

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1	Research Background.....	1
1.2	Theoretical Model.....	3
1.3	Research Objectives .....	6
1.4	Summary of Research Questions.....	10
1.5	Importance and Benefits of the Proposed Study .....	10
2	THEORETICAL MODEL, LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES .....	13
2.1	Background .....	13
2.2	Theoretical Framework.....	14
2.2.1	Social Identity Theory.....	14
2.2.2	Linking Social Identity Theory with Implicit Bias.....	15
2.2.3	Definitions of Key Terms.....	16
2.3	Implicit Bias, Microaggressions and Abusive Supervision.....	17
2.3.1	Dual-process Theory of Implicit Bias.....	17
2.3.2	Implicit Bias and its Manifestation in Behaviour .....	18
2.3.3	Moderating Factors of the Relationship Between Implicit Racial and Religious Bias and Microaggressions .....	24
2.3.4	Moderating Factors of the Relationship Between Microaggressions and Abusive Supervision .....	27
2.4	Psychological and Behavioural Consequences.....	30
2.4.1	Consequences of Abusive Supervision.....	30
2.4.2	Moderating Factor of the Relationship Between Abusive Supervision and its Consequences .....	33
3	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	38
3.1	Research Design.....	38
3.2	Target Population and Sample Method .....	39

3.3	Data Collection and Measurement Scales .....	40
3.3.1	Data Collection.....	40
3.3.2	Demographic Information.....	42
3.3.3	Measurement Scales: Employee Survey .....	43
3.3.4	Measurement Scales: Manager Survey .....	47
3.4	Data Analysis Strategy .....	48
3.4.1	Measurement of Abusive Supervision in South Africa .....	49
3.4.2	Hypotheses Testing .....	49
3.5	Research Ethics .....	50
4.	RESULTS .....	52
4.1	Measurement Models.....	52
4.1.1.	Model 1: The Employee-Rated Manager Behaviour Variables .....	54
4.1.2.	Model 2: The Employee Self-Reported Individual Differences .....	56
4.1.3.	Model 3: A Manager Self-Reported Individual Difference .....	56
4.1.4.	Model 4: The Employee Outcomes.....	56
4.2	Descriptive Statistics and Correlations.....	58
4.3	Measurement of Abusive Supervision in South Africa.....	60
4.4	Hypotheses Testing.....	61
4.5	Summary of Results .....	70
5.	DISCUSSION.....	73
5.1	Abusive Supervision and Racial and Religious Bias .....	73
5.1.1	Racial Bias.....	73
5.1.2	Religious Bias .....	74
5.2	Positive Manager Behaviour, Bias and Microaggressions.....	75
5.2.1	Self-monitoring.....	75
5.2.2	Individualised Consideration .....	76
5.3	Microaggressions, Attribution Styles and Abusive Supervision .....	77

5.3.1 External Attribution Styles.....	77
5.3.2 Hostile Attribution Styles.....	78
5.4 Abusive Supervision and Employee Outcomes.....	78
5.5 Abusive Supervision, Psychological Capital and Employee Outcomes.....	79
5.6 Contributions to Theory and Literature.....	81
5.7 Practical Contributions.....	84
5.8 Limitations.....	88
5.9 Directions for Future Research.....	89
5.10 Conclusions.....	91
References.....	92

## **APPENDICES**

Appendix A: Measuring Scales.....	116
Appendix B: Informed Consent Form - Manager.....	125
Appendix C: Informed Consent Form - Employee .....	128

## **LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure 1: Theoretical model.....	6
Figure 2: Moderating effect of individualised consideration on the relationship between implicit racial bias and racial microaggressions .....	63
Figure 3: Moderating effect of hostile attribution style on the relationship between racial microaggressions and abusive supervision.....	65

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Summary of Hypotheses.....	35
Table 2: Demography of Sample.....	42
Table 3: Summary of Confirmatory Factor Analyses.....	53
Table 4: Exploratory Factor Analyses: Abusive Supervision and Racial Microaggressions.....	55
Table 5: Exploratory Factor Analysis: Psychological Distress.....	58
Table 6: Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations Among Study Variables.....	59
Table 7: Abusive Supervision Factor Loadings: South Africa .....	60
Table 8: Moderating Effect of Self-Monitoring on the Relationship Between Implicit Racial Bias and Racial Microaggressions .....	62
Table 9: Moderating Effect of Individualised Consideration on the Relationship Between Implicit Racial Bias and on Racial Microaggressions.....	63
Table 10: Moderating Effect of External and Hostile Attributions on the Association Between Racial Microaggressions and Abusive Supervision in the Full Sample.....	64
Table 11: Moderating Effect of Hostile Attributions on the Association Between Racial Microaggressions and Abusive Supervision in the Racially Dissimilar Dyadic Sample .....	64
Table 12: Moderating Effect of Psychological Capital on Abusive Supervision and Anxiety .....	66
Table 13: Moderating Effect of Psychological Capital on Abusive Supervision and Depression.....	66
Table 14: Moderating Effect of Psychological Capital on Abusive Supervision and Emotional Exhaustion.....	66
Table 15: Moderating Effect of Psychological Capital on Abusive Supervision and PTSD Symptoms .....	66
Table 16: Moderating Effect of Psychological Capital on Abusive Supervision and Intentions to Quit .....	67
Table 17: Two-stage Moderated-Mediation Regression Analysis Predicting Abusive Supervision and Psychological Distress .....	68
Table 18: Two-stage Moderated-Mediation Regression Analysis Predicting Abusive Supervision and PTSD Symptoms .....	69

Table 19: Two-stage Moderated-Mediation Regression Analysis Predicting Abusive Supervision and Turnover Intentions .....	69
Table 20: Summary of Results of Hypotheses Testing .....	71

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Research Background

Abusive supervision is defined as “subordinates’ perceptions of the extent to which supervisors engage in the sustained display of hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviors, excluding physical contact” (Tepper, 2000, p. 178). Abusive supervision is a distressing problem for individuals and organisations, with workplace aggression impacting 13.6% of United States of America employees (Schat, Frone, & Kelloway, 2006). It is estimated that the cost of abusive supervision in the United States of America alone amounts to an approximate \$24 billion per year, taking into account absenteeism, health care costs, and lost productivity (Tepper, Henle, Lambert, Giacalone, & Duffy, 2008). There has been a growing interest in understanding the causes and consequences of negative leadership, i.e., corporate psychopathy (Mathieu & Babiak, 2016), petty tyranny (Ashforth, 1994), destructive leadership (Einarsen, Aasland, & Skogstad, 2007), workplace bullying (Hoel, Glasø, Hetland, Cooper, & Einarsen, 2009) and revenge (Bies, Tripp, & Kramer, 1997). In this study, I will focus on one type of negative leadership, abusive supervision. Abusive supervision differs from conceptually overlapping deviance-related constructs such as manager bullying and undermining in that the intentions of the manager are not important, but rather the perceptions of the employee<sup>1</sup> (Martinko, Harvey, Brees, & Mackey, 2013). As defined, abusive supervision is an *employee’s perception* of the extent to which his or her manager engages in the sustained display of hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviours, excluding physical contact (Tepper, 2000). These abusive behaviours include ridiculing, putting employees down in the presence of others, failing to give credit where credit is due, being rude and lying to employees.

Numerous studies have explored the adverse consequences of abusive supervision. A meta-analysis conducted in 2015 found relationships between abusive supervision and numerous organisational and personal outcomes, such as decreased task performance, reduced job satisfaction, emotional exhaustion, work-to-family conflict, workplace deviance and reduced organisational commitment (Mackey, Frieder, Brees, & Martinko, 2015). The majority of the research has focused on the detrimental consequences of abusive supervision. The predictors of abusive supervision have only been sporadically investigated. Of the twenty-two studies included in Tepper’s review of abusive supervision in organisations in 2007, only three involved predictors of abusive supervision. The predictors studied encompass managers’ procedural

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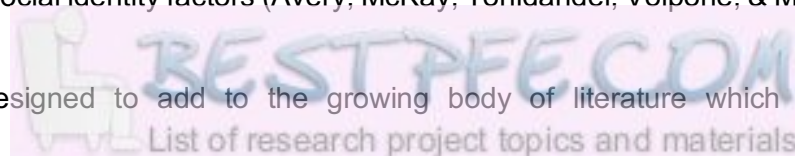
<sup>1</sup> Throughout this paper the term “employee” will mean the potential victim and “manager” will mean the potential provocateur of abusive supervision.



justice perceptions (Tepper, Duffy, Henle, & Lambert, 2006), managers' perceived psychological contract violation (Hoobler & Brass, 2006), and managers' perceptions of interactional justice and their authoritarianism (Aryee, Chen, Sun, & Debrah, 2007). Since Tepper's (2007) call for further research in understanding antecedents of abusive supervision, there has been an increase in research in this area. Martinko et al. (2013) list several new studies that have examined supervisor-related antecedents to abusive supervision, including stress and a lack of physical exercise (Burton, Hoobler, & Scheuer, 2012), co-worker conflict (Harris, Harvey, & Kacmar, 2011), deep-level dissimilarity (Tepper, Moss, & Duffy, 2011), emotional intelligence (Xiaqi, Kun, Chongsen, & Sufang, 2012), and histories of family undermining (Kiewitz et al., 2012). In their review on abusive supervision research, Tepper, Simon and Park (2017) further highlighted supervisor-related antecedents that have been explored in relation to abusive supervision, including supervisors' psychological entitlement (Whitman, Halbesleben, & Shanine, 2013) and supervisors' Machiavellianism through an authoritarian leadership style (Kiazad, Restubog, Zagenczyk, Kiewitz, & Tang, 2010). Subordinate-level antecedents that have been studied include subordinates' negative affectivity (Tepper et al., 2006), subordinates' lower performance (Liang, Lian, Brown, Ferris, Hanig & Keeping, 2016; Tepper et al., 2011), subordinates' unfavourable response to supervisors' attempts at charismatic leadership behaviours (Pundt, 2014), subordinates' core self-evaluations (Neves, 2014), and high performing subordinates of supervisors who are high in self-dominance due to threats to organisational hierarchy (Khan, Moss, Quratulain, & Hameed, 2016).

Furthermore, surface-level dissimilarity (i.e., age, gender and race) in manager-employee dyadic relationships has been shown to relate to an assortment of attitudinal, interactional and behavioural outcomes, and deep-level dissimilarity (i.e., values, attitudes and personality) has been found to be a significant predictor of abusive supervision (Tepper et al., 2011). Dissimilarity in manager-employee relationships is associated with several negative employee outcomes, including decreased job satisfaction (Turban & Jones, 1988) and lower-quality relationships with supervisors (Liden, Wayne, & Stilwell, 1993; Wayne & Liden, 1995). Belonging to a particular social group may influence employees' perceptions of supervisors' behaviour as unfair or discriminatory (Dhanani, Beus, & Joseph, 2018). Aquino and Bommer (2003) found that racial minority employees experienced more mistreatment in the form of victimisation and appeared to benefit less from acts of organisational citizenship. Prior research showed that racioethnic mismatching is the most powerful basis for mistreatment, compared to other social identity factors (Avery, McKay, Tonidandel, Volpone, & Morris, 2012).

This study was designed to add to the growing body of literature which investigates



antecedents of abusive supervision, and, specifically, to address social group dissimilarity as a contributing factor to abusive supervision. In this study, I test a model of implicit bias, microaggressions (employees' evaluations of supervisors' behaviour as being discriminatory), abusive supervision and employee outcomes (intentions to quit<sup>2</sup>, psychological distress and symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder). Manager-related moderating factors between implicit bias and microaggressions (self-monitoring and individualised consideration) were tested. Employee-related moderating factors between microaggressions and abusive supervision perceptions (external and hostile attribution styles), and abusive supervision and employee outcomes (psychological capital) were tested. To develop this model, I used social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978) in overarching support of the hypotheses.

## **1.2 Theoretical Model**

In this research, I will study abusive supervision mainly from the perspective of Tajfel's social identity theory (1978). Social identity theory was developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in 1979. Social identity theory explains that a person's self-concept comes from belonging to a group, which may include a person's family, country or nationality, the area in which he or she resides, racial group, religious group, gender, occupation, etc. Social identity theory asserts that group membership creates ingroup perceptions or self-categorisation and enhancement in a manner that favours the ingroup at the expense of the outgroup. Tajfel and Turner (1986) showed that the simple act of individuals categorising themselves as group members was sufficient to instil in them a preference for ingroup members. The central hypothesis of social identity theory is that members of an ingroup will harbour biased perceptions of an outgroup.

