doctrine Publication 2-00 Understanding and Intelligence Support to Joint Operations and Joint Doctrine Publication 05, Shaping a Stable World: The Military Contribution”) about cultures of various regions and the impact of culture on the world view (Žotkevičiūtė, 2018). The UK military forces thus perceive cultural proficiency (competency or awareness) as the process used to escalate the power of the armed forces. To further address and enhance cultural competency and cross-cultural communication of UK personnel, the force initiated the advanced specialist programme based on language and culture-general issues (Žotkevičiūtė, 2018).

### *Diversity, cultural and linguistic training in Lithuania Armed Forces*

In May 2005, the initial agreement to cultural awareness training in Lithuania was made between Vilnius University, the Centre of Oriental Studies and the Ministry of National Defence. During this period, military personnel undergoing international operations in Afghanistan received language education and training. A second language and cultural proficiency agreement was made between the Centre of Multi-Cultural Relations and the General Adolfas Ramanauskas Combat Training Centre of the Lithuanian Armed Forces. Arabic and Farsi languages as well as cultural skills were taught to military personnel of the force. Furthermore, informal learning and social constructivism learning were conducted between troops and military personnel who had experienced domestic and international military operations. Videos, impressions, and photos were shared in such constructive learning environments (Žotkevičiūtė, 2018).

Cultural competencies should “encourage military personnel to take interest in and respect the culture and traditions of other parties” (Žotkevičiūtė, 2018:110). To support the above statement, the Lithuania Armed Forces Operation developed a 2011 Doctrine that provides additional information about cultural awareness and the importance of cooperation between military personnel, cognition of the enemy and mutual respect for cultural variances. The 2016 Doctrine (Lithuanian Armed Forces) emphasised that “the nucleus of the armed forces is formed from the motivated initiative of firm combat spirit and well-trained (particularly psychologically) military

personnel who are capable of operating in a multinational and multicultural environment” (Žotkevičiūtė, 2018:111). Furthermore, Major Sergeants, Warrant Officers (WO) and Non-Commissioned Officers (NCO) stage III Career Course raised knowledge about the impact of culture on different management styles, peculiarities of communication with the local population and the similarities and differences between Christianity and Islam (Žotkevičiūtė, 2018).

#### *Diverse Education and cultural awareness programmes in the U.S. Armed Forces*

The U.S. military force addressed the traditional military force by implementing the Army Field Manual 3-24 counterinsurgencies (2006) to change the previous military attitude and promote cultural awareness of military personnel. Regional and Cultural Expertise Summit organised by the Defence Language Office further took place in 2007. The Summit identified cultural and regional competencies and sought to understand the needs of foreign (international) operations as well as “create a framework for the synchronisation of policy, plans and programmes complying with the current needs” (Žotkevičiūtė, 2018:98).

To further raise cultural competency, the U.S. Armed Forces implemented language and culture centres, career development models and cultural development programmes. Moreover, management of Language and Regional Expertise Instruction (DoD 5160.70) developed in 2007 to raise cultural cognition was implemented by the force and the “USA Army Training and Doctrine Command was appointed as the executive agent to implement comprehensive decisions covering career development and pre-deployment teaching of foreign cultures and languages” (Žotkevičiūtė, 2018:99). Accurate standards and cross-cultural competency programmes and exercises of the military personnel were provided by the Management of the Defence Language, Regional Expertise and cultural programme of 2016. In addition, the Defence Language Institute Foreign Language Centre (DLIFLC) assisted the Army’s Command and General Staff School (CGSS) in conducting professional language exercises before deployment activities (Žotkevičiūtė, 2018).

Contradicting with the above, Punti and Dingel (2021) argue that cultural competency and cultural learning tools remain deficient in the U.S. military. Cross-cultural competency training tools focus on culture and exclude racist and prejudiced attitudes

experienced by minority groups. Experienced prejudiced attitudes and racist behaviours thus make it difficult for ethnic minority groups to interact and engage across the majority cultural groups and/or dominant cultures.

### *Diverse Education and Cultural intelligence training and programmes in Canadian Armed Forces*

The Civil-Military Cooperation Tactics, Techniques and Procedures Doctrine (2006) of the Canadian Defence Force is the main doctrine regulating cultural exercises and cultural awareness of the military. The Doctrine emphasises that military operations require comprehension of the cultural context in which operations occur. The Canadian Defence Force encourages cultural intelligence through the Cultural Intelligence and Leadership Guide published in 2009. In this context, cultural intelligence is defined as “the ability to recognise the shared beliefs, values, attitude and behaviours of a group of people and to effectively apply this knowledge towards a specific goal or range of activities” (Žotkevičiūtė, 2018:106).

Žotkevičiūtė (2018) further postulates that Canadian forces focus on a culture-general approach where individuals articulate and understand their culture to identify and analyse cultural differences during local and international military operations. In Canadian forces, peace Support Training Centres provide cultural training to military troops. For instance, a five-day cultural awareness course was presented to military personnel who participated in the Afghanistan operation. The training process was based on the general Afghanistan approach which included teaching Pashto and Dari dialects (Žotkevičiūtė, 2018).

#### ➤ **Education and cultural awareness programmes in African Armed Forces**

Education and cultural awareness training are crucial for promoting harmony, cohesiveness and successful cross-cultural communication in multicultural military settings. Ghana, Kenya and Nigeria have recognised the necessity to implement organised cultural competency and education initiatives to overcome communication hurdles within their armed forces. These programmes seek to foster tolerance for one another, lessen ethnocentric prejudices and improve military personnel's capacity to function well in a variety of groups and environments.

### *Diverse Education and cultural awareness programmes in Kenya Defence Force*

Kenya Defence Force have introduced several cultural awareness programmes. Otieno, Kihoro, and Wambua (2023) indicate that cultural education is incorporated in both official training programmes and extracurricular activities including field immersion exercises and cultural exchange programmes. Personnel are made aware of the value of accepting ethnic variety through events such as the Joint Command and Staff College's annual Cultural Day (Kariuki & Wekesa, 2022). For operations to be effective, these programmes seek to promote diversity and reduce cultural tensions. Additionally, Mutuku (2021) indicates that Kenyan military have implemented community engagement programmes that permit military personnel to engage with diverse ethnic group while learning and promoting cultural empathy and language acquisition.

### *Diverse Education and cultural awareness programmes in Ghana Armed Forces*

Cultural awareness has also been incorporated into officer and non-commissioned officer training programmes of the Ghana Armed Forces. According to Agyekum (2022), Ghana Armed Forces acknowledge that communication patterns within the military hierarchy are influenced by regional traditions, social conventions and ethnic affinities. To close the gaps between workers from diverse origins, the Ghana Armed Forces has responded by introducing modules centered on national identity development, values alignment and intercultural communication. Ghana's strategy has also benefited greatly from international cooperation. Public affairs, cultural sensitivity and psychological operations training were among the strategic communication workshops that Ghana Armed Forces and the U.S. Africa Command conducted in 2023 (Adjei & Mensah, 2023). During both domestic and international missions, these programmes were created to give staff members the required skills to interact with a variety of cultures and handle cultural differences.

### *Diverse Education and cultural awareness programmes in Nigerian Armed Forces*

With over 250 ethnic groups in Nigeria, the military faces a great deal of cultural and linguistic diversity. The Nigerian military has established formal language and culture training programmes to overcome communication issues (Okonkwo & Akinyemi,

2024). Intercultural communication modules have been added to professional military education programmes at the Nigerian Defence Academy and other training facilities (Abubakar & Lawal, 2023). The modules seek to raise cognition regarding cultural, religious, local etiquette and conflict-sensitive communication techniques (Abubakar & Lawal, 2023).

➤ **Education and cultural awareness programmes in the South African Armed Forces**

The SANDF is aware of tensions that emanate from diversity. The SANDF implemented various programmes to reduce interpersonal conflict, promote racial tolerance and increase personnel knowledge on multicultural issues. These programmes encourage and instil cognition in cross-cultural exchanges, whereby members can acknowledge, accept and recognise demands from a particular culture, different mannerisms and behaviour (Heinecken, 2011). The initial diversity management programme implemented in the SANDF was the Psychological Integration Programme (PIP) which was introduced as part of the Civic Education Programme in the DoD. The programme aimed to address aspects of cultural diversity, discover members' feelings about diversity, promote respect for various cultures and build team cohesion or synergy between diverse people (Heinecken, 2009; 2020).

Further military developmental courses and training (such as the SAS Saldanha Naval Training) introduced cultural difference issues as part of their life skills course. Legislative frameworks based on language, gender, race and culture were explained and discussed during the phase of the courses (Heinecken, 2009).

Moreover, Heinecken (2009) indicates that Equal Opportunities Chief Directorate (EOCD) established a diversity management course on labour relations issues. The course outlined issues based on knowledge and understanding of AA, Equal opportunity, aspects relating to communication across cultures (cross-cultural communication), language, socialisation, racism, sexual harassment, power, discrimination, sexism and conflict management (Heinecken, 2009). Seminars that addressed the effects of stereotypes and perceptions on the organisational communication process, goal accomplishment and organisational mission readiness were organised. Non-verbal communication cues, cultural practices, beliefs, values

and the impact of language on socialisation and communication were further discussed (ibid). The DoD also implemented a shared value policy which stipulated that the management of multiculturalism is based on tolerance of differences, equality and effective communication to promote common understanding (Heinecken, 2009; 2011).

The above discussions reveal that educational programmes and training aid in minimising cross-cultural communication barriers experienced by international, regional and local military soldiers operating in culturally diverse environments. Education and cultural awareness programmes are critical interventions for addressing the cross-cultural communication challenges that characterise diverse armed forces. These programs not only enhance operational efficiency but also promote social cohesion and national unity within increasingly diverse militaries. Cultural education as a strategy or approach to improved cross-cultural communication therefore guided the current study which aims to develop a cross-cultural communication strategy for BMT recruits operating in a diverse military training unit, Air Force Gymnasium. Subsequently, it is indicated that cultural education plays a pivotal role in raising cultural awareness and reducing cross-cultural communication tensions amongst diverse military service men and women and could be considered as one of the channels or tools in a cross-cultural communication strategy.

### 3.7.2 Interpretation as a strategy for cross-cultural communication in a military context

Language impedes effective cross-cultural communication (Divekar & Itankar, 2020). According to O'Connor (2009), understanding language is a critical tool for effective cross-cultural communication and a critical factor in building and maintaining relationships with diverse cultures in military contexts. With this mentioned, interpretation is perceived as a vital tool used to convey messages and raise understanding between military personnel operating in diverse military social contexts (O'Connor, 2009).

According to Masduki (2020:2), interpretation refers to:

An extempore oral reproduction in one language of what is said in another language. Interpretation is not merely a linguistic undertaking but a

communication of linguistic proficiency and encyclopaedic knowledge. Linguistic proficiency is a speech reproduced orally in a language. It is the transfer of the meaning of an utterance from one language (source language, and one culture) to another (target language).

Brislin (1976:1) describes interpreting as a “type of translation that depends on oral communication situations in which one person speaks in the source language, an interpreter processes the input and produces output in a second language, and a third person listens to the source language version”. Weber (1984:3) defines interpretation as the “oral transposition of an orally delivered message performed in the presence of the participants”. Interpreting is thus viewed as a vital tool for cross-cultural communication strategy amongst interlocutors originating from various linguistic and cultural backgrounds. It is used to transmit cross-cultural communication messages and meaning between people of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Yuna et al., 2022).

➤ **Interpretation as a strategy to cross-cultural communication: An international military context**

In the U.S. military, interpreters play a critical role in conveying the messages between the advisors, troops as well as their counterparts. The U.S. military utilises interpreters to understand the intricacies of a culture and to aid in conveying cultural realities and perceptions among soldiers (O'Connor, 2009). Concurring with the above statement, Grant (2020) posits that interpreters are vital to the mission accomplishment of the Australian Armed Forces and have played a critical role in the transmission of messages and raising cross-cultural understanding between personnel during Operation Sumatra Assist of 2004 and the 1991 International Force for East Timor led by the Australian military forces. Sharing the same sentiments with the above scholars, Rosendo (2022) indicates that interpreting served as a cultural and linguistic mediator during conflict and post-conflict situations experienced in Afghanistan. Spanish Armed forces deployed as contingents to Afghanistan employed interpreters to convey messages between the forces to attain the identified mission (Rosendo, 2022).

➤ **Interpretation as a strategy to cross-cultural communication: A regional military context**

Interpretation has developed from simple linguistic translation to a multifaceted tool that incorporates relationship-building, cultural mediation and conflict prevention in the contexts of Ghana, Nigeria and Kenya, where ethnic pluralism is ingrained in national identity and military structure. In the military forces of Ghana, Nigeria and Kenya, interpretation has been adopted, especially in international peacekeeping operations, where operational readiness and knowledge of the host country's culture are equally important (Boadi, 2022; Mensah & Asare, 2023).

In the Nigerian Armed Forces, interpreters are essential for information gathering, civil-military relations and translation (Okonkwo & Bello, 2024). The demand for interpreters who can interact with communities in their own languages and cultural idioms is not entirely met by the adoption of Barikanci, a Hausa-based pidgin that aid in bringing troops together in communication (Usman & Ibrahim, 2023). Therefore, interpretation becomes an operational necessity (Usman & Ibrahim, 2023).

Additionally, Kenya's Defence Forces have institutionalised interpretation as part of their pre-deployment training, particularly for missions in South Sudan and Somalia. In addition to regional languages, interpreters receive training in conflict-sensitive communication, symbols and manners. Mwangi and Otieno (2022) report that in Kenya Defence Forces, interpreters act as cultural liaison officers and mediators between Kenya's Defence Forces and foreign or local actors, translating not only language but also behaviour and gesture (Njeri & Kamau, 2023).

The above studies indicate that mission effectiveness, citizen participation and unit cohesiveness are all strengthened by interpretation, especially when combined with cultural mediation. Therefore, formalising and professionalising interpretation services is crucial as African forces regularly participate in multicultural, multinational and peacekeeping contexts.

### ➤ **Interpretation as a strategy to cross-cultural communication: A South African Military Context**

Since the 1994 transition of the South African military, different channels (see section 3.7.4), policies and approaches (previously discussed in section 3.4.2) have been used to disseminate information about diversity and to raise knowledge and awareness about different races, languages and cultures present in the SANDF. However, Ndlangamandla, Chaka, Shange and Shandu-Phetla (2024), opine that government departments, including the DoD, predominantly use the English language to transmit information. Military activities including various courses and training use English as a predominant form of communication. Little attention has been given to language competency and social justice as African indigenous languages are not utilised when disseminating information and providing training and/or courses to DoD members (De Korne, 2021). This calls for interpretation to fill the identified linguistic gap, reduce sociolinguistic misinterpretations and promote effective cross-cultural communication (Ndlangamandla et al., 2024). Chen (2022) indicates that interpreting using indigenous languages enhances cross-cultural communication, knowledge and understanding of diverse elements. Ndlangamandla et al. (2024:10) further elucidate that “there cannot be a one-size-fits-all language approach” in multilingual institutions like the military.

During the 2022 portfolio committee on Defence, Minister Thandi Modise stipulated that the SANDF fails to understand and fast-track the ‘hard issues’ regarding promoting and creating a diverse military, civil control, integration and policy issues related to affirmative action and language issues (Jordaan, 2023). The SANDF focuses on soft issues, such as force design, aircraft and vessels (ships) which can be addressed after the DoD has addressed the ‘hard issues’ associated with culture, language, race and gender (Jordaan, 2023). With deficient focus and implemented strategies on ‘hard issues’, especially the SANDF’s “language strategy” (Jordaan, 2023:287), diversity and cross-cultural communication remain problematic in the SANDF. With the presented limitations of the SANDF, interpretation as a strategy for cross-cultural communication remains as a gap in military training bases and units, including the SAAF in particular (Jordaan, 2023).

### 3.7.3 Adaptation and acculturation as a strategy for cross-cultural communication in the military

Redfield, Linton and Herskovits (1936) in Meso (2023:16) indicate that “acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups”. It is perceived as a process whereby people learn and adapt to new cultures in a given diverse social context (Tkachuck, 2019; Meso, 2023). According to Picket (2000), in Tkachuck (2019:9) acculturation is viewed as “the modification of the culture of a group or individual as a result of contact with a different culture”. Additionally, Berry (2005: n.p) defines acculturation as a process of psychological and cultural transformations that involve different forms of mutual accommodation, “leading to some longer-term psychological and sociocultural adaptations between both groups”.

#### ➤ **Adaptation and acculturation strategies for cross-cultural communication: an international military perspective**

The 21st international military organisations operate in a diverse context consisting of diverse members from diverse cultural, linguistic, racial and religious backgrounds. Regardless of these differences, service members serving in the U.S. military undergo cross-cultural adaptation and acculturation processes to assimilate into a single uniform military culture (Williams, 2022). Yongsheng (2010) and Williams (2022) reported that members of the U.S. and the Republic of Korea National Military experienced cross-cultural communication, exchanged thoughts and cultural beliefs and underwent the adaptation and acculturation process during the 2020 multinational joint and naval exercise known as the ‘invisible spirit’.

Gehrmann (2020) indicates that Australian forces engaged in cross-cultural interaction during the terror war of Afghanistan and Iraq whereby Australian soldiers were faced with cultural and linguistic cross-cultural communication barriers between the Iraqi and Afghan allies. Australians worked with unfamiliar Western allies (Dutch) who originated from different military cultures, linguistics and liberal social values. This complicated the force’s interaction with Iraq and Afghan allies, thus calling for interpreters,

acculturation, adaptation and cross-cultural adjustment to minimise the identified challenges (Molan, 2017; Gehrmann, 2020).

Demers (2011) conducted focus groups with various Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans who indicated that a military is an organisation whereby members are transformed from civilians to soldiers. Members in military organisations undergo an acculturation process and adapt to the military culture which values collectivism over an individualistic culture. McCaslin, Becket-Davenport, Dinh, Lasher, Kim, Choucroun, and Herbst (2021) further support that military enlistment commences with basic training whereby recruits undergo the readjustment process from the civilian culture to the acculturation process of the military. "Military culture reflects the collectivistic nature of war and military missions and differs from the more individualistic nature of contemporary civilian society (Rose, Herd & Palacio, 2017 in McCaslin et al., 2021:2).

#### ➤ **Adaptation and acculturation in African military contexts**

Regional military units and bases of Nigeria and Ghana operate in multicultural settings and therefore employ adaptation and acculturation as strategies to effective cross-cultural communication and unit cohesion. In Nigerian Armed Forces, cross-cultural training has been demonstrated to facilitate adjustment in a variety of professional contexts. According to Iheanachor, Costa-Climent, Ulrich and Ozegbe (2024), thorough cross-cultural training programmes aid Nigerian soldiers to adjust and effectively engage in cross-cultural interactions. Additionally, Ndika (2013) examined the acculturation experiences of Nigerian immigrants in the U.S. and pointed out that individuals often employ adaptation and acculturation strategies simultaneously, depending on the context. This flexibility in acculturation approaches can be beneficial in military settings, where personnel must adapt to various cultural situations both domestically and internationally.

Cultural sensitisation plays a critical role in promoting understanding and mutual respect among military members. Therefore, the study of Attah (2017) indicate that Ghana Armed Forces implemented initiatives that focus on acculturation strategies and encourage peer support and mentorship in promoting cultural adaptability in Ghana. These initiatives promote a unified military culture that promotes inclusivity by

teaching soldiers to adapt to difference and respect various cultural customs and traditions (Attah, 2017).

The above studies indicate that well-planned adaptation and acculturation techniques are essential for cross-cultural communication in regional military institutions. Current research emphasises the value of thorough training programmes, adaptable acculturation strategies and cross-cultural competency.

### ➤ **Adaptation and acculturation in the SANDF context**

According to Makula (2023), members operating in multicultural institutions, including the SANDF operate amidst people of diverse cultures and are required to understand the diverse traditions, values, customs and behaviour. During these instances, such members encounter culture shock and therefore opt for adaptation, acculturation and assimilation strategies whereby they absorb and adapt to the dominant or host culture (Berry, 2005; Makula, 2023).

Memela-Motumi (2011) contends that the SANDF transformation goes beyond race, gender, language, disability representation and religion. It comprises structural and training transformation, as well as the capability of SANDF members to adapt and assimilate to the transformed environment. Transformation within the SANDF involves the integration of diverse cultures, races and genders. The force is expected to accommodate diverse members in its structure and diverse strategies, however regardless of the integrated masculine and feminine aspects, the military is “geared towards men” (Dube, 2023:161) and military training provides both male and female recruits with similar training whereby women adapt to the masculine physique presented during military training (Heinecken, 2005; Dube, 2023).

O’Neil and O’Neil (2022) reveal that the SANDF further engages in different joint operations requiring cooperation with members from all arms of service and divisions. Diverse members are required to work jointly and collaborate with multinational military forces, international organisations, civilian populations and governmental organisations. Therefore, diverse members undertaking in SANDF military operations adapt to different cultures to form effective relationships, exchange cross-cultural messages and attain the operational aim and objectives (Bester & Du Plessis, 2014;

Heinecken, 2020). SANDF training courses further incorporate members and train them to adapt and assimilate to the military culture and flexibility to diverse regional and international cultures during operations (O'Neil & O'Neil, 2022). Adapting to multicultural context promote effective cross-cultural collaborations, working relations and cohesion within the SANDF. Adaptation and acculturation are therefore incorporated into the cross-cultural communication strategy for diverse BMT recruits.

#### 3.7.4 Communication channels to promote diversity and cross-cultural communication in military contexts

According to Slapakova, Caves, Posard, Muravska and Dascalu (2022), communication channels are regarded as tools to strengthen and improve support for cross-cultural communication in diverse military training environments. They are perceived as effective strategies to enhance diversity and cross-cultural communication in the armed forces. Diversity and cross-cultural communication related issues may be shared and promoted through the utilisation of various communication platforms (Slapakova et al., 2022). This section discusses communication channels utilised to support cross-cultural communication and diversity in local and international armed forces.

##### ➤ **Communication channels to support cross-cultural communication and diversity: An international military setting**

###### *U.S.A. military perspective on diversity and cross-cultural communication channels*

The U.S. is a diverse military force that promotes inclusion and ensures that all members serving in the force are treated fairly regardless of their diverse backgrounds. The Force is of the view that “demographic representation, accompanied by the Departments’ unwavering commitment to fairness, transparency and leadership is essential to achieve a mission ready fighting force in the contemporary society” (Miller, 2020:1). To effectively attain the identified mission, the DoD Board on Diversity and Inclusion identified strategies to improve its diversity and inclusion as well as to promote equal opportunities for all members of the force in July 2020. Amongst the recommendations, new media was mentioned as one of the effective communication channels to promote diversity, inclusion and effective

communication between personnel. The DoD further recommended implementing a diversity and inclusion website which will be accessed by all force members and will aid in enhancing communication among members, creating resource groups and raising knowledge about diversity and inclusion regulatory frameworks (Miller, 2020). Moreover, the U.S. DoD Board report (2020) indicates that implementing inclusive communication and media materials and outreach programmes such as lectures, seminars and campaigns aids in creating knowledge among military members.

#### *Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) perspective on diversity and cross-cultural communication channels*

Diversity and inclusion are viewed as vital issues that need to capture the public official's and the public's attention in the CAF. CAF leadership thus aims to improve diversity and diversity awareness through various communication and/or media platforms which will capture the attention of the target populace (Grégoire, 2021). With this mentioned, media platforms have been used by the CAF to address issues evolving with diversity and to promote change and acceptance of individual differences within the force (Waruszynski, Febraro, Wright & Fonséca, 2021). For instance, Grégoire (2021) indicates that challenges emanating from gender integration of women into the CAF have been published through various media platforms to promote change and encourage acceptance of women within the CAF. The media is further used to address sexual misconduct and racial discrimination while promoting fair and equal treatment for women and minority groups (Grégoire, 2021). This is reinforced by the study of Waruszynski et al. (2021) which revealed that the media reports on racism problems experienced by the Asian members serving in the CAF. This is reported to eliminate and/or address racial issues and promote equality within the CAF and the entire society (Waruszynski et al., 2021).

#### *Australian Military perspective on diversity and cross-cultural communication channels*

Australian military forces are not excluded from diversity and inclusion elements. In the armed forces, the media is perceived as an oversight platform to oversee and ensure the organisation's diversity, equality and effective operation (Watson, 2019). Communication forums and campaigns are viewed as tools to change individual perceptions about diversity and cross-cultural communication issues as well as to

raise knowledge about such issues (Riseman, 2016). Previously, the media was used to portray inaccurate stereotypes and sexist comments about women. However, female combatants and society activists established the Invisible Battalion Project which redefined the role of women in the military and fought against the negative media reports. This was accompanied by a media campaign that changed the perceptions and stereotypes about women and promoted gender equality in the Australian Forces (Watson, 2019). Moreover, Watson (2019:51) indicates that media and communication platforms “ensure that armed forces and other defence institutions uphold the obligation to promote equal opportunities, change perceptions and prevent discrimination”.

➤ **Communication channels to support cross-cultural communication and diversity: An African military setting**

Promoting cross-cultural communication through the use of digital platforms and mainstream media has received attention in regional military forces such as Nigeria, Ghana and Kenya Defence Forces. Social media sites like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter have been integrated into the Ghana Armed Forces' public relations campaigns. This online presence has produced a platform for instantaneous interaction with various populations seeking to promote cross-cultural interactions (Abubakar, 2021). Similarly, Kenya's Defence Force institutionalised communication through the development of a strategic communications office in 2021. This initiative was implemented to promote effective communication, reach the public and maintain internal unity within the defence force (Kenya Ministry of Defence, 2021).

The employment of strategic communication workshops is another channel that the armed services of Ghana, Nigeria and Kenya have in common. These workshops, which emphasise developing communication capabilities in line with more general regional security objectives, frequently entail collaborations with foreign military groups, such the U.S. Army Southern European Task Force (United States Army, 2023). In addition to technical instruction, these workshops offer training in public affairs, cultural sensitivity and crisis communication which are essential in military environments with a diverse population and various languages.

Cross-cultural communication is further strengthened by cultural events and symbolic practices in Kenya Armed Forces. As part of its training programmes, Kenya Defence Force hosts yearly Cultural Day Celebrations to promote intergroup appreciation and draw attention to the personnel's ethnic and geographical diversity, which enhances cohesion and understanding between diverse groups (Wambua, 2022).

The armed forces of Ghana, Nigeria and Kenya have demonstrated an initiative in promoting cross-cultural communication through integrated use of traditional media digital platforms, international collaborations and intercultural training. These initiatives improve operational effectiveness and bridge socio-cultural divisions within the military and civilian society. However, the identified forces continue to navigate complex diversity dynamics. Therefore, the development of inclusive and strategic communication practices remains central to military professionalism, collaboration and national stability (Wambua, 2022).

➤ **A SANDF review on communication channels for diversity and cross-cultural communication**

Since the 1994 democratisation, the SANDF has focused on creating a transformed and inclusive military for all South African citizens. Different communication channels were utilised to promote and raise diversity awareness and to address diversity issues (Heinecken, 2020). Educational programmes and seminars were implemented to promote diversity and resemblance aspects as well as to address the past imbalances in the military (Esterhuyse, 2007; Heinecken, 2009; 2020). With the experienced sexual-related issues, the SANDF further employs the Soldier Magazine to educate about sexual harassment and provide recommendations to resolve and report issues related to sexual misconduct (Soldier Magazine, 2023).

Despite these initiatives, research indicates that the SANDF still has issues with diversity management and cross-cultural communication. Heinecken (2020) draws attention to persistent conflicts and challenges in attaining harmonious integration among various racial, cultural and gender groups in the military. The ongoing requirement for awareness campaigns and educational interventions highlights the incomplete resolution of fundamental problems.

Additionally, the SANDF has had to deal with issues pertaining to gender, specifically sexual harassment and misconduct. As a result, the organisation uses internal channels like Soldier Magazine to spread knowledge, offer instructional materials and give advice on how to report and deal with sexual misconduct (Soldier Magazine, 2023). This demonstrates that the SANDF acknowledges persistent social and cultural problems and obstacles to overcome in terms of diversity and cross-cultural communication among its members and uses focused communication techniques to address them.

### **3.8 MODELS OF COMMUNICATION STRATEGY**

The primary aim of this study is to develop a cross-cultural communication strategy for MSDS recruits undertaking BMT in a diverse military context. This section provides a literature review on communication strategies.