Drawing on social identity theory, I argue in this thesis that a manager, who categorises an employee as different from him or herself as an outgroup member, may hold biased views and demonstrate subtle acts of discrimination against that outgroup member. Differences between groups in the workplace have shown to affect exchanges between managers and employees (Green, Anderson, & Shivers, 1996). Numerous studies show that participants rate ingroup members more positively, revealing a preference for the ingroup in the allocation of resources, thereby affording outgroup members unequal access to resources (Ramiah, Hewstone, Dovidio, & Penner, 2010). The mere categorisation of a group member can lead to ingroup bias; the favouring of ingroup members above outgroup members (Turner, 1978 cited Ramiah

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<sup>2</sup> The term "intentions" to quit may be used interchangeably with the term "turnover intentions" in this manuscript, depending on sentence structure.

et al., 2010). This inclination to discriminate is a critical finding within the context of societal norms valuing equality and is indicative of the automatic or spontaneous nature of bias and discrimination in diverse group contexts (Ramiah et al., 2010). This bias is exacerbated in competitive situations, and direct competition between groups typically generates responses to directly disadvantage the outgroup (Sherif et al., 1961 cited Ramiah et al., 2010). It is therefore expected that a relationship will exist between implicit bias and discriminatory behaviour in a diverse environment such as the South African workplace.

Due to changing social norms where bias and discrimination towards stigmatised groups are prohibited in situations where right and wrong are clearly defined, or when a person does not want to appear as discriminatory, such behaviour is more likely to be expressed in subtle or automatic forms. Bias, therefore, does not have to be conscious or intentional to create unfair discrimination and can be measured explicitly or implicitly. To avoid concerns around social desirability, I will utilise implicit measures of bias in this research to capture bias that people may be unwilling or unable to express (Fazio & Olson, 2003). Extant diversity studies have investigated the relationship between dissimilar manager-employee dyads and a number of outcomes (Tepper et al., 2011). In pursuing social identity theory further, managers may categorise dissimilar employees as outgroup, displaying favouritism to ingroup members who are similar to them (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). By invoking social identity theory in work on moral exclusion, it has indeed been argued that offenders of conscious or unconscious hostile and aggressive acts against outgroup members exclude these members from their scope of justice, resulting in acts of mistreatment and harm (Opatow, 1990). Thus, based on social identity theory, it is likely that a relationship exists between discriminatory behaviour and abusive supervision in a diverse workplace.

It is generally accepted that abusive supervision results in increased psychological distress of the abused employee, such as anxiety, depression, job strain, and burnout (Chi & Liang, 2013). Abusive supervision in the form of "the sustained display of hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviors" (Tepper, 2000, p. 178) is a source of chronic stress that leads to severe negative consequences (Tepper, 2007). Although abusive supervision revolves around hostile verbal and non-verbal behaviours, excluding physical attacks, the long-term nature of these behaviours chronically torment the victim psychologically (Wu & Hu, 2009). Victims of abusive supervision experience elevated levels of psychological distress (Duffy, Ganster, & Pagon, 2002), as well as indications of strain that involve dysfunctional thoughts and emotions such as anxiety, depression and emotional exhaustion (Tepper, Moss, Lockhart, & Carr, 2007). Drawing on social identity theory, positive interactions with others are imperative for the well-being of a person. Thus, negative evaluation from others, such as rudeness, being ridiculed

and belittled in the presence of others, may lead to adverse psychological outcomes (Lin & Scott, 2012). Social identity theory highlights "the group in the individual" (Markovsky, Hogg, & Abrams, 1990) and assumes that individuals exist in a society with many social categories that stand in relative power and status relationships with each other. An employee's self-identity may be partly based on age, race, religion, language, or on membership of the employee group, in contrast to groups of management employees (Tsui, Egan, & O'Reilly, 1992). All social categories have the potential to contribute to a person's self-concept (Greenfield & Marks, 2007). Thoits (1999) explained that "since people's self-conceptions are closely linked to their psychological states, stressors that damage or threaten self-concepts are likely to predict emotional problems" (p. 346), such as psychological distress in the form of depression, anxiety and/or emotional exhaustion, or symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. Furthermore, as Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, and Wetherell (1987) stated: "When social identity in terms of group membership is unsatisfactory, members will attempt to leave that group (psychologically or in reality) (p. 30)". When an employee experiences abusive supervision, he is logically likely to find his membership in the social unit - the organisation - unsatisfactory and will most likely not want to maintain this membership. It is therefore expected that there will be an association between abusive supervision and turnover intentions.

However, it has been noted that not all employees experience abusive supervision in the same way (Tepper, 2007). In line with the job demands-resources theory, resources are needed to cope with job demands and stressors. I propose that psychological capital, consisting of four psychological constructs, including hope, resilience, optimism and self-efficacy (Luthans, Avolio, Avey, & Norman, 2007), is one such resource that can help victims cope with an abusive supervision situation.

Figure 1 portrays the theoretical model for this study

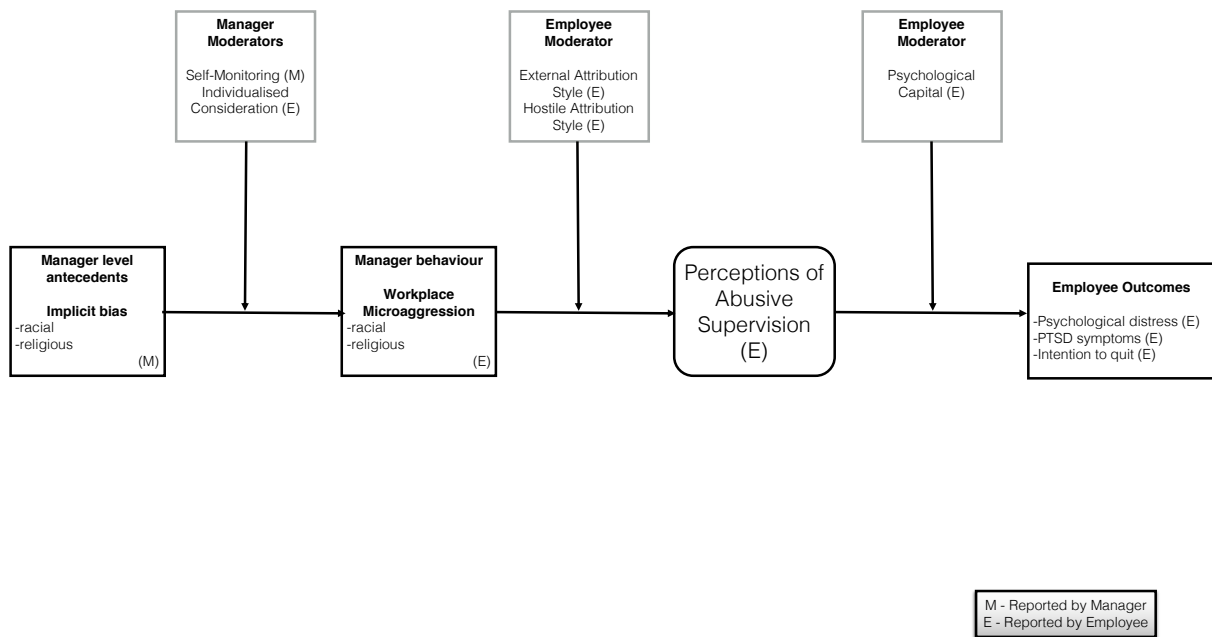


Figure 1. Theoretical model

### 1.3 Research Objectives

Firstly, I explored *implicit bias* as an antecedent of abusive supervision. Traditionally, it was believed that social behaviour is determined by conscious cognition (Aidman & Carroll, 2003). This assumption has been challenged based on dual process models (Agerström & Rooth, 2011). Dual process models distinguish between the implicit (automatic, unconscious) mode and the explicit (systemic, conscious) mode of information processing. Implicit refers to processes that occur outside conscious awareness and without conscious control (Devos, Huynh, & Banaji, 2012). When people are in the implicit or automatic mode, they process information using simple, low-effort, readily available decision rules. As the process occurs unconsciously, based on social identity theory, evaluations of self and others may be impacted by group membership. This may happen even though the individual is not aware of this influence (Agerström & Rooth, 2011; Devos et al., 2012). This automatically activated intergroup evaluation can influence social judgement and behaviours. Behaviour reflecting stereotypes and bias has moved from overt and hostile, to more subtle and subdued (Ziegert & Hanges, 2005). This reflects the decline in bias and stereotypes such as racist attitudes, as measured by self-report questionnaires (Maass, Castelli, & Arcuri, 2000). Yet, discrimination continues in the workplace (Ziegert & Hanges, 2005). Accordingly, it is plausible that managers' implicit bias could be a predictor of their behaviour that contributes to employees' perceptions of abusive supervision in the workplace.

Secondly, I built on the constructive revision of Tepper's 2007 model (Martinko et al., 2013).

Martinko et al. (2013) added several new potential paths and variables to Tepper's 2007 model, adding supervisory behaviour as a separate variable to accentuate that subordinates' evaluations of abusive behaviour are subjective interpretations of supervisory behaviours. Managers' behaviour may be influenced more by implicit bias, activated outside a person's consciousness (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995), than explicit attitudes that are produced as a result of conscious, explicit processing (Bargh & Chartrand, 1999). Substantial research has shown that implicit bias can influence a wide range of judgements and behaviours (Agerström & Rooth, 2011). Thus, a relationship between managers' implicit biases and their behaviour is expected. This may have critical consequences for outgroup members who are recipients of such biased behaviour and possibly abusive supervision. I also considered employees' evaluations of their managers' behaviour as being discriminatory, as a mediator between managers' implicit bias and employees' perceptions of abusive supervision.

*Thirdly*, I considered external and hostile attribution styles relating to the evaluation or *attribution* that employees make when perceiving managers' behaviour, as a moderating factor of the association between managers' behaviour and abusive supervision. Because of the perceptual nature of abusive supervision (Henle & Gross, 2014), one employee may perceive a manager's behaviour as abusive, whereas another may perceive that same manager's behaviour as acceptable or not abusive. Attributions are defined as individuals' causal explanations for important outcomes in their lives and can be used to explain a large proportion of variance in abusive supervision (Martinko, Sikora, & Harvey, 2012).

People have a natural need to understand and explain the causes of human behaviour. Therefore, attributions are likely associated with perceptions of abusive supervision. Attribution styles are stable, trait-like tendencies towards making certain types of attributions. They can be considered as individuals' perceptual biases (Russell, 1991 in Martinko, Harvey, & Dasborough, 2011). Martinko, Harvey, and Douglas (2007) demonstrated that attribution styles are useful for understanding individual behaviours. The different employee attribution styles and their influence on perceptions of abusive supervision have been explored (Burton, Taylor, & Barber, 2014; Hoobler & Brass, 2006; Martinko et al., 2012). These authors argued for a positive relationship between employees' external and hostile attribution styles and perceptions of abusive supervision. External attributions are reflective of an employee's belief that his or her manager is responsible for abusing the employee (Burton et al., 2014). Hostile attribution style is the tendency to perceive ambiguous actions of others as intentional, threatening and hostile (Douglas & Martinko, 2001). Hostile attribution style is an extra-punitive frame of mind where people tend to blame others for negative outcomes (Adams & John, 1997; Hoobler & Brass, 2006). Employees who are likely to attribute blame for negative experiences

to others are probably more likely to interpret their managers' behaviour as abusive.

*Fourthly*, I studied two moderators of the relationship between implicit bias and managers' behaviour, including manager self-monitoring and individualised consideration. The first moderator of the relationship between managers' implicit bias and abusive supervision is *self-monitoring*. Whereas traditional self-report measures have indicated that there has been a decline in racist attitudes, discrimination continues in the workplace (Ziegert & Hanges, 2005). This suggests that when explicitly asked to report on their racial attitudes, people's reports may not reflect their actual attitudes, but instead reflect adherence to societal norms and pressures toward non-prejudiced attitudes. Individuals who are higher in self-monitoring pay closer attention to their behaviour out of concern for social appropriateness in their expressive self-presentation (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000). Managers may monitor their behaviour with outgroup employees in an attempt to avoid acting negatively on their bias or prejudice. They may do this to avoid disapproval from others, or they may genuinely be motivated by personal beliefs to be unbiased towards people of other groups (Plant & Devine, 1998).

The second moderator of implicit bias and abusive supervision I explored is employees' perceptions of managers' *individualised consideration*. Managers who are perceived by employees to be higher in individualised consideration take care to meet the unique needs and expectations of individual employees and strive to provide them with individualised development support and guidance. These managers often act as a coach or mentor, to guide and support employees using empowering behaviours that correspond with the employee's particular needs, in a friendly, close, and equal manner (Bass, 1985). Social identity theory explains how mere categorisation as a group member can lead to the favouring of ingroup members over outgroup members in evaluations and allocation of resources (Mummendey & Schreiber, 1984), thereby giving outgroup members less than the social equality norm would require (Ramiah et al., 2010). Individualised consideration contradicts the essence of social identity theory, in that it deals with a concern for each employee as an individual (Bass, 1999) and is not based on social group membership. Considering that employees, with managers who are perceived to be higher in individualised consideration, are more likely to be treated in an individualised manner, it is probable that a manager's support will be adapted to support employees individually. Hence, different employees could have different perceptions of the manager's actions and behaviours (Avolio & Bass, 1995), despite social group differences. If employees perceive their manager to be higher in individualised consideration, managers are likely to be perceived as being empathic to employees' different needs, which may lessen perceptions of abusive supervision.

*Fifthly*, I explored three outcomes of abusive supervision in this study. The first outcome is *psychological distress*. Evidence of a positive relationship between abusive supervision and employees' consequent experience of psychological distress has been found in abusive supervision studies (Duffy, et al., 2002; Harvey, Stoner, Hochwarter, & Kacmar, 2007; Tepper et al., 2007). Psychological outcomes in these studies focused on manifestations of lower-level psychological distress reactions, such as anxiety, depression, job strain, and burnout (Tepper, 2007). It has been suggested that in addition to psychological distress, abusive supervision may be associated with more delayed, more potentially severe reactions such as post-traumatic stress disorder (Hoobler, 2014).

This leads me to the second psychological outcome: *symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)*. PTSD is characterised by a cluster of late stress reactions amongst individuals who had experienced a single or multiple events that involved a threat to life, serious injury or death, such as natural disasters, accidents, physical assaults, rape and armed conflict (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). Considering the requirements for classification of post-traumatic stress disorder as per the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders V (American Psychiatric Association, 2013), it is questionable that the experience of abusive supervision can be classified as an event that involves a threat to life, serious injury or death. However, recent evidence suggests that the extended experience of negative interactions, such as abusive supervision, may bring forth symptoms of PTSD. The symptoms of PTSD appear to overlap with the consequences of abusive supervision. Thus, it is likely that abusive supervision may result in both psychological distress and symptoms of PTSD.

The third outcome I explored is *turnover intentions*. Extant research shows positive relationships between abusive supervision and higher turnover intentions for employees perceiving supervisory abuse, than employees who do not experience abusive supervision (Keashly & Harvey, 2005). When abusive supervision is a stressor that characterises everyday life, it can pose a significant threat to the psychological and physical health of employees. As abusive supervision is sustainable over time, it subjects its victims to long-term threats to their well-being, such as loss of employment, interpersonal challenges and financial uncertainties (Tepper et al., 2007). Understanding how managers' implicit bias relates to abusive supervision and contributes to adverse employee outcomes, can assist organisations in establishing measures to reduce its detrimental impact on employees and the massive cost implication and loss of skills due to employee ill health or turnover.

*Finally*, I explored the moderating effect of *psychological capital* on the relationship between



abusive supervision and psychological distress, symptoms of PTSD and turnover intentions. Psychological capital is comprised of positive individual characteristics such as self-efficacy, optimism, hope and resilience (Luthans, et al., 2007). A negative relationship has been found between psychological capital and undesirable employee behavioural and well-being outcomes such as turnover intentions, job stress and anxiety (Cassidy, McLaughlin, & McDowell, 2014). Psychological capital is a potential coping resource that may assist employees to better protect themselves from the otherwise potentially detrimental outcomes of abusive supervision. From a practical point of view, understanding how psychological capital can lessen psychological and behavioural outcomes of abusive supervision can lead to organisations investing more in the development of psychological capital, resulting in healthier organisations and employees meeting the challenges of the world of work.

#### **1.4 Summary of Research Questions**

- What is the relationship between managers' implicit racial and religious bias, perceptions of managers' discriminatory behaviour and abusive supervision?
- To what extent do managers' self-monitoring and individualised consideration moderate the relationship between managers' implicit bias and managers' behaviour?
- To what extent do external attribution style and hostile attribution style moderate the relationship between managers' behaviour and abusive supervision?
- Does workplace microaggression mediate the relationship between managers' implicit racial and religious bias and abusive supervision?
- To what extent does psychological capital moderate the relationship between abusive supervision and negative employee outcomes?

#### **1.5 Importance and Benefits of the Proposed Study**

First, I contributed to the small number of research studies that have investigated antecedents of abusive supervision. Abusive supervision is prevalent in the workplace, yet the predictors of abusive supervision remain under-researched. Although understanding the outcomes of abusive supervision is important, a solid understanding of its antecedents is necessary to enable management scholars to guide organisations practically towards reducing abusive supervision. Also, understanding the antecedents of abusive supervision will help organisational psychologists and HR professionals to identify and mitigate this social problem in organisations. Theoretically, my study fills a gap in our understanding of manager-related

antecedents of abusive supervision.

Secondly, I built on a small body of research acknowledging the influence of employees' attributional styles on their evaluations and perceptions of their managers' negative leadership behaviour. Most research on abusive supervision and negative leadership treats subordinate ratings as objective indicators of these variables. In contrast, Martinko et al., (2011) argued that biased attributions can impact subordinates' perceptions of their leaders' negative behaviours. I added to existing research by exploring the impact of attribution styles on employees' perceptions of abusive supervision when managers are implicitly biased towards outgroup employees.

Thirdly, it has been noted by Tepper in his 2007 review that very little abusive supervision had been conducted outside of the United States of America. In Martinko and colleagues' 2013 review of abusive supervision research, twenty-one studies using non-United States of America samples were identified, including samples from Australia, Canada, China, the Philippines, South Korea and Taiwan (Martinko et al., 2013). In the majority of these studies, the researchers failed to test the measurement equivalence of Tepper's abusive supervision scale, despite his advice that researchers will first have to demonstrate measurement equivalence across the cultures under study (Tepper, 2007). I contributed to the small number of studies conducted outside the United States of America by conducting this study on a sample in South Africa. By evaluating differences in perceptions of Tepper's abusive supervision measure, I contributed to very limited knowledge about whether the abusive supervision measure performs similarly across cultures.

Fourthly, abusive supervision has never been viewed from the perspective that this type of supervisory behaviour may be a reflection of manager stereotypes and implicit bias toward members of other social groups or categories. From this study, organisations may begin to understand that racial and religious bias may manifest in abusive supervision in the workplace. Further, this study sheds light on whether abusive supervisory behaviour that is driven by implicit bias may result in undesirable employee actions such as turnover and psychological outcomes such as psychological distress and symptoms of PTSD.

The literature review of the extant published literature on abusive supervision as it relates to the proposed study is provided in Chapter 2, together with the theoretical model to be tested and proposed hypotheses. Chapter 3 contains a description of the proposed research design

and methods. In this chapter, the operationalisation of independent, dependent and moderating variables as well as a description of methodology is outlined. The results of my study are reported in Chapter 4 and discussed in Chapter 5.



## 2 THEORETICAL MODEL, LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

*We have a tendency to condemn people who are different from us, to define their sins as paramount and our own sinfulness as being insignificant.*

- Jimmy Carter

### 2.1 Background

South Africa is among the most diverse countries globally, endearingly named the "Rainbow Nation" by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, to describe post-apartheid South Africa after the demise of the apartheid rule in April 1994. Apartheid was a system of racial segregation practised in South Africa that officially ended in 1994. President Nelson Mandela (1994) built on the Rainbow Nation description in his inaugural speech as president of a democratic South Africa, when he said: "Each one of us is as intimately attached to the soil of this beautiful country as are the famous jacaranda trees of Pretoria and the mimosa trees of the bushveld". Before 1994, there was minimal diversity in the workplace as it consisted of mostly homogeneous people who shared similar views (Carrim, 2015).

After 1994, new labour legislation, aimed at empowering previously disadvantaged<sup>3</sup> South Africans, was promulgated and for the first time in South Africa racial equality and religious freedom were protected by the South African Constitution. However, history shows us that racial, religious and other forms of discrimination, stereotypes and bias do not automatically disappear (FASSET, 2013), nor do previously disadvantaged groups instantaneously become respected (Carrim, 2015) with the introduction of policies or legislation. Even though South Africa has experienced, and continues to experience, significant social, economic and political transformation (Motsei & Nkomo, 2016), people in the South African workplace continue to experience widespread discrimination, bias and stereotyping. Discrimination is especially prevalent in women, black people, those with different sexual orientations, diverse religions, people with disabilities, or anyone who is perceived to be different (FASSET, 2013). In a study on workplace bullying, Motsei and Nkomo (2016) found that the broader social, political and economic environment in South Africa contributed to the experience of the related construct of bullying in the workplace by impacting the perceptions of its antecedents. Furthermore, targets attributed being bullied to social identities derived from ingroup-outgroup categorisations such as gender, race, religion and education (Motsei & Nkomo, 2016). Similarly, discriminatory behaviour in South Africa is associated with perceptions of abusive supervision, and

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<sup>3</sup> The previously disadvantaged population groups in South Africa include Black, Coloured, and Indian people.

attributions for such abuse are likely derived from social group categorisations such as race and religion. This is supported by the social identity theory literature, which is discussed in the following section as an explanation towards shaping an understanding of implicit bias and discriminatory behaviour in the workplace. Its link with abusive supervision in the workplace and associated outcomes follow thereafter.

## **2.2 Theoretical Framework**

### **2.2.1 Social Identity Theory**

The concept of social identity theory was first introduced in 1972 by Henri Tajfel as "the individual's knowledge that he belongs to certain groups together with some emotional and value significance to him of this group membership" (Tajfel, 1972, p. 292 in Hogg & Terry, 2000). A social group is defined as a set of individuals who consider themselves to be members of the same social category or hold a joint social identification (Stets & Burke, 2000). Social identity rests on intergroup social comparisons with the intention of categorising persons who are similar to the self, called the ingroup, and persons who are different to the self, categorised as the outgroup (Stets & Burke, 2000). Social categorisation is motivated by an underlying need for self-esteem (Treppe, 2006; Turner, 1975). Tajfel (1974) said that the manner in which individuals or groups pursue positive social identity is influenced by beliefs about the nature of relations between groups (status, stability, permeability, legitimacy).

Turner et al., (1987) extended the social identity theory by developing the self-categorisation theory. Self-categorisation theory proposes that individuals categorise themselves and others as belonging to different social groups based on the perceived similarity with such group (ingroup) or dissimilarity (outgroup) (Hogg & Terry, 2000). Self-categorisation theory suggests that group members view themselves as exemplars of the group, rather than individuals who are unique (Turner et al., 1987).

According to Stets and Burke (2000), it is through the process of self-categorisation that social identity is formed. These authors explained that the process of social identity formation consists of two components, namely self-categorisation and social comparison. Self-categorisation results in an accentuation of similarities of the self and ingroup persons, and an accentuation of the differences between the self and outgroup members. This is done by evaluating the ingroup on attributes that lead to the ingroup being judged positively and the outgroup being evaluated negatively (Stets & Burke, 2000).

Markovsky et al., (1990) postulated that social categories used in the formation of social identity exist within a structured society that individuals are born into, and only exist in relation to other contrasting categories, for example, black vs white, Christian vs Hindu and male vs female. Each category has more or less power, prestige, and status. Social identity was described by Turner, Oakes, Haslam, and McGarty (1994) as "the social categorical self ("us" versus "them"; ingroup versus outgroup; us women, them men; us whites, them blacks; etc.)" (p. 45). In summary, the term social identity refers to how individuals' sense of who they are is embedded in their membership of particular social groups, and that social identity can signal which behaviours are appropriate (Hopkins & Reicher, 2011). This is explored in the following section linking social identity theory with implicit bias and behaviour.