#### **3.8.1 Defining the concept strategy**

Strategic communication cannot be separated from the concept of strategy. Nickols (2016) defines strategy as a framework that guides and directs decisions that determine an organisation's nature and success. It is “the determination of basic long-term goals of an enterprise and the adoption of courses of action necessary to carry out those goals (Chandler, 1962 in Nickols, 2016:1). Bryson (2012) and Bryson and George (2020) explain strategy as the pattern of policies, decisions, actions, resource allocations or purposes that defines an organisation and its functions. The concept of strategy is associated with approaches to developing a comprehensive corporate communication strategy (Mintzberg & Waters, 1990). Burger (2016) characterises strategy as a planned process involving tactics to reach the overall objective, necessitates strategy development and implementation and encompasses the organisation's vision, mission and strategic objectives.

#### **3.8.2 Cross-cultural communication strategy in international and local military forces**

Various military departments of international countries implemented and developed diversity communication strategies and inclusion plans. The Australian government developed an inclusion communication diversity strategy in 2014 (Australian DoD, 2014). The strategy aimed to enhance Australian Defence capability through diversity

and inclusive practice. It addresses the past imbalances, recognise people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and respects and raises diversity cognition throughout the military units. The communication strategy further provides a platform for collaboration, social construction, talent and provides leadership opportunities for diverse members of the organisation (Australian DoD, 2014).

The U.S. DoD (2012) developed a diversity and inclusion strategic plan to promote diversity and inclusion in the Federal workforce. The strategic plan focuses on diversity and inclusion as critical components of their military workforce and encourages initiatives incorporating diversity and inclusion in their organisations (U.S. DoD, 2012). South Africa has implemented a National White Paper on Defence (1996) and Defence Review (2015) that addressed some issues of diversity and diversity management within the SANDF. However, cross-cultural communication strategies based on diversity and diversity management issues within the South African Armed Forces (specifically the SAAF Training Unit, Air Force Gymnasium) have not yet been implemented. This remains a gap that the study aims to address.

### 3.8.3 Contextualising communication strategy in military training

Communication is a vital tool used by various contemporary organisations to achieve the intended organisational goals and objectives. As stipulated above, language, culture and communication are integral elements that lead to diversity tensions and require strategic communication elements that can be employed to reduce the identified issues. Goodman (2000) and Argenti, Howell and Beck (2005) agree that the main purpose of strategic communication is to effectively communicate and advocate positive attitudes among specific target groups or stakeholders. The strategic communication process requires organisations to develop communication strategies to determine what the organisation should communicate to achieve the identified organisational goals (Van Riel, 2003; Burger, 2016). Steyn and Puth (2000:52) define communication strategy as:

“A process of identifying the organisation’s key strategic issues, determining their impact on the organisation’s stakeholders and deciding what should be communicated to solve the problem or capitalise on the opportunity”.

To develop a cross-cultural communication strategy for BMT recruits operating in the Air Force Gymnasium, research needs to be conducted to identify the problem, categorise the relevant target audience and develop appropriate measurable aims and objectives. To achieve this, various steps and guidelines utilised to develop a communication strategy need to be followed. Table 3.1 shows various models and phases which are employed by various scholars to develop a comprehensive communication strategy for different organisations, including the military in particular.

Model and steps	Communication Management by objectives (MBO) model (Fourie, 1982)	Cutlip, Center and Broom model (Cutlip, Allen, Center & Broom, 2006)	Public Relations Institute of Southern Africa (PRISA) model (Jefkins, 1982)	Steyn and Puth's communication plan model (Steyn & Puth, 2000)
<p><b>Stage 1</b></p> <p><b>Context</b></p> <p><b>Environmental scanning</b></p>	<p><b>Planning</b></p> <p>The steps included in the planning stage involve 1) identifying the communication needs of both the communicator and stakeholders, 2) formulating the message, 3) formulating the objectives, 4) determining profitability, 5) gathering data, 6) stakeholder analysis, 7) analysis of the communicator, 8) determining the circumstances, 9) timing the communication, 10) determining the approach, 11) choosing the format, 12) determining the tempo, 13) structuring the communication, 14) selecting the codes and 15)</p>	<p><b>Defining the problem</b> Research is conducted to determine the reason for the need for a public relations campaign. A situational analysis, incorporating a SWOT analysis, is also done</p>	<p><b>Situation analysis</b></p> <p>Problem identification by means of a SWOT analysis takes place with the view to understand the organisational climate and how it is perceived by stakeholders</p>	<p><b>Research</b></p> <p>The problem or opportunity is identified and a situation analysis is conducted</p>
	selecting the media			

<p><b>Step 2/Stage 2</b></p> <p><b>Strategy and objectives</b></p>	<p><b>Encoding</b></p> <p>The encoding stage involves steps 16 and 17 of the model: 16) encoding the communication and 17) testing the communication</p>	<p><b>Planning and programming</b></p> <p>A strategy for the campaign is developed along with specific campaign objectives. Role players and their accompanying duties are identified. Key messages that must be communicated by the campaign are formulated to inform or persuade stakeholder groups. Communication or media channels are selected. Specific stakeholder groups are defined and identified in relation to their relevance to the campaign and its objectives. A budget for the campaign is outlined and agreed upon</p>	<p><b>Formulating objectives</b></p> <p>The objectives are aligned with the situational analysis and comply with the SMART principle</p>	<p><b>Planning</b></p> <p>The overarching, long-term communication goals and specific, short-term communication objectives are determined</p>
<p><b>Step 3/Stage 3</b></p> <p><b>Stakeholder Identification</b></p>	<p><b>Delivery</b></p> <p>The delivery stage of the model looks at step 18, whereby the communication is delivered</p>	<p><b>Taking action and communicating</b></p> <p>Key messages are disseminated to the identified stakeholder groups and public relations activities are implemented</p>	<p><b>Stakeholder identification</b></p> <p>Internal and external stakeholders relevant to the campaign are identified</p>	<p><b>Adaptation stage</b></p> <p>Stakeholder identification and constraints identified by the situation analysis and research are Recognised</p>
<p><b>Step 4/Stage 4</b></p> <p><b>Key Message</b></p>	<p><b>Feedback</b></p> <p>The feedback stage of the model</p>	<p><b>Evaluating the campaign</b></p> <p>The campaign is evaluated</p>	<p><b>Message formulation</b></p> <p>The content that must be communicated</p>	<p><b>Theme and messages</b></p> <p>An overall message in the form of a slogan</p>

	incorporates the following steps: 19) arranging for feedback, 20) evaluating effectiveness and 21) stop or repeat	according to the objectives that were determined during step 2	through the campaign is devised and message(s) are formulated for each identified stakeholder group	is devised, and specific messages crafted for each identified stakeholder group
<b>Step 5/Stage 5</b>  <b>Implementation stage</b>			<b>Implementation of actions</b>  Public relations strategies and techniques are employed to communicate messages and messages are aligned with the campaign objectives	<b>Implementation strategy and activities</b>  This step/stage involves the following aspects: implementation strategy, activities, central action and media for each activity
<b>Step 6/Stage 6</b>  <b>Budget</b>			<b>Budget</b> Administrative and campaign budgets are drawn up	<b>Budget</b> The cost of each activity is listed
<b>Step 7/Stage 7</b>  <b>Evaluation</b>			<b>Evaluation</b> Formal and informal research techniques are employed to determine the success of the campaign as it relates to the objectives in step2/stage 2	<b>Evaluation research</b> Consists of formative and summative evaluation research, in-process, internal and external evaluation
<b>Step 8/Stage 8</b>  <b>Measurement</b>				<b>Evaluation research</b> Consists of formative and summative evaluation research, in-process, internal and external evaluation

Table 3.1 Communication strategy development steps (Steyn & Puth, 2000; Cutlip *et al.*, 2006; Jefkins, 1982; Fourie, 1982 in Burger, 2016)

Given the above stages or steps of communication strategy development, Government Communicators' Handbook (2014-2017) indicates that strategising for communication requires guidelines and approaches on communication strategy development. The communication strategy guidelines presented by the Government Communicators' Handbook (2014-2017) stipulate that before developing a communication strategy, research is required to inform the strategy, resolve the identified problem and attain the desired aim and objectives of the communication strategy.

Government Communicators' Handbook (2014-2017) further indicates that an introduction and background that presents the pre-history and the aim of the strategy must be outlined as the initial point of a communication strategy followed by a review of previous communication strategies of a given organisation. When compiling a communication strategy, it is imperative to define and understand the selected environment. This includes understanding and presenting the related mandate, public mood, political issues, media agenda, forces at play, the publics' demography, concerns and attitudes. Moreover, effective communication strategy must define the strategic emphasis, communication objectives, communication channels, messages and themes that integrate with the core message of the government, communication channels used to reach the identified target audience(s), identify stakeholders, presents communication programmes and milestones, develop an action plan and media engagement plan with the detailed plan of press briefings, opinion pieces, interviews and the target media or journalists and identify the structure, channel of command and processes of the organisation. Last, organisations or the compiler of the communication strategy are/is required to conduct a monitoring and evaluation process to gauge the failure or success of a given communication strategy (Government communicators' handbook, 2014-2017).

For this study, different stages and guidelines for communication strategy were used. Selected stages from Steyn and Puth's (2000) communication plan model and communication strategy guidelines from the Government communicators' handbook (2014-2017) were used to develop a cross-cultural communication strategy for MSDS recruits undertaking BMT training in the SAAF Gymnasium. Steyn and Puth's (2000) communication strategy development plan and communication strategy steps outlined

in the Government communicators' handbook (2014-2017) were used as they comprise all the necessary strategic plans or stages required to carry out a corporate communication strategy, from environmental analyses, identifying strategic stakeholders and key objectives, providing key messages, composing a budget plan, implementing the strategy to evaluating and measuring the failure or success of the strategy.

Further reference to the development of the strategy was drawn from Steyn and Puth's (2000) model for communication strategy development as depicted below.

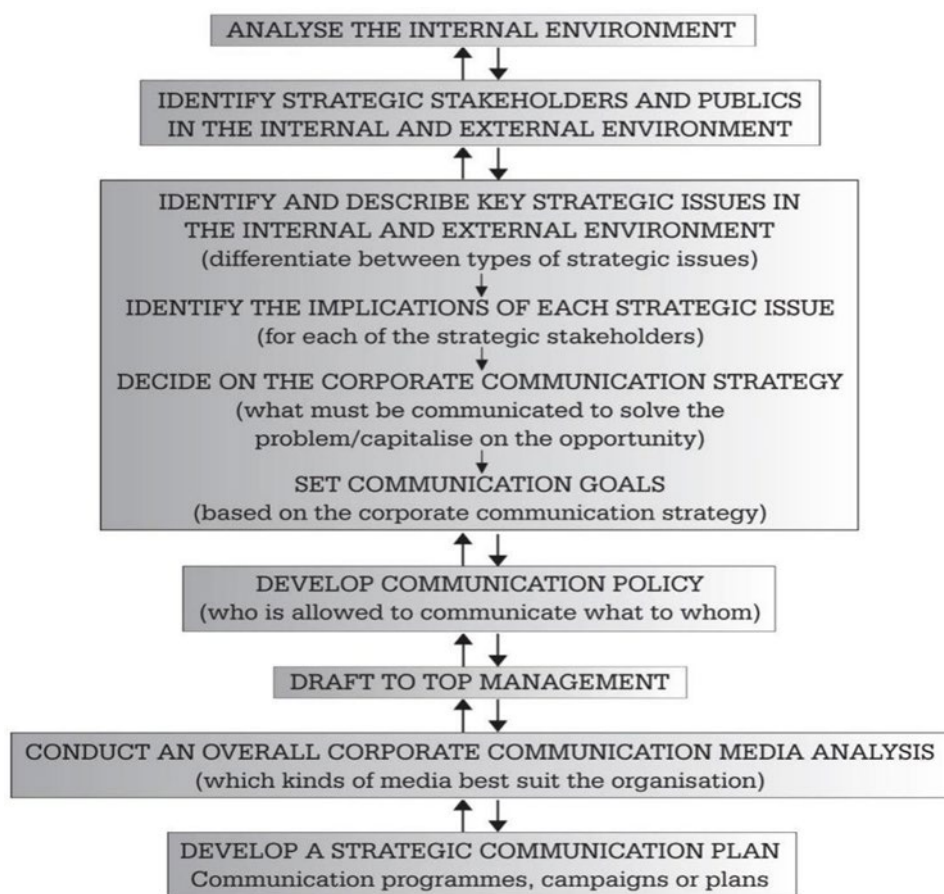


Figure 3.1 Model for communication strategy development (Steyn & Puth, 2000)

### 3.9 ROLE OF THEORY IN THE STUDY

This section discusses theories that are employed to guide the study. The section discusses Cross-cultural adaptation theory, Interaction adaptation and EIWCT.

### 3.9.1 Cross-cultural Adaptation Theory (Kim, 1988)

Cross-cultural adaptation is a complex process that requires individuals to function and operate effectively in cross-cultural situations or contexts (Haslberger, 2005; Lai, Wang & Ou, 2023). It is the “dynamic process by which individuals, upon relocating to new, unfamiliar or changed cultural environments, establish (or re-establish) and maintain relatively stable, reciprocal and functional relationships with those environments” (Kim 2001:31) to achieve and maximise individual’s cross-cultural interactions (Kim & Kim, 2016; Liu, 2017). Their adaptation is not only essential for their effective functioning, but it is also for the smooth effective running of the organisation and its communication flow.

Cross-cultural adaptation theory is based on host cross-cultural communication competence - the cognitive, operational (or behavioural) and affective abilities of an individual to communicate following the communication norms, symbols, practices and meaning systems of the host culture (Kim & Kim, 2016) and host social communication whereby members can participate and engage in interpersonal, social and mass communication or social activities of the host cross-cultural environment and host activities of ethnic social communication which provides members with different sub-cultural experiences with fellow co-ethnics (Kim & Kim, 2016).

The theory further focuses on the individual’s predisposition whereby members are prepared for the new environment, adaptation and ethnic proximity. It predicts and explains various levels of intercultural transformation (Kim & Kim, 2016). The element of cross-cultural adaptation theorises maintains that the greater the ethnic proximity, host cross-cultural communication and interpersonal and mass communication competence, the greater the cross-cultural and intercultural communication and transformation (Kim & Kim, 2016; Wang, 2022).

Individuals’ cultural backgrounds and conditions in the foreign context affect the adaptation process. However, cross-cultural adaptation theory argues that people in cross-cultural environments experience a personal identity transformation and unconscious change that results in intercultural competency (Kim, 2008). They are challenged by differences and are forced to find similarities to move beyond their challenges and find effective solutions to the experienced problems (Kim & Kim, 2016).

Cross-cultural adaptation “incorporates divergent cultural elements that evolve into a greater self-integration that defies the simplistic and conventional categorisations of people” (Kim, 2008: n.p).

The MSDS recruits are not exempted from these experiences, they are exposed to cross-cultural environments for training purposes. Therefore, they experience cross-cultural issues and are required to interact and communicate with other different members. This theory was used to discover common adaptation skills implemented by BMT recruits. It further maximised the researcher’s cognition of cross-cultural adaptation skills and aided in raising knowledge on the insider role played by the researcher which in turn led to the effective attainment of data from all the participants.

### 3.9.2 Interaction Adaptation Theory (Burgoon, Stern & Dillman, 1995)

Interaction adaptation theory aims to explain and predict how individuals interact in different situations. Individuals originate from different social contexts and cultural backgrounds, they have different requirements, expectations and desires (goals, temperament preferences and mood) which affect the way they interact with others (Casey, 2019). Interaction adaptation theory integrates social norms and biological and cognitive or communication approaches to “adaptation patterns in interaction” and predicts the interpersonal communication process (Burgoon, Stern & Dillman, 1995:150).

The interaction adaptation theory provides a comprehensive account of different coexisting adaptation patterns. It incorporates a wide range of adaptation methods (models), functions and communication behaviours. The theory is based on various underlying principles that assume that human beings are social beings, and they are predisposed to adapt to various social contexts and communication patterns of various situations. Regardless of varying cultural backgrounds, people adapt and adjust their behaviours during social interactions (Burgoon & Hubbard, 2004; Burgoon, Dunbar & Giles, 2017; Van de Pol, Van Braak, Pennings, Van Vondel, Steenbeek & Akkerman, 2023).

Consistency in individuals’ behavioural style, cultural differences in communication practices and expectations, physical setting, performance adjustment ability, internal

causes for adjustment and matching elements - proxemics, linguistic, appearance similarities, vocal and chronemics - affect the adaptation process. Interaction adaptation theory recognises that cultures have varying standards of social conduct and ensures that those standards do not undermine other cultures. Social skill is a vital factor that should be considered when examining intercultural interactions. The theory further stipulates that a communicator's skill (intercultural communication competence) is a vital dimension that should be employed to enhance the cross-cultural communication process and the ability to adjust to the behaviour of others (Burgoon & Hubbard, 2004; Gudykunst, 2005). Van De Pol et al. (2023) further note that interaction adaptation ability is a vital tool to effective communication between the communicators.

As BMT comprises diverse people, interaction adaptation theory was utilised to understand intercultural and cross-cultural interactions and raise cognition on the nature of adaptation in communication situations in which the adaptation process occurs. The theory was used to understand how MSDS recruits, instructors and squadron managers adapt in a diverse social context, form diverse relationships and maintain social organisation through interactions.

### 3.9.3 Effective Intercultural Workgroup Communication Theory (Oetzel, 2005)

Individual's cultural values, attitudes and situational features have a direct effect on the process of communication, behaviour and decision-making. This section discusses the EIWCT which explains how culture and cultural diversity affect social (group) interaction (Oetzel, 2017). EIWCT was developed to challenge the traditional method and approaches used to understand the effect of diversity on the process of interaction (Oetzel, McDermott, Torres & Sanchez, 2012).

Traditional approaches to workgroup diversity addressed diverse communication through information or decision-making and social categorisation perspective (Oetzel et al., 2012). The models argued that individuals engage in interaction with people who have a range of diverse experiences, information, backgrounds and similar demographic traits or social categorisation such as race, age, status, gender and so forth. Knouse and Dansby (1999:487) mentioned that the effective diverse interaction process occurs when individuals have "a greater pool of diversity information,

innovative and potential solutions to diverse situations and a greater variety of criteria to evaluate solutions". According to Harrison, Price, Gavin and Florey (2002:1031), traditional approaches focused on "surface level diversity (qualities that are recognisable and used by individuals to assign others to tacit social categories) rather than deep level diversity (intragroup differences such as culture, attitudes, values and personality which affect the diverse communication process)".

The EIWCT therefore explains how deep-level diversity influences workgroup communication and group outcomes. The theory examines the effect of culture and cultural diversity on satisfaction, group interaction climate (communication) and work outcomes (Oetzel, 2005; 2017). It considers the impact of both situational features (such as unequal and equal status, in-group or out-group, cooperative and competitive task and history of unresolved conflict) and deep level diversity on the interaction process of diverse groups. The major premise of the theory is that "cultural aspects, particularly individualistic and collectivistic characteristics of group members manifested by in group or out-group, self-construal and face concerns of group members influence the communication process (interaction climate) with a workgroup" and consequently impact the outcomes of the group (Oetzel et al., 2012; Kolodziej-Smith, 2016:13; Tiatira, Herwandito & Krisnawati, 2024). Moreover, the theory indicates that individuals' cultural characteristics affect the possibilities of effective communication between diverse groups (Oetzel, 2017; Tiatira et al., 2024).

In addition, Oetzel (2017) posits that heterogeneous and homogeneous cultural characteristic affects the quality of a group's performance and the interaction process. With this mentioned, Oetzel (2005), argues that a theory for effective workgroup communication must include relational outcomes (developing positive work relationships and a desire for teamwork) and task outcomes (good decision-making and productivity). Oetzel (2017) further indicates that positive teamwork results in positive communication, positive relational outcomes and positive tasks. To achieve the identified positive results within an organisation, Oetzel, Meares, Myers and Lara (2003) point that members must comprehend the following factors which affect workgroup communication:

- Situational factors - contextual factors that shape a given workgroup interaction. This may include a history of unresolved conflict between diverse parties.
- Individual level factors - individual variances among members of a group, face concerns and self-construal factors
- Group level factors - group diversity which helps to explain variances in group communication behaviours and outcomes.

For this study, EIWCT was utilised to understand the effect of both surface-level and deep-level diversity on the communication and interaction process of MSDS recruits along with their instructors and squadron managers. The theory was used to enhance understanding of how cultural traits shape and affect cohesion, training outcomes and effective interactions between members involved in military training.

### **3.10 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER**

This chapter provided a literature review on diversity and communication. The chapter indicated that a formidable challenge is still encountered by various multicultural forces. Military armed forces lack mutual acceptance of both individual, military and civilian cultures regardless of the presence of legislative frameworks and programmes of diversity management. Armed forces still experience a sense of power and racial discrimination among military members. Moreover, lack of capacity (competency) is perceived as a vital tool that undermines the success of the current diversity management programmes (Heinecken, 2009) within multicultural organisations. Heinecken (2011) indicates that managing diversity in multicultural environments is complex and requires a new paradigm and communication strategies to organisational management. The challenges and implications presented in this chapter indicate that more efforts are required to subdue current tensions that destabilise unity in the military. Communication strategies, cross-cultural competency and linguistic competency are required to understand the communication process of the organisation, address variances, promote relationships, collaboration and organisational achievements (Hussain, 2018). The chapter further discusses the theoretical frameworks - cross-cultural adaptation theory, interaction adaptation and effective intercultural workgroup communication theory- that were used to guide the study. The theories discuss the impact of diversity on the cross-cultural communication

and interaction process of an organisation. It is stipulated that various diversity manifestation issues have an impact on the effective process of organisational communication. Oetzel et al. (2012) argue that predicting individual and group-level diversity influences the communication process, interaction climate and satisfaction in culturally diverse organisations. Therefore, diverse issues should be comprehended, promoted and discussed to build diverse relationships and effective cross-cultural communication.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter discusses the research methodology employed in the study. Research methodology refers to the data collection, data analysis and interpreting procedures followed by the researcher (Nieuwenhuis, 2016). This study aims to compose a cross-cultural communication strategy for BMT recruits operating in a diverse training environment. The chapter provides an overview of the qualitative research method which was used to guide the study and aided in attaining the desired study aim and objectives. In order to compose a cross-cultural communication strategy, the researcher needed to understand individual attitudes, perceptions and challenges emanating from diverse organisations such as the Air Force gymnasium. Therefore, a qualitative research method was utilised to study and understand the lived experiences of BMT recruits, instructors and squadron managers operating within a diverse military training environment, Air Force Gymnasium.

The chapter discusses interpretivism as a qualitative research paradigm used to describe and comprehend participants' views, expressions and experiences towards cross-cultural communication and diversity. Non-probability qualitative sampling and quota sampling methods are discussed as the sampling techniques used to sample the participants in the study.

The focus group method, interview and participant-observation method are presented as the data collection methods employed to achieve the study aim and objectives. Data collection tools which comprised the topic guide, interview guide and observation sheet used in the study are further discussed. Moreover, the ethical considerations in conducting the study and the quality criteria are outlined in the chapter.

#### **4.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM**

This study is situated within the qualitative research method - a research method which is characterised by an interpretative approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Interpretivism focuses on the construction of meaning gained by an individual. The paradigm is "influenced by hermeneutics - the study of meaning and interpretation in historical

texts” and phenomenology (Maree, 2016:60). It creates meaning and understanding to textual data, and verbal and non-verbal forms of communication (Chowdhury, 2014).

Maree (2016) views a research paradigm as a set of assumptions or beliefs about fundamental aspects of reality which give rise to a particular worldview. It serves as the organising principle by which reality is interpreted and depicts a functional and meaningful world. Chowdhury (2014) defines the interpretivism paradigm as a research approach which focuses on the meaningful nature and understanding of people’s participation and character in both cultural and social life contexts. This paradigm emphasises enhancing meaning and understanding behind people’s behaviours (Whitley, 1984 in Chowdhury, 2014).

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) describe interpretivism as a research paradigm which aims to understand the subjective world of human experiences. In this paradigm, the reality of human beings is socially constructed, and people are studied differently from objects. The interpretivism paradigm further focuses on meaning-oriented methodologies (for instance; interview, participant-observation and focus group method) that aim to create a mutual subjective relationship between the researcher and the participants (subjects). It intends to explain the meaning behind a given social action (Kaplan & Maxwell, 1994; Nieuwenhuis, 2016).

Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2014:29) argues “interpretivists believe that reality is a social construction and that it is dependent on the meanings that people ascribe to their own experience and interactions with others”. To promote cross-cultural communication, the study attempted to compose a cross-cultural communication strategy, by focusing on understanding and creating meaning based on the lived diversity experiences of BMT recruits, their instructors and squadron managers. The Interpretivism paradigm was adopted because the researcher intended to gain an in-depth understanding of the participants’ cross-cultural communication challenges experienced during BMT as well as the meaning attached to and relevant to this challenge. Therefore, the interpretivism research paradigm was used to interpret participants’ experiences about diversity and cross-cultural communication challenges experienced in the Air Force Gymnasium. The paradigm assisted the researcher in interpreting and understanding

the interdependent relationship of culture and communication and how they negatively impact the BMT and cross-cultural communication process between the MSDS recruits, instructors and squadron managers.

### **4.3 RESEARCH APPROACH**

This study employed a qualitative research approach, a research method developed in the social sciences whereby researchers can study cultural and social phenomena (Maree, 2016). Qualitative research is “an existing interdisciplinary landscape which comprises diverse perspectives and practices for generating knowledge” (Leavy, 2011 in Nieuwenhuis, 2016:50). It focuses on subjective meaning and relies on words rather than statistical forms and numerical data. Moreover, Busetto, Wick and Gumbinger (2020:1) define qualitative research as the “study of the nature of phenomena, including their quality, different manifestations, the context in which they appear or the perspectives from which they can be perceived, excluding their range, frequency and place in an objectively determined chain of cause and effects”. According to Maree (2016), qualitative research involves an interpretive approach to a phenomenon and attempts to interpret and make sense of the meaning arising from individuals’ behaviours and actions. The research is individual-based, and it seeks to understand how inhabitants make sense of their surroundings through rituals, symbols, social structure and social roles (Maree, 2016). Liamputtong (2020) opines that the qualitative method is implemented to understand human beings and the cultural and social context in which they operate. Within this study, the qualitative method is adopted to highlight the cross-cultural communication challenges experienced in a diverse military setting and draw meaning that expounds participants’ personal experiences, attitudes, cultural symbols and behaviours to achieve the goal of the study.

### **4.4 RESEARCH DESIGN**

A research design is “a plan or strategy that moves from the underlying philosophical assumptions to specifying the selection of participants, the data gathering methods to be used and the data analysis to be done” (Maree, 2016:72). du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout (2014), Wright, O’Brien, Nimmon, Law and Mylopoulos (2016) and Thakur (2021) view the research design as the research strategy used to address or

answer the research questions through the data collection, interpretation and discussions. It is the blueprint that logically outlines the research scope, approach and methods used to guide the study. Creswell (2009: n.p) further refers to a research design as a research plan and procedure that “span decisions from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection and analysis”.

This study employed an exploratory research design to explore, discover and identify diversity-related key variables and issues and to comprehend cross-cultural communication in a diverse military social setting. Exploratory research design is conducted when there is a lack of known elements about a phenomenon (Boru, 2018). This study focuses on cross-cultural communication and diversity issues experienced during BMT and aims to compose a cross-cultural communication strategy for diverse MSDS recruits undertaking BMT at Air Force Gymnasium, Limpopo Province. Military organisations comprise high security measures where most access is permitted only to uniformed and civilian members of the organisation. Therefore, a majority of studies are conducted by members within the organisation, which explains why there is limited literature concerning diversity issues experienced in the military. The researcher employed an exploratory research design to discover information about social reality from BMT recruits, instructors and squadron managers, explore all participants’ lived experiences and answer the presented research questions to achieve the desired aim and objectives of the study.

## **4.5 POPULATION AND SAMPLING PROCEDURES**

### **4.5.1 Population**

Population “refers to the whole group of people or set of items and events the researcher desires to study” (Alpaslan, Van Rensburg, du Plooy, Gelderblom, Van Eeden & Wigston, 2010:150). BMT undertaken in 2022 comprised 270 recruits, ten instructors and two squadron managers. The entire group of people partaking in BMT were regarded as the population of the study. However, qualitative research does not aim to “establish a representative or a random sample drawn from the entire population but to identify a specific group of people or target population who possess characteristics or live in a circumstance relevant to the social phenomenon being studied”. The target population refers to the population from which the researcher identifies and draws information. It is the whole set of cases where the researcher

draws the sample from (Taherdoost, 2016). The target population of this study was divided into three categories which comprise thirty BMT recruits, five instructors and two squadron managers based at the Air Force Gymnasium, Hoedspruit in the Limpopo Province.