### **2.2.2 Linking Social Identity Theory with Implicit Bias**

Devos et al. (2012) stated that "when William James (1890) wrote about the unique problem of studying self and identity, he immediately noted the peculiar blurring of the otherwise clear demarcation between the knower and the known" (p. 2). They argued that when it becomes clear that the "self-as-knower" does not have access to the "self-as-known", knowledge about the implicit self exists in a form that is inaccessible to consciousness. *Implicit* refers to processes that occur unconsciously. A person's self-evaluation may be influenced by group membership, without the person being aware of this influence (Devos et al., 2012). A practical example of this may be a female student who strongly identifies with her gender; yet, unknowingly, integrates traditional gender role expectations about parenthood into her self-concept while consciously identifying with higher education for women (Devos, Blanco, Rico, & Dunn, 2008). Through the process of social identity and self-categorisation, the similarities of the self with the ingroup are highlighted and applied to the self, inextricably linking the attributes of the self with the ingroup. Traditionally, testing of this association consisted mostly of self-report measures (Biernat, Vescio, & Green, 1996; Simon, Pantaleo, & Mummendey, 1995). However, some empirical studies have illustrated that the process by which the ingroup may be incorporated in the self can also operate at implicit level (Devos et al., 2012; Greenwald & Farnham, 2000; Nosek, Banaji, & Greenwald, 2002; Smith & Henry, 1996).

Tajfel (1974) stressed the association between the self and ingroup when he defined social identity as "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups together with the emotional significance attached to that membership" (p. 69). This definition is demonstrated by a large body of research that

shows how people have a more favourable evaluation for ingroup than outgroup members when using measures of implicit attitude or evaluation (Mullen, Brown, & Smith, 1992). The implicit attitude literature clearly suggests that groups automatically or implicitly receive more positive affective evaluations when they are linked to the self (Devos et al., 2012).

In this study, I focused on ethnic identity as an aspect of social identity by considering **race and religion**. It is often necessary for researchers to categorise individuals by their ethnic or racial group in order to study differences across groups. Trimble (2007) said that Helms (2007) and Cokley (2007) emphasised in their lead articles that considerable confusion exists about racial and ethnic identity constructs and terms, including ethnicity, race, racial, and culture. For purposes of this study, it is essential to discuss the related key terms of culture, ethnicity, religion and race.

### **2.2.3 Definitions of Key Terms**

The concept **culture**, on the surface, needs little explanation (Trimble, 2007). Contradicting this assertion, Lonner and Malpass (1994), as cited in Trimble (2007) indicated that approximately 175 definitions of culture could be found in the social and behavioural science literature. Geertz (1973) provides a definition that is reasonably inclusive of all the elements when he defined culture as “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 and attitudes towards life” (p. 89). Geertz, however, cautiously reminded readers that “the trouble is that no one is quite sure what culture is. Not only is it an essentially contested concept, such as democracy, religion, simplicity or social justice, but it is also a multiply defined one, multiply employed, ineradicably imprecise. It is fugitive, unsteady, encyclopedic, and normatively charged, and there are those... who think it vacuous altogether, or even dangerous, and would ban it from the serious discourse of serious persons” (Geertz, 2001, p. 11).

Similar to the culture construct, Trimble (2007) concluded after a review of the literature, that the **ethnicity** construct is complex. Ethnicity is different from race, a construct that classifies people based on physical and social aspects. Ethnicity, broadly, is defined as “any differentiation based on nationality, race, religion, or language” (Greeley, 1974, p. 9 in Trimble, 2007). Greeley (1974, p. 188) in Trimble (2007) proposed that individuals can be classified “into groups on the basis of shared, observable traits to include shared physical characteristics, shared historical experiences, and shared religious identities”. His suggestion formed the foundation for the creation of the concepts of stereotypes and other ethnic group

generalisations. *Ethnic identity* is developed by individuals from a shared race, religion, geography and language (Chávez & Guido-DiBrito, 1999).

**Religion** pertains to "the feelings, thoughts, experiences, and behaviors that arise from a search for the sacred as well as the means and methods (e.g., rituals or prescribed behaviors) of the search that receive validation and support from within an identifiable group of people" (Hill et al., 2000, p. 69). The most common use of the term religion focuses on group affiliation, e.g., Christianity, Islam, Hindu and Judaism (King, Stewart, & McKay, 2010).

**Race**, as a construct to classify human beings, causes great controversy. Ethnicity, culture or ethnic groups are terms often used instead of race to classify people, probably because these constructs are less likely to give rise to controversy as compared to race. Helms (1994) said that ethnicity is often used as a euphemism for race and added that neither culture nor ethnicity has anything to do with race in the way the term is typically used in psychology (Helms, 1994 in Trimble 2007). Race is a widely used construct to refer to types of people and is not an easy term to define. Similar to culture, race is a social construction and has been used as a social-political category. Due to the prevalence of racism experienced by millions of people, scholars have argued that race must be kept at the forefront of our vocabulary when discussing intergroup relations (Jones, 2003 in Trimble, 2007).

## **2.3 Implicit Bias, Microaggressions and Abusive Supervision**

### **2.3.1 Dual-process Theory of Implicit Bias**

The most prevalent theoretical framework in implicit bias research, underpinning social cognition, is the dual-process theory. Dual-process theory demonstrates how two modes of information processing can occur: one that is explicit, deliberate, conscious, effortful, rule-based, or systematic; and the other that is implicit, unconscious, automatic, or associative (Nosek, Hawkins, & Frazier, 2011). Recent empirical research findings and theoretical grounds have challenged the conventional belief that social behaviour is determined by conscious cognition (Aidman & Carroll, 2003). This challenge is rooted in the theoretical distinction between implicit or unconscious and the explicit or conscious mode of information processing (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). There is a growing body of research evidence that implicit processing of information exerts a significant influence on social behaviour, including attitudes, stereotypes and self-concept. This is despite implicit processes acting outside voluntary control and being inaccessible, to a great extent, to human cognition (Kihlstrom, 1987



in Aidman & Carroll, 2003).

Substantial research has shown that implicitly activated stereotypical perceptions can influence a wide range of social judgements and behaviours (Agerström & Rooth, 2011). Stereotypes are cognitive structures that contain knowledge and expectations about the group's characteristics and traits (Ratliff & Nosek, 2011). Snyder (1981) defined stereotyping as occurring when an individual (a) categorises a person by group membership; (b) attributes a set of characteristics to a group; and (c) applies that set of attributes to all members of that category. People attribute stereotypical traits to outgroup members without hesitation (Ratliff & Nosek, 2011). Martin and Krahnke (2012) said that people use categorisations such as stereotyping to make sense of the world, but explained that unconscious and implicit reliance on stereotypes often results in unfavourable bias against outgroup members.

### **2.3.2 Implicit Bias and its Manifestation in Behaviour**

Implicit biases can "produce behaviour that diverges from a person's acknowledged or endorsed beliefs or principles" (Greenwald & Krieger, 2006, p. 951). Many people earnestly believe they are not biased (Pronin, 2007 in Rudman, 2011). A study conducted by Fazio, Jackson, Dunton, and Williams (1995) showed that while the conscious system, measured by self-report questionnaires, believed it was non-biased, implicit bias was present in attitudes toward Blacks. Another study showed that self-report measures of discrimination strictly capture what people are able and willing to report and do not tap into the phenomena measured by implicit measures of discrimination (Krieger, 1999 in Carney, Banaji, & Krieger, 2010). Self-report measures have in the past 20 years (Observer, 1996) indicated a decline in racist attitudes; yet, discriminatory behaviour continues in the workplace (Ziegert & Hanges, 2005), albeit in a different form.

This different form of discriminatory behaviour is illustrated by the following quote from Dovidio and Gaertner (1998): "Aversive racists recognize prejudice is bad, but they do not recognize that they are prejudiced... Like a virus that has mutated, racism has also evolved into different forms that are more difficult not only to recognize but also to combat" (p. 25). Dovidio and Gaertner (1998) explored how prejudice has evolved over the past 20 years into subtler and more complex forms, especially when individuals assert strong egalitarian values, believing that they are not biased. These individuals may have negative feelings of which they are unaware or want to disassociate from, as a result of cognitive, motivational and sociocultural forces that can affect most people (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1998). Hence, to obtain a true

reflection of bias, it is critical to utilise implicit measures rather than rely purely on explicit or self-report measures. It is also important to measure how implicit bias manifests in subtle discriminatory behaviour in the workplace.

### **Racial Bias, Workplace Racial Microaggressions and Abusive Supervision**

South Africans have experienced an immense political and social transformation since the dismantling of apartheid in 1994 (Booyesen, 2007). South Africa is a diverse country, with many available identities embedded in its social context. According to Census (2001), the South African population is racially classified as follows: African - 79 percent, Coloured - 8.9 percent, Asian or Indian - 2.5 percent and White - 9.6 percent. The most salient social identity group in the South African workplace is race. Other identities such as gender, ethnicity and professional identity appear to be embedded in the salient social identity group identification of race as sources of intra-group variation. A practical example would be a black female manager who identifies primarily with her race group and regards all black people as part of her ingroup. Being a manager and female illustrate what kind of black person she is, and this makes her more or less similar to others in her ingroup. Consequently, she identifies more with other black people than with other women or other managers, as race is her primary identification group. This dynamic is more prevalent in societies where specific social groups dominate other groups in the form of number, hierarchy, status or power (Booyesen, 2007).

Due to the changes in societal norms and power patterns in South Africa in recent years, significant social identity and transformational changes are also happening in the workplace (Booyesen, 2007). Since 1994, all South Africans - regardless of race, ethnic, or religious group - have been subjected to large-scale political and social change in South Africa and the South African workplace (Bekker, 1999 in Bornman, 2006). Also, the broader societal identity group conflicts are increasingly spilling over into the workplace (Booyesen, 2007). From a research perspective, studies on intergroup conflict have been based on the contact hypothesis (Bornman & Mynhardt, 1991). According to the contact hypothesis, intergroup contact should improve intergroup attitudes and relations, but research results have yielded several conditions to this hypothesis (Bornman & Mynhardt, 1991). Conditions include that contact should take place by equal status and that the attributes of the dissimilar group must disconfirm the prevailing stereotyped beliefs about it (Amir, 1969; Brewer & Miller, 1984). Correspondingly, research also indicated that contact does not necessarily result in improved intergroup attitudes, and, summarily, that theoretical clarification is needed on many aspects of the contact hypothesis (Cohen, 1984). Horowitz (1991) cautioned that ethnic, racial or other social identity categories would not likely become irrelevant once ethnic and racial equality has been

achieved within a democratic South Africa (Horowitz, 1991 in Bornman, 2010). Also, South Africans may experience a greater need to identify themselves by contrast to confirm their racial identities, which could give rise to new ways in which "us" and "them" are defined (Erasmus, 2010; Soudien, 2010).

According to social identity theory, Tajfel (1982) attributed the contrasting results of contact studies to the fact that contact studies have mostly been studied without taking the social environment, including the underlying structure of social divisions and power or status differences, into account. After analysing contact theory within the context of social identity theory, Brewer and Miller (1984) concluded that Tajfel's social identity theory has important implications for intergroup contact. When a group's social identity is salient in a specific situation, such as race being the most salient social identity group in the South African workplace (Booyesen, 2007), group contact will be more inclined to emphasise group differences and dissimilarities, rather than fostering intergroup acceptance (Brewer & Miller, 1984). Foster and Finchilescu (1986) asserted that finite racial group differences influence relations in the South African workplace. Furthermore, the overwhelming importance of group difference and race, as the most salient workplace social identity category, may override other positive factors related to the contact hypothesis. A possible reason, according to Barth (1969), is that people often experience intergroup interaction in heterogeneous settings as strenuous and that the familiarity, warmth and safety of interaction with ingroup members essentially becomes a refuge.

According to Booyesen (2007), social identity group conflict in organisations is not only causing major disruptions to work, but also significant pain and distress for group members. Social identity group conflict may be amplified by the accentuation of group similarities and differences and the dynamics between ingroup and outgroup in the workplace (Haslam & Rahim, 2001 in Booyesen, 2007). In a heterogeneous workplace, conflict can be expected around strong and negative stereotypes, bias, prejudice, blaming and projection of negative emotions such as anger and frustrations (Booyesen, 2007).

Based on the number of complaints received by the Human Rights Commission of South Africa, South Africa is becoming more racist (Legalbrief Today, 2016). Traditional self-report measures of racism have, however, indicated a decline in racial attitudes toward the end of the twentieth century (Maass et al., 2000); yet, discrimination continues in the workplace. Subsequently, some researchers have moved away from self-report measures of racism to implicit measures of racist attitudes (Fazio & Olson, 2003). Implicit measures are less susceptible to self-presentation biases and thus more effective at determining prejudice or bias

(Ziegert & Hanges, 2005). Evidence has shown that implicit measures predict behaviours that are performed relatively automatically and unconsciously (Bargh, Chen, & Burrows, 1996; Dovidio, Kawakami, Johnson, Johnson, & Howard, 1997) and are less successful in predicting overt racist behaviours that are under conscious control (Devine, 1989).

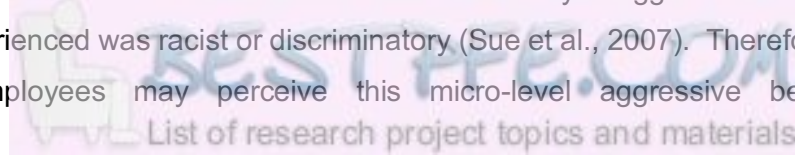
Overt discrimination has also become socially, morally and legally less tolerated in South Africa since 1994; how discrimination occurs, has evolved since then. Dovidio, Gaertner, Kawakami, and Hodson (2002) recognised a key trend, namely that discrimination in the United States of America is more likely to be subtle and less overt than it was in the past. Dovidio et al. (2002) also asserted that prejudice tends to persist in a society, but its nature and how it is expressed may be altered by historical, political and contextual factors. Evidence shows that an insidious form of discriminatory behaviour, called *microaggressions*, is increasingly prevalent (Forrest-Bank & Jenson, 2015). Microaggressions are characterised by small, insulting occurrences which tend to be subtle and often unintentional acts of discrimination (Sue, Bucceri, Lin, Nadal, & Torino, 2007). These acts of microaggression are mostly automatic, non-verbal and unintended (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). Sue et al. (2007) identified three forms of microaggressions: microassault, microinsult and microinvalidation. Microassaults are consciously enacted toward others and can include name-calling, avoidant behaviour or purposeful discriminatory acts, and are most similar to "old-fashioned" racism conducted on an individual level. Microinsults are subtle insults, often unknown to the perpetrator, that convey a message of humiliation, negativity or exclusion to the recipient. A practical example is a white manager who tells a potential job candidate who is black that he or she believes the most qualified candidate should get the job, regardless of race. The hidden message is that black people are not qualified. Microinvalidations are characterised by communications that dismiss, deny or invalidate the experiential reality, psychological thoughts and feelings of a diverse person. Sue et al. (2007) said that this type of thinking (i.e., that racism no longer exists) often obscures racism and oppression and implies that inequities in society are exclusively due to the inferiority of people who do not work hard enough to succeed. Furthermore, various themes of racial microaggressions manifesting in everyday life have been presented in an original taxonomy of racial microaggressions (Sue et al., 2007). Themes include being treated like an "alien in one's own land" (i.e., experiences in which people of colour feel like foreigners). Another theme is "assumption of criminality" (i.e., experiences in which people of colour are stereotyped as deviant). Other themes included "ascription of intelligence" (e.g., assuming that people of colour are less intelligent or uneducated), and "assumption of inferiority" (e.g., assuming that diverse people are poor or hold substandard careers). Nadal (2011) operationalised workplace racial microaggressions by asking people to indicate the number of times a racial microaggression occurred in the past

six months. Therefore, it tends to be measured as a record of behaviour. Examples of managers' racial microaggression behaviour include overlooking an employee's opinion in a group discussion because of the employee's race, or treating an employee of colour differently than white co-workers.

Exposure to workplace racial microaggressions can be interpreted by diverse employees as abusive supervision, despite the distinctiveness of these two constructs in previous literature. Abusive supervision, in the original article that introduced the construct, is defined by Tepper (2000) as "subordinates' perceptions of the extent to which supervisors engage in the sustained display of hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviors, excluding physical contact" (p. 178), and he operationalised abusive supervision by asking subordinates to report their perception of the frequency with which their supervisors engage in a variety of hostile acts. A critical feature of abusive supervision is its characterisation as a subjective perception (Tepper, Simon & Park, 2017). Abusive supervision is a subjective evaluation made by the employee regarding his or her supervisors' behaviour toward him/her, and is not an objective measure of abusive supervisory behaviours. Examples of abusive supervision include the employee's perception that his/her boss made negative comments about him/her to others or the employee's perception that his/her boss withholds credit for jobs that required a lot of effort.

To clarify, abusive supervision and workplace racial microaggressions are two related, but distinct, subjective perceptions, one that addresses employees' attitudes toward or perceptions of their managers by using the label "abusive" to describe the supervisor (Tepper et al., 2017), and the latter addressing being treated differently by managers during daily interactions because of race (Nadal, 2011).

According to social identity theory, people have a more favourable evaluation of ingroup than outgroup members (Mullen et al., 1992). For instance, managers may evaluate similar race employees more favourably, because doing so enhances self-esteem according to social identity theory (Tepper et al., 2011). Since overt discrimination is legally and socially less tolerated than in the past, implicit bias is more likely to manifest in the form of workplace microaggressions. It is therefore likely that a relationship exists between implicit racial bias of managers in the South African workplace and abusive supervision, through the demonstration of micro-level aggressive behaviours targeted at the outgroup or dissimilar employees. The demonstration of micro-level aggressive behaviours or microaggressions often leaves diverse recipients confused about the intent of the behaviour in that they struggle to determine if what they have just experienced was racist or discriminatory (Sue et al., 2007). Therefore, I predict that outgroup employees may perceive this micro-level aggressive behaviour or



microaggressions as abusive and that they should transfer the effect of implicit bias onto abusive supervision.

Given the literature discussion, the following hypotheses are formulated:

*H1:* Implicit racial bias and perceived racial microaggressions are positively related when subordinates are from a different race group than their manager.

*H2:* Perceived racial microaggressions and abusive supervision are positively related when subordinates are from a different race group than the manager.

*H3:* Racial microaggressions mediate the relationship between managers' implicit racial bias and abusive supervision.

### **Religious Bias, Workplace Religious Microaggressions and Abusive Supervision**

Extant literature on diversity is predominantly based on social identity groups such as gender, age and race/ethnicity, which are called surface-level diversity as these characteristics are easily observable. Far fewer studies have examined deep-level diversity variables such as beliefs and values (Gebert, Boerner, Kearney, King, Zhang, & Song, 2013). Jackson and Joshi (2011) called for more studies on different types of diversity and their effects in organisations. Hence, I focused on religion as a deep-level diversity variable that has been neglected in the extant diversity literature (Gebert et al., 2013). In the South African context, religion plays a pivotal role in the lives of the majority of South Africans (Carrim, 2015). South Africa has eight religions and 25 denominations (Census, 2001). Almost 80 percent of South Africa's population identifies with Christianity, 1.5 percent identifies with Islam, and 1.2 percent with Hindu religions. Judaism is followed by 0.2 percent of the South African population. A further 15.6 percent of South Africans either do not belong to any of these major religions or regard themselves as traditionalists (Van Der Walt, Mpholo, & Jonck, 2016). In South Africa, non-Christian religious groups are often marginalised (Amien, 2006), and during the Apartheid era religious freedom and accommodation in the workplace was restricted (Carrim, 2015).

According to social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), one's social identity is based on the postulation that the group to which one belongs is a source of pride and self-esteem, and that this group provides one with a sense of belonging or an identity (Tajfel, 1974). An individual's religious identity is linked to religious denomination membership (Hill et al., 2000). Social interaction within the religious ingroup provides emotional significance and value (Van Der Walt et al., 2016). Members of religious groups will likely seek out ingroup members in religious organisations, schools, neighbourhoods and social clubs. Partly because of

legislation, the South African workplace may be one of the most religiously diverse institutions within a community, as it may be the only instance where social contact is made across the lines of different social identities (Smith, Peterson, & Schwartz, 2002).

This distinction between ingroup and outgroup is often the source of discrimination, prejudice and conflict (Hewstone, Rubin, & Willis, 2002), essentially because people view ingroup members more favourably than outgroup members. In the workplace, increased diversity requires that employees and managers work and interact with people from dissimilar religions; yet, employees and managers who are religiously different from one another may feel uncomfortable because they recognise that their religious identities are dissimilar. This may result in managers treating employees differentially, which may lead to employees' perception of discriminatory behaviour (Van der Walt et al., 2016).

In a study on the related constructs of workplace bullying, religion was one of the three most used social group categories that targets used to make sense of the reasons for being bullied (Motsei, 2015). In Motsei's (2015) study, in the case of religion, targets attributed being bullied to belonging to a different religion than that of the bully. It is therefore hypothesised that because of differences in religious affiliation, employees who belong to different religions than their managers may perceive their managers' microaggressive behaviours as discriminatory (Van Der Walt et al., 2016), that is, hostile expressions, which may be perceived as being supervisory abusive. Religious microaggressions are predicted to transfer the effect of implicit bias onto abusive supervision perceptions. On these bases, I hypothesise the following:

*H4:* Implicit religious bias and perceived religious microaggressions are positively related when subordinates are from a different religious group than the manager.

*H5:* Perceived religious microaggressions and abusive supervision are positively related when subordinates are from a different religious group than the manager.

*H6:* Religious microaggressions mediate the relationship between managers' implicit religious bias and abusive supervision.

### **2.3.3 Moderating Factors of the Relationship Between Implicit Racial and Religious Bias and Microaggressions**

#### **Self-monitoring**

There have been significant changes over the past five decades in majority groups' self-

reported attitudes toward minorities. Numerous large-scale survey studies indicate more positive racial attitudes (Greeley & Sheatsley, 1971 in Plant & Devine, 1998), illustrating that people may be tending toward not acting on their prejudices or biases. A recent study on self-regulation of implicit bias (Allen, Jeffrey, Sherman, & Klauer, 2010 in Martin & Krahnke, 2012), showed that people can control their implicit bias through conscious attention, and thought thereof. Individuals who monitor their behaviour out of concern for social appropriateness of their expressive self-presentation are defined as being higher in self-monitoring (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000).

From a social identity perspective, implicit bias research illustrates that ingroup people unconsciously or automatically trigger more positive affective reactions than outgroup persons (Devos et al., 2012). Self-monitoring is the attempt to alter behaviour for social or personal purposes, and people may be motivated to hide a bias they do not want others to know about for many different reasons. A relevant example would be a manager with either racial bias, religious bias or a bias against gay people, who does not want to reveal this at work. As a result of both personal standards and normative pressures, most people may monitor and alter their behaviour, to operate in a way that is appropriate in racially diverse interactions and so as not to be perceived by others as racially biased (Perry, Dovidio, Murphy, & Van Ryn (2015). However, this argument adopts the belief that when such managers attempt to monitor their behaviour, they are conscious of their implicit bias and of trying to maintain a good impression (Devos et al., 2012). Perry et al. (2015) found that when white people were highly aware of their racial bias, they acted particularly friendly toward people from racial minorities, most likely because they engaged in compensatory behaviour in their interactions. Also, Plant and Devine (2009) showed that people aware of their bias will spend more time participating in activities that will help them reduce their bias.

In a society that encourages equality and fairness, the norm encourages proper speech and behaviour, and, as such, creates social pressure to act without prejudice (Adler et al., 1990 in Plant & Devine, 1998). Across cultures, managers have become more aware of social norms against bias, whether implicit or explicit, and therefore are likely to be more guarded about displaying their bias in the workplace. Managers who are consciously or unconsciously racially or religiously biased, but also higher in self-monitoring, are more likely to act without prejudice in order to seek and maintain external approval, conforming to social norms that do not tolerate bias or discriminatory behaviour against outgroup employees. It is expected that self-monitoring will affect the relationship between the behaviours demonstrated by managers and their implicit racial and religious bias in a society where displaying prejudice against outgroup members is not only frowned upon, but is also legally protected through employment equity



legislation. The following hypotheses are:

*H7: Self-monitoring moderates the relationship between manager implicit racial bias and racial microaggressions, such that higher self-monitoring weakens the association between implicit racial bias and racial microaggressions.*

*H8: Self-monitoring moderates the relationship between manager implicit religious bias and manager religious microaggressions, such that higher self-monitoring weakens the association between implicit religious bias and religious microaggressions.*

### **Individualised Consideration**

Individualised consideration is one of four sub-dimensions of transformational leadership (Bass, 1985), together with idealised influence, inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation. Transformational leadership was incepted in Burns' (1978) seminal work introducing the concepts of transformational and transactional leadership. Transformational leadership has demonstrated a positive relationship between transformational leadership and leadership effectiveness (Lim & Ployhart, 2004). Individualised consideration includes leaders' supportive behaviour, providing new learning and development opportunities. It has been defined as "knowing your followers' needs and raising them to more mature levels... and using delegation to provide opportunities for each follower to self-actualise and to attain higher standards of moral development" (Bass & Avolio, 1993, p. 64).