#### 4.5.2 Sampling procedures

To answer the research questions of the study, researchers need to select a sample where data will be collected from. Therefore, it is imperative to select the suitable sample for a given study (Taherdoost, 2016). Sampling is defined as the “subset of a population that is considered to be representative of the population” (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014:135). It aims to include certain variants perceived to be relevant for the study (Taherdoost, 2016).

In order to obtain the sample of the study, the following model was used:

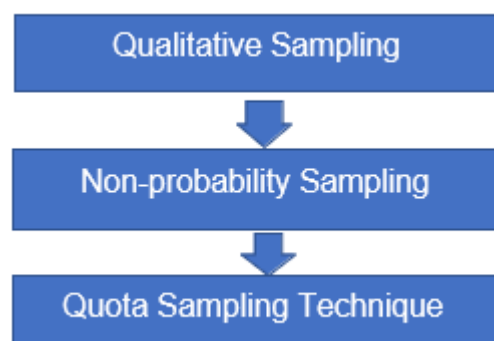


Figure 4.1 The sampling process model for the study (self-designed by Microsoft Word)

As a qualitative study, non-probability sampling technique was used to select the participants of the study. Non-probability sampling is a qualitative sampling technique which focuses on small samples with the aim of examining a real-life phenomenon. It is defined as the “selection of sampling units from a population using non-random procedures such as purposive, convenience, snowball and quota sampling” (Polit, Beck & Hungler, 2001:467).

Taherdoost (2016) views non-probability sampling as a sampling technique that focuses on a clear rationale required for the inclusion of given individuals. This sampling technique allows the researcher to identify a suitable target population to

examine a given topic and those who are perceived as eligible to share their opinions, beliefs, values and experiences about a study topic (Lopez & Whitehead, 2013). For this study, diverse participants partaking in BMT and experiencing daily cross-cultural communication were sampled. Quota sampling was used to sample the relevant participants of the study. According to Taherdoost (2016:22), quota sampling is a non-probability sampling technique whereby “participants are chosen based on pre-determined characteristics”. Quota sampling aided the researcher in ensuring that the population characteristics were represented in the sample. The researcher carefully selected a sample from the population that poses the required characteristics, thus all official language speakers (excluding sign language), races, tribes and cultures were included in the sample.

During the sampling process of the study, the population was divided into different groups. The categorisation of the population was divided according to the position or the post of individuals. Three groups were created and categorised as the BMT recruits’ group, the BMT instructors’ group and the squadron managers’ group. The target population was then selected from the three entire groups.

The research population consisted of SAAF members undergoing and presenting BMT in a single SAAF training unit. The inclusion and exclusion criteria were therefore used to select the target participants and to allow for a wider definition of diversity. These included gender, race, language, religion and culture.

In order to contribute to the research, participants had to have been active SAAF members partaking in BMT and presenting BMT. They must have been representative of diverse racial, gender, language, religious and cultural groups. Additionally, they must have been willing to participate voluntarily, been able to speak English or any African languages and been readily available during data collection. Members who were not partaking in BMT, inactive SAAF members, unavailable members and members not willing to participate in the study were excluded.

Tables 4.1 and 4.2 present the demographic breakdown of participants according to variables such as race, religion, gender and language. These groupings were not arbitrary but were informed by the study’s conceptual framework, which highlights the role of identity markers in shaping cross-cultural communication. For example,

grouping participants by language enabled the study to explore how linguistic diversity affects communication and cohesion during BMT, while gender groups allowed for an examination of gendered relations and experience. This approach not only enhanced the representativeness of the sample but also ensured that the findings would be relevant to the broader discourse on diversity and inclusion within the South African military. This was encouraged by the view that people of different races belong to different languages and cultures and react differently to diverse situations. Diverse participants were selected as the researcher perceived them as people who could cover the general identified population and provide the researcher with diversity and cross-cultural communication constraints experienced within the Air Force Gymnasium.

### ➤ **Sampling**

According to Du Plooy (1997), sampling refers to the rigorous procedures involved when selecting individuals from a large population. As detailed in 4.5.2 above, a sample is a representative cross-section of people drawn from a population so that their responses may be studied. Bless, Higson-Smith and Sithole (2013) stipulate that the qualitative research approach comprises small sample sizes which provide a better understanding of the studied phenomenon. The method stresses that the 'richness' of data is of critical importance than the number of participants (Tuckett, 2004 in Lopez & Whitehead, 2013). Therefore, the researcher is required to select a sample size that is likely to provide rich in-depth data and achieve the primary purpose of the research (Patton, 2014). In this study, a sample size of 37 military personnel was selected to enhance cognition about cross-cultural communication challenges and communication strategies employed by members presenting and undertaking military training. The sample of this study comprised 30 diverse MSDS recruits, five instructors with a minimum of two years of work experience in their current post and two squadron managers with a minimum of two years of work experience in their current post. The sample size of 37 participants was selected because it was impossible to collect data from the entire population. The sample representation of the study is illustrated in Table 4.1 below.

<b>PARTICIPANT</b>	<b>GENDER</b>	<b>AGE</b>	<b>RACE</b>	<b>HOME LANGUAGE</b>	<b>RELIGION</b>
Participant 1	Female	25	Black	Tshivenda	Christianity
Participant 2	Male	20	Coloured	English	Christianity
Participant 3	Female	24	Black	Setswana	Traditional and African spirituality
Participant 4	Male	21	Black	SiSwati	Christianity
Participant 5	Female	20	Black	isiXhosa	Christianity
Participant 6	Female	20	Black	Sepedi	Traditional and African spirituality
Participant 8	Male	24	White	English	Christianity
Participant 7	Female	19	Black	Setswana	Traditional and African spirituality
Participant 9	Male	21	Black	Xitsonga	Traditional and African spirituality
Participant 10	Male	22	Black	Sesotho	Christianity
<b>Total number of BMT recruits in focus group A</b>			<b>10</b>		

Table 4. 1 Demographic representation of sampled BMT recruits for focus group A

<b>PARTICIPANT</b>	<b>GENDER</b>	<b>AGE</b>	<b>RACE</b>	<b>HOME LANGUAGE</b>	<b>RELIGION</b>
Participant 11	Male	22	Black	Sepedi	Christianity
Participant 12	Male	21	Black	isiXhosa	Muslim
Participant 13	Female	20	Coloured	Afrikaans	Christianity
Participant 14	Male	19	Black	Setswana	Christianity
Participant 15	Male	25	Black	Sesotho	Traditional and African spirituality
Participant 16	Male	21	White	Afrikaans	Christianity
Participant 17	Female	19	Black	Setswana	Traditional and African spirituality
Participant 18	Female	21	Black	isiZulu	Christianity
Participant 19	Male	21	Black	Sepedi	Traditional and African spirituality
Participant 20	Male	26	Black	Setswana	Christianity
<b>Total number of BMT recruits in focus group B</b>			<b>10</b>		

Table 4. 2 Demographic representation of sampled BMT recruits for focus group B

<b>PARTICIPANT</b>	<b>GENDER</b>	<b>AGE</b>	<b>RACE</b>	<b>HOME LANGUAGE</b>	<b>RELIGION</b>
Participant 21	Female	21	White	English	Christianity
Participant 22	Male	26	Black	isiZulu	Traditional and African spirituality
Participant 23	Male	23	Black	Tshivenda	Traditional and African spirituality
Participant 24	Female	23	Black	Sepedi	Traditional and African spirituality
Participant 25	Female	20	Black	isiNdebele	Christianity
Participant 26	Male	26	Indian	English	Muslim
Participant 27	Male	20	Coloured	Afrikaans	Christianity
Participant 28	Male	22	Black	isiZulu	Traditional and African spirituality
Participant 29	Female	20	Black	Setswana	Christianity

Participant 30	Male	22	Black	isiXhosa	Traditional and African spirituality
<b>Total number of BMT recruits in focus group C</b>			<b>10</b>		

Table 4. 3 Demographic representation of sampled BMT recruits for focus group C

PARTICIPANT	ROLE	GENDER	AGE	RACE	HOME LANGUAGE	YEARS OF EXPERIENCE	RELIGION
Participant 31	Instructor	Male	35	Black	isiZulu	8 years	Christianity
Participant 32	Instructor	Male	34	Black	Sepedi	14 years	Christianity
Participant 33	Instructor	Male	32	Black	Setswana	6 years	Christianity
Participant 34	Instructor	Male	32	Black	Sepedi	6 years	Christianity
Participant 35	Instructor	Male	25	Black	isiZulu	5 years	Christianity
<b>TOTAL NUMBER OF INSTRUCTORS</b>			<b>5</b>				

Table 4. 4 Demographic representation of sampled BMT instructors

PARTICIPANT	ROLE	GENDER	AGE	RACE	HOME LANGUAGE	YEARS OF EXPERIENCE	RELIGION
Participant 36	Squadron Manager	Male	39	Black	Setswana	19 years	Christianity
Participant 37	Squadron Manager	Male	37	Black	isiXhosa	16 years	Christianity
<b>TOTAL NUMBER OF SQUADRON MANAGER</b>				<b>2</b>			

Table 4. 5 Demographic representation of sampled BMT squadron managers

#### 4.6 STUDY AREA

The study was conducted at the Air Force Gymnasium - a unit of the SAAF. The Gymnasium is located in Limpopo province, near Hoedspruit town. It is located near Mozambique and is on the boarder of the Kruger National Park. The Air Force Gymnasium is a designated training base responsible for various training courses such as BMT, Very Important People (VIP) protection, Non-commissioned officers (NCO), Air Ground Aviation (AGP), Junior Leadership Development programme (JLDP) and Instructor's course.

#### 4.7 INSIDER AND OUTSIDER RESPECTIVES

As qualitative research, this study required the researcher to engage and collaborate with the identified participants of the study in order to discover their lived experiences during BMT. Therefore, the researcher needed to identify the insider and outsider perspectives throughout the process of the study. Naaeke, Kurylo, Grabowski, Linton and Radford (2011) define outsider perspectives as perspectives that derive from the researcher who is considered to be an out-group member of a given community. Insider perspectives are viewed as opposing factors to outsider perspectives, they

refer to perspectives that consider the researcher to be an in-group member of a given community (Saunderson, 2013).

In conducting this study, the researcher occupied a dual role as both the researcher and the researched. As a member of the South African Air Force (SAAF) and a former participant in Basic Military Training (BMT), the researcher's insider status provided unique access to the research setting and participants. During the data collection process, the researcher discovered that the majority of the BMT recruits were aged between 20 and 26 years while a majority of instructors were aged between 30 and 35 years, which made the researcher an outsider in terms of age because she was 27 years old during the time of data collection. Although all the participants originated from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds in South Africa, the researcher shared the same culture and language with Sepedi speaking participants. She was an insider to Sepedi speaking participants and an outsider to other participants who belonged to other cultures and official languages of South Africa.

Academically, the researcher was an outsider to participants, most of whom had a matric certificate and Diploma and an insider to two participants (recruits) who were in a possession of a Master's degree. Like other participants, the researcher was employed within the SAAF, which made her an insider in this study. Dwyer and Buckle (2009:58) posit that;

“The benefits of being a member of the group one is studying is acceptance. One's membership automatically provides a level of trust and openness among the participants. One has a starting point (the commonality) that affords access into groups that might be closed to outsiders. Participants might be more willing to share their experiences because there is an assumption of understanding and an assumption of shared distinctiveness”.

Being a member of the SAAF assisted the researcher in the sense that the participants were able to open up and share their diverse communication experiences and their cultural impact on BMT. Moreover, the majority of participants were open and wished to attain the same qualifications as that of the researcher.

Being an insider in terms of occupation further aided the researcher in accessing military bases and units that are strictly controlled and limited to members of the SANDF. It was thus easier for the researcher to get access and entry to the training

unit, Air Force Gymnasium, Hoedspruit. The researcher had undergone BMT training, however, she ensured that being an in-group member of the target population did not raise bias or influence the data collection and analysis processes. This positionality enabled a deeper understanding of the institutional culture, language and practices, which enriched the data collection process. However, it also necessitated a critical engagement with the potential biases and assumptions that may have shaped the research.

Reflexivity was central to maintaining methodological rigour throughout the study. The researcher engaged in continuous self-reflection to examine how her personal experiences, beliefs and institutional affiliation influenced the research process. This included maintaining a reflective journal to document her thoughts, emotional responses and evolving interpretations during fieldwork and analysis.

The researcher's positionality also encompassed dimensions of identity such as gender, race and rank, which shaped interactions with participants and influenced the dynamics of data collection. As a female researcher in a predominantly male military environment, the researcher was aware of how gendered power relations could affect participant openness and the framing of responses. In some cases, male participants may have moderated their language or behaviour, while female participants may have felt a greater sense of rapport. Similarly, the researcher's racial identity and rank within the SAAF may have influenced how participants perceived her authority, trustworthiness or alignment with institutional values.

Strategies such as triangulating data sources, engaging in peer debriefing and explicitly acknowledging the researcher's positionality in the analysis contributed to the credibility and transparency of the study. Ultimately, the integration of reflexivity and positionality allowed for a more nuanced and ethically grounded exploration of the lived experiences within the SAAF and BMT. It ensured that the research was not only informed by insider knowledge but also critically examined through a lens of methodological self-awareness.

## 4.8 DATA COLLECTION

Data collection is viewed as “the process of gathering and measuring information on variables of interest, in an established systematic fashion that enables one to answer stated research questions, test hypotheses and evaluate outcomes” (Kabir, 2016:202). According to Maree (2016), the enhancement of credibility in qualitative research requires the utilisation of various data collection strategies. Therefore, to increase trustworthiness and to better understand the research topic, this study employed multiple methods (triangulation) of data collection which comprised the interview, focus group and participant observation as deliberated below. Knowledge was socially constructed in an interactive process employing the identified data collection methods.

### 4.8.1 Data collection methods

For the purpose of this study, semi-structured interview, focus group and participant observation were used as data collection methods to explore, understand and interpret participants’ experiences regarding cross-cultural communication experienced in a diverse military setting. The identified data collection methods were used to answer the research questions and attain the study aim and objectives.

#### ➤ **Semi-structured interview**

An interview is a qualitative data collection method which aims to obtain descriptive data through a two-way conversation or interactive process between the researcher and the participants. It is a process whereby the researcher asks the respondents (participants) questions to discover their beliefs, ideas, behaviours, views and opinions about a given phenomenon.

An interview helps the researcher to comprehend and raise cognition about the participant’s construction of social reality and knowledge (Adhab & Anozzi, 2017; Maree, 2016). Sewell (2008) defines a qualitative interview as the “attempt to understand the world from the subject’s point of view, to unfold the meaning of peoples’ experiences and to uncover their lived world before scientific explanations”. It is used to gain cognition about people’s opinions, motivations and subjective experiences (Busetto et al., 2020).

Turner III and Hagstrom-Schmidt (2022) postulate that an interview is a qualitative data collection method that assists the researcher in obtaining in-depth detailed information and leads to constructive suggestions and recommendations. To gain in-depth insight about cross-cultural communication and diversity challenges experienced by instructors and squadron managers, semi-structured interview was used. Semi-structured interview is a data collection tool that employs an interview guide, which outlines the broad topic of interest or questions to achieve the aim of the research project (Busetto et al., 2020). They comprise both open and closed (for instance participant's demographic information) ended questions.

During the data collection process, the researcher conducted semi-structured interview with BMT instructors and squadron managers. Semi-structured interview was conducted with BMT instructors and squadron managers because they were perceived as members who have presented various BMT courses and have better understanding and experience regarding diversity, cross-cultural interaction challenges and benefits, approaches, as well as strategies employed during BMT.

Instructors and squadron managers were requested to gather at the Air Force Gymnasium boardroom where one on one or individual interview between the researcher and the participant were conducted for an average time of 15 to 25 minutes per session. Interview sessions were conducted within 3 working days with 5 instructors and 2 squadron managers.

Semi-structured interviews were used to gather information from BMT instructors and squadron managers through an interview guide, which entails an outlined set of questions set by the researcher (Stuckey, 2013). An interview guide was used to direct relevant questions related to the identified study topic. The guide outlined diversity and cross-cultural communication questions which were used to direct the interview sessions in relation to the set objectives of the study (see Appendix 3). To ensure that adequate and clear information was gathered from the participants, clarification probes were administered where the researcher paraphrased some of the questions to help interviewees understand the interaction and provide in-depth information.

### ➤ **Focus group method**

A focus group is an informal discussion between selected members of a group and a moderator (researcher) to provide insight about a specific topic. It is a planned group interview or discussion where “a small group of individuals are gathered together to discuss a given topic” and obtain various views and opinions on a defined topic of interest (Tritter & Landstad, 2020; Barrows, 2000 in Gundumogula, 2020:299). A focus group is a type of group discussion that comprises eight to twelve people and provides in-depth information about the studied phenomenon (Maree, 2016). Busetto et al. (2020) further defines a focus group discussion (interview) as a qualitative research method that explores participants’ experiences, knowledge and how they react to a given phenomenon.

This study used focus group methods to obtain information on diversity and cross-cultural communication from BMT recruits. During this phase, the researcher interacted with the BMT recruits where discussions and follow-up questions ensued. To provoke participation, reduce anxiety and enhance understanding amongst participants, 3 focus group discussions were conducted with 30 BMT recruits. Each group comprised ten recruits. The group discussions were conducted for approximately 30 to 40 minutes.

To gain in-depth group views and experiences about diversity and cross-cultural communication, recruits were gathered in a single lecture room where questions and discussions about the defined topic were made. Participants were given a platform and assurance to participate without fear. The study utilised the focus group method to further build more comments and ideas which are difficult to attain from individual interviews. Maree (2016:95) posits that the focus group method is productive in enhancing various responses, “activating forgotten details of experience and releasing inhabitations that may otherwise discourage participants from disclosing information”.

Busetto et al. (2020) argue that focus groups are guided by a topic guide. Therefore, this study utilised a topic guide to guide the focus group discussions and questions at hand. It comprises the pre-defined topics which were used to guide the focus group discussions. The topic guide aided the researcher in comprehensively covering the necessary topics which include amongst others the challenges presented by diversity

manifestation elements, the impact of culture on cross-cultural communication, suitable communication mediums perceived to effectively promote cross-cultural communication during military training and communication strategies and approaches used to manage and enhance cross-cultural communication (see Appendix 4), and to allow for the broad discussion regarding diversity and cross-cultural communication within the Air Force Gymnasium during BMT.

### ➤ **Participant observation method**

Observation is a data collection method whereby the researcher uses his or her intuition and senses to gather data about the observed phenomenon. It is the “systematic process of recording the behavioural patterns of participants, objects and occurrences without questioning or communicating with them” (Maree, 2016:90).

For this study, the participant observation method was used to observe participants’ behaviours towards diversity and cross-cultural communication variables and gather an in-depth understanding of the observed phenomenon throughout both interviews and focus groups. Participants were observed for approximately 30 to 40 minutes for focus groups discussions and 15 to 25 minutes for interview sessions. The study utilised an observation sheet (refer to Appendix 5) to describe the participants’ observed behaviours. Anecdotal observation records and transcripts whereby short descriptions that capture keywords and phrases were noted during the observation process (Maree, 2016).

Participant observation provided rich, in-depth insights into social dynamics and behaviours. However, it emerged with several notable drawbacks that must be carefully managed to ensure the integrity of the research. The researcher noticed that in some cases, observation requires video equipment or multiple observers which can increase the cost of data collection. Regardless of the drawback, an audio recorder was used to relieve the researcher from the need to take extensive notes, thereby allowing greater focus on observing the participants’ non-verbal cues and eliminating drawbacks.

The most significant non-verbal communication observed was facial expressions. For instance, simply by raising one’s eyebrows or changing the curve of one’s mouth, one

could convey emotions such as surprise, anger, fear, disappointment or sadness. Non-verbal cues such as body language and nodding of the head were regularly used as sign of agreement or disagreement whereas the raising of a hand was used as a request to speak (refer to Chapter 5 for more details).

#### 4.8.2 Pilot testing

Piloting of data collection tools is imperative before the implementation of data collection. Pilot testing assists in preparing the interview and topic guide of the study and aids the researcher in discovering the weaknesses or limitations of the guides, to implement relevant improvements (Turner & Hagstrom-Schmidt, 2022). Moreover, Turner and Hagstrom-Schmidt (2022) indicate that pilot testing should be conducted with participants who have similar interests to the identified target population of the study. For this study, pilot testing of the interview and topic guide was conducted with 10 BMT recruits trained in 2020, five instructors who previously provided BMT training to MSDS recruits and three Regimental Sergeant Major (RSM) operating at regimental offices of the SAAF Bases and Units around Pretoria (AFB Swartkop, AFB Waterkloof and SAAF Headquarters). Two out of three RSM's previously served as squadron instructors. Additionally, the pilot testing process assisted the researcher in finding loopholes in the initial interview and topic guides, which led to some questions being refined and more questions added to the guides.

### 4.9 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis focuses on “reducing the capacity of raw data, sifting significance from trivia, identifying key patterns and constructing a framework for communicating the essence of what data reveal” (De Vos, Delport, Fouché & Strydom, 2011:397). It is the process of bringing meaning and understanding to raw data (De Vos et al., 2011).

In this study, reflexive thematic analysis was used to analyse the data collected from the BMT recruits, instructors and squadron managers. Reflexive thematic analysis is a qualitative data analysis method that “entails the identification, analysis and interpretation of recurring patterns within a data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006 in Kiger & Varpio, 2020:2). It involves the process of data interpretation and description through coding and constructing of themes.

Braun and Clarke (2012) contend that reflexive thematic analysis is an appropriate data analysis method used when the researcher aims to understand various individual thoughts, experiences or behaviours towards a phenomenon. This method uses an iterative and interpretive process of coding and theme development. As a result, it is ideally suited for studies that aim to investigate participants' lived experiences as well as the external social realities surrounding diversity and communication (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Joffe, 2011). According to Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2012) conceptualisation, reflexive thematic analysis is especially suitable for research that aims to thoroughly examine and analyse individual viewpoints, behaviours and experiences. Reflexive thematic analysis, in contrast to more rigid or reliability-focused methods, acknowledges the researcher's active participation in creating meaning and permits theme development to be flexible as knowledge of the data grows. For this study, a reflexive thematic data analysis method was used to systematically search for themes and analyse participants' lived experiences and the external reality of communication and diversity aspects (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Joffe, 2011). To effectively generate themes and complete the interpretation and analysis of the data, this study followed a six-step reflexive thematic data analysis framework implemented by Braun and Clarke (2006). The steps are discussed below.

#### 4.9.1 Step 1: Data familiarisation

This is the first step of thematic data analysis method. It requires the researcher to familiarise him or herself with the presented data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006 in Kiger & Varpio, 2020). To better understand and gain cognition about the responses regarding diversity and cross-cultural communication in the BMT, the researcher familiarised with the collected data from the research participants. The researcher immersed herself in the data where recorded content was repeatedly played and listened to clearly comprehend and transcribe the responses accurately.

#### 4.9.2 Step 2: Transcription of data

An audio recorder was utilised as a data collection tool to ensure that the study findings were based on accurate data sets. During this stage, the recorded data from focus group discussions and interviews were transcribed, played and re-played to gain a deeper understanding of diversity and cross-cultural communication challenges

experienced by BMT recruits along with their instructors and squadron managers and strategies adopted by the organisation to overcome them.

### Step 3: Generating initial code

A code is defined as “the most basic segment or element of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon” under study (Boyatzis, 1998:63). It is part of the process of organising and labelling of data by making connections between items that might result into subsequent themes (Nengovhela, 2017). Jansen (2007) in Busetto et al. (2020:4) describes coding as a process of “connecting the raw data with theoretical terms”. It is a process of sorting out raw data and making sense of each aspect. Through coding, the researcher was able to label and categorise data into meaningful units of analysis. Coding assisted in organising the data and determining themes, sub-themes and emerging themes.

#### 4.9.3 Stage 4: Searching for themes (construction of themes)

This step involves the process of examining codes which may form potential themes of the study (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). The themes of the study were pre-defined and originated from the presented research objectives of the study while some emerged during the data collection and code generation. Selected codes were cross-examined to form various themes presented in the study. Main themes and sub-themes were then constructed through the combination and comparison of various selected codes.

#### 4.9.4 Stage 5: Data interpretation and reviewing of themes

This is a two-level analysis process where the researcher reviews the identified themes and sub-themes (Kiger & Varpio, 2020; Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher re-reviews the themes and ensures that various codes are under the relevant themes or subthemes. During this phase, the researcher re-viewed the identified themes and codes to ensure adequate coherence and commonality. The entire data set was read and re-read to re-examine and modify themes and sub-themes. Furthermore, the researcher ensured that data were interpreted adequately, and all objectives of the study were reflected through the developed themes and sub-themes.

#### 4.9.5 Stage 6: Writing the report or manuscript

This is a phase where the researcher writes up the final description, interpretation and analysis of the findings (Kiger & Varpio, 2020; Braun & Clarke, 2006). At this stage, various themes were presented and interpreted meanwhile the researcher gained cognition on the presented findings and analysis from the participants' extracts from the data. The analysis was supported by the related literature which authenticated the new knowledge derived from the data to achieve the identified research problem as stated in the introduction of the study.

Additionally, Microsoft Excel was used to capture and manage numerical data (participants' demographic information) in this qualitative study. Charts representing the participants' numerical demographic data, including gender, age, race, home language, years of service, religion and rank insignia were created using Microsoft Excel.

### **4.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Research ethics emphasise the “humane and sensitive treatment of research participants” who may be affected by the research procedure (Bless et al., 2013:28). This study was ethically conducted through the following principles of research ethics:

#### 4.10.1 Respect of participants' right and dignity

All participants in the study were treated with utmost respect. Participants were treated with respect regardless of gender, age, ethnicity and language. They were treated equally and were not discriminated against based on cultural differences or any other characteristics. The researcher ensured that participants were not harmed by any research question presented by in study.

#### 4.10.2 Voluntary participation, informed consent and discontinuance

The researcher ensured that no participant was forced to partake in the study projects. The nature of the study was clearly explained before the researcher requested the participants to partake in the study. Participants were also provided with a consent form which states that they are allowed to participate voluntarily and to discontinue

participation at any time (Appendix 4). Participants who voluntarily partook in the study signed the provided consent forms.

#### 4.10.3 Confidentiality and anonymity

Participants partaking in this study remained anonymous. The researcher ensured that the collected data were not associated with the participant's name or identity. Data were kept confidential and participants were informed that study materials would be used for academic purposes only. The collected data were seen by the supervisor and the co-supervisor of the researcher. The researcher further ensured that the study adhered to the Disclosure of Defence Information (DODI 2/99) and Defence Act (section 104 Act 42 of 2000) which pertain to the protection of DoD Classified Information.

#### 4.10.4 Obtaining permission and access to the study area

This study was conducted to develop a cross-cultural communication strategy for diverse members undergoing BMT in the Air Force Gymnasium. Data were conducted in a military base where basic training takes place (Air Force Gymnasium). Military training units are not accessible, therefore, the researcher requested permission to conduct this study from the SAAF and a letter was granted from the Department of Defence, Chief of Defence Intelligence – reference number DI/DDS/R/202/3/7. An ethical clearance certificate that permitted the researcher to proceed with the study was also granted from the Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC) of the University of Limpopo – project number TREC/318/2021:PG - Amended.

#### 4.10.5 Bias

Regardless of the researcher being a member of the SAAF and sharing the similar language and cultural traits with some Sepedi speaking participants (insider), during data collection and data analysis phase, the researcher ensured and maintained neutrality and further avoided personal sentiments (bias) that might have affected the credibility of the study.

#### 4.10.6 Plagiarism

To avoid plagiarism, this research was conducted with proper acknowledgement and credit by means of citations and references. All information is appropriately referenced and cited according to the author(s).

### **4.11 QUALITY CRITERIA**

Quality criteria measure the trustworthiness and authenticity of the research findings. It tests the quality and accuracy of research findings, summary and conclusions of the study (Maree, 2016). This study measures its trustworthiness through the four criteria used to evaluate the trustworthiness of qualitative research known as credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability (Maree, 2016).

#### 4.11.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to the accuracy of the study findings and interpretations (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). This study relied on the participants' responses which were analysed and interpreted through reflexive thematic analysis. To ensure credibility and add value to the collected data, an audio recorder was used to capture responses from both the interview sessions and the focus group discussions. The recorded information was listened to and transcribed into English language to ensure the authenticity of the study findings. Clarification probing was also used to gain clarity about each participant's response. Additionally, pilot testing was used to generate factual and accurate data for the study.