Individualised consideration is one of the components of transformational leadership that relate to employees' interpersonal justice perceptions. Interpersonal justice is defined as an individual's perception of the quality of the interpersonal treatment received by organisational authorities, such as managers (Cho & Dansereau, 2010). Managers who are higher in individualised consideration are likely to be concerned about each employee as an individual (Bass, 1999; Bass & Riggio, 2006). Employees' unique and specific needs and preferences are recognised by leaders who are higher in individualised consideration, in a friendly, close and equal manner. When such support is not given in a friendly and considerate way, employees may perceive that they are being treated negatively by the manager (Cho & Dansereau, 2010). On the other hand, when managers do treat their employees in a considerate manner, employees are likely to feel that their personal career goals are being met and, through coaching and mentoring, they perceive their manager to provide them with a sense of increased competence (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Therefore, I argue that even when managers are biased, when they exhibit higher individualised consideration, they will likely be evaluated more positively by employees than when they are lower in individualised

consideration.

Considering social identity theory, managers are likely to treat their ingroup employees and outgroup employees differently; often favouring the ingroup, while discriminating against the outgroup (Miller & Brewer, 1986); motivated by an underlying need for self-esteem (Turner, 1975). Qualifying social identity theory postulates that managers who are higher in individualised consideration are more likely to use empowering actions that address their employees' individual needs (Bass, 1985) in a fair and considerate manner, rather than intergroup social comparisons that seek to confirm or establish ingroup favouring. Based on the above arguments, I expect a moderating effect of individualised consideration on the relationship between managers' implicit bias and managers' discriminatory workplace microaggressions.

*H9:* Individualised consideration moderates the relationship between implicit racial bias and racial microaggressions such that higher individualised consideration weakens the positive association between implicit racial bias and racial microaggressions.

*H10:* Individualised consideration moderates the relationship between implicit religious bias and religious microaggressions such that higher individualised consideration weakens the positive association between implicit religious bias and religious microaggressions.

### **2.3.4 Moderating Factors of the Relationship Between Microaggressions and Abusive Supervision**

#### **External and Hostile Attribution Styles**

By nature of its definition, abusive supervision is a perceptual construct. Abusive supervision is defined as "subordinates' perceptions of the extent to which supervisors engage in the sustained display of hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviours, excluding physical contact" (Tepper, 2000, p. 178). In practice, this means that two employees may perceive and assess the same actions or behaviour of a manager as abusive and non-abusive respectively. The same employee can also evaluate the manager's behaviour as abusive in one situation, and non-abusive in another context. This perception may be affected by employees' characteristics (e.g., their personality, attribution style, and social identity).

Martinko et al. (2012) posit that the attributions and attribution styles of employees can explain a large portion of the variance in employees' perceptions of abusive supervision. In the

following paragraphs, I will provide a short description of attribution theory and attribution styles. Thereafter, I will explore external and hostile attribution styles and how they likely moderate the relationship between microaggressions and abusive supervision.

Attribution theory stemmed from the seminal work of Heider (1958), who considered people to be like amateur scientists or naive psychologists with an inherent need to understand the cause of other people's productive and counterproductive behaviour (Luthans & Church, 2002). Heider (1958) stated that there is a strong need for individuals to understand events by attributing them to another's disposition or to stable characteristics of the environment. Attributions are causal explanations, which, according to Heider (1958), help individuals make sense of their world. Attribution theory affirms that individuals perceive and interpret causation differently, influencing expectancies, emotions and behaviour (Martinko et al., 2011; Martinko et al., 2007). Martinko, Moss, Douglas, and Borkowski (2007) stated that attribution theory provides a basis for understanding how employees differ in their understanding of their interactions with their managers.

Martinko et al. (2007) demonstrated that attribution styles are useful for understanding how and when individuals' perceptions motivate their behaviours. Attribution styles are stable, trait-like tendencies towards making certain types of attributions and can be considered as descriptive of people's perceptual biases (Russell, 1991 in Martinko et al., 2012). In my study, I focused on external attribution and hostile attribution styles. External attribution occurs when an individual attributes the cause of a particular outcome or observation to external causes. External attributions refer to situational factors that are often beyond the individual's control, or they may take the form of blaming others for a particular outcome (Burton et al., 2014). In the context of microaggressions and abusive supervision, employees with an external attribution style are likely to conclude that a manager is directly accountable for the negative leadership behaviours they enact, rather than the employee. External (manager) attributions for perceived supervisory abuse have been found to be negatively related to interactional justice perceptions (i.e., employees' perceptions that their manager has treated them justly on an interpersonal basis) (Breux, Tepper, Carr, & Folger, 2010). Burton et al. (2014) further found that between internal, external and relational attributions for supervisory abuse, external attributions demonstrated the largest impact on employees' evaluations of managers' fairness and behaviour.

Moreover, a hostile attribution style is likely to be associated with the degree to which bias relates to perceptions of abusive supervision (Brees, 2012). This is because a hostile attribution style is an extra-punitive mentality whereby an individual tends to transfer or project

blame onto others (Adams & John, 1997). Individuals with a hostile attribution style disproportionately attribute their adverse outcomes to the behaviour or actions of others. Individuals with a hostile attribution style are likely to assign antagonistic intentions to others' actions (Dodge & Coie, 1987; Douglas & Martinko, 2001; Weiner, 1995), especially when the conduct and actions of others are ambiguous, such as the nature of microaggressions.

Microaggressions are powerful and have major implications for the recipient thereof, in that the outgroup recipient will be faced with the nagging question of whether it really happened or not (Crocker & Major, 1989), as their subtle and ambiguous nature make microaggressions more challenging to identify (Sue et al., 2007). When faced with the ambiguous behaviour and actions of others, people with external and hostile attribution styles are more likely to assign antagonistic intentions to others' actions (Douglas & Martinko, 2001). Therefore, when employees experience racial or religious microaggressions which are subtle ambiguous in nature, a tendency toward hostile evaluation will likely lead to higher perceptions of being abused.

From a social identity point of view, employees will define themselves in terms of their group membership and seek to maintain a positive social group identity through self-serving comparisons with other groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This can manifest in various ways, including ingroup favour and outgroup disparagement (Tajfel, 1982). This provides indirect support for the notion that external and hostile attributions are related to abusive supervision, as negative outgroup evaluations are comparable to external and hostile attribution styles in that they imply a tendency to attribute negative outcomes to external factors. Harvey and Martinko (2009) found that employees with a self-serving bias, which is similar to a hostile attribution style in that it denotes an inclination to attribute negative outcomes to external factors, were more likely to report conflict with their manager.

Therefore, it is expected that, based on social identity theory, outgroup employees' external and hostile attribution styles will influence the relationship between outgroup employees' experience of manager microaggressions and manager abusive supervision.

*H11:* Employees' external (H11a) and hostile (H11b) attribution styles moderate the relationship between racial microaggressions and abusive supervision such that higher external and hostile attribution styles strengthen this association.

*H12:* Employees' external (H12a) and hostile (H12b) attribution styles moderate the relationship between religious microaggressions and abusive supervision such that higher external and hostile attribution styles strengthen this association.

## **2.4 Psychological and Behavioural Consequences**

Martinko et al.'s (2013) review of abusive supervision research asserted that research on abusive supervision has demonstrated significant relationships between abusive supervision and critical organisational outcome variables such as aggression (Burton & Hoobler, 2011), organisational citizenship (Rafferty & Restubog, 2011), subordinates' psychological health (Rafferty, Restubog, & Jimmieson, 2010), and subordinates' work performance (Tepper et al., 2011). These outcomes are essential to the success and sustainability of organisations, as well as being critical for the health and well-being of their employees. To demonstrate the criticality of my study and the gravity of the consequences of abusive supervision, I chose to investigate three distressing consequences of abusive supervision: psychological distress, symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and intentions to quit. I also investigated psychological capital as a moderator of the relationships between abusive supervision and these consequences.

### **2.4.1 Consequences of Abusive Supervision**

#### **Psychological Distress and Symptoms of PTSD**

Stress refers to what a person experiences when he or she perceives that "demands exceed the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilize" (Lazarus, 1966, p. 4). This is called the transactional model of stress and coping. An individual's perception of the psychological situation is the critical factor in defining stress (Gunawan, 2007). According to Lazarus, the effect that stress has on a person is based more on that person's feeling of threat, vulnerability and ability to cope than on the stressful event itself. He defines psychological stress as a "particular relationship between the person and environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being" (Lazarus, 1966, p. 19).

Tepper (2007) compared the consequences of abusive supervision to victims of domestic emotional abuse, that is, increased psychological distress (Duffy et al., 2002), and indications of emotional difficulty involving dysfunctional thoughts and anxiety, depression and emotional exhaustion. Numerous studies have provided evidence of the relationship between negative workplace experiences and job stress (Hoobler, Rospenda, Lemmon, & Rosa, 2010). Stress research has shown that major life events such as the death of a spouse can lead to PTSD

(Lim & Tai, 2014), and has emphasised that stressors that characterise everyday life can pose an even greater impact on psychological and physical health. As with constant daily hassles, abusive supervision can be considered a work stressor in that it is sustained over time and includes long-term threats to well-being, such as loss of employment, relationship problems and constant financial worries (Tepper et al., 2007). From the job demands-resources model perspective, these threats as perceived by victims of abusive supervision, pose a risk of resource loss. Threats furthermore deplete their coping resources, resulting in psychological distress (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011).

A relationship between abusive supervision and symptoms experienced by individuals suffering from PTSD has been mentioned (Hoobler, 2014) in literature, but has never been empirically tested. PTSD is classified as a disorder and is defined by three clusters of symptoms: re-experience, avoidance and arousal (Tehrani, 2004). Medically, PTSD can only be diagnosed when an individual experienced, witnessed or was confronted with a traumatic event of a severely threatening nature, such as a life-threatening event or an event that threatened an individual with grave physical harm. Events such as natural disasters, accidents, physical assaults, sexual assault and armed conflict are listed as threatening events (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). Abusive supervision would therefore not be considered a traumatic experience. However, victims of workplace bullying have shown extreme distress, e.g., bullied victims' symptoms are similar to those found in rape victims (Leymann & Gustafsson, 1996). Extremely disconcerting, another study found that symptoms of PTSD in bullied workers exceeded the severity levels of train drivers who had run over people on a rail track (Malt et al., 1993).

From a social identity perspective, several theorists have speculated on associations between social identities and psychological well-being, the opposite of psychological distress (Greenfield & Marks, 2007). According to Abrams and Hogg (1988), the psychological process of forming social identities is theorised to serve as the simplification of social reality. Thereby, the formation of social identities help individuals avoid the distress of being overwhelmed by social complexities; motivated by an underlying need for self-esteem (Treppe, 2006; Turner, 1975). Employees' perceptions of their managers' behaviour as being abusive may result in a negative subjective assessment of their status in the workplace. This, together with a social comparison of their situation or resources to that of the outgroup, results in a sense of social inequity which has an impact on various psychological outcomes such as stress-related symptoms (Corning, 2002). Based on these arguments, I hypothesise:

*H13: Abusive supervision is positively related to psychological distress in the form of anxiety*

(H13a), depression (H13b) and emotional exhaustion (H13c).

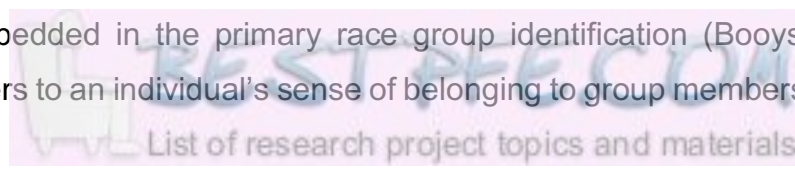
*H14: Abusive supervision is positively related to symptoms of post-traumatic stress.*

## **Turnover Intentions**

Extant research suggests that employees who perceive their managers' behaviour as being abusive, have greater turnover intentions (Ahmed & Muchiri, 2014; Keashly, 1998). Clearly, this has a detrimental impact on organisations, such as a massive cost implication and loss of human capital (Aryee et al., 2007; Restubog, Scott, & Zagenczyk, 2011; Tepper, 2000, 2007; Thau & Mitchell, 2010). In addition to the cost and loss of skills, organisational groups that experienced higher turnover have also been found to show a reduction in productivity, in that the groups with employee turnover manufactured significantly fewer products than did those groups that had not experienced turnover (Argote, Insko, Yovetich, & Romero, 1995).

Employee turnover research has demonstrated that intentions to quit are a reliable antecedent of actual future turnover (Roehling, 1997). Employees who experience abusive supervision over time may respond to such abuse by reconsidering their employment situation and may decide to look for alternative employment (Ahmed & Muchiri, 2014). Furthermore, it has been asserted that after employees have endured a negative experience in the workplace, such as abusive supervision, they may re-evaluate their situation and question whether they should remain in such an employment relationship (Turnley & Feldman, 2000).

This can be explained from a social identity perspective. Previous research has suggested that social identity in organisational contexts is an important concept to explain employees' performance, well-being and turnover intentions (Van Dick et al., 2004). Social identification with a group involves the incorporation of the group's norms and values into the individual's self-concept (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), especially when one's social identity is salient in a specific situation (Turner et al., 1987). The most salient social identity group in the South African workplace is race, while other identities such as gender, ethnicity (including religion and language) and professional identity appear to be embedded in the primary race group identification (Booyesen, 2007). Social identity refers to an individual's sense of belonging to group membership, where



belonging to groups that are positively valued is important for maintaining member self-esteem (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). In the case of an employee perceiving his or her outgroup manager's behaviour as abusive, this perception can be an indication of social standing and status within a social collective (Shao, Rupp, Skarlicki, & Jones, 2013). Employees' perceptions of abusive supervision can convey symbolic information about group membership (e.g., identity, status), which threatens identity and contrasts individuals' psychological need for belongingness (Cropanzano, Rupp, Mohler, & Schminke, 2001). When an individual (i.e. an employee) is threatened by an outgroup member (i.e. an outgroup manager), he or she may decide to leave the ingroup (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). To conclude, I hypothesise that when an employee experiences abusive supervision by an outgroup manager, he or she may re-evaluate his or her employment relationship (Turnley & Feldman, 2000), feeling the importance to look for alternative employment.

*H15: Abusive supervision is positively related to turnover intentions.*

## **2.4.2 Moderating Factor of the Relationship Between Abusive Supervision and its Consequences**

### **Psychological Capital**

In line with the job demands-resources theory, resources are needed to cope with job demands and stressors. I propose that psychological capital is one such resource that can serve as a means of coping in an abusive supervision situation. Psychological capital is a resource comprising four psychological constructs, including hope, resilience, optimism and self-efficacy (Luthans et al., 2007). Psychological capital is defined as "an individual's positive psychological state of development and is characterised by: (1) having confidence (self-efficacy) to take on and put in the necessary effort to succeed at challenging tasks; (2) making a positive attribution (optimism) about succeeding now and in the future; (3) persevering toward goals and, when necessary, redirecting paths to goals (hope) in order to succeed; and (4) when beset by problems and adversity, sustaining and bouncing back and even beyond (resilience) to attain success" (Luthans et al., 2007, p. 3).

From a theoretical stance, psychological capital builds on the traditional deficit model of stress and coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The developing field of positive psychology provides



organisational researchers with evidence of a positive relationship between psychological capital and enhanced performance, job satisfaction, work happiness and organisational commitment (Luthans et al., 2007; Youssef & Luthans, 2007). Furthermore, in a meta-analysis it was found that there is a significant inverse relationship between psychological capital and adverse employee behaviours such as turnover intentions (Cassidy et al., 2014).

Psychological capital is a resource to help cope with adverse situations (Schaufeli, Bakker, & van Rhenen, 2009), such as perceived supervisory abuse. From a job demands-resources theory perspective, resources contribute to employee well-being (as opposed to psychological distress) and lower turnover intentions link to greater work engagement (Barbier, Dardenne, & Hansez, 2012). Resources are valuable because they help employees cope when they experience adversity such as supervisory abuse in the workplace (Barbier et al., 2012). Psychological capital, as a resource, may help create a more favourable working environment (Van den Heuvel, Demerouti, Schaufeli, & Bakker, 2010) and reduce the effects of abuse on negative employee outcomes such as turnover intentions, psychological distress and symptoms of PTSD.

From the perspective of social identity theory, individuals are motivated to maintain their self-esteem, which is derived from belonging to a social group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Group membership models social identity, a definition of the self that is based on belonging to a group (Barbier et al., 2012). Group identification is then the level to which an individual perceives him or herself to be a member of that group. Barbier et al. (2012) concluded that, based on their research findings, group identification could be considered as the king of social resources, which similarly to job resources fosters employees' work engagement and well-being.

I predict a moderating effect of employees' psychological capital, as a coping resource, on the relationship between abusive supervision and turnover intentions, psychological distress and symptoms of PTSD. I hypothesise:

*H16:* Employees' psychological capital moderates the relationship between abusive supervision and employees' psychological distress in the form of anxiety (H16a), depression (H16b) and emotional exhaustion (H16c), such that higher psychological capital weakens the positive association.

*H17:* Employees' psychological capital moderates the relationship between abusive supervision and employees' symptoms of PTSD, such that higher psychological capital weakens the positive association.

*H18:* Employees' psychological capital moderates the relationship between abusive

supervision and employees' turnover intentions, such that higher psychological capital weakens the positive association.

Building on the prior moderating and mediating hypotheses, and, to bring together the components of the theoretical model in the form of two-stage moderation mediation, I hypothesise:

*H19:* External and hostile attribution styles and psychological capital moderate the mediated relationship between racial microaggressions and employees outcomes via abusive supervision, such that external and hostile attribution styles strengthen the path between racial microaggressions and abusive supervision, and psychological capital weakens the path between abusive supervision and employees' psychological distress (H19a), symptoms of PTSD (H19b) and turnover intentions (H19c).

*H20:* External and hostile attribution styles and psychological capital moderate the mediated relationship between religious microaggressions and employees outcomes via abusive supervision, such that external and hostile attribution styles strengthen the path between religious microaggressions and abusive supervision, and psychological capital weakens the path between abusive supervision and employees' psychological distress (H20a), symptoms of PTSD (H20b) and turnover intentions (H20c).

See Table 1 for a summary of all hypotheses.

## **Table 1**

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### *Summary of Hypotheses*

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- H1: Implicit racial bias and perceived racial microaggressions are positively related when subordinates are from a different race group than their manager.
- H2: Perceived racial microaggressions and abusive supervision are positively related when subordinates are from a different race group than the manager.
- H3: Racial microaggressions mediate the relationship between managers' implicit racial bias and abusive supervision.
- H4: Implicit religious bias and perceived religious microaggressions are positively related when subordinates are from a different religious group than the manager.
- H5: Perceived religious microaggressions and abusive supervision are positively related when subordinates are from a different religious group than the manager.
- H6: Religious microaggressions mediate the relationship between managers' implicit religious

- bias and abusive supervision.
- H7: Self-monitoring moderates the relationship between manager implicit racial bias and racial microaggressions, such that higher self-monitoring weakens the positive association between implicit racial bias and racial microaggressions.
- H8: Self-monitoring moderates the relationship between manager implicit religious bias and manager religious microaggressions, such that higher self-monitoring weakens the positive association between implicit religious bias and religious microaggressions.
- H9: Individualised consideration moderates the relationship between implicit racial bias and racial microaggressions, such that higher individualised consideration weakens the positive association between implicit racial bias and racial microaggressions.
- H10: Individualised consideration moderates the relationship between implicit religious bias and religious microaggressions, such that higher individualised consideration weakens the positive association between implicit religious bias and religious microaggressions decreases.
- H11: Employees' external (H11a) and hostile (H11b) attribution styles moderate the relationship between racial microaggressions and abusive supervision, such that higher external and hostile attribution styles will strengthen the positive association.
- H12: Employees' external (H12a) and hostile (H12b) attribution styles moderate the relationship between religious microaggressions and abusive supervision, such that higher external and hostile attribution styles strengthen the positive association.
- H13: Abusive supervision is positively related to psychological distress in the form of anxiety (H13a), depression (H13b) and emotional exhaustion (H13c).
- H14: Abusive supervision is positively related to symptoms of post-traumatic stress.
- H15: Abusive supervision is positively related to turnover intentions.
- H16: Employees' psychological capital moderates the relationship between abusive supervision and employees' psychological distress in the form of anxiety (H16a), depression (H16b) and emotional exhaustion (H16c), such that higher psychological capital weakens the positive association.
- H17: Employees' psychological capital moderates the relationship between abusive supervision and employees' symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, such that higher psychological capital weakens the positive association.
- H18: Employees' psychological capital moderates the relationship between abusive supervision and employees' turnover intentions, such that higher psychological capital weakens the positive association.
- H19: External and hostile attribution styles and psychological capital moderate the mediated relationship between racial microaggressions and employees outcomes via abusive supervision, such that external and hostile attribution styles strengthen the path between racial microaggressions and abusive supervision, and psychological capital weakens the path between abusive supervision and employees' psychological distress (H19a), symptoms of PTSD (H19b) and turnover intentions (H19c).

H20: External and hostile attribution styles and psychological capital moderate the mediated relationship between religious microaggressions and employees outcomes via abusive supervision, such that external and hostile attribution styles strengthen the path between religious microaggressions and abusive supervision, and psychological capital weakens the path between abusive supervision and employees' psychological distress (H20a), symptoms of PTSD (H20b) and turnover intentions (H20c).

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### **3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

In this chapter, I explore the research methodology choices made for my study. I describe the research design approach I utilised, followed by a discussion of the target population, sampling technique, and data collection methods. This is followed by a description of the measurement scales I used for the variables in my theoretical model, and my statistical methods for data analysis.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

For my study, I followed a positivist approach, relying on quantitative methods as the most relevant method to empirically test the formulated hypotheses (Cooper & Schindler, 2003). Positivism has its roots as a philosophical paradigm in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with Auguste Comte's assertion that only scientific knowledge can reveal what reality is (Bergmann et al., 2008). A paradigm is a shared world view that represents the beliefs and values in a discipline and that guides how problems are solved (Schwandt, 2001). A positivist approach is a paradigm that is concerned with gathering knowledge objectively, using scientific methods of enquiry (Cooper & Schindler, 2003). According to Bryman (2004), in positivism "theories are used to produce hypotheses that can be tested and allow explanations of laws to be assessed (deductivism)" (p. 11), and science must be conducted objectively. However, positivism also adopted René Descartes's epistemology (i.e. theory of knowledge), believing that logical reasoning is the best way to gain knowledge about reality (Bergmann et al., 2008). His deductive method implies that events are ordered and interconnected, and therefore reality is ordered and deducible. Positivism is underpinned by realism (Chilisa, 2011), such that real events can be observed and measured empirically and explained by rational and logical analysis. Choosing this approach was in harmony with how I thought about this problem, how it can be studied, how the objectives of this study could be met, and how the findings could be credible to others in my discipline. I tested the two-stage moderated mediation model, as depicted in Figure 1, using path analytic procedures (Hayes & Little, 2018), as this is an appropriate method to simultaneously test a model with multiple mediation, moderators and dependent variables.

I used a cross-sectional survey design, measuring all the variables concurrently (Blaikie, 2003). Cross-sectional studies are used to measure the relationships between variables within a sample of subjects at a single point in time (Hopkins, 2000). The advantages include cost- and time effectiveness. To avoid common source bias, I collected data from multiple respondents. In order to avoid common method variance, the exogenous variable in the study

was collected via the quasi-experimental IAT method; all other variables were collected via survey method. To enhance the rigour of the research design, I specifically addressed issues of internal validity. Internal validity is concerned with the rigour, especially the degree of researcher control, of the study design. Firstly, to avoid social interaction threat to internal validity, I ensured that employees and managers were briefed and surveyed separately, and on different days. Social threats to internal validity refer to the social pressures in the research context that can influence the results of the research (Trochim, 2006). Social threats could have occurred in my research because the key people involved in carrying out the research, i.e., managers and employees, would have been aware of each other's existence and of the role they play in the research project if they were surveyed simultaneously. A manager's physical presence could influence employees' honesty in completing their surveys. Secondly, I was present during the completion of the surveys to ensure that there were no discussions between the participants that could influence responses, and to assist with any questions that participants had. Thirdly, participants were ensured of confidentiality by making them aware they were assigned a secret code with no identifiable reference. Moreover, upon completion of their survey, they put their survey in a sealed envelope and handed it to me in person. They could therefore have peace of mind that their responses will not be made available to fellow employees nor their employer.

### **3.2 Target Population and Sample Method**

The target population for this study was a diverse group of employee-manager dyads representative of the workforce in South Africa. The sample was selected using a nonprobability sampling strategy. Purposive sampling is a form of nonprobability sampling where the sample meets specific criteria (Cooper & Schindler, 2003). There are two major types of purposive sampling: judgement sampling and quota sampling (Cooper & Schindler, 2003). In this study, I used the quota type of purposive sampling to improve representativeness (Cooper & Schindler, 2003). I specified two control dimensions that were pertinent to this study. First, the racial distribution in the South African working population was estimated using the workforce profile for South Africa (Ramutloa, 2015), and, second, the religious distribution was estimated using the data collected by Statistics South Africa in 2011 (Census, 2001). A potential limitation of this approach was that the data available on South Africa's religious profile was outdated. Unfortunately, Census 2011 did not collect religious information as it was considered a low priority for the country (Census FAQ, 2011). Furthermore, South Africa's religious profile may not be representative of the South African workforce due to the inequalities of the past. Another limitation of quota sampling is that the

choice of subjects was based on the availability of organisations agreeing to participate in this study. To overcome this, I specified the target population in the request for participation and endeavoured not to approach organisations that were not diverse in their employment profile.