#### 4.11.2 Transferability

Transferability refers to the "ability of the findings to be applied to a similar situation and delivering similar results" (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014:258). The target population, study area and the findings of the study are clearly presented and supported by the literature review, this assists in the transferability process of the study. The researcher further provided a thick description and interpretations of data which may aid other scholars to determine the significance of the meanings attached to the findings of diversity and cross-cultural communication issues and management strategies in this study.

#### 4.11.3 Dependability

Dependability emphasises the trustworthiness and consistent accountability of the study findings (Bless et al., 2013). For this study, a clear audit trail was made where acknowledged research documents and research notes were archived. An audio recorder with all the recorded data was used to achieve the dependability of the study. Furthermore, a clear research methodology procedure on how data was collected, analysed and interpreted into the study findings was clearly discussed.

#### 4.11.4 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the true depiction of the study interpretations and analysis. It refers to how well the collected data support the findings of the study (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). This study achieved confirmability by quoting participants verbatim and ensured that no personal opinions and bias were included in the study. The research procedure and interpretations were objective and all research documents which concur with the findings of the study were clearly acknowledged. EIWCT, cross-cultural adaptation and interaction adaptation theory were discussed and used to confirm the problems and strategies revealed in the findings of the study. A clear research methodology procedure followed to generate in-depth information and understanding regarding diversity and cross-cultural communication experienced within the Air Force Gymnasium was presented.

### **4.12 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER**

This chapter provided insights into the research methodology of the study. The chapter presented the qualitative research approach used to collect, present, interpret and analyse data to provide answers to the research questions of the study. It outlined what qualitative research entails and how and why the approach was adopted. It focused on the research design and paradigm, the sampling procedure, data collection and data analysis methods used for the study. Lastly, ethical considerations and quality criteria elements are further outlined. The next chapter addresses the presentation and interpretation of data.

## CHAPTER 5

### PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents and interprets the data for this study. The chapter is divided into two sections where the first section presents the demographic information of the participants, and the second section discusses the findings of the study. This section provides the presentation and interpretation of data as per the participants' experiences concerning diversity and cross-cultural communication during BMT. Firstly, it deliberates findings on the fundamentals of diversity manifestation during BMT, secondly, it presents challenges and the impact of culture on cross-cultural communication and lastly, the section provides cross-cultural communication strategies employed by recruits and instructors within the SA Air Force Gymnasium.

#### 5.2 DISTRIBUTION OF PARTICIPANT'S DEMOGRAPHIC

This section presents the participants' demographic information (BMT recruits, instructors and squadron managers) through pie charts created by Microsoft Excel. The section is divided into two sub-sections. The first sub-section presents the demographic information of BMT recruits and the second sub-section outlines the demographic information of BMT instructors and squadron managers.

##### 5.2.1 Demographic distribution of BMT recruits

This section presents demographic information about MSDS recruits undergoing training at the Air Force (SAAF) Gymnasium. The section illustrates the age, gender, race, home language, religion and educational level of the recruits as critical aspects that could influence cross-cultural communication in a diverse environment.

##### ➤ **BMT recruits by age in years**

Figure 5.1 illustrates the age of the MSDS recruits who participated in the study.

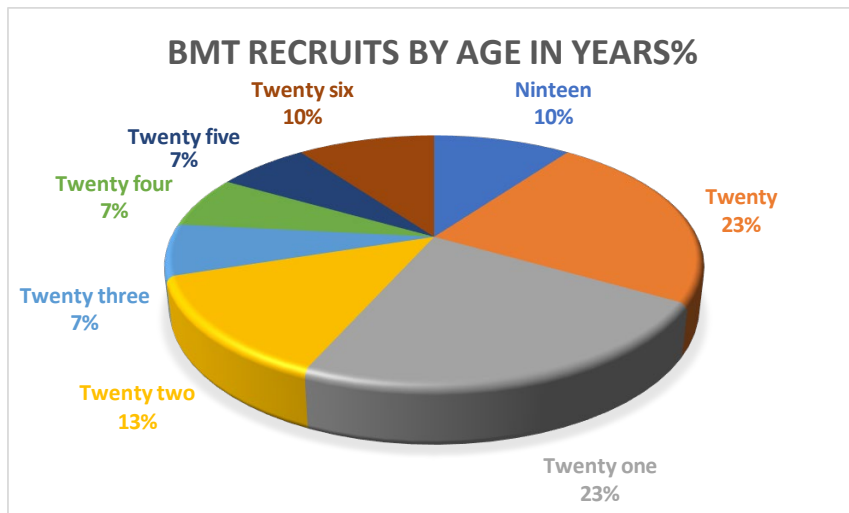


Figure 5. 1 BMT recruits by age in years

During the data collection phase, recruits filled their age in section A of the topic guide (refer to Appendix 6). Data indicated that the majority of recruits undertaking BMT were 20 and 21 years of age with an average age composition of 23% each. This was followed by recruits who are 22 years of age, amounting to 13%. Moreover, recruits aged 19 and 26 years constituted 10% each and those aged 23, 24 and 25 years constituted a total percentage of 7% each of the total sample of BMT recruits.

The data indicates that despite the presented age variance, BMT recruits are not extensively diverse in terms of age. The average recruit is relatively young, with the majority aged between the ages of 20 and 22. This indicates that BMT target or recruit individuals in their early adulthood.

#### ➤ **Recruits by gender**

This subsection determines the gender composition of the SAAF MSDS recruits who contributed to the study. The section is presented to comprehend different cross-cultural communication and diverse views from recruits of different genders.

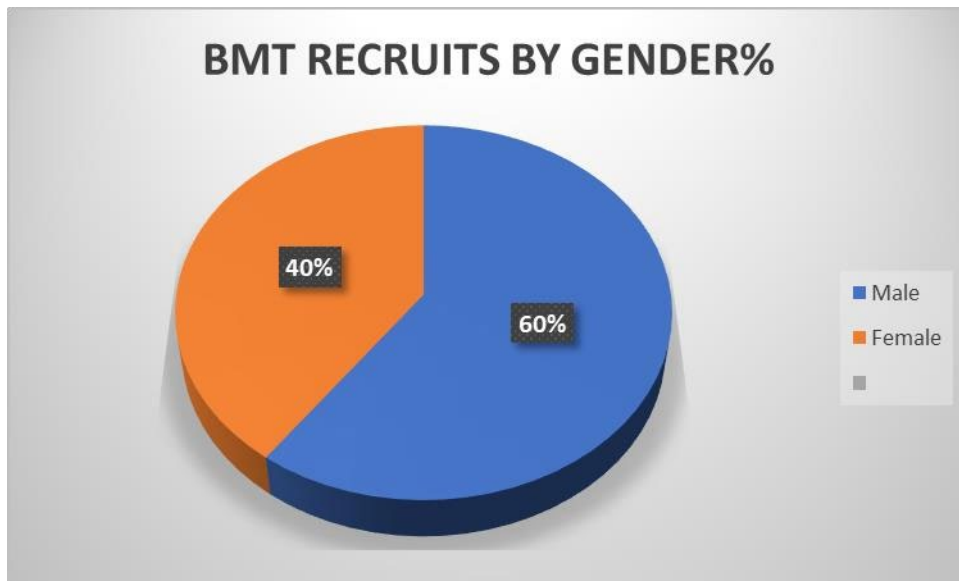


Figure 5. 2 Recruits by gender

Given the total number of 30 MSDS recruits who partook in the study, the above figure indicates that most of the recruits were male participants amounting to 60% whereas females contributed to 40%. This indicates that in 2022, there was a majority of males who undertook BMT compared to females. The figure indicates that the military context remains male dominated. However, the 40% female representation indicate the military progress towards gender transformation and inclusion.

➤ **Recruits by race**

This subsection presents the race of the sampled BMT recruits.

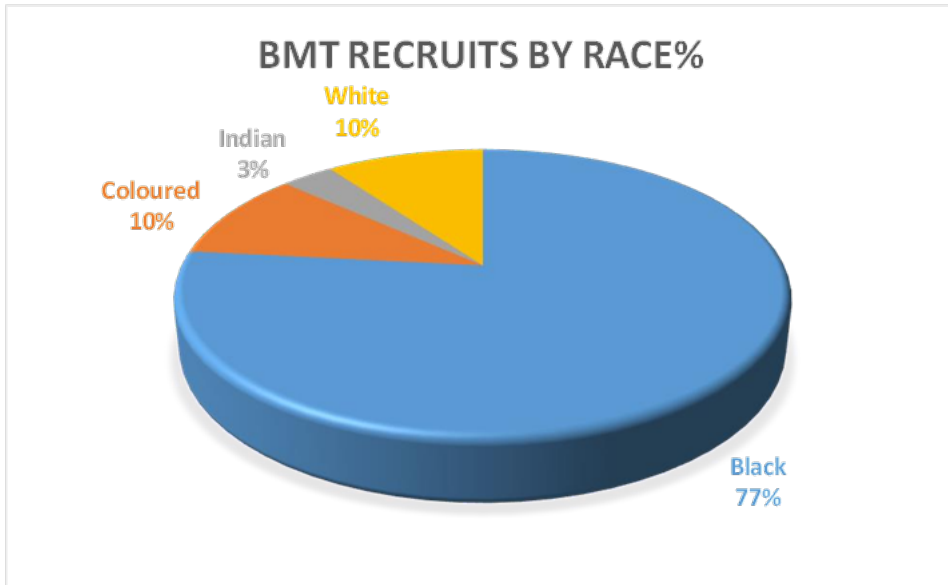


Figure 5. 3 Recruits by race

Figure 5.3 indicates that this study consisted of a majority of Black African MSDS recruits who constituted 77% of the BMT recruits' sample. It further comprised an equal number (10%) of White and Coloured recruits who were followed by (3%) of Indian participants. The presented figure shows that the study comprised recruits from diverse racial groups, however, Black Africans dominated the group. The racial distribution was uneven and therefore requires strengthened and balanced inclusion that will foster equal participation of different racial groups.

➤ **Recruits by home language**

The nature of diversity and cross-cultural communication is characterised by individuals who originate from various linguistic backgrounds. The 2022 BMT was diverse, and it comprised members (recruits) of various language groups. Figure 5.4 illustrates the different home languages of the selected MSDS recruits.

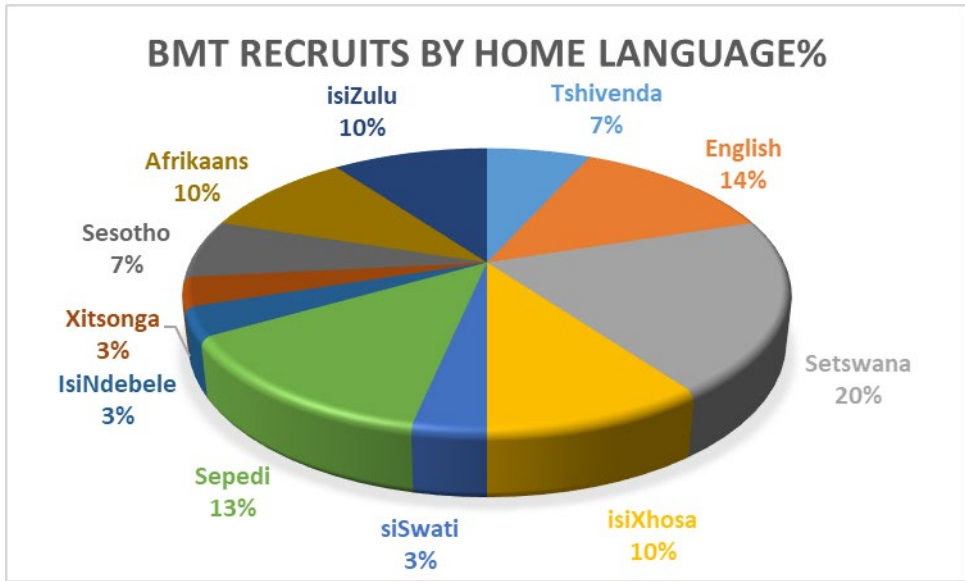


Figure 5. 4 Recruits by home language

MSDS recruits who partook in the study represented all eleven official languages of South Africa excluding South African Sign language. Figure 5.4 demonstrates that 20% of the sampled recruits spoke Setswana, 14% spoke English and 13% spoke Sepedi as their native language. Afrikaans, isiXhosa and isiZulu native speakers constituted 10% each. Moreover, Sesotho and Tshivenda-speaking recruits constituted 7% each, while Xitsonga, siSwati and IsiNdebele native speakers had an equal percentage of 3%.

The existence of all eleven official languages (with the exception of South African Sign Language) suggests that the MSDS programme draws participants from a diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Despite Setswana speakers being the most represented, BMT brought together recruits from diverse languages and communication styles that can enhance or hinder cross-cultural communication.

➤ **Recruits by religion**

BMT is composed of different trainees who have different religious and spiritual beliefs. Figure 5.5 demonstrates the religious diversity of BMT recruits.



Figure 5. 5 Recruits by religion

Figure 5.5 indicates that recruits who partook in BMT training during 2022 belonged to three religious affiliations or beliefs namely Christianity, Muslim and traditional or African spirituality (Native African religions) centered on belief in the spiritual realm, ancestors and free will. Christians constituted 53% of the selected recruits, 40% believed in traditional and African spirituality while the minority (7%) associated with the Muslim religion.

Despite Christianity being the most common religion among the recruits, figure 5.5 indicates that there is some degree of religious diversity. BMT recruit individuals from multiple spiritual beliefs that need different inclusion practices such as respecting different prayer time, rituals and dietary requirement, for instance, halal food for Muslims.

### 5.2.2 BMT instructors and squadron managers

#### ➤ **BMT instructors and squadron managers by age**

The subsection presents demographic information about BMT instructors and squadron managers presenting training in the Air Force (SAAF) Gymnasium. The section illustrates the age, gender, race, home language, religion, rank insignia and years of service of the instructors and squadron managers that could influence cross-cultural communication in a diverse environment.

This subsection illustrates the age categories of BMT instructors and squadron managers.

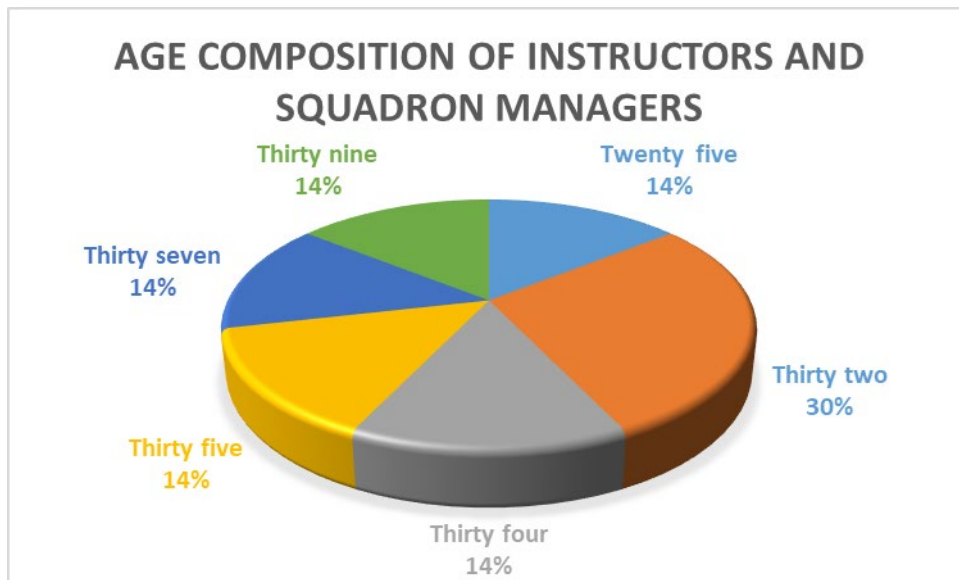


Figure 5. 6 Age composition of instructors and squadrons managers

Figure 5.6 illustrates that BMT instructors and squadron managers were aged between 25 and 39 years. The majority (30%) of the participants were 32 years of age and the remaining participants were 25, 34, 35, 37 and 39 years of age with a percentage of 14% each.

➤ **BMT instructors and squadron managers by gender**

Understanding the military gender inclusion and different views and attitudes between males and females depends on gender. This section presents the gender of the instructors and squadron managers of the study.

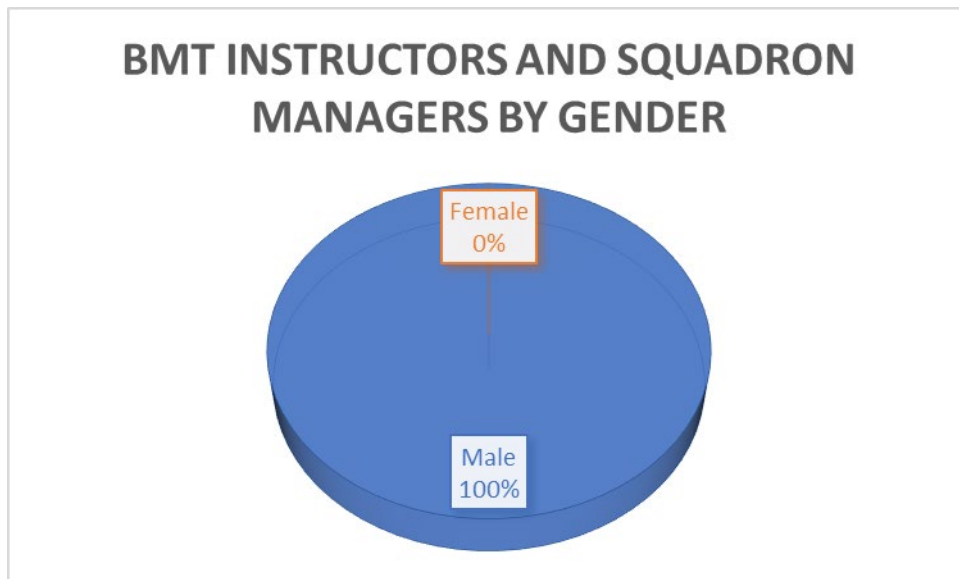


Figure 5. 7 BMT instructors and squadron managers by gender

Figure 5.7 indicates that both BMT instructors and squadron managers were all males. This situation that falls short of gender equity compliance with respect to the adopted South African military AA and EEO aimed to ensure women representation across all ranks and mustering. The absence of female instructors and squadron managers in BMT highlights a lack of gender inclusion and gender imbalance within key training roles.

➤ **BMT instructors and Squadron managers by race**

Suyemoto, Curley and MUKkamala (2020:7) define race as an “aspect attributed to physical appearance and characteristics of individuals such as skin colour, hair” and so forth. This subsection presents the race composition of instructors and squadron managers.

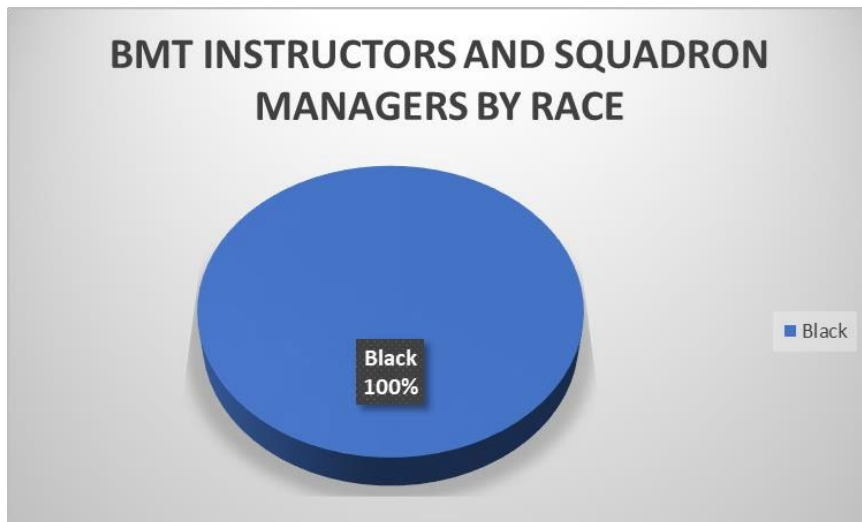


Figure 5. 8 BMT instructors and Squadron managers by race

Although the SAAF comprises all races and ethnic groups, Figure 5.8 indicates that this study composed of all (100%) Black African instructors and squadron managers who presented BMT during 2022. This shows a clear representation of the Black African groups and consequently underrepresentation or lack of diverse racial groups such as Indians, Whites and Coloured. It further shows the current transformation and inclusion of Black Africans in the SAAF, however an equal representation is required to indicate that the SAAF embodies diversity principles at all levels.

➤ **BMT instructors and Squadron managers by home language**

Language refers to the “expression of ideas through speech-sound combined into words” (Crystal & Robins, 2018: n.p), to create meaning for communication purposes (Del Castillo, 2015). Given that language plays a critical role in cross-cultural communication, this section presents the home language of instructors and squadron managers to understand its impact on the failure or effective flow of cross-cultural communication in a diverse military training organisation, Air Force Gymnasium.

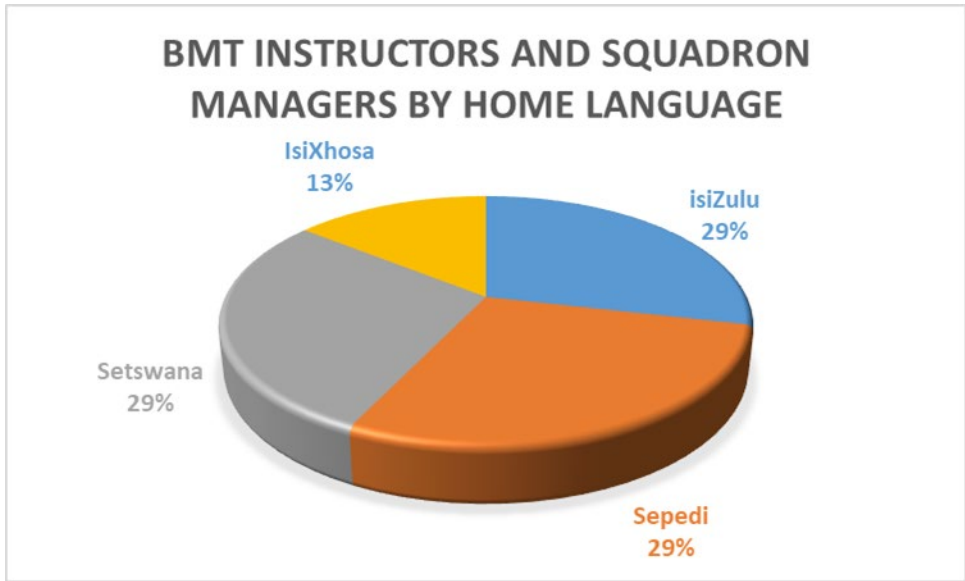


Figure 5. 9 BMT instructors and Squadron managers by home language

Figure 5.9 illustrates that the selected participants consisted of instructors and squadron managers who spoke the following African native languages: isiXhosa, isiZulu, Sepedi and Setswana. One squadron manager spoke isiXhosa as a native language and the other one spoke Setswana as native language. Two instructors spoke Sepedi as their native language, two spoke isiZulu as their native language and one spoke Setswana as a native language.

➤ **BMT instructors and Squadron managers by religion**

This subsection illustrates the religious affiliation of instructors and squadron managers during the 2022 BMT.



Figure 5.10 Instructors and Squadron managers by religion

Although recruits in BMT have a wide range of religious affiliations, all instructors and squadron managers who took part in the study identified as Christian (Figure 5.10). This result shows that there is no religious diversity amongst instructors and squadron managers. The increasingly diversified BMT recruit population contrasts with the instructors and squadron managers homogeneous religious allegiance. Therefore, the training environment's inclusion and cultural competency may be impacted by such leadership uniformity. It specifically calls into question whether non-Christian trainees' religious needs and viewpoints are sufficiently recognised, reflected or accommodated. Consequently, BMT may want to provide a welcoming atmosphere, and the lack of religious diversity among important staff members draws attention to possible representational gaps that might have an impact on the training process as a whole.

➤ **BMT instructors and Squadron managers by rank insignia**

Amongst others, the armed forces are characterised by the culture of hierarchical ranks which define the responsibility and authority of the military personnel. Figure 5.11 illustrates the ranks of instructors and squadron managers who provided training in the SAAF Gymnasium in 2022.

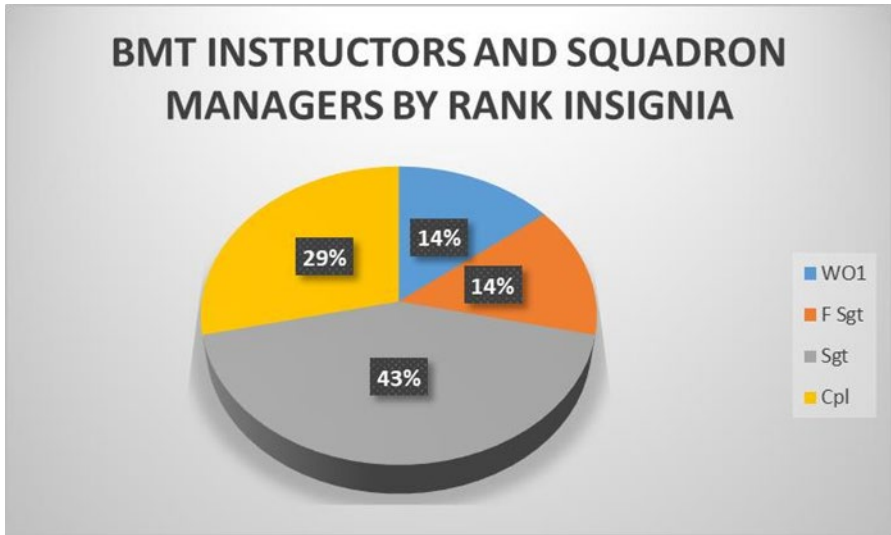


Figure 5. 11 BMT instructors and Squadron managers by rank insignia

Figure 5.11 above indicates that the 2022 BMT instructors and squadron managers held the ranks of Warrant Officer Class 1 (WO1) to Corporal (Cpl). One squadron manager was a WO1, and the second one was a Flight Sergeant (F Sgt). Three instructors were Sergeants (Sgt) and two were Cpl(s).

➤ **BMT instructors and Squadron managers’ years of service**

This subsection presents instructors’ and squadron managers’ years of experience or service in providing military training within the SAAF.

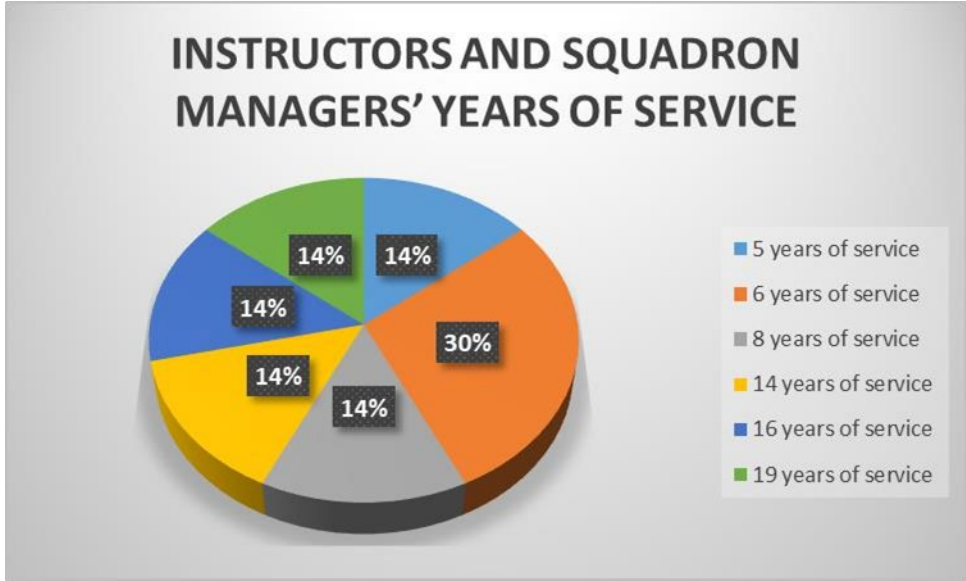


Figure 5. 12 Instructors and squadron managers’ years of service

The above figure indicates that two (30%) of the selected instructors had 6 years of work experience or service in facilitating and providing training to BMT recruits. Moreover, the remaining instructors and squadron managers operated with different years of experience including 5 (14%), 8 (14%), 14 (14%), 16 (14%) and 19 (14%) years. The variation in years of working experience indicates a degree of professional variety in the instructors and squadron managers group, indicating the presence of both highly experienced and relatively new staff members. This variation in service duration could enhance the training experience for recruits by creating a balanced learning environment that blends modern methods with established institutional customs.

### **5.3 FUNDAMENTALS OF DIVERSITY MANIFESTATION IN BMT**

This section provides a simultaneous analysis of the determined theme based on the nature and manifestation of diversity in BMT. The section analyses and interprets themes concurrently because similar questions were posed to all participants, regardless of their roles in BMT and the data collection method used. This helped the researcher to simultaneously draw similar and dissimilar arguments between BMT recruits and their instructors and squadron managers.

The fundamentals of diversity manifestation presented below describe elements and principles that were experienced during BMT. These fundamentals were found to affect BMT and other important elements upon which BMT depends. They form the basis (foundation) from which dynamics of cross-cultural communications and diversity manifestation were experienced and understood during BMT. The findings of the study indicate that during BMT, diversity manifested through gender, language and multicultural practices, racial and ethnic diversity and religious affiliation.

#### **5.3.1 Gender inclusivity and integration during BMT**

BMT training in South Africa comprises gender integration of both males and females. Therefore, gender was understood to be a diversity manifestation element experienced by BMT recruits along with their instructors and squadron managers in the SAAF training unit, Air Force Gymnasium.

The Air Force Gymnasium comprises both male and female recruits undertaking and presenting BMT. However, the training context comprises the majority of male troops and male instructors (refer to Figure 5.2 and Figure 5.7). This led to a gender imbalance between male and female counterparts undertaking and presenting training.

On issues of gender inclusiveness, participant 31 (instructor) mentioned that:

*The protection mustering, and specifically being an instructor comprises of majority of male individuals because it requires a lot of physical strength and training. In most cases, female soldiers deviate from the mustering because it emanates with a lot of training responsibility and physical strength. Most women are perceived to be weak, and they lack the required physical strength. However, we have some female protectors and instructors although they are always of [in] the minority.*

Similarly, participant 35 (instructor) indicated that:

*As observed, all instructors are males, this clearly shows that women are [may] not [be equally] capable or designed for jobs that require physical strength and fitness. This creates gender imbalance in military organisations.*

On the contrary, a female participant recruit (participant 18; focus group B) – agreeing with most (seven) participants in the focus group - argued that:

*Not all women move away from combat or protection mustering. As women we do not get the support and motivation from our male counterparts, instead, we are discouraged and sometimes told about our weaknesses and that our bodies are designed for office duties. This raises [bring about negative] attitudes between us, our male comrades (soldiers) and our instructors.*

The findings above show that gender integration remains a challenge in the SA Air Force Gymnasium, further making the integration process a difficult issue for the majority of female MSDS recruits. Furthermore, two instructors and one MSDS recruit indicated that the integration challenge emanates from tensions and attitudes between male and female soldiers. The above findings indicate that most female soldiers are compelled to deviate from the protection mustering (combat) because of the held stereotypes associated with gender roles, perceived lack of physical strength and fitness perpetuated by their male counterparts or instructors.

In addition, participant 32 (instructor) emphasised that:

*... providing physical training and transforming a woman into a soldier is not an easy task. Sometimes women compromise the standard of training, and I assume that this is caused by their feminine traits. The Air Force Gymnasium comprises the majority of male soldiers who are in combat positions, this [which] clearly shows that women are in most cases not capable and not suitable for some military mustering, especially combat positions.*

This above scenario concurs with various scholars who noted that most women usually do not serve in combat positions because of their perceived lack of the required standard of physical strength. Hence, Enloe (1998), Gautreau (2014) and Reis, Menezes (2019) and Yakubu (2023) reiterated that military organisations experience gender integration challenges because they are often characterised by masculine elements, perceived relevant to particular operations such as combat positions that require extensive physical strength and training. This happens despite the approaches and policy framework (refer to section 3.4) on diversity and integration that guides the military to attain gender equality. Following this observation, the study notes that the perceived standard or level of physical strength demanded on women during BMT render them subject to stereotyped officials.

However, evidence in the study shows that female recruits hold a different view arguing that the above situation results from a lack of support from their male counterparts. The main reason for the tension and attitude given was the exclusion of women from combat roles. Female participants are of the view that gender discrimination in the military serves to protect male career paths and are founded on stereotypes about women's inferiority.

### 5.3.2 Language and multi-cultural practice during BMT

Given that language and culture are interdependent and interrelated and one cannot exist without the other. Learning a language is central to new knowledge and is associated with adapting to a new culture. In a multicultural social setting such as the SA Air Force Gymnasium, diversity emerges with different people who speak different languages and belong to different cultures. Language is an important factor in developing and maintaining cultural diversity within the military organisation. Soldiers' ability to understand one another's language and culture will facilitate cross-cultural communication and means of managing diversity. Adequate proficiency in various languages allows for the transfer of cultural knowledge and practices, and traditions to and from another translating into a free flow of information. This study, guided by the participants' views, revealed that language and culture emerge as aspects of diversity manifestation.

A member from focus group A (participant 1) mentioned that:

*BMT offered me the opportunity to engage with diverse people who originate from different cultures. However, some cultural practices and beliefs are not recognised within the training base. Another problem is our language differences during communication amongst us as troops, sometimes I just cannot hear what the other person is saying.*

Additionally, a recruit from focus group C (participant 22), alluded that:

*Being exposed to a diverse context and getting to experience diversity for the first time is a bit difficult. Above all, I perceive language as the utmost barrier to a successful communication process. During training, English is used as a medium of communication to accommodate others. This becomes a problem because I am not fluent in speaking English and I regularly find it difficult to understand some of the terms. I grew up in the rural areas where I was only exposed to the Xitsonga language, and I was also taught the same language throughout my educational background. What is most frustrating is that, when I try to express myself with Xitsonga some do not understand what I am saying, and they seem irritated and not willing to tolerate my broken English.*

Another recruit from focus group B (participant 18) mentioned that:

*As a White individual, I only speak English and Afrikaans. My fellow members (especially isiXhosa and Tshivenda-speaking recruits) always speak in their mother tongue, and I find it difficult to understand them. I have thus developed stereotypes and negative perceptions and attitudes about Black individuals. I sometimes feel like they are selfish, and they do not want to engage in conversations with other members. How do I tolerate such selfish behaviour. [This was said with a sad face and teary eyes].*

Recruit from focus group A (participant 3), sharing the sentiment with others mentioned that:

*Our cultural beliefs and practices are not treated equally, some are acceptable while some are being criticised. For instance, in my culture, we are not allowed to sweep at night, thus, this is acceptable and is regularly practiced in our training living areas (Bungalows). When I raised that the practice is not normal and is not acceptable in my culture (Pedi culture), I received some negative comments and some members made a joke about it, at times it seemed to be disrespectful. Such differences in cultural practices cause tensions among us.*

Sharing the same sentiments, participant 33 (instructor) mentioned that:

*Language and cultural issues are not new things to us as instructors. I still recall that during my BMT, language and culture have always been a problem, and they continue to be a problem. People come from different cultural beliefs and values which are not practiced during training. On the other hand, members speak different languages, however, English becomes the primary spoken language. This becomes a problem for troops who are not fluent in the language. Sometimes we [instructors] realise that troops are not comfortable speaking English for some reason.*

Language and culture were revealed as the manifestations of diversity that occur in the Air Force Gymnasium. Data in this study revealed that language and culture are the diversity manifestation elements that are found to be the key barriers to effective cross-cultural communication and diversity management. Language and culture are experienced as cross-cultural communication barriers due to BMT recruits belonging

to various cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Issues of acceptable and unacceptable cultural practices also cause tension among members.

Language continues to be a diverse issue, and it constitutes various cross-cultural communication barriers, tensions and perceptions among members of the organisation. According to Heinecken (2009), the SANDF employs English as a medium of communication used to send and receive messages. With this stipulated, it is argued that the majority of White members are unable to speak other native languages of South Africa while the majority of Africans find it difficult to express themselves using English within the organisation. Some members are resistant to language change due to various reasons such as a lack of confidence in English while their counterparts find them selfish or resistant to change. Lack of tolerance to other members' diverse languages and cultures thus causes tension and cross-cultural barriers during BMT. While others claimed to avoid engaging with those of different cultural groups, a lack of tolerance for others' language and culture determined the way in which recruits interacted with each other and with their instructors and/or influenced performance during BMT.

Heinecken (2005) further argues that African cultural practices and beliefs are not recognised within the military. Lack of recognition is experienced in these organisations and causes various communication tensions, challenges and attitudes. Similarly, Kim (2008) suggests that diverse members are challenged by their differences, and they are thus forced to find similarities and find effective solutions to their presented diverse problems.

Participant 34 (instructor) further elucidated that:

*We all originate from various cultures, and we all have our cultural practices and beliefs. However, we operate in the SAAF now and the only culture that matters is the "blue culture"- SAAF culture. The SA Air Force culture comes first, and we abide according to what is acceptable and unacceptable in the "blue culture".*

In support of participant 34, one squadron manager (participant 37) emphasised that:

*As instructors, we separate troops from their similar individuals, and we try to eliminate the presented cultural tensions by deviating them from their respective cultures. We try to mix them in their residential areas (Bungalows). This is done to promote cross-cultural interaction and enforce the third culture known as the "blue culture". As a result, troops must learn to operate among themselves regardless of their differences. [This was said while the Participant was pointing his fingers on top of the table to emphasise the response].*

These responses indicate that regardless of people's differences, the SA Air Force has developed its own third culture known as the "blue culture" (unique set of beliefs, values and norms that are instilled in service men and women representing change or transformation towards the SAAF's identity) whereby all members undertaking training are taught about and expected to adjust to it. It is indicated that the 'blue culture' is instilled in the minds of the recruits to eliminate tensions and promote diversity management and cross-cultural interactions amongst such members of the military culture.

This finding concurs with a study by Parmar (2007) which reports that military organisations integrate members and impose uniform military culture within them. Various military organisations develop their sub-culture which is adapted by diverse parties within the field. Kim (2001; 2008) and Kim and Kim (2016) cross-cultural adaptation and the Interaction theory of Burgoon et al. (1995) maintain that individuals must have the capacity to interact and communicate in accordance with the communication norms, symbols, practices and meaning systems of the host culture and host activities of ethnic social communication which provides members with different sub-cultural experiences (Burgoon et al., 1995; Kim & Kim, 2016; Van de Pol et al., 2023).

### 5.3.3 Religious diversity during BMT

Findings of the study revealed that military recruits undertaking BMT encountered various religious and spiritual beliefs that develop from different individuals belonging to different spiritual beliefs and religious affiliations. Recruits undertaking training reported having varying beliefs such as traditional and African spirituality that are not acknowledged throughout the training process.

Sharing sentiments with others, participant 3 (recruit in focus group A) indicated that:

*When it comes to religion, our instructors assume that if you are a Black African, you are a Christian or that one way or another we must find a way to operate in the church. This is not the case because I am a Black isiXhosa speaking individual and I am a Muslim. The Air Force Gymnasium provides us with Christian church services which take place almost every Sunday. As Blacks, we are forced to attend, [He shook his head and rolled his eyes indicating boredom].*

Sharing the same sentiment, participants 7 (recruit) in focus group A further indicated that:

*This becomes a challenge for me because I might be Black, but I am not a Christian and this creates tensions between myself and my instructors. They think I do not want to attend the church services or perhaps I am disrespectful or defy instructions. When I try to explain, our communication becomes sour and unsuccessful because of the held religious assumptions, [he added with a sad face].*

Participant 26 (recruit from focus group C) enunciated that:

*Certain groups disregard our religious and spiritual beliefs. I am isolated and discriminated against for my religious and spiritual differences. I always perform my religious beliefs at 00H00 and I am being judged for that. This creates tensions, conflicts and negative communication among us. Some feel disturbed because they are usually sleeping during this time while others do not feel comfortable.*

The above findings reveal that religious difference is a significant barrier to cross-cultural interaction, with participants agreeing that religious practices (specifically Christianity, Muslim and traditional African beliefs) frequently lead to conflict, discrimination, prejudice and even violence among BMT recruits from different faith backgrounds.

Basedao (2017) and Ottuh and Omosor (2022) share the same sentiments with the above views. The scholars posit that the majority of tensions within the military training units are created by various religious practices such as Christianity, Muslim and traditional African beliefs. Different religious beliefs breed conflict and intolerance between members of diverse beliefs. People differ concerning their religious and spiritual ideas. Diverse spiritual and religious beliefs thus result in cross-cultural interaction barriers such as tensions, discrimination, prejudice and violence between members of different religions (Exline, 2013; Ferreira, 2017).

From focus group C, a recruit (participant 28) articulated that:

*During the BMT training process, Christians are offered more attention as compared to us (Muslims). They are given a platform to attend their church services whereas we do not have Muslim services. I feel like we are being discriminated, and this creates conflicts and tensions between us and our instructors, unless they wanna [want to] say we serve a lesser God.*

The participants shared the sentiment with participant 28 that they feel discriminated against on religious grounds and suffer from low self-esteem while having difficulty relating to Christians whom in their view serve greater God as they are being catered for. The data revealed that participants who are not Christians experience feelings of shame and guilt for not living the religious requirements of Christianity.

Moreover, participant 33, an instructor during interview revealed that:

*Both recruits and personnel in the Gymnasium [SAAF Gymnasium] belong to different religious affiliations and have different beliefs. However, it is unfortunate that during training, church service is only availed [available] for Christians. The chaplain services do not provide a variety of religious practices but only Christian ones. However, notable concerns are released which to a particular extent are above our control as instructors.*

Participant 37, an instructor during interview added that:

*It could bring some sense of support, belonging and acceptance to have multiple religious practices to cater for all if not most of the members. This thing [religion] can cause conflicts among recruits if they don't understand each other. They will not work well together because of their unmanaged religious differences. Those are policy related matters of which the SAAF does not have a policy on this type of matter.*

The above utterance shows that during BMT, preferential treatment is provided to Christians while other members from other religious groups are not considered. This can be caused by the fact that the SAAF training unit is dominated by Christians. The majority of BMT recruits and all BMT instructors and squadron managers are Christians. This creates cross-cultural issues and diversity management challenges due to religiously imbalanced sessions - reported to deliver Christian services - provided by the Air Force Gymnasium. Marsden (2019) and Oluyemi (2021) concur with the above utterances as they agree that religious conflict and terrorism occur due to the preferential treatment given to a particular religious group. Moreover, EIWCT (theory) indicates that situation features, for instance, unequal and equal status and in-group or out- group affect the interaction process between communicators and further create tension between members who are given preferential treatment and those who do not (Oetzel et al., 2012; Oetzel, 2017).

Instructors are of the view that religious diversity during BMT is important in various ways because it could bring different experiences, perspectives, cultural and religious knowledge to the BMT. They also acknowledge that it could potentially create tension amongst individuals of different religions if not well managed and understood as participants 33 and 37 expressed. According to the instructors, recruits' unmanaged religious differences could hinder them from effectively executing their duties.

As shown in Figure 5.10, these findings indicated that all instructors and squadron managers presenting BMT are identified as Christians. This religious homogeneity among leadership is not merely a demographic detail, it has implications for institutional culture, inclusivity and the lived experiences of recruits.

The dominance of Christianity among instructors appears to influence the spiritual and cultural practices embedded in BMT, such as the regular scheduling of Christian church services and prayer routines. These practices, while potentially fostering unity and discipline, may also reflect institutional preferences that privilege one religious tradition over others.

These views revealed that there is a need for Chaplains of various religions and spiritual practices that will incorporate diverse available religions in South Africa such as Christianity, Muslims, African spirituality and Hindu. Following the above dissatisfaction on religious matters, it can be argued that participants call for freedom of religion to be guaranteed to meet the spiritual needs of all BMT participants.

In the context of the SAAF, the prevalence of Christian instructors may contribute to the normalisation of Christian practices, potentially marginalising recruits who identify with other faiths or none at all. This raises questions about religious pluralism, representation and spiritual equity in military settings.

#### 5.3.4 Traditional and African Spirituality

Traditional and African spirituality or Native African religious factors emerged as subthemes to religion and spiritual manifestation of diversity. As reported, these factors create tensions and discrimination among BMT recruits not only because they belong to different spiritual or religious groups but because they worship differently at different times; in which one's manner or time of worship could be uncomfortable to others. Traditional African religion is centered on ancestral worship believing in the spiritual world where the deceased humans still exist - in the spiritual world - and has the potential to interact, guide and influence them in the physical world. Those associated with traditional spirituality feel isolated from Christians.

Participant 15 (recruit) from focus group B mentioned that:

*Being at the SA Air Force Gymnasium is very difficult for me. I am a traditional person, and I practice some traditional practices, which I find difficult to practice in this environment. Whenever I get to practice them, I receive negative judgment and prejudices from my fellow troops, and this becomes a difficult curve for me. It creates negative attitudes, and it leaves me with a sour taste in my mouth [The member reported with a sad and grumpy face which was filled with sad emotions and teary eyes].*

From focus group B, participant 11 (recruit) mentioned that:

*Before joining training, I was going through the traditional healing apprenticeship process that is associated with a variety of traditional herbs and processes that I follow regularly. I receive negative attitudes and judgments about my current identified process. This creates negative communication outcomes between my fellow counterparts and myself. My belief [religion] is not respected and this demoralises me. As a result, I am not ready to work with Christians in particular because I cannot trust them.*

Participant 29 from focus group C further reported that:

*I have a spiritual calling and sometimes when we are doing PT [physical training] my calling [spiritual trance] awakens. My fellow recruits always mock me about it and this reduces my morale during training.*

Participant 33 (instructor) indicated that:

*African spirituality has been a problem during my BMT days and currently traditional healers and those who have 'calling' still experience challenges within the Air Force Gymnasium. They continue to be judged and discriminated against by Christians who are recognised within the training Base, however, some instructors are also practicing traditional or African spirituality, and they understand troops who are in the same traditional field.*

The above responses reveal that African spirituality continues to be a challenging factor in the Air Force Gymnasium. African spirituality is not recognised and considered, and it receives different criticisms and negative perceptions by different people from different spiritual beliefs. People experiencing African or traditional spiritual beliefs or 'calling' are challenged (criticised) by those who rely on Western or 'normal acquainted' beliefs or affiliations. A (spiritual) calling is an experience where an individual is chosen by ancestors (higher powers) to fulfill a spiritual role such as becoming a traditional healer or a Sangoma. Participants were of the view that Christianity is more recognised than other religious practices, including African spirituality. As indicated in the demographic section, this might be created by the fact that the majority of BMT recruits, instructors and squadron managers belong to the Christian affiliation. This finding shows that institutional identity shaped by leadership demographics can influence the inclusivity of training environments. The lack of diversity among instructors may inadvertently reinforce cultural and religious norms that do not reflect the lived realities of recruits, thereby affecting morale, cohesion and the effectiveness of training.

This pattern has implications on how diversity is managed and experienced within BMT. The prominence of Christian church services may not only be a reflection of personal faith but also a structural feature reinforced by the religious identity of

leadership. This could explain why alternative religious practices or secular options are less visible or supported.

Sharing the same sentiment, Hunsberger and Jackson (2005) and Kossowska and Sekerdej (2015) reported that military chaplains play a critical role in promoting religious and spiritual beliefs, however, fundamentalism continues to breed conflict and intolerance between members of varying beliefs. However, these utterances contradict Masuku (2020) postulating that the SANDF comprises various ministries of religion that are accommodated, supported and led by their church ministries.

Participant (13), Coloured BMT recruit (focus group B) indicated that she has adapted to the African way of doing things. She stated that:

*My cubicle mate [a space that comprises two single beds and is allocated to two members] believes in African spirituality. She uses snuff and sometimes I use the snuff with her. Using a snuff makes me calm and I enjoy doing it, [she said that while laughing and indicating that she enjoys what she learned and adapted from her cubicle mate].*

The data reveal that BMT recruits feel attracted to those who belong to their religion or spiritual practice. The spiritual differences amongst them affect their attitude towards each other as well as their effectiveness and performance during training activities, which also leads to unwillingness to cooperate with fellow group members belonging to different religious groups, which diminishes group cohesion (unity). As articulated by participant 11 above, different religions lead to disagreement and hostile and unproductive training sessions during BMT as recruits fail to trust and respect one another.

This response also shows that some members are open to cross-cultural learning and adaptation as supported by the cross-cultural adaptation theory which explains the various levels of individual transformation and the ability to adapt and create commonality to move beyond the identified differences (Kim & Kim, 2016).

### 5.3.5 Racial diversity during BMT

Military units that provide training are not excluded from racial and ethnic diversity. The findings revealed that recruits undergoing military training at the SA Air Force Gymnasium belong to different racial and ethnic groups. They originate from African, Coloured, White and Indian racial groups (refer to Figure 5.3). Therefore, their ability

to socialise and live cooperatively during formal and informal sessions contributes to a sense of communal, provides support and offers guidance as well as the opportunity to learn from each other's cultural differences. On the contrary, their inability to socialise during informal sessions contributes to a lack of trust and denies them the opportunity to learn from each other, which will affect the formal BMT sessions.

Focus group discussions with the BMT recruits reported that racial diversity manifestation does not only pose barriers to diversity and cross-cultural communication challenges during their daily training activities. However, it becomes a problem after their training hours whereby members of the same racial group sit together for a given period. Thus, they isolate themselves from other different racial groups.

As indicated in Figure 5.3 and Figure 5.8, the 2022 BMT comprised the majority of Black African recruits, instructors and squadron managers. White recruits reported that the majority of Black recruits have racial and ethnic segregation towards their White counterparts. This was supported by a White BMT recruit from focus group C (participant 21) who alluded that:

*Black members racially segregate us as Whites. They do not want to sit or even engage in a conversation with us. This occurs during after-hours, and it creates negative attitudes and perceptions about African Black members. Honestly speaking, they are impolite, and this creates unpleasant communication barriers between us.*

Similarly, participant 3 (recruit from focus group A) mentioned that:

*The environment of the Air Force Gymnasium is stressful, and it is a very difficult environment to deal with. As a BMT troop, I normally interact with troops of a similar race as mine. I feel comfortable when I am with them as I can express myself and share my opinions and ideas openly. In any way, Whites prefer to isolate themselves.*

Supporting the above sentiment, a Black recruit from focus group B (participant 17) further reported that:

*I believe that all members from the same race sit together and engage in a common conversation while using their mother tongue. After hours, you will find that Coloured members go and sit at a specific side, Whites and Indians do the same while Blacks also associate amongst themselves.*

The above findings indicate that racial and ethnic manifestation elements of diversity delay the process of tolerating one another's races which ultimately affects cross-cultural communication and diversity management that may occur between diverse

recruits. This results in less opportunity to learn one another's culture and consequently affects the cross-cultural communication process because their segregations denied them the opportunity to interact and learn from each other. The ability to socialise during informal sessions or after working hours will assist recruits to easily learn each other's cultural differences and their cultural effects on communication as well as their cultural styles of communication.

Baffoe (2022) and Salem et al. (2023) concur that racial and ethnic diversity manifestation affects work efficiency and the cross-cultural communication process. Racial and ethnic tension determines the effective flow or the failure of cross-cultural communication in the military. The lower the racial and ethnic tensions between parties, the greater the effective flow of cross-cultural communication between members and vice versa (Segal et al., 2015).

However, the above responses contradict the utterance from participant 37 (Squadron manager) who reported that:

*As an instructor, I believe that our mandate is to unite our troops, and we instill and enforce the spirit of synergy and cohesion throughout the training phase.*

Sharing the same sentiment, participant 34 (instructor) mentioned that:

*Issues of race and ethnicity are not a problem during training. One of our duties and responsibilities is to ensure that regardless of race and ethnicity, all recruits must unite and learn to collaborate.*

Conversely, all instructors and squadron managers maintained that race and ethnicity have no impact on the training process and cross-cultural communication in BMT. The instructors are convinced that recruits operate with the instilled "blue culture" [synergy and cohesion]' and turn to regard the "blue culture" as the right strategy to manage their workforce and to face everyday challenges during BMT.

With these diverse views, the researcher observed that race and ethnic barriers are experienced amongst BMT recruits and this is done without the supervision or knowledge of their instructors or squadron managers as recruits mentioned it occurs after working hours (see participant 21's views above). Racial and ethnic tensions created between BMT recruits have the potential to minimise the level of cross-cultural interactions among BMT recruits.

The above section presented and interpreted the fundamentals of diversity in BMT ranging from gender, language and multi-cultural practices as well as traditional and African spirituality factors among others. The researcher is convinced that having diverse recruits and instructors with different backgrounds, religions, cultures, skills, and experience levels means that BMT participants are likely to have different and varied approaches to the same problems due to their diverse nature. It is noted that, if not well handled, diverse groups experience strong conflicts, communication between diverse recruit group members becomes more difficult, the willingness to cooperate with fellow group members diminishes and group cohesion (unity) decreases among BMT recruits.

#### **5.4 DYNAMICS OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY ON CROSS-SECTIONAL COMMUNICATION IN BMT**

This section presents challenges and the impact of cultural diversity on cross-cultural communication that occurs during BMT. This is a theme that emerged from data collected during the personal interview sessions and focus group discussions. The subthemes that emerged from the data are discussed below.

##### **5.4.1 Interpretation of cultural non-verbal cues during BMT**

During the data collection phase, the participants (from focus groups and interviews) alluded that non-verbal cues create communication tensions and barriers between recruits of different cultures.

Participant 21 from focus group C (White female BMT recruit) mentioned that:

*I have realised that black individuals, especially those who belong to the Tshivenda culture do not make eye contact when communicating with seniors or instructors. This is not acceptable in our White culture, and we perceive that as a sign of lack of interest in the conversation or we either believe that the person is not telling the truth. Therefore, it results to unfruitful communication between the communicators.*

On the contrary, a male Black African recruit who spoke Tshivenda as a native language (participant 23) from focus group C reported that:

*Showing eye contact while in a conversation (especially with an elder person) is perceived as a sign of disrespect in our culture. I have realised that this creates communication tensions between us and people who believe in maintaining eye contact when engaging in a conversation. Sometimes, even the way people sit says a lot about their mood and lack of interest in conversations.*

These articulations reveal that body signs and gestures send various meanings to various cultures. Cultures have different meaningful gestures that are used during the communication process, and which may portray or convey different messages to people of different cultures. This creates different views and misinterpretations among different members undergoing training. Moreover, it creates diversity and cross-cultural communication problems among the recruits.

For instance, maintaining eye contact signifies different messages amongst various cultural groups. It can be perceived as a sign of respect or disrespect. In the Tshivenda culture, eye contact is a common gesture of disrespect when communicating with someone, especially elders. However, in Western or White culture, it is viewed as a sign of disrespect and lack of interest in the conversation.

Data revealed that seating positions also signify different meanings in different cultures. One's seating posture mirrors their mood or status. Sitting cross-legged might indicate relaxation, while sitting upright or at the edge of the chair with hands on knees can signal attentiveness or readiness to engage in Western cultures, however, in African cultures, this indicates a lack of interest in conversation or that the listener is in a hurry.

These cultural differences are interpreted according to cultures and therefore create misinterpretation and misunderstanding of gestures that emerge with cross-cultural misconceptions during BMT. As reported, gestures and postures appear as cross-cultural barriers to effective communication in BMT.

Various scholars such as Heineken (2011), Long-Terry and Damari (2015) and Subramanian (2016) infer that the flow of communication between members can be affected by the presented ethno-cultural differences of individuals. Non-verbal meanings and messages can be misunderstood and may be interpreted differently by various individuals. Misunderstanding and misinterpretation of non-verbal cultural cues lead to tension and mistrust and affect the flow of communication among recruits during BMT.

Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2014), Logan-Terry and Damari (2015) and Subramanian, (2016) argue that the cultural background of individuals has an impact on the

interpretation of non-verbal cues and the outcome of communication between the interlocutors. Meaning, verbal and non-verbal expressions of people have varying interpretations and implications for people who belong to different cultures.

Sharing sentiments with other instructors, participant 32 (instructor) further stipulated that:

*Non-verbal behaviors differ across cultures, and they create cross-cultural communication tensions between the communicators. As an instructor, I operate with six years of experience and the competency of being in a cross-cultural setting such as the Air Force Gymnasium, Hoedspruit. Therefore, I believe that cross-cultural communication and diversity environments require a level of multicultural competency to decrease misunderstandings, communication tensions, attitudes and negative perceptions about a particular culture and individuals.*

This finding depicts that those members who lack diversity experience and cross-cultural communication competence encounter cultural challenges and normally face intercultural and cross-cultural communication barriers. Consequently, leading them to ineffective communication and creating tension and anxiety between recruits and their instructors. The response indicates that operating with cross-cultural communication and diversity competence results in positive cross-cultural communication outcomes. Orna-Montesinos (2017) concurs that cross-cultural competency emerges with a mutual understanding of differences and leads to effective cross-cultural communication interactions and diversity management.

The above section explained the importance of recruits' cultural knowledge of whom one is attempting to communicate with. Knowledge brings cultural sensitivity or consideration and avoids tension during interactions. Due to a lack of cultural knowledge or cultural unfamiliarity, recruits regularly face challenges with culture-based non-verbal cues that are acceptable in one culture and unacceptable in other cultures leading to cross-cultural communication barriers.

#### 5.4.2 Cultural diversity and tolerance in BMT

Tolerance is accommodating others' differences and being empathetic to the individual's culture, language and beliefs. It is associated with the willingness to accept others and their unique habits and beliefs (Hazel, Macdonald & Edwin, 2024). On cultural issues, one BMT recruit from focus group C (participant 23) said the following:

*Throughout the BMT process, we are provided with a platform to do group assessments. We experience challenges, especially with white cultural groups. They prefer to do things on their own and they lack teamwork skills. As Black African members, we enjoy working together and sharing ideas amongst ourselves. We believe in the spirit of teamwork and working together to achieve a common goal.*

Supporting the above response, another BMT recruit from focus group C (participant 28) said:

*I agree with what the other participant is saying. As a White member, I believe in working hard to achieve my personal goals. Working with other people is not part of my beliefs and expectations. I prefer to work and achieve all goals at an individual level. Above all, it is easy to work with those who belong to the same culture with me [as mine].*

People have varying behaviors and beliefs which may be in contrast with one another. They are raised differently and have different cultural ethics and moralities. The above utterances indicate that the individualism and collectivism aspects dictate the interaction outcome of members who belong to various cultures. These aspects contribute to cross-cultural communication tensions between MSDS recruits affecting the free flow of information, trust and efficient training during BMT. Cultural diversity challenges during BMT range from reduced cooperation during group tasks and miscommunication to actual conflict, all compromising effective BMT productivity and performance. It is for this reason that managing cultural diversity in the BMT remains crucial.

Hofstede (1994; 2011) postulates that people differ according to the concept of individualism and collectivism. Each member belongs to either of the concepts and is culturally raised through applying the concept and identifying it as an ethically and morally accepted behaviour. These concepts appear to create tensions between different members undertaking military training. Geertz (1973) in Meso (2023) stipulates that the cultural patterns of individuals are transmitted from generation to generation. The different beliefs and behaviours of a given culture affect the outcome of the cross-cultural communication and diversity management process. Heinecken (2005) observed that military organisations have a strong sense of teamwork (collectivism) and this method frustrates some members who have a strong belief in the individualistic approach and prefer to be appraised on their own merits rather than that of a group. Such individuals usually find it difficult to tolerate others, especially those of different cultures.

The above views were challenged by participant 35 (instructor) who emphasised that:

*There is only one recognised culture in BMT known as the “blue culture”. The culture believes in the spirit of collectivism and maintains that there is no me nor I in the SAAF, thus, we are one. Therefore, we respect must each other and work as one no matter what.*

This view indicates that it is difficult or impossible for one to isolate oneself from activities undertaken within the training process. Attempts of individualism are challenged by the culture of the organisation. By ‘no matter what’ the participant emphasises the need to tolerate one another regardless of their unique cultural and linguistic difference. Regardless of recruits’ diversity, including diversity of race, religion, and gender, the adoption of communal culture has been shown to improve the spirit of cooperation and association. Recruits - according to participant 35 – remain loyal when they feel respected, accepted and valued for their unique contribution. A variety of ideas, expertise and experience enables recruits to learn from a diverse collection of cultural differences. Similar to cultural diversity, the adoption of the “blue culture” also boosts problem-solving capabilities and increases productivity during BMT.

This section indicates that BMT recruits tend to tolerate, attract or are attracted to those who belong to their cultural group. The cultural diversity affects their attitude towards those of different cultures leading to ineffectiveness and low performance during training activities, as well as unwillingness to tolerate and cooperate with fellow recruits belonging to different cultural groups. These cultural differences also affect the outcomes of cross-cultural communication and diversity management processes during BMT. However, from a “blue culture” perspective, diversity facilitates a more functional problem-solving process; that is, a better quality of decision making from dissimilar experiences and viewpoints that recruits bring to their team members where one willingly learns and benefits from other cultures.

#### 5.4.3 Cultural diversity and racial integration in BMT

Racial integration includes desegregation, which entails ‘the process of ending systematic racial segregation’, providing opportunities for all people regardless of race, removing obstacles to an association and building a culture that incorporates a variety of traditions rather than just assimilating a minority racial group (Finney, 2024).

Regarding racial integration, one participant (participant 1) from focus group A stated that:

*I grew up in the hood of Atteridgeville and I went to a multiracial school. Being in a multicultural and multiracial area [training unit] was not a difficult space for me. I understand all the 11 [excluding sign language] official languages of South Africa and I am always open to diversity and cross-cultural interaction. Being at the Air Force Gymnasium continues to be a learning curve for me.*

Furthermore, participant 15, a recruit from focus group B articulated that:

*Being in a diverse environment poses communication challenges and diversity tensions between various people. I was raised in the rural areas of Limpopo province and I later moved to Pretoria to further my studies. Being exposed to a diverse context of Pretoria was not an easy phase for me. The majority of Africans used their mother tongues (in most cases, isiZulu, Setswana and isiXhosa). I learned to adjust and adapt to the situation and dealt with the challenges that came at hand.*

The above opposing quotes indicate that effective cross-cultural communication and diversity depend on the level of experience in diverse contexts and the level of acceptance and adaptation of an individual. Diversity, cross-cultural communication, acceptance and adaptation are interdependent elements. The greater the diversity experience and acceptance, the higher the racial integration process and the more effective cross-cultural communication and diversity tolerance. Thus, it is easy for those who were previously exposed to diverse environments to easily adapt and integrate with those of different cultures. This facilitates training activities and effective cross-cultural communication. During the interview session with one squadron manager (participant 36), the researcher observed that the member is frustrated about the cultural and linguistic issues that develop with diversity.

The member shared his frustrations by reporting that:

*It is stressful to deal with BMT recruits who are from different cultures and operate in different languages. Members come with their expectations, attitudes and desires, and as an instructor, I must keep up with the tensions, remain neutral and try to stabilise the tensions while imposing the military traditions. At some point I allow them to use their mother tongue and find a volunteering member to interpret within themselves. With cross-cultural knowledge and the experience that I have in operating within a diverse environment, I slowly adapt to their way of doing things. Slowly I got to understand various languages and so it should be with them.*

Emphasising the above, participant 34 (instructor) stipulated that:

*Experience makes things easier. The more experience you have about diversity and cross-cultural issues, the easier you adapt to diverse environments and cross-cultural interaction processes.*

The above responses indicate that the adaptation process of individuals differs according to the experience and the cross-cultural competence of an individual. The

higher the experience and the socio-cultural skill, the easier the cross-cultural interaction and diversity management between parties (communicators). It could also be argued that those who originate from multicultural settings interact more easily than those who are from monocultural environments.

The IAT theory supports the above views as it argues that people have different integration or adaptation patterns (Burgoon & Hubbard, 2004; Burgoon, Dunbar & Giles, 2017; Van de Pol et al., 2023). People are social beings, and they adapt to various situations differently. The integration pattern of individuals is affected by various cultural or linguistic elements and strategies employed to develop the cross-cultural communication process within the organisations (Gudykunst, 1993; Burgoon & Hubbard, 2004). The EIWCT further maintains that an individual's cultural values, personality and attitudes affect the communication process, behaviour and decision-making of individuals. However, the greater the skills of diversity, potential solutions and innovative ideas, the higher the cross-cultural interaction (Oetzel et al., 2012; Kolodziej-Smith, 2016).

Adapting to multiculturalism during BMT enhances the effective flow of training. Adaptation is perceived as a learning process whereby members undertaking training recognises that diverse cultures are individually different. The willingness to learn and adapt enhances diversity knowledge and respect towards people's differences. Moreover, this results in a high potential of decision making from different cultural experiences and perspectives that BMT recruits bring to the team.

#### 5.4.4 Cultural diversity and transformation in BMT

Transformation is a drastic change in the form or way of doing things; it is sometimes referred to as an extreme, radical change (Memela-Motumi, 2011). In the military context, the ordinary civilian members of the society are transformed into soldiers. For this study, acculturation was revealed as a pivotal tool used to transform recruits from civilian members to soldiers and to deal with diversity and cross-cultural communication concerns.

Participant 34 (instructor) mentioned that:

*To effectively deal with diversity and promote cross-cultural engagements, all recruits are trained to change and conform to the new SAAF [military] culture. They are taught about the rank insignia of the organisation and how to conduct themselves in the military culture.*

On the other hand, participant 1 (recruit) from focus group A revealed that:

*For BMT recruits to change their attitudes and behaviour towards differences, I suggest that members must conform to a third (neutral) culture – “blue culture”- implemented by the organisation.*

Sharing the similar sentiments participant 16 (recruit) from focus group B mentioned that:

*Conforming and transforming to one culture, which is the military culture will reduce cross-cultural tensions and thus enhance the efficiency of BMT.*

The majority of the participants are of the view that a particular transformation must occur between members of different cultures. They concur that BMT emanates from a third culture which has its communication styles and various symbols used to indicate meaning. Participant 34 above indicated that BMT recruits are perceived as immigrants into the Air Force Gymnasium who should be transformed from the civilian way of doing things into the military way of life.

Recruits are further taught about the “blue culture” associated with the rank insignia of the SAAF and their symbolic meaning as well as the communication procedure and the channel of command which need to be followed in all aspects. For instance, the researcher observed that BMT recruits pay compliments (military greetings) and salute members according to their rank insignia and they are acquainted with various commands (for instance, off caps- taking off their headdress by strictly using their right hand) which is in most cases misunderstood by civilian members who are not familiar with military culture. Therefore, transformation increases uniformity and collaboration amongst BMT recruits.

Heineken (2020) and Bester and Du Plessis (2014) posit that diverse members undertaking military operations and training are required to transform and adapt to different cultures to form effective relationships, exchange cross-cultural messages and attain the operational aims and objectives of BMT.

## 5.5 CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES AND APPROACHES IN BMT

This section presents different strategies and approaches employed to limit the cross-cultural communication barriers experienced during BMT. The section presents the findings on the identified approaches or strategies employed to enhance cross-cultural interactions in BMT.

### 5.5.1 Emphasis of English as the medium of instruction

The challenges of second language learning include the diversity of the audience, such as cultural, linguistic, and academic diversity, lack of practice opportunities and fear of speaking with strangers (Abduholiqovna, 2021). Vocabulary is the foundation of any language, and without a complete understanding of words, one may find it difficult to read, write, listen, and communicate.

English language was regarded as a medium of communication used during BMT. Some members revealed that they encounter challenges in presenting and expressing themselves using the English language while others lack confidence to speak English. Furthermore, they find it difficult to understand some concepts presented through the language. From focus group A, participant 2 (recruit) shared the below to share some lights.

*Someday the instructor was talking about a 'hole' or 'whole'. I did not know whether he was talking about mulimdi (hole) or tshoṭhe (whole). The other day he said, "Do not bank my lectures". To me, a bank is a financial institution while he referred to not missing his lectures. Sometimes this thing leaves us frustrated.*

As articulated by participant 2 above, failure to understand some English concepts serves as an obstacle to effective communication that misinterprets or distorts the instructors' intended meaning. These communication barriers arise from differences in languages and the context in which words are used as well as their pronunciation (such as hole and whole indicated by participant 2 above), leading to misunderstandings, miscommunication and errors in decision-making amongst BMT participants. This leads to misunderstandings and miscommunication during BMT. However, participants (instructors) reported that the English language should be learned and adopted by BMT participants to facilitate the communication process.

Participant 36 (Squadron manager) reported that:

*Regardless of the language barriers experienced in BMT, both recruits and instructors must learn and adapt to English as a language of instruction in BMT and the South African Air Force at large.*

Concurring with the above, a BMT recruit, participant 24 from focus group C also revealed that:

*All recruits and instructors operating in the military training units and all military bases and units must adapt to the English language as the language of communication across the organisation.*

The use of English provides opportunities for recruits from diverse ethnic, cultural and linguistic groups and social classes to learn from one another. It enables recruits to acquire skills and develop a positive attitude to communicate among themselves and foster acceptance and tolerance with those from diverse cultures to create a free flow of communication and a functional BMT environment. The use of English further encourages recruits to learn about and from one another's cultural backgrounds, which facilitates cross-cultural communications and collaborations as well as overcoming cultural diversity challenges experienced during BMT.

#### 5.5.2 Interpretation as an intermediation process

Participants referred to interpretation as a strategy for effective cross-cultural communication and it is perceived as an approach to minimise misunderstanding and miscommunication amongst diverse BMT recruits along with their instructors and squadron managers.

In support of this approach, participant 32 (instructor) indicated that:

*At times, miscommunication between communicators is experienced during training. This is caused by the diverse nature of individuals undertaking training. Some troops encounter difficulties when articulating or speaking the English language. As an instructor, I usually encourage them to speak in their mother tongue and request one member who speaks the same home language to interpret what is being said by the member.*

Moreover, participant 28 (focus group C) mentioned that:

*Interpretation is an indispensable method of closing the communication gap, assisting with message clarification conveyed across differing languages. It assures equal access to messages and promotes common ground among individuals with differing linguistic origins*

According to the above response, interpretation is perceived as an effective approach and a strategy for effective cross-cultural communication and diversity management. It is viewed as an effective method used to send messages and raise understanding

of intended cross-cultural messages between diverse interlocutors. This finding concurs with O’Conor (2009), Rosendo (2022), Usman & Ibrahim (2023) and Okonkwo & Bello (2024) who maintain that interpretation involves a linguistic mediator between diverse people and is used as an effective method to transmit messages between diverse linguistic and cultural people. The strategy is used to bridge the language barrier among interlocutors, who in this case are BMT recruits and instructors. To support this, participant 31 (instructor) mentioned the below.

*Some day one recruit was struggling to express herself in English and requested to speak isiXhosa. She said “Ngaba ndingathetha isiXhosa ukuze ndiveze izimvo zam ngokulula” (May I kindly speak isiXhosa to easily express my ideas). The recruit continued to speak her mother tongue and the other volunteered to interpret into English. This approach was commonly used and effective across BMT and some recruits seem to be comfortable speaking their mother tongue over English.*

The adoption of interpreting was effective in conveying messages from one African language into English. Distortion and misinterpretation of the meaning of a message communicated were avoided through the adoption of interpretation as an intermediation strategy. It also helped to avoid cross-cultural communication barriers arising from differences in linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Interpretation facilitates collaborations among recruits’ team members and the ability to learn about and from one another’s cultural background, which facilitates cross-cultural communications, and as well as overcoming cultural diversity challenges experienced during BMT. Participant 31 indicated that during BMT interpretation was used to address misunderstandings and promote effective communication.

### 5.5.3 Adaptation and acculturation to the “blue culture”

Most of the participants, particularly – both instructors and recruits - reported that adaptation could serve as a strategy to eliminate cross-cultural misunderstandings and enhance effective cross-cultural interactions. This provides reports about adaptation strategies for cross-cultural communication. Acculturation concurs with the concept of the implementation of a third culture whereby people experience cultural transformation and selected adaptation of value systems to that culture (Zagefka, Lefringhausen, López Rodríguez, Urbiola, Moftizadeh and Vázquez, 2022). Molan (2017) and Gehrman (2020) are of the view that acculturation and adaptation are critical elements to eliminate cross-cultural communication barriers in diverse military contexts. Thus, when one has adopted or has been acculturated to the “blue culture”

shares similar symbolic meanings such as salutes and other military specific symbols with other members. One's ability to communicate or share meaning with others could not be excluded from this scenario as well as one's ability to assume new behavioural patterns to fit within the MBT purpose or environment.

Participant 23 (recruit) from focus group C stated that:

*As an African Tshivenda-speaking BMT Troop, I interact with diverse troops, instructors and squadron managers. At the beginning of BMT, it was difficult to engage in diverse interactions but as time went by, I adapted to some spoken home languages like IsiZulu, Sepedi and Setswana. The adaptation process was a bit difficult and I had mixed emotions about it [he smiled].*

Participant 37 (squadron manager) further reported that:

*Air Force Gymnasium is regarded as a home of training and a home to all troops who are undertaking military training within the base. Therefore, due to the diverse nature of the setting, we developed a third culture which is adopted by both parties. For instance, during military drills and physical training sessions, we encourage troops to overcome their differences and adapt to the military way of doing things [military culture].*

Sharing the same sentiments with Participant 37, Participant 32 (instructor) mentioned that:

*Recruits are familiarised with the "blue culture" through different courses, which they do in lecture rooms and practice on parade ground or in the relevant area. It is through these courses that they learn Military values of loyalty, duty, respect, chain of command, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage and begin physical and tactical military training.*

Adaptation is viewed as an important strategy adopted to deal with cross-cultural communication and diversity management problems. It is reported (by instructors) as an effective method that is consequently difficult to deal with. Participants mentioned that it is not easy to adapt to one's cultural behaviour or the presented communication style or to adapt to the developed third culture presented during BMT. Regardless of the identified challenge, participants supported that being able to adapt to the culture of a given individual or a third culture (for instance, "blue culture") created by various individuals can promote and enhance cross-cultural communication and working relationships. This process of acculturation was facilitated through theoretical framework, physical training and practical musketry training.

According to the instructors, recruits start adapting to military culture and learn about teamwork, hygiene, discipline, military programs and traditions. Through this process of acculturation, they also learn to handle weapons, equipment and advanced weaponry like machine guns and grenades as well as learning other hands-on aspects

of being a soldier by both theory and practice. Skills are expanded to understanding basic rifle marksmanship, maintenance and target engagement as well as learning to prioritise multiple targets and further develop hand-to-hand combat skills.

Molan (2017) and Gehrmann (2020) point out that adaptation is a strategy that is employed by global organisations and military forces in particular. The authors indicate that this strategy is used by various forces to eliminate cross-cultural communication barriers and diversity management tensions. It is used to promote cross-cultural engagements and understanding (cognition) of diverse cultural, religious and linguistic dimensions. This method further aids in Fast-tracking members' readjustment and acculturation process to a single culture (William, 2022). Adaption of the "blue culture" encourages the spirit of collaboration among recruits during training, combat and any other form of military activity. Thus, it enables recruits to work with others, share information and tolerate diverse cultural perspectives and expertise toward achieving a common goal. Acculturation into the "blue culture" helps recruits to build a collaboration culture in the military, understand discipline, a chain of command, hierarchy and authority as essential elements in the military as well as foster teamwork and trust among recruits and instructors.

#### 5.5.4 Diversity-embedded BMT curricula

All participants reported that, during the BMT course, troops (recruits) are equipped with the knowledge of acceptance, which helps them to accept people's differences. Diversity-embedded curricula should encourage equality and inclusion to foster a more inclusive BMT environment.

For instance, a BMT recruit from focus group C (participant 24) mentioned that:

*Courses are more effective in changing people's attitudes regarding a given phenomenon.*

Another BMT recruit from focus group B (participant 17) articulated that:

*Nothing beats the power of education. The more courses we receive regarding cross-cultural communication and diversity, the more positive we will engage in such interactions and the less the tensions and attitudes towards each other.*

Participant 28, BMT recruit from focus group C further reported that:

*I believe the more education we receive on cultural, linguistic, racial, sexual, traditional and religious differences, the better the diversity management and cross-cultural communication.*

Similarly, participant 37 (squadron manager) mentioned that:

*Education is a key to raising awareness, knowledge and changing perceptions, attitudes and behaviour towards a given topic.*

To further promote effective cross-cultural communication and reduce stereotypes, tensions and prejudices emanating from diversity and cross-cultural interactions, most of the participants remarked that BMT should encompass English for communication courses (classes), traditional or African spirituality courses and cultural and religious studies. In these courses, troops should be taught about the elements of diversity, diversity manifestation, cross-cultural communication and the strategies that could be employed to deal with diversity problems and raise diversity and cross-cultural communication competency.

Orna-Montesinos (2017) and Hussain (2018) concur with the above presentations and maintain that cross-cultural awareness and diversity competency are required to manage diversity and promote cross-cultural communication. This aids military personnel in understanding the importance of cross-cultural communication, diversity (and its elements) and diversity management in the military as well as to accept, adjust, and adapt to diverse environments.

Squadron manager (participant 36) mentioned that:

*I am not aware of any course related to diversity and communication. However, there are various courses related to particular Musterings in the entire SANDF. Learning from their contribution on knowledge development, I agree diversity and cross-cultural communication courses will solve a lot of our problems and familiarise us with possible solutions to these cultural differences related problems.*

Although participant 36 was not aware of any course(s) related to diversity and cross-cultural communication, it is acknowledged that courses of this nature will be helpful in conflict management and knowledge development. Regardless of Participant 36 lack of knowledge on courses relating to diversity, Heinecken (2009) indicated that various diversity management courses and seminars are implemented by the SANDF to address cross-cultural and diversity barriers (refer to section 3.4.2).

However, no specific known diversity course was raised by the participants. This indicates that the majority of members are not aware of the above-mentioned courses and seminars presented by the SANDF. This study thus aims to bridge the identified gap by raising awareness about these courses and further raise cognition about cross-cultural communication through the development of a cross-cultural communication and diversity management strategy.

#### 5.5.5 Diversity awareness campaigns

Cross-cultural communication and diversity awareness campaigns further emerged as both strategies and approaches to promote and manage diversity and cross-cultural communication issues. Diversity awareness has the potential to broaden recruits' view of BMT environment and to be aware of their cultural differences. Thus, recognising the varied collection of cultural values and demographics in your diverse setting. Raising diversity awareness campaigns is essential for fostering a more inclusive BMT. Establish safe spaces or open forums where recruits can share their experiences and discuss diversity experiences and challenges without fear of judgment. Support groups for underrepresented recruits are also viewed as strategies to foster connection and understanding during BMT.

From focus group C, participant 24 deliberated that:

*Awareness programmes and campaigns could be effective strategies to convey information flexibly and efficiently. In most cases, various languages are used to transmit knowledge and communicate with members. They further provide a platform for two-way communication whereby members can ask questions.*

Participant 37 (Squadron manager) further mentioned that:

*Hosting campaigns and giving out premiums will aid in raising cross-cultural communication and diversity cognition not only in the Air Force Gymnasium but also in all military bases and units in South Africa. I joined the military in 2009, however, I have never come across a campaign held in military Bases or Units to promote the identified topics – diversity and cross-cultural communication.*

From the above response, awareness campaigns are viewed as methods that have the potential to change individual behavior and attitudes and educate and raise cognition and awareness about a phenomenon. These kinds of social activities are viewed as platforms to teach how individuals should best deal with their differences. They are outreach programmes that transmit information in a more traditional and effective manner (Chinie, Biclesanu & Bellini, 2021). These methods were raised as

strategies that will contribute to the body of knowledge in various diverse military bases and units as it is horizontal and permits two-way communication between the members and the key holders or professionals of the awareness programmes.

This strategy is employed and perceived as one of the effective strategies by Ghana Armed Forces. Successful campaigns are viewed as strategies to aid in understanding the advantages of diversity in the military, which result in greater efficiency during training, combat, information sharing and tolerance of diverse cultural practices (Abubakar, 2021).

#### 5.5.6 Multi-media channels and diversity promotion

To further promote and enhance knowledge and awareness about cross-cultural communication and diversity, the data revealed that different multi-media channels can be employed to reduce issues evolving with differences. During the data collection phase, participant 4, BMT recruit, focus group A reported that:

*Posters, pamphlets and seminars that aim to instill knowledge about diversity and cross-cultural communication must be posted around the Air Force Gymnasium. Since I arrived at the Gymnasium, I have never come across such posters or pamphlets and we have never attended seminars related to such issues.*

Another BMT recruit from focus group B (participant 18) mentioned that:

*I think that posters, pamphlets and lectures must be used to support diversity and cross-cultural communication and raise cognition about such topics.*

Participant 29, focus group C (recruit) mentioned that:

*I suggest that pamphlets and posters must be posted around the training units to promote diversity management and cross-cultural communication strategies for the recruits along with their instructors and squadron managers.*

Moreover, participant 34 (instructor) further indicated that:

*Different cross-cultural communication and diversity management posters, presentations, lectures and seminars must be held during BMT to change individuals' negative perceptions, strengthen and promote cross-cultural communication and diversity.*

The above responses indicate that most of the participants were of similar views regarding communication channels that need to be used to support and/or promote cross-cultural communication and diversity in military training Units. As indicated above, posters and pamphlets are reported as the most effective communication

channels to raise awareness in military training Units. All participants (100%) from both interviews and focus group discussions mentioned that electronic and traditional posters and pamphlets could be used as one of the channels to enhance diversity and cross-cultural communication knowledge. Moreover, Officer Commanding of military bases could organise seminars, lectures and presentations as effective communication or media channels to create cognition and positive perceptions and attitudes toward diversity.

This finding concurs with Riseman (2016) and Abubakar (2021) who postulates that media channels are effective methods that attract individuals' attention and change the held perceptions, behaviour and attitudes towards a given phenomenon. The study of Heineken (2009), further indicates that seminars and lectures serve as educational methods, and they are thus regarded as effective channels to create and enhance knowledge and awareness about diversity and cross-cultural communication aspects. Attending lectures and seminars are critical aspects of communication channels; offering benefits not limited to the content presented which allows debating various viewpoints of diversity and culture, exploring topics in greater depth, question and answer sessions, knowledge sharing and collaborative discussions.

Additionally, participant 37 (Squadron manager) articulated that:

*The SAAF has its magazine known as Ad Astra magazine and different social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. These different media or communication platforms can be used to promote cross-cultural communication and diversity. Moreover, I believe that Chaplains of the SAAF can be used to create cross-cultural communication and diversity awareness and influence change.*

This finding indicates that both new and traditional media can be used to support cross-cultural communication and diversity in military training. This finding concurs with the U.S DoD Board on Diversity which also suggested that media is an effective promotional method for diversity (U.S DoD; Miller, 2020). Moreover, Waruszynski et al. (2021) and Grégoire (2021) and Watson (2019) that postulate media and multi-media channels play a critical role in changing individuals' perceptions, eliminating segregation and ensuring equality in different organisations including the military. Relevant social media platforms could also be utilised to interact or share content with the identified audience and gain community-based input and collaboration with relevant stakeholders.

The second statement of the finding reveals that chaplains as spiritual leaders of the military are suggested as messengers who can be used to change individuals' behaviour and attitudes toward diversity and cross-cultural communication. This appears as a gap in the present literature and should therefore be considered in future research.

#### 5.5.7 Cross-cultural communication and diversity legislative frameworks

Possible cross-cultural communication and diversity legislative frameworks were further raised as vital methods that can be employed to promote cross-cultural communication processes and diversity tolerance within the military training bases and units. The majority of the participants agree that the government, DoD, SANDF and other relevant stakeholders and associations should implement both the existing and proposed diversity and cross-cultural legislative frameworks.

Participant 32 (BMT instructor) elucidated that:

*Various regulations, Acts and policies must be developed to reinforce, promote and raise knowledge about cross-cultural communication and diversity. I am aware of the equal opportunity programmes and the AA approaches which played a critical role in bringing equality within the military. However, I feel like they are not enough for the promotion of cross-cultural engagements in military training organisations.*

A recruit from focus group A (participant 7) further shared the below sentiments with the instructor.

*Policies that promote and educate about diversity and cross-cultural communication must be developed, implemented and emphasised throughout the training period.*

These views concur with various scholars who have discovered that policies and legislative frameworks are crucial strategies that could be employed by various military forces to promote and educate members about cross-cultural communication and diversity management. Most scholars postulate that diversity policies are approaches that aim to address inequality and create equality within diverse organisations (Winslow et al., 2007; Heinecken, 2011; Okech & Masinjila, 2021; Schwarz, 2023). Regulatory frameworks have played a pivotal role in addressing past imbalances by promoting fair treatment and equality in the military and can therefore play a critical role in addressing cross-cultural communication and diversity concerns (Winslow et al., 2007; Prins, 2020), particularly in a multi-cultural society such as South Africa.

## **5.6 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER**

This chapter presented the analysis and interpretation of data, which were collected through different but complementary research methods (See section 4.8). The chapter presented the demographic information of participants which comprised race, gender, home language, age and instructor's and squadron manager's rank insignia and years of work experience in the military. It further presented and analysed the discursive themes of the study. The analysis indicates that the demographic details of participants play a crucial role in determining the effectiveness of diversity and cross-cultural communication between communicators. Evidence shows that participants' diverse cultural backgrounds, personal experiences and the socialisation process affect their perception of diversity and cross-cultural communication in the military setting. Additionally, the more exposure to diverse contexts, the greater the cross-cultural communication and diversity management skills and adaptation process trainees will possess. Furthermore, the chapter noted that various communication strategies can be used to raise diversity management and cross-cultural communication awareness in military training Units such as the Air Force Gymnasium. Multi-media channels and diversity awareness campaigns were suggested as some of the effective strategies with which to promote cross-cultural communication and diversity in the BMT. The final chapter of the study presents the summary of findings, recommendations and conclusions of the study. The chapter further presents the developed cross-cultural communication strategy for BMT recruits.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter marks the general inferences of the study. It presents the summary of findings, recommendations and concluding remarks of the study. The interprets and summarises the findings of the study in relation to the study objectives. Recommendations for future studies are presented as well as cross-cultural communication management strategies driven by the findings of the study. Furthermore, the limitations of the study are also outlined followed by the overall concluding remarks for the study. Although this chapter presents a summary of findings and recommendations, it also presents a developed cross-cultural communication strategy for BMT recruits operating in a diverse military training environment.

#### **6.2 RE-STATEMENT OF THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

With the diverse nature of the contemporary military forces, this study aimed to compose a cross-cultural communication strategy for diverse MSDS recruits undertaking BMT in the Air Force Gymnasium, Hoedspruit.

#### **6.3 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY FINDINGS**

This section interprets and discusses the research findings of the study. The sections reflect on the findings of the study from a comprehensive, interpretive perspective. The interpretation and discussion of findings are aligned with the research objectives of the study.

##### **6.3.1 To determine the nature and manifestation of diversity in BMT**

The study revealed that during BMT diversity manifests in multiple ways which include gender, language and multi-cultural practices, racial and ethnic diversity as well as religious diversity. This study also indicates that diversity manifests through individuals' demographic information. The manifestation elements of diversity are better understood through individuals' educational level, race, gender, language,

culture and religion. Figure 6.1. indicates the manifestation elements of diversity during BMT.

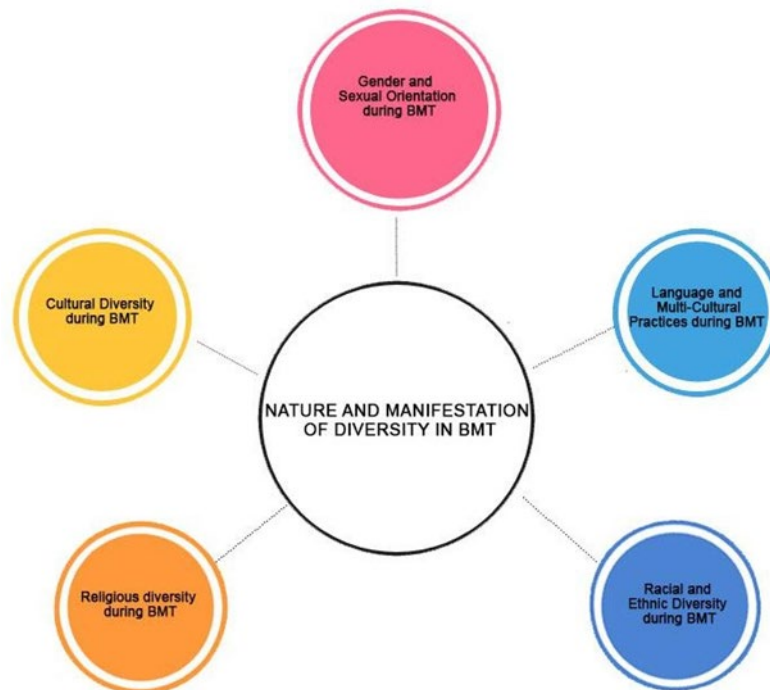


Figure 6. 1 Nature and manifestation of diversity in BMT (self-designed)

The above presented diversity manifestation elements occurred during BMT, and they are regarded as the primary barriers to effective cross-cultural communication and diversity management. BMT represents multiple cultures as it is integrated with diverse members from various social contexts. However, diversity and inclusivity evolve with different stereotypes, criticisms, judgments, assumptions, attitudes, conflicts, lack of tolerance, opposing collectivism and individualism beliefs, linguistic challenges and lack of recognition and acceptance of other cultures and their religious beliefs.

African spirituality and traditional beliefs appear to be major diversity aspects that continue to encounter recognition challenges during BMT. The practice is still experiencing judgments and criticisms from other members who have varying spiritual beliefs. This remains a major challenge for African traditional believers. The findings concur with Heineken (2005) positing that African cultural beliefs and practices are a challenge for the military as they are not acknowledged within the organisation.

Racial segregation which occurs during the recruits' contact sessions is also encountered as a challenge that hinders the opportunity for various racial groups to learn each other's languages and cultures. As a result, they fail to engage effectively in cross-cultural communication. Subsequently, culture and language appeared as cross-cultural challenges resulting in misunderstanding and misinterpretation of cultural norms, beliefs and non-verbal cues. As a male dominated military training environment, gender persists as a barrier whereby female recruits are regarded as soldiers who should serve in other military services or support roles other than combat.

### 6.3.2 To evaluate the impact of cultural diversity on cross-cultural communication during BMT

Geertz (1973) and Gustiawan (2020) posit that culture is a learned behaviour that is recurring and is shared among members of a given society. Members who belong to a given society ascribe to a given societal culture and hold to similar cultural beliefs, norms and values. Concurring with the above scholars, this study revealed that the interaction process is not only dependent on the communicators but also depends on their cultural background. This was evident during BMT, which comprised members from diverse cultural backgrounds who get to engage in cross-cultural communication. Due to the cultural differences, members encounter cross-cultural communication barriers. They assign different interpretations and meanings to communicated messages and perceive non-verbal communication differently depending on their cultural and historical background. Non-verbal cues or gestures are interpreted differently according to a given culture, whether acceptable or not.

This finding shares a similar sentiment with Heineken (2009) that people of different cultures assign different meanings to a given communication symbol. This results in cultural tensions and barriers to cross-cultural communication in diverse settings. Cultural diversity affects the process of cross-cultural communication and leads to ineffective communication outcomes as it is experienced during BMT amongst participants of various backgrounds. Cultural diversity leads to, among others, a lack of conflict management, lack of tolerance, lack of racial integration and unwillingness to accommodate and understand others' differences. It is amongst these reasons the

study argues for the importance of recruits' cultural knowledge of whom one is attempting to communicate with.

BMT participant's cultural and linguistic differences lead to ineffective cross-cultural communication and diversity management issues. The cross-cultural communication amongst the BMT recruits was impeded by their historically learned cultural behaviour and cultural differences as they originate from various South African provinces as well as belonging to various cultural and linguistic backgrounds. As a result, the study argues that during BMT, MSDS recruits experience strong conflicts, cross-cultural communication becomes more difficult, the willingness to cooperate with fellow recruits diminishes and group cohesion decreases among the recruits.

### 6.3.3 To identify cross-cultural communication strategies and approaches in BMT

This objective aimed to identify strategies and approaches employed to improve cross-cultural communication in diverse environments. Literature has widely recognised that diversity is a vital aspect that originates with a competitive advantage for various organisations. It evolves with varying ideas and perceptions which bring about efficiency and aid in effectively attaining the organisation's goals (Heinecken, 2020). Al-Jenaibi (2011) argues that working with culturally diverse individuals helps to overcome cultural dissimilarities through collective experiences. Thus, individuals coming from dissimilar cultures have different views and experiences, which could be of value and provide the military organisation with a sound and vast knowledge base. However, if diversity is not well managed, it could derail the organisation from attaining its goals.

Inclusivity in the military gives rise to various challenges, which impede effective cross-cultural communication management in diverse training environments. However, various strategies (depicted in Figure 6.2) are employed to deal with such challenges and promote cross-cultural communication processes during BMT.

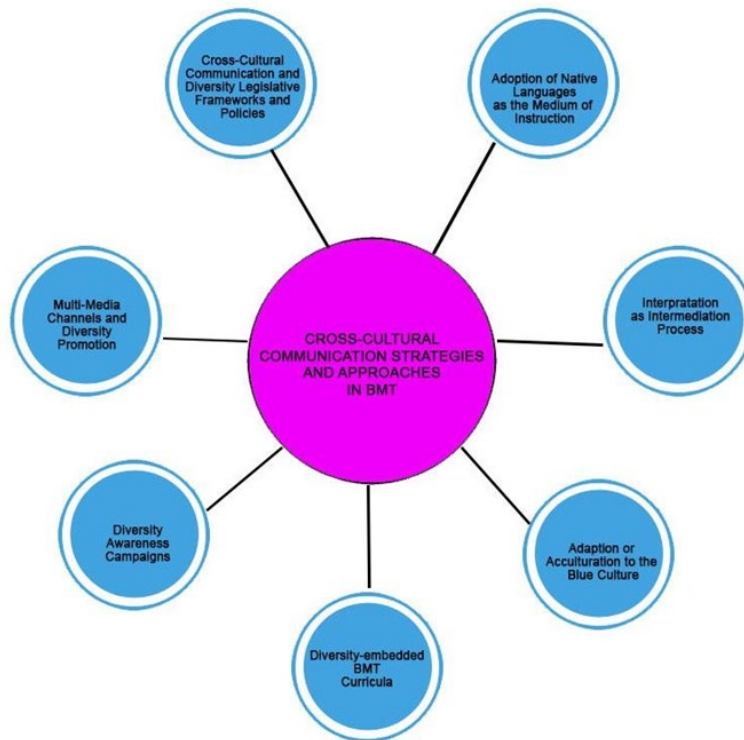


Figure 6. 2 Cross-cultural communication strategies and approaches in BMT (self-designed)

Chapter 3 (See section 3.4) indicated that AA and EEO programmes have been implemented by various military organisations to readdress the imbalances of the past and to promote diversity and equality within their bases and units. These legislative frameworks do not spell out the day-to-day activities and challenges, but they encourage cooperation and cultural diversity tolerance amongst members in diverse environments. The majority of members undertaking training are, however, not acquainted with these approaches. With this stipulated, participants indicated that various strategies should be utilised to deal with cross-cultural communication and diversity challenges. Among other strategies adopted, are the adaption of English as the medium of instruction, Interpretation as an intermediation process, adaptation or acculturation to the “blue culture”, diversity awareness campaigns and multi-media channels and diversity promotion.

To breach the linguistic gap (challenges), interpretation was adopted as an intermediation process for effective cross-cultural communication. Members who clearly understand a given African (native) language and can speak and understand

the English language were used as interpreters to convey a given message to particular individuals who experience linguistic challenges.

The adaptation to the “blue culture” was also supported to facilitate the acculturation process as an effective strategy to effective cross-cultural communication and diversity management. This encourages members to be open and flexible to change and adaptation. Moreover, the utilisation and promotion of the “blue culture” promote cross-cultural communication management and the value of collectivism among BMT participants. This method was employed to promote the process of transformation, culture change and adaptation system to a military culture. It required individuals to be instrumentalised in favour of collectivism (Dragomir, 2023). The identified military culture is instilled to promote discipline and the critical importance of the chain of command, group cohesion, selflessness and values the military code of conduct. The SAAF is operating with the adoption of the third culture to further enforce common values, attitudes, norms and behaviours that are shared amongst the military personnel and trainees.

Moreover, diversity-embedded BMT curricula (educational programmes) along with various multi-media channels, such as posters, pamphlets, seminars, lectures and diversity awareness campaigns are perceived as effective methods or strategies to enhance knowledge about cross-cultural communication in diverse military training bases and units. Education and Multi-media channels are regarded as effective tools to change the perceptions and attitudes of members partaking in BMT and to effectively encourage acceptance of peoples’ differences. Additionally, chaplains who serve as military ministries and provide spiritual support and counseling to the members are viewed as messengers who could effectively transmit and educate about diversity and cross-cultural engagement in the military (SAAF) training bases and units.

#### 6.3.4 To develop a communication strategy to manage diversity across cultures during BMT

This study proposed to compose a cross-cultural communication strategy for BMT recruits during training. Therefore, this objective aimed to fulfill the identified aim of the study. This study has explored the manifestations of diversity within the SAAF training

environment, revealing both the richness and the tensions inherent in a multicultural, multilingual and multi-faith institution. The strategic framework proposed is not a standalone solution but a synthesis of the study findings and existing scholarship. It reflects a commitment to institutional transformation that is both evidence-based and theoretically grounded. The strategic recommendations presented in this study are grounded in the empirical findings and informed by existing scholarship on diversity, institutional culture and leadership in structured environments such as the military. Rather than presenting the strategy in isolation, this section critically engages with the data and situates the proposed approach within broader theoretical and practical frameworks.

The findings revealed several key challenges in the SAAF training environment, including religious homogeneity among instructors, linguistic and cultural diversity among recruits and gendered experiences that affect inclusion and cohesion. These issues are not unique to the SAAF and have been documented in military contexts globally. For example, Winslow (1998) and Segal (1986) emphasise the importance of cultural representation and inclusive leadership in fostering unit cohesion and morale. Similarly, Thomas and Ely's (1996) paradigms of diversity management highlight the need for organisations to move beyond surface-level representation toward deeper structural transformation.

A communication strategy was therefore developed with the primary purpose of resolving the experienced challenges, fostering unity and promoting effective cross-cultural communication amongst MSDS recruits undertaking military training. It responds to the specific challenges identified in the SAAF while contributing to broader conversations about inclusion in hierarchical and culturally complex environments. The strategy further raises diversity awareness and cognition about cross-cultural communication in diverse contexts and its impact on the productivity of military bases and units.

This communication strategy incorporated Steyn and Puth's (2000) model for communication strategy development as outlined in Figure 3.1 and steps of developing a communication strategy outlined in the Government communicators' handbook (2014-2017). Both these sources were adopted as they comprise all the necessary strategic plans or stages required to carry out a corporate communication strategy,

from environmental analyses, identifying strategic stakeholders and key objectives, providing key messages, composing a budget plan, implementing the strategy to evaluating and measuring the failure or success of the strategy.

Moreover, the developed strategy outlines the steps that should be followed by the military organisations, themes and messages that need to be communicated to promote cross-cultural communication management amongst BMT recruits, instructors, squadron managers and other stakeholders through the use of appropriate channels. The presented literature review indicated that the SAAF has no developed cross-cultural communication strategy for BMT. Therefore, the proposed strategy aims to fill the gap in the literature and promote cross-cultural communication management in the SA Air Force Gymnasium and beyond.

### ➤ **Towards a SAAF BMT cross-cultural communication strategy**

Based on the Government Communicators' Handbook (2014-2017) communication strategy guidelines and Steyn and Puth's (2000) communication strategy framework, this section outlines a cross-cultural communication strategy tailored for BMT within the SAAF Gymnasium.

#### ○ Introduction and Background

As indicated in the historical overview of the South African military (chapter two), pre-1994, the South African region was represented by a non-inclusive military that comprised the majority of personnel who originated from similar cultural, racial and linguistic backgrounds (Heinecken, 2011). SADF was a force that was dominated and ruled by members of similar racial, cultural and linguistic groups. During this period, diversity was not regarded as the key aspect of efficient work missions and outcomes. Access to the military within the SADF was limited to White members who served in various divisions of the military bases and units. Consequently, this brought about various guerilla armies that aimed to challenge the pre-1994 military strategies, policies and legislative frameworks. The guerilla armies fought for the spirit of inclusiveness, equality and fairness in the South African Defence Force. In 1994, the mission to diversity and inclusivity in the South African Armed Forces was achieved

and different members began to serve in different sections of the military. This gave birth to the SANDF - a military force that is inclusive and encourages diversity.

SANDF gave equal opportunities for all South African citizens to serve in the military regardless of their differences. Diverse people were provided with an opportunity to undergo military training (BMT) undertaken in diverse military bases and units. However, this inclusive transformation emerged with different limitations. As a diverse military force, the SANDF evolved with various diversity issues brought about by members who originate from different racial, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Military personnel began to experience cross-cultural communication and diversity challenges during their daily work and throughout their military training phase. This is evident in the SAAF whereby MSDS recruits undertaking training in the SA Air Force Gymnasium encounter cross-cultural communication and diversity challenges that evolve with different members from all nine provinces of South Africa.

- Problem identification

Section 1.2 indicates that BMT consists of diverse recruits who originate from different social groups and traditions and evolve with different linguistic backgrounds, cultural heritages and communication behaviour which hinders the occurrence of effective cross-cultural communication. Concurring with the above, Aririguzoh (2022) asserts that cross-cultural communication issues arise due to confusion created by misunderstanding, misperception, misconstruction and misevaluation of messages between diverse senders and receivers of messages. This occurs amongst BMT recruits who carry their cultural biases and peculiarities into their communication process, thus leading to cross-cultural communication barriers such as stereotypes, prejudice, ethnocentrism and racism. To bridge the identified gap, a cross-cultural communication strategy is required to raise cross-cultural communication awareness and knowledge among members undertaking BMT in the Air Force Gymnasium.

- Internal environmental analysis

The environmental analysis scrutinises the situational or contextual factors where the strategy is implemented. Therefore, this theme sets out the demography, forces at

play, mandate, public mood, individuals' attitudes and concerns, political issues and media agenda on diversity and cross-cultural communication in the SA military.

### *Mandate*

The constitution of the Republic of South Africa maintains that all citizens of the Republic have the right to equality (Section 7 of the Bill of Rights). This states that all members must be treated equally regardless of their race, gender, language, ethnicity, religion, culture and disability. Section 31 (1) of the Bill of Rights postulates that all different members must be permitted to practice and enjoy their own culture, use their language and practice their religion of choice. To further promote equality and to address the past imbalances that were present in various workplaces, the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 and the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 4 of 2000 were implemented to redress the inequalities and promote equal opportunities and fair treatment for all personnel and civil members of the society. The Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 emanated with the AA which emphasises that organisations must be representative and encourage equal opportunities for diverse (designated) members. It aims to prevent unfair discrimination and encourages accommodation, respect and equal employment opportunities for various members (South African Constitution, 1996).

The SANDF along with its arms of services is not excluded from these Acts as it draws its mandate from the South African constitution. It complies with all the legislative frameworks of SA including the government's equal opportunity laws. The Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 is used by the SANDF to redefine the past injustices that were presented in the military. The Act is employed to ensure social justice and equitable or fair treatment of diverse members. It aims to promote equal opportunities and eliminate unfair discrimination among military personnel. The DoD further implemented the EEO and AA programmes which aimed to eliminate discrimination practices and attitudes towards designated members of the force. These programmes offer training and courses which are required to qualify and promote the above-mentioned members (South African Defence Review, 2015). Heinecken (1998:220) further stipulates that the SANDF is committed to "foster a non-racial, non-sexist and non-discriminatory institutional culture in line with the

constitutional imperatives in the widespread transformation of the military affecting virtually every facet of the organisation - institutional, structural and cultural”.

Members are further permitted to freedom of expression which is thus against the promotion of hatred that is based on ethnicity, race, gender, culture and religion that “constitutes incitement to cause harm” (Section 16, Subsection 2 (c) of the Bill of Rights).

### *Political Concerns*

The SANDF operates in a politically active environment whereby various political parties manifest for various social and economic factors. These political parties aim to encourage growth, transformation or development in various communities and public and private entities. The African National Congress (ANC) manifesto (2019), stipulated that SA is operating in a new era that aims to fight against inequality and promote inclusiveness and diversity in various workplaces. Amongst other aspects, it manifested in the celebration of all South African cultures and unity in various government programmes and entities. Similarly, the Democratic Alliance (DA) (n.d) and the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) (2024) advocates for inclusion and the eradication of unfair discrimination through the enforcement of the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 4 of 2000.

The above statements indicate that diversity is not only a societal concern, but it is also a political matter. Political organisations believe that the people of South Africa must be treated fairly regardless of their demographic background. They maintain that South Africa is a diverse society and all members must have equal opportunities, practice their customs and exist without the domination of others. Inclusion is perceived as the core element of equal opportunity. With this mentioned, it is indicated that the SANDF’s inclusion and equality policy is supported by the constitution and related political parties. Therefore, this communication strategy proposes that political parties (politicians) should be viewed as communication modes to educate and raise cross-cultural communication competency in the military training Units.

### *Media Agenda*

Similar to political parties, the media promotes equality and fairness in their daily reports. Cross-cultural communication and diversity management initiatives are broadcasted in different media platforms whereby different members report, engage and communicate with members from diverse backgrounds. The promotion of diversity in the media is governed by the Media Development and Diversity Agency Act 2002, which was established to promote diversity and support media development in small commercial and community media. The Act further aims to redress the “exclusion and marginalisation of disadvantaged communities and persons from access to the media and the media industry” (Annual Report of the Media Development and Diversity Agency, 2018:3).

Regardless of age, gender, culture, language and race, the Media Development and Diversity Agency Act (2002) promotes equal media access to various members, and it is against any discrimination and unfair treatment of any person because of their diverse nature. This was evident in the City Press newspaper which is against any form of discrimination and published an article titled ‘Air Force racial rift surfaces after 14 years. The article reported on discrimination cases against black student pilots by instructors at the Central Flying School (CFS) at the AFB Langebaanweg. It was reported that black students are not treated equally to their White counterparts and the base had not yet embraced cultural diversity and the principles of transformation (Stone, 2018). For fair treatment of all diverse members, the article recommended that cross-cultural communication and cultural diversity should be a requirement for instructor qualification (Stone, 2018).

### *Attitudes and Concerns*

Chapter 5 revealed that diverse members undertaking BMT emerge with various attitudes, beliefs and concerns that impede effective cross-cultural communication amongst themselves. Language and cultural aspects are carried in cross-cultural conversions, leading to misconstruction and misunderstanding of the intended messages. Carried cultural peculiarities evolve with generalisations or stereotypes and attitudes which influence the cross-cultural engagement of diverse people (Aririguzoh, 2022). However, it is revealed that members equipped with knowledge and experience

regarding diverse social contexts engage effectively in cross-cultural interactions and have more positive attitudes toward differences as compared to those without knowledge or skill.

### *Public Mood*

Similar to attitudes and concerns, the study findings indicated that the more knowledge, awareness and experience on cross-cultural communication in diverse contexts, the higher the positive perceptions, attitudes and moods towards the phenomena. This reveals that there is an interrelationship between individuals' knowledge and their mood towards a given topic of interest. This is also raised by Rachlinski (2021) who postulates that diversity cognition influences the way members receive and process messages from different members and leads to effective communication and positive moods which sustains effective relationships among diverse people.

### *Demography*

This study was conducted with diverse individuals who originate from diverse backgrounds. The participants belong to various demographical categories which can influence their attitudes towards a phenomenon. It has been revealed that one's demographical information concerning race, language, religion, race and culture has an impact on their opinions about diversity and cross-cultural communication. Learned cultural beliefs, language, biases and communication symbols and gestures are carried to the communication process between different people, thus impeding effective cross-cultural communication. Moreover, miscommunication and misunderstanding emerge through cultural, racial and linguistic judgment created among members (Aririguzoh, 2022).

### *Forces at Play (Stakeholders)*

This strategy considers various members and organisations which have an impact on cross-cultural communication awareness raising in the military sector. Public and private organisations which focus on security solutions and overlook the security of the SA region, and its citizens are considered the forces at play for this strategy. These organisations include the DoD, South African Police Service - which is also

undertaking security training with diverse members, civil security which provides integrated security resolutions that result in military efficacy and the Council for Scientific Industrial Research (CSIR) - an independent contributor to SA security and sovereignty. Moreover, academics as members who contribute to the body of knowledge, politicians, the media, policy or legislative framework practitioners and all SANDF members are regarded as the forces at play for this strategy.

- Strategic emphasis

Cross-cultural communication tensions such as stereotypes (generalisations), linguistic challenges, collectivism and individualism aspects of culture and religious tensions occur between recruits and their instructors and squadron managers. Thus, this strategy stresses eliminating these tensions and improving cross-cultural communication among diverse members who undertake training in the SA Air Force Gymnasium. It further emphasises the following key aspects:

- Promote diversity and cross-cultural communication competency, knowledge and awareness through various military cross-cultural communication and diversity management training programmes (For instance, language programmes) and campaigns on acculturation and accommodation of other different members.
- Educate recruits on diversity and cross-cultural communication to eradicate and re-address racial, cultural, linguistic and religious stereotypes, prejudices and tensions amongst BMT recruits.
- Language-sensitive communication training: Recognising the multilingual nature of the SAAF and equipping instructors with tools to navigate linguistic diversity effectively, thereby reducing miscommunication and enhancing mutual understanding.
- Addressing the religious and cultural homogeneity among instructors by implementing inclusive recruitment and promotion practices that reflect the demographic diversity of the recruit population.
- Gender-responsive mentorship structures: Establishing support systems that acknowledge and address the unique challenges faced by female recruits.

- Institutional reflexivity: Encouraging ongoing reflection within the organisation about whose values and norms are being privileged, and how these affect the lived experiences of all members.
- Communication objectives

This strategy is developed to achieve specific objectives about cross-cultural communication. As stipulated above, this study revealed that the majority of BMT recruits lack cross-cultural communication competency and operate with varying attitudes which impede the effective flow of cross-cultural communication and tolerance amongst themselves. With this mentioned, this strategy aims to accomplish the following objectives:

- To raise awareness and educate BMT recruits about diversity issues and strategies to deal with differences to improve cross-cultural communication competency through the integration of cross-cultural communication training into the BMT curriculum.
- To promote and familiarise members with cultural tolerance, acculturation and accommodation of various members from different backgrounds.
- To eliminate cultural tensions and create sustainable knowledge and positive attitudes about cross-cultural communication that occurs in a diverse military context.
- To encourage the development of cross-cultural communication programmes which familiarise BMT recruits with different social etiquette, diplomacy and regional cross-cultural expertise.
- Strategic messages

This strategy is based on the following core message:

- Unity through diversity in communication – Emphasising that mutual understanding and respect strengthen team cohesion and operation effectiveness.

Supporting messages:

- Communication is the foundation of effective teamwork.
- Respect and openness are essential for cross-cultural understanding.
- Diversity knowledge and awareness promotes constructive cross-cultural communication.
- Communication messengers

Communication messengers refer to the relevant parties, organisations and affiliates who can deliver messages to the relevant stakeholders. Therefore, this strategy suggests that the President or Deputy President of South Africa, Minister and Deputy Minister of South African DoD, Secretary of Defence, Chief of the SANDF, Commanders or Chiefs of the different Arms of Services, Military bases, and units and leaders of various military directorates and sections must be considered as the primary parties to promote and deliver messages about cross-cultural communication in diverse military environments.

- President or Deputy President

To effectively promote positive attitudes and develop educational programmes about cross-cultural communication in the SANDF training units and bases, the President (Commander in Chief) or Deputy President is considered the most influential and credible individual whom the society looks up to. Messages delivered by these dignified members are credible and members of the society act upon the delivered message. The president and the Deputy President are perceived as the primary commanders to encourage military personnel to operate fairly, to be accommodative and tolerant of all aspects of culture and to live with the spirit of Ubuntu at all times.

- Minister, Deputy Minister and Secretary for Defence

The Minister or Deputy Minister is the representative of the SANDF who operates with the ability to ensure that the arms of services are effectively functioning, and they execute their national duties and responsibilities. Therefore, he or she may direct messages and encourage military organisations and personnel to effectively operate

in a diverse environment and employ various strategies to manage cross-cultural communication. The Minister can further support and recommend the integration of various cross-cultural communication and diversity programmes during BMT. The secretary of Defence may also transfer the identified messages to the appropriate parties.

- Chief of the SANDF

The Chief of the SANDF can influence and encourage the behaviour of the military personnel towards a phenomenon. The Chief has the ability to command and to send messages which recommend the development of cross-cultural competency programmes and strategies to manage cross-cultural communication in the current diverse military force.

- Chiefs of the arms of services and commanders of military bases and units

The SANDF comprises four arms of services which consist of different bases and units. The Chiefs of the Arms of services have a direct influence on their bases and units which are led by various commanders. Thus, cross-cultural communication and cultural accommodation messages can be communicated and promoted through these dignitaries. Moreover, orders which promote and approve the incorporation of educational programmes in cross-cultural communication can be constructed for training purposes.

- Communication channels

For this communication strategy, the following communication channels are suggested to be utilised during BMT:

- Diversity-embedded BMT curricula

The study reveals that during BMT, diversity education through lectures and seminars on cross-cultural communication and the ability to recognise and tolerate cultural differences must be held to enhance cross-cultural communication and equality while minimising the perceived tensions caused by diversity. During such lectures and seminars, interpreters must be utilised to minimise language barriers.

- Multimedia channels and diversity promotion

The SAAF corporate communications officials may construct articles that promote cross-cultural communication and diversity tolerance through its respective magazines and the intranet. Moreover, various SANDF social media (for instance, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to mention a few) platforms may be used to publish and popularise diversity and cross-cultural communication that originate with BMT. Additionally, cross-cultural communication and diversity promotional materials such as posters must be posted around the SA Air Force Gymnasium's living areas (bungalows), notice boards, halls and lecture rooms. Moreover, pamphlets could be utilised and handed over to BMT recruits, their instructors and their squadron managers.

- Diversity awareness campaigns

Members from the SAAF must visit BMT recruits and educate them about diversity and cross-cultural communication and their impact on the organisation. Cross-cultural communication campaigns must also be used to promote and raise awareness about cross-cultural communication in diverse work contexts and change recruits' attitudes toward one another.

- Interfaith training on religious morality

Chaplains as military spiritual leaders have the potential to influence members' behaviour and distribute information about diversity-related matters.

- Feedback mechanisms

The SAAF Gymnasium should have anonymous feedback channels (suggestion box) to allow recruits to report any cross-cultural communication issues or improvements required.

- Identification of Strategic Stakeholders and publics in the internal and external environment

This communication strategy aims to deliver cross-cultural communication messages that will aid in creating cognition regarding the above-mentioned theme. This strategy

aims to address BMT recruits as the primary target audience who operate in a diverse setting on the daily basis of training. However, to emphasise the message and to raise cognition to a large target audience, the strategy suggests that the following members (secondary audience) must be considered as the secondary stakeholders:

- Instructors, squadron managers and administrative staff who influence BMT recruits' communication environment and guide their socialisation.
- SAAF transformation management officials.
- SAAF chaplain services.
- SAAF corporate communication.
- Policy and decision-makers.
- Parliamentarians.

Priority issue	Desired outcome	The target audience of the strategy	The key message to be communicated	Communication tools
Prioritise and instil a culture of diversity tolerance, accommodation and acculturation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Promote and raise awareness of cross-cultural communication in diverse work contexts</li> <li>➤ To change individuals' perceptions and behaviour toward cultural differences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Instructors and squadron managers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Promote accommodation and tolerance as a vital tool for effective cross-cultural communication and positive training outcomes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Lectures</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ SAAF transformation management officials</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Respect and have compassion toward people's differences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Public participation in presentations, seminars and conferences</li> <li>➤ Posters and Flyers</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ SAAF chaplain services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Value different beliefs presented by different individuals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Church sessions</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The media</li> <li>➤ Policy and decision-makers</li> <li>➤ Public and private security companies</li> <li>➤ Parliamentarians and politicians</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Accommodate differences and avoid pull-down syndrome towards members of diverse genders (sexual orientations), races, religions or language</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Electronic and print media (for instance, newspapers, social media, television slots, etc.)</li> <li>➤ Community-based media through community radio</li> </ul>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Regard diversity as our strength and not our weakness</li> <li>➤ Value cross-cultural communication and normalise engaging in it</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Stations and community print media</li> <li>➤ Posters, Flyers and Billboards</li> <li>➤ Personalities through opinion leaders, political figures</li> </ul>

				d ambassadors ➤ Outreach programmes, exhibitions and campaigns held at Air Force Gymnasium
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Table 6. 1 Stakeholder engagement strategy

○ Communication challenges

Communication challenges refer to the aspects that hinder the communication mission and the effective transmission of the message. This section presents the communication challenges or barriers to effective cross-cultural communication.

- This study revealed that members who are resistant to change fail to adapt to diverse contexts and therefore create cross-cultural communication barriers.
- Culture is also a communication challenge that is carried into the cross-cultural communication process and evolves with cultural symbols (non-verbal cues) interpreted differently by diverse people. It creates cross-cultural communication tensions and misunderstandings among the BMT recruits.
- Similar racial and linguistic group engagements and conversations that occur amongst recruits.
- Intentionally held attitudes, biases and stereotypes about given cultural or tribal groups.

○ Communication programmes and milestones

Government communicators' handbook (2014-2017) designates that communication programmes and milestones serve as the blueprint for future programmes of an organisation. This subsection sets out the communication programmes and milestones (illustrated in Table 6.2) of upcoming cross-cultural communication campaigns which might be performed during BMT.

Programme	Targeted milestone	Communication approach	Budget	Responsibility	Time frame
Awareness and cognition-raising campaigns on cross-cultural communication	Generate diversity and cross-cultural communication knowledge which will result to positive attitudes and accommodation of diverse recruits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Outreach programmes in the SA Air Force Gymnasium</li> <li>➤ Posters and pamphlets</li> </ul>	Depends on the SAAF's budget	Depends on the appointed commander or team who will be accountable for the programme	Depends on the schedule of the SAAF and SA Air Force Gymnasium in particular

Table 6. 2 Communication programmes and milestones

○ Action plan

Training activities are diverse, and they require cross-cultural communication skills or knowledge which can be transmitted through various communication channels and campaigns. For such campaigns and programmes to occur, an action plan which lays out the planned activities is required. With this mentioned, this section presents a desired cross-cultural communication action plan for diverse military training contexts.

Event/ Opportunity	Activity	Action	Channels	Budget
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Awareness campaigns and programmes</li> <li>➤ Seminar or lecture on diversity and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Develop pamphlets on cross-cultural communication and provide various presentations and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Engage with BMT recruits along with their instructors and squadron managers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Traditional media through the use of pamphlets, module materials, and community (local) radio station located</li> </ul>	Depends on the SAAF's budget

cross-cultural communication	<p>examples on the topic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Include a cross-cultural communication module on the BMT programme</li> <li>➤ Implement cross-cultural communication and diversity lecture materials which will be utilised to raise knowledge on the identified theme</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Provide a lecture on diversity and cross-cultural communication</li> </ul>	<p>next to SA Air Force Gymnasium</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ New media- SAAF social media pages</li> <li>➤ SAAF intranet</li> </ul>	
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Table 6. 3 Action plan

➤ **Implementation tactics**

- Cultural sensitivity training - conduct mandatory workshops focusing on cultural awareness, empathy and effective communication techniques.
- Language support and resources - provide language resources and if possible, employ multilingual instructors support and bridge language gaps.
- Team building exercises - use cross-cultural team building activities to help recruits develop mutual respect and overcome cross-cultural barriers.

○ **Monitoring and evaluation**

Monitoring and evaluation are critical factors that are conducted to measure and assess the effectiveness of a communication strategy and to check if the identified aim of a strategy has been effectively attained or relinquished. To evaluate the contribution, effectiveness and impact of this strategy, different data collection tools (through surveys, summative assessments and focus group discussions) could be used over a given period. These identified tools might be employed to track or assess

change, development and constraints on cross-cultural communication awareness and competency. The collected data will then be analysed and distributed to the relevant key target audience and stakeholders. Monitoring and evaluating the developed communication strategy is thus suggested for further research.

#### **6.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The study encountered the below-mentioned limitations.

##### **6.4.1 Geographical area**

The SANDF comprises four arms of services which include the SA Army, SA Navy (SAN), SAAF and the South African Military Health Services (SAMHS). However, this study was area-bound. It was limited to the SAAF BMT base – Air Force Gymnasium. The study might not be generalisable to all other arms of services but could be generalised to all SAAF bases and training units. Conducting the study in different BMT units of all SA arms of services could have yielded more in-depth information regarding diversity and cross-cultural communication management challenges. Although the study could not be generalised across all bases of other arms of service and countries the findings and recommendations of the study could be useful to these arms of service and various diverse organisations.

##### **6.4.2 Methodological limitations**

As indicated in Chapter 4, this was a qualitative research design study. Qualitative research was followed, and qualitative data collection methods were employed to achieve the intended aim and objectives of the study. Focus group discussions were conducted with BMT recruits; however, this affected some participants who are introverts and lack the confidence to express themselves in a public space. Few recruits were quiet and reserved during the data collection process. Some information was therefore not acquired from the participants unless they shared the sentiment with those who voiced their opinions. Contrary, other participants outspoken their views and opinions and dominated the entire group. Utilising a mixed method could have limited these challenges. Employing closed-ended questionnaires to BMT recruits could have provided information from the entire participants and even used a larger sample.

## **6.5 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY**

This study developed a cross-cultural communication strategy for BMT recruits. The strategy is developed to overcome the cross-cultural communication barriers and diversity management challenges experienced in a multicultural environment. With the current global environments and the diverse nature of contemporary organisations, this study raises knowledge and creates awareness of the key elements of diversity and cross-cultural communication challenges for the SANDF, its arms of services and divisions and other diverse organisations.

By critically engaging with the data and situating the strategy within established frameworks, the study contributes to the academic discourse on diversity and inclusion in military contexts. It offers a nuanced understanding of how identity, power and representation intersect in structured environments and proposes actionable steps towards a more inclusive and equitable SAAF.

The study raises cognisance about the relevant theoretical frameworks which can be employed and followed by diverse organisations daily. The cross-cultural communication strategy provides diversity and cross-cultural communication guidelines which can be utilised to raise knowledge on diversity management and cross-cultural communication for various government and non-governmental organisations of different regions. The study indicates diversity and cross-cultural communication strategies that might be employed by the decision-makers and the diversity practitioners of the SAAF and SANDF and the international and domestic regions extensively.

Moreover, this study presents the key focus issues related to diversity and cross-cultural communication within the SAAF and SANDF. This might enhance understanding of the role of diversity and cross-cultural communication management in the SAAF and the SANDF at large. The study shall further contribute to the body of knowledge and benefit academics and researchers in the fields of communication, culture, security studies and human resource management.

## 6.6 RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of the study identify some gaps or limitations which need to be filled. To replenish the gaps, this section provides cross-cultural communication recommendations pertaining to future researchers and diverse organisations.

To reduce limitations and to improve cross-cultural communication amongst members of the SAAF, this study recommends that cross-cultural communication educational programmes and training must be regarded as a paramount tool used to raise cross-cultural awareness and cross-cultural communication competence amongst diverse groups. Educational programmes should be used to limit cross-cultural communication and diversity challenges encountered in diverse social settings.

To further improve sustainable collaboration and effective cross-cultural communication, education and training on cultural or linguistic differences must be prioritised during and after the military training period. Knowledge and cognition on cross-cultural communication and diversity results in cross-cultural communication and diversity management competency.

Emphasising the above recommendations, this study revealed that to address cross-cultural communication barriers and cultural diversity challenges, the SAAF and/or SANDF must develop and facilitate diversity awareness seminars that deal with language, religion, African spirituality and cultural dissimilarities. Moreover, Chaplain (religious leaders) should focus on improving individuals' behaviour and attitudes on cross-cultural communication and diversity through interfaith training on religious morality to enhance support and cognition on the identified aspects.

Develop and implement different cross-cultural (diversity) awareness campaigns that will be utilised in various societies and organisations. The campaigns should emphasise cultural diversity and tolerance to address individuals' differences and raise awareness that no culture, language or race is superior to the other. The concepts of equality, tolerance, accommodation, adaptability and understanding of other cultures must form the basic principle of such campaigns. A longitudinal experimental study focusing on evaluating, measuring and testing cross-cultural communication competency and effective diversity management skills could come in handy.

Moreover, a comparison study should be undertaken to measure the level of cross-cultural communication and diversity expertise in all training Bases and Units of all Arms of Services. A study sampling of other arms of services should be considered to yield results that could be generable to the entire SANDF. This will assist in developing and benchmarking effective and successful strategies for managing diversity and promoting effective cross-cultural communication in the SANDF.

The study further recommends that more guidelines and policies which promote equality, cross-cultural communication and diversity should be initiated and enforced in the military and other organisations. Such policies must promote diversity and cross-cultural communication understanding, cultural diversity and racial integration, ethno-cultural diversity and inclusivity, cultural diversity and tolerance of others' differences and emphasise that differences are not weaknesses but organisational strengths.

Organisations are to develop cross-cultural communication and diversity management offices managed by the designated cross-cultural communication and diversity management committee which must govern, measure and report on cross-cultural communication and diversity management progress. Within Human Resource divisions, organisations should have committees dealing with social and cultural challenges. Such committees must create forums where organisational members meet, engage, and share opinions and experiences.

## **6.7 CONCLUSION**

South Africa is a multicultural region known as a rainbow nation with a racially diverse society. As a result, the organisations within the country are diverse and are equal employment opportunities (as supported by the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998) to all different members of the country. Contrary to the pre-apartheid military, the South African contemporary military forces (SANDF) comprise members of different racial, cultural and linguistic backgrounds with given learned and transmitted behaviours. This study argues that these diverse behaviours evolve with varying barriers that impede effective cross-cultural communication and diversity management. Members who undertake military training are not excluded from these challenges. The study argued that cultural diversity affects recruits' attitudes towards those of different cultures leading to ineffectiveness and low performance during BMT, as well as

unwillingness to tolerate and cooperate with fellow recruits belonging to different cultural groups. However, from a “blue culture” perspective, diversity awareness facilitates a more functional problem-solving process and free flow of communication; that is, a better quality of decision making from dissimilar experiences and viewpoints that recruits bring to their team members where one willingly learns and benefit from others culture.

This study composed a cross-cultural communication strategy that can be employed to promote effective cross-cultural communication and diversity management during BMT. The EIWCT, interaction adaptation and adaptation theory were employed as the theoretical frameworks that guided the study. It is indicated that the more the adaptation process between diverse members the greater the cross-cultural communication and effective diversity management were realised.

It is amongst these reasons the study concludes that when one has adopted or has been acculturated to the “blue culture”, they share similar symbolic meanings such as salutes and other military-specific symbols with other members. One’s ability to share similar meaning with other recruits could not be excluded from this scenario as well as one’s ability to change behavioural patterns to make it suitable for BMT purpose or environment. Adaptation enables recruits to learn about and from one another’s cultural backgrounds, facilitating cross-cultural communications and collaborations and helping them overcome cultural diversity challenges experienced during BMT. It also fosters cultural acceptance and tolerance with those from diverse cultures, creating a free flow of communication and a functional BMT environment.

Gender and sexual orientation, language and multi-cultural practices, racial and ethnic diversity, religious diversity and African beliefs (spirituality) as well as lack of conflict management skills, lack of cultural tolerance and lack of racial integration during BMT are the principal aspects that result to diversity management challenges and communication barriers amongst diverse members. However, it was revealed that ‘the more the cognition and experience about social diversity context’, the more effective communication amongst different members. This reveals that there is a relationship between education (cognition), awareness, experience and the management of diversity and cross-cultural communication. Therefore, BMT undertaking in a diverse

context should be integrated with various approaches such as educational courses and seminars to raise cultural diversity awareness and manage cross-cultural communication challenges. Interfaith training on religious morality was also recommended by this study.

Communication remains central for all activities during BMT amongst MSDS recruits, instructors, squadron managers and other stakeholders. Communication is a critical tool used to establish and maintain healthy working relationships; however, communication does not occur without understanding. This vital aspect of communication 'understanding' is hindered by cultural and linguistic background which, if not well handled could undermine the process of the BMT. It is, therefore, necessary for both recruits and instructors to strive to become effective cross-cultural communicators through the adoption of various strategies to overcome challenges brought about by diversity. The study also realised that linguistic gap (failure to understand other languages) serves as an obstacle to effective communication due to misinterpretation or distortion of the speaker's intended meaning or message. These communication barriers arise from differences in languages and the context in which expressions are uttered, leading to misunderstandings, miscommunication, and errors in decision making and hindering teamwork amongst recruits.

To avoid distortion and misinterpretation of the meaning of a message communicated, strategies like interpretation and English were adopted by recruits and instructors during BMT. These strategies provided recruits from diverse ethnic, cultural and linguistic groups and social classes to learn from one another. It enables recruits to acquire skills and develop a positive attitude to communicate among themselves and foster acceptance and tolerance with those from diverse cultures to create a free flow of communication and a functional BMT environment. These strategies further encouraged recruits to learn about and from one another's cultural backgrounds, which facilitates cross-cultural communications and collaborations and helps them overcome cultural diversity challenges experienced during BMT.

Concurring with the literature, the findings from data collections also conclude that effective communication is a prerequisite for a successful BMT and all other military operations. Because of the diverse labour force and regular cross-cultural

communications challenges, it was argued that military organisations need strategies to manage their diverse workforce. The study proposed a cross-cultural communication strategy to overcome communication and diversity management challenges experienced during BMT

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



**University of Limpopo**  
Department of Research Administration and Development  
Private Bag X1106, Sovenga, 0727, South Africa  
Tel: (015) 268 3935, Fax: (015) 268 2306, Email: tukiso.sewapa@ul.ac.za

**TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE**  
**ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE**

**MEETING:** 23 July 2024  
**PROJECT NUMBER:** TREC/318/2021: PG -Amended  
**PROJECT:**

**Title:** Diversity Management Strategy for Military Skills Development System Recruits: A Cross-Cultural Approach for the South African National Defence Force, Air Force Base Gymnasium, Limpopo Province  
**Researcher:** MR Mamabolo  
**Supervisor:** Dr J Le Roux  
**Co-Supervisor/s:** Prof T Muswede  
**School:** Language and Communication Studies  
**Degree:** PhD in Communication Studies

  
**PROF D MAPOSA**  
**CHAIRPERSON: TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE**


The Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC) is registered with the National Health Research Ethics Council, Registration Number: REC-0310111-031

**Note:**

- i) This Ethics Clearance Certificate will be valid for one (1) year, as from the abovementioned date. Application for annual renewal (or annual review) need to be received by TREC one month before lapse of this period.
- ii) Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure as approved, the researcher(s) must re-submit the protocol to the committee, together with the Application for Amendment form.
- iii) PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES.

## APPENDIX 2: DoD PERMISSION LETTER

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 **defence intelligence**  
Department:  
Defence  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

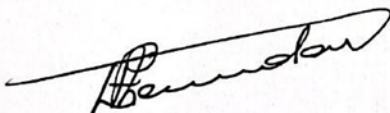
Telephone: 012 315 0161  
Extension: 816 0161  
Facsimile: 012 326 3246  
Enquiries: Lt Col M.C. Bapela

**SAAF HQ**  
2022-06-21  
Dosis  
**SAAF HQ**

DI/DDS/R/202/3/7  
Defence Intelligence  
Private Bag X367  
Pretoria  
0001  
28 March 2022

**AUTHORITY TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE (DOD): 00089391MC AMN M.R. MAMABOLO**

1. Receipt of a request letter AIR COMD/D OPS SUP&INT SR/202/1 dated 06 March 2022 to conduct research in the DOD with a Research Proposal attached as per requirement is hereby acknowledged.
2. Permission is hereby granted from a security perspective to Amn M.R. Mamabolo to conduct research in the DOD on a topic entitled **"Diversity Management Strategy for Military Skills Development System Recruits: A Cross-Cultural Communication Approach for the South African National Defence Force, Air Force Base Gymnasium, Limpopo Province"** as a precondition for the attainment of a Doctorate of Philosophy (PhD) in Communication Studies at the University of Limpopo as requested.
3. After the completion of the research, the final research product must be forwarded to Defence Intelligence Division (DI), Sub-Division Counter Intelligence (SDCI) for final authorisation before it may be published or distributed to any entity outside the DOD.
4. Approval is however granted on condition that there is strict adherence to inter alia DODI 2/99 "Disclosure of Defence Information" and Section 104 of the Defence Act (Act 42 of 2000) pertaining to protection of DOD Classified Information and the consequences of non-compliance.
5. For your attention.

  
**(M.E. PHENDANI)**  
**DIRECTOR DEPARTMENTAL SECURITY: BRIG GEN**  
MR/MR (Amn M.R. Mamabolo)

### **APPENDIX 3: CONSENT LETTER**

My name is Mamogobo Rosinah Mamabolo. I am currently enrolled for Doctor of Philosophy in Communication Studies at the University of Limpopo. I am conducting a research study entitled 'Diversity management strategy for military skills development system recruits: A cross-cultural approach for the South African National Defence Force, Air Force Base Gymnasium, Limpopo province'. The study aims to compose a cross-cultural communication for Military Skills Development Recruits (MSDS) undertaking BMT at the SA Air Force Gymnasium, Hoedspruit.

The researcher identifies you as the participant of the proposed study because you are currently undertaking BMT and encounter diversity during this period. You will effectively assist the researcher in understanding diversity and diversity management strategies within the military. Please note that your participation is voluntary, no recruit or instructor is forced to partake in the study. Your rights will be respected, and your identity will not be revealed. Your responses (collected data) will be used for academic purposes.

Should you require any further information, please contact the researcher on the following contact details:

Ms M.R Mamabolo 061 934 8426

Regards,

## APPENDIX 4: CONSENT FORM

### UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO ETHICS COMMITTEE

**PROJECT TITLE: DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY FOR MILITARY SKILLS DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM RECRUITS: A CROSS-CULTURAL APPROACH FOR THE SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL DEFENCE FORCE, AIR FORCE BASE GYMNASIUM, LIMPOPO PROVINCE.**

**PROJECT LEADER: MS M.R MAMABOLO (201412134)**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ hereby

voluntarily consent to participate in the following project: Diversity Management Strategy for Military Skills Development System Recruits: A Cross-Cultural Approach for the South African National Defence Force, Air Force Base Gymnasium, Limpopo Province.

I realise that:

1. The study deals with \_\_\_\_\_
2. The procedure or treatment envisaged may hold some risk for me that cannot be foreseen at this stage;
3. The Ethics Committee has approved that individuals may be approached to participate in the study.
4. The experimental protocol, ie. the extent, aims and methods of the research, has been explained to me;
5. The protocol sets out the risks that can be reasonably expected as well as possible discomfort for persons participating in the research, an explanation of the anticipated advantages for myself or others that are reasonably expected from the research and alternative procedures that may be to my advantage;
6. I will be informed of any new information that may become available during the research that may influence my willingness to continue my participation;

7. Any questions that I may have regarding the research, or related matters, will be answered by the researchers;
8. If I have any questions about, or problems regarding the study, or experience any undesirable effects, I may contact a member of the research team;
9. Participation in this research is voluntary and I can withdraw my participation at any stage;
10. If any medical problem is identified at any stage during the research, or when I am vetted for participation, such condition will be discussed with me in confidence by a qualified person and/or I will be referred to my doctor;
11. I indemnify the University of Limpopo and all persons involved with the above project from any liability that may arise from my participation in the above project or that may be related to it, for whatever reasons, including negligence on the part of the mentioned persons.

\_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNATURE OF RESEARCHED PERSON

\_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNATURE OF WITNESS

\_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNATURE OF PERSON THAT INFORMED  
PARENT/GUARDIAN

\_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNATURE OF THE  
RESEARCHED PERSON

Signed at \_\_\_\_\_ this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ 2022

## **APPENDIX 5: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR INSTRUCTORS AND SQUADRON MANAGERS**

This interview guide is designed to collect data or information about cross-cultural communication and diversity management strategies employed to enhance cross-cultural communication patterns within a diverse military training environment, Air Force Gymnasium. Obtained information will be used for research purposes and is subject to ethical rules of the University of Limpopo research. Please note that no identity or name of respondents should be revealed. Your honest answers will be highly appreciated.

### **Section A: Demographic Details**

- Gender:
- Age:
- Race:
- Home language:
- Years of experience:

### **Section B: Communication Diversity and Diversity Management Information**

- When did you join the SAAF and how long have you been presenting BMT?
- What are your experiences about a diverse environment?
- Which elements of diversity manifestation are experienced during BMT?
- Do you think diversity manifestation elements present challenges amongst yourselves and BMT recruits? If yes, please elaborate.
- What are the possible cross-cultural communication challenges do you encounter during your BMT presentation?
- How does cross-cultural communication challenges impact on your work?
- Do you think elements of diversity manifestation have an impact on cross-cultural communication? If yes, how does it affect such?
- What do you think can be done to manage diversity and enhance the cross-cultural communication process amongst the recruits?
- Which communication strategies and approaches do you employ to manage a huge number of diverse recruits?
- Which communication mediums can be used to promote effective cross-cultural

communication during BMT?

## **APPENDIX 6: TOPIC GUIDE FOR FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS**

This topic guide is designed to collect data or information about cross-cultural communication and diversity management strategies employed to enhance cross-cultural communication patterns within a diverse military training environment, Air Force Gymnasium. Obtained information will be used for research purposes and is subject to ethical rules of the University of Limpopo research. Please note that no identity or name of respondents should be revealed. Your honest answers will be highly appreciated.

### **Section A: Demographic details**

- Gender:
- Age:
- Race:
- Home language:

### **Section B: Diversity and Diversity Management Discussions**

- Discuss your experiences with regard to being in a diverse environment such as Air Force Base Gymnasium, Hoedspruit.
- What are the possible cross-cultural communication and diversity problems encountered during BMT?
- Discuss or mention elements of diversity manifestation experienced since your arrival at BMT.
- Do you think diversity manifestation elements present challenges amongst yourselves and your instructors and squadron managers? If yes, please elaborate.
- Discuss the impact of diversity manifestation elements on the interaction process amongst yourselves and your instructors.
- With reference to your experience in this diverse environment, what do you understand about culture and communication?
- With reference to your BMT context, do you think culture affect cross-cultural communication between? If yes, please elaborate.
- Deliberate on the communication strategies and approaches which you think should be adopted to manage cross-cultural communication and enhance effective communication during BMT.

- Which communication mediums can be used to promote effective cross-cultural communication during BMT?

**APPENDIX 7: OBSERVATION SHEET**

<b>Date and Time</b>	<b>Participant context</b>	<b>participant</b>	<b>Actions observed</b>

## APPENDIX 8: CONFIRMATION OF DATA COLLECTION LETTER

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sa air force

Department:  
Defence  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

SAAF GYM/OC/R/103/10/3/2

Telephone: 015 799 2915  
Facsimile: 015 799 2945  
Enquiries: Col M.J. Magana

SA Air Force Gymnasium  
Private Bag X504  
Hoedspruit  
1380  
28 November 2024

### CONFIRMATION OF DATA COLLECTION FOR 00089391MC, CPL M.R. MAMABOLO

1. This letter serves to confirm that 00089391MC, Cpl (Ms.) M.R. Mamabolo (Student No: 201412134) collected data at the SA Air Force Gymnasium, Hoedspruit for the PhD study entitled 'Diversity Management Strategy for Military Skills Development Recruits: A Cross-cultural Approach for the South African National Defence Force, Air Force Gymnasium, Limpopo Province'.
2. Data was collected between the period of 11 and 13 April 2022.
3. Hope this finds you in order.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M.J. Magana', written over a circular stamp.

(M.J. MAGANA)  
OFFICER COMMANDING SA AIR FORCE GYMNASIUM: COL



efapha la Boiphemelo Umnyango wezokuVikela. Egozo ya Tshireletso, Sebe lezoKhaselo. Department of Defence. Makhubo wa  
Tshireletso/Innyango WezokuVikela. Ndzawiso ya swa Vunireholeri. Leapha la Tshireletso. Departement van Verdediging. LiTiko leTshwike

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## APPENDIX 9: TURNITIN REPORT

25 June 2025 MAMABOLO Corrected thesis.docx

### ORIGINALITY REPORT

<b>4%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>2%</b>
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

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<b>8</b>	<b>Agnietė Žotkevičiūtė. "Modern Practice of Military Cultural Awareness: Lithuania among the Great Powers", Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review, 2018</b> Publication	<b>&lt;1%</b>

## APPENDIX 10: PROOF OF EDITING



**FACULTY OF HUMANITIES**  
**School of Languages & Communication Studies**  
**Department of Communication, Media & Information Studies**  
**Private Bag x1106, Sovenga, 0727, South Africa**  
**Tel: 015 268 3465. Fax: 015 268 2868, Email: tshegofatso.thipa@ul.ac.za**

**DATE:** 02 DECEMBER 2024

**REF: PROOF OF EDITING: MS M.R. MAMABOLO**

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This letter serves to confirm that the above-mentioned candidate submitted her PhD thesis for proofreading and language editing to the undersigned. The title of the work is “**DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY FOR MILITARY SKILLS DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM RECRUITS: A CROSS-CULTURAL APPROACH FOR THE SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL DEFENCE FORCE, AIR FORCE BASE GYMNASIUM, LIMPOPO PROVINCE**”. As such, the document has been duly proofread and edited for both grammatical and technical errors with evidence of track changes. Subsequently, I can confirm that if no new content is added to the current document, the thesis should be technically and academically sound.

Kind regards



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