Two organisations participated in the study. Organisation 1 is a Kwa-Zulu Natal-based manufacturing organisation that produces specialty chemicals that are used as binding and dispersing agents in a range of agricultural and industrial applications. The organisation was established in a joint venture between a South African organisation and a Norwegian organisation. Organisation 2 is also a Kwa-Zulu Natal-based manufacturing organisation that produces agricultural chemicals. This organisation is the South African division of a leading fertiliser company that is headquartered in Norway.

### **3.3 Data Collection and Measurement Scales**

#### **3.3.1 Data Collection**

The data collection technique that was used in this study is survey methodology. Employee surveys were distributed in paper and pencil format to participants and matched afterwards using a unique code, with their managers' implicit bias test results. To build trust and provide assistance where necessary, I conducted briefing sessions with the participants informing them of the purpose of the study as well as the study ethics and how their confidentiality would be protected. The briefing sessions took place during April 2017. I supervised the completion of the employee surveys during May of the same year. For the manager survey, managers completed their Implicit Association Test (IAT) using the commercial Millisecond Inquisit Web platform. The IAT was developed by Anthony Greenwald of the University of Washington, Mahzarin Banaji of Harvard University and Brian Nosek of the University of Virginia. It was first introduced into literature in 1998 (Greenwald, McGee, & Shwartz, 1998) and is the most widely used test to measure automatic, implicit associations (Srivastava & Banaji, 2011). To link the results of the IAT tests and the same manager's self-monitoring score, unique codes were assigned to managers which I maintained in a list and according to which I recorded the data. To overcome the disadvantages of online surveys, i.e. low response rates and the need for a low-distraction environment, managers also completed their online IATs under my supervision followed by completion of a paper-based survey. Computerised data collection of the IATs (Cooper & Schindler, 2003), as well as using a unique code rather than an identifiable identity or employee number, assisted with participants' perceived anonymity.

In organisation 1, all full-time employees were invited to participate in the study. To avoid nestedness in data, it would have been ideal to have single employee/manager dyads. However, the general manager and human resources manager invited and encouraged all to participate, in the spirit of inclusivity, so some employees who participated reported to the same managers. The majority of the employee participants from organisation 1 worked in production (51%). Other employee participants worked in the engineering department as artisans and technicians (17%). A smaller number of employee participants worked in the supply chain department as warehouse, export and shipping coordinators (13%). The balance of the employee participants worked in sales (4%), administration/HR (4%), technical (3%) and finance (8%). The manager participants were mainly engineering, production, supply chain, finance, sales, technical and administrative managers. They had supervisory responsibility for the employees. Employee surveys were provided to 111 employees, and 108 completed their surveys, yielding a response rate of 97%. All 25 managers completed their IATs, and 24 completed their paper-based survey, for a response rate of 96%.

In organisation 2, more purposive dyadic sampling was conducted. From company records, the HR Manager identified an individual employee for each manager who differed in race, religion and/or gender from the manager, and these dyads were asked to participate in the study. The majority of employee participants worked in operations (41%), HR/finance (24%), and marketing and customer service (21%), with the balance of employees working in health and safety (10%) and agronomic services (4%). Manager participants worked in various functions as managers and included managers in general management (7%), operations (45%), HR/finance (24%), marketing and customer service (14%), health and safety (7%), and agronomic services (3%). Again, these managers had supervisory responsibility for their matched employees. Employee surveys were provided to 29 employees, and 29 completed their surveys, yielding a response rate of 100% during April 2017. All 29 managers completed their IATs during May and June 2017. However, one manager's employment contract was terminated while I was collecting data, and therefore he could not complete his paper-based survey, yielding a response rate of 97%.

All employees of organisation 1 and the identified participants of organisation 2 were invited to attend a briefing session before completing their surveys. The briefing session covered the purpose of the research study and the ethics that governed this research. They were given an opportunity to ask questions and discuss concerns. Data was collected through the use of ten scales for the employee survey, and three scales for the manager survey. To link managers



and employees, I maintained a list where I assigned codes to each participant and which were recorded in the data. I then looked up each code in the list to link manager and employee data. The demographic information collected from managers and employees, as well as the scales used in the employee and manager surveys respectively, is described in the following sections.

### 3.3.2 Demographic Information

I collected demographic information from managers and employees. Managers and employees were asked which race, religious, gender and sexual orientation groups they identified with most. They were also asked to report on their age group, education, home language and marital status. Collecting this information was critical to the study as this study focused on employee perceptions of managers' behaviour linked to different social group identifications. The demographic breakdown of the participants by organisation is provided in Table 2. In organisation 1, each manager rated, on average, 4.32 employees. In organisation 2, each manager rated 1 employee.

**Table 2**

*Demography of Sample*

	<u>Organisation 1</u>		<u>Organisation 2</u>	
	<u>Employee</u>	<u>Manager</u>	<u>Employee</u>	<u>Manager</u>
<b>Gender</b>				
- Male	83%	80%	55%	79%
- Female	17%	20%	45%	17%
- Not specified	-	-	-	3%
<b>Race</b>				
- Black	44%	16%	24%	21%
- Indian	38%	52%	24%	17%
- Coloured	-	-	24%	-
- White	18%	32%	28%	62%
<b>Age</b>				
- 18-29	10%	4%	21%	3%
- 30-39	38%	12%	24%	10%
- 40-49	29%	40%	34%	42%
- 50-64	23%	44%	21%	42%
- Not specified	-	-	-	3%
<b>Education</b>				
- Grade 10	13%	4%	7%	7%



- Grade 12	35%	36%	31%	21%
- Trade/Technical Training	16%	8%	3%	3%
- National diploma	26%	28%	42%	32%
- Bachelor's degree	4%	8%	7%	10%
- Postgraduate degree	6%	16%	10%	24%
- Not specified	1%	-	-	3%
<b>Religion</b>				
- Christian	64%	56%	69%	76%
- Hinduism	20%	32%	24%	10%
- Muslim	4%	4%	-	-
- Other Nguni/African religion	8%	-	-	-
- Not religious	4%	8%	7%	14%
<b>Home language</b>				
- Afrikaans	4%	8%	35%	45%
- English	54%	76%	41%	28%
- isiXhosa	3%	4%	-	3%
- isiZulu	36%	8%	17%	11%
- Sesotho	2%	4%	-	3%
- Setswana	1%	-	7%	-
- Other/Not specified	-	-	-	10%
<b>Sexual orientation</b>				
- Asexual	2%	-	-	-
- Bisexual	2%	-	-	-
- Heterosexual	81%	96%	97%	97%
- Other/Not specified	15%	4%	3%	3%
<b>Marital status</b>				
- Married or domestic partnership	57%	88%	69%	86%
- Separated or divorced	5%	4%	4%	4%
- Single/never been married	37%	8%	24%	7%
- Widowed	1%	-	3%	3%
	<u>N</u>	<u>108</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>29</u>

### 3.3.3 Measurement Scales: Employee Survey

The employee survey used the following scales to measure the employee-reported variables:

#### 3.3.3.1 The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (Form 5X)

Individualised consideration was measured by using just that factor from the revised Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (Avolio & Bass, 1995)<sup>4</sup>. Employees responded to four items using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (frequently, if not always). A sample item is: *"My manager treats me as an individual rather than just a member of a group"*. The four items were averaged to form an overall score for individualised consideration ( $\alpha = .78$ ).

### 3.3.3.2 Racial and Ethnic Microaggressions Scale

Workplace microaggressions were measured by the Racial and Ethnic Microaggressions Scale (REMS) (Nadal, 2011), which assesses various racial and religious microaggressions. For one of the six subscales called Workplace and School Microaggressions, employees were asked to indicate the number of times that each particular microaggression occurred and was enacted by their manager in the past six months. These items were adjusted to focus only on workplace events, on experience of managers' behaviour, and were duplicated for religion. An example of how an item was modified to focus only on workplace events is that "I was ignored at school or at work because of my race" was changed to "I was ignored at work because of my race". An example of how an item was modified to specify the experience of managers' behaviour is an item that was changed from "An employer or co-worker was unfriendly or unwelcoming toward me because of my race" to "My manager was unfriendly or unwelcoming toward me because of my race". An example of how an item was modified to refer to religion is an item that originally read, "My opinion was overlooked in a group discussion because of my race" being changed to "My opinion was overlooked in a group discussion because of my religion". A five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (I did not experience this event in the past six months) to 5 (I experienced this event 10 or more times in the past six months) was used. The five items were averaged for racial microaggressions and religious microaggressions respectively. Excellent reliability was found for the racial microaggressions scale ( $\alpha = .95$ ). However, the religion microaggressions scale had relatively low reliability ( $\alpha = .56$ ) and was therefore excluded from all further analyses.

### 3.3.3.3 Abusive Supervision

The extent to which employees perceive their managers' behaviour as abusive was measured with Tepper's (2000) 15-item abusive supervision scale. Employees responded to the statements on a five-point scale, ranging from 1 (I cannot remember him/her using this

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behaviour with me) to 5 (He/she uses this behaviour very often with me). Example items from this abusive supervision measure include “puts me down in front of others”, “blames me to save himself/herself embarrassment” and “tells me I’m incompetent”. The fifteen items were averaged to form an overall score reflecting abusive supervision ( $\alpha = .94$ ).

#### 3.3.3.4 Attributions for Perceived Abuse

Employees' external attribution style was measured by three items from the Attributions for Perceived Abuse scale (Burton et al., 2014). An example item is "The cause of my supervisor's behaviour is something controllable by the supervisor". The three items were averaged to reflect one score per employee, reflecting their level of external attribution style ( $\alpha = .88$ ).

#### 3.3.3.5 Hostile Attribution Bias

Employees' hostile attribution bias was measured by the Hostile Attribution Bias scale (Adams & John, 1997). This scale assesses individuals' tendency to perceive others' behaviour toward them as hostile. Employees were asked to respond to six items on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). An example item is "People pretend to care more about one another than they really do". These six items were averaged to form an overall hostile attribution style score for each participant ( $\alpha = .75$ ).

#### 3.3.3.6 Compound Psychological Capital Questionnaire

Employees' psychological capital was measured by the Compound Psychological Capital Questionnaire (CPC-12) (Lorenz, Beer, Pütz, & Heinitz, 2016). Employees were asked to respond to six items relating to two subscales: resilience and self-efficacy. These two subscales were selected as confirmatory factor analysis results indicated relatively poor fit with all the subscales included in one model (CFI = .778, RMSEA = .101), and based on these two subscales' closest conceptual relation to overcoming victimisation in my model. Based on these factors, the optimism and hope subscales were not included in the study. Combining the two subdimensions of resilience and self-efficacy resulted in improved model fit (CFI = .963, RMSEA = .048). Employees responded to items using a six-point response format ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). The resilience subscale consisted of three items. An example item is, "Sometimes I make myself do things whether I want to or not". The self-efficacy subscale also consisted of three items. An example item is, "I can

remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities". All six items were averaged to create one score for employees' psychological capital ( $\alpha = .80$ ).

### 3.3.3.7 Intentions to Quit

Employees were asked to complete a three-item measure of intentions to quit used by Tepper et al. (2009). An example item is "I expect to change jobs in the next few months". This scale was measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The three items were averaged to indicate overall intentions to quit scores per employee ( $\alpha = .91$ ).

### 3.3.3.8 Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10)

Employees' psychological distress was measured in the forms of depression and anxiety. Employees were asked to complete the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10) (Kessler et al., 2002), comprising ten items. Employees were asked how often they experienced specific feelings over the past 30 days. The scale has ten items and uses a five-point scale ranging from 1 (none of the time) to 5 (all of the time). Example items were, "During the past 30 days, about how often did you feel so sad that nothing could cheer you up?" and "During the past 30 days, about how often did you feel that everything was an effort?" All items were averaged together to indicate the level of psychological distress (anxiety and depression) experienced by employees ( $\alpha = .88$ ).

### 3.3.3.9 Maslach Burnout Inventory

To measure employees' emotional exhaustion, I used the nine-item Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). A sample item is, "I feel burned out from my work". Employees used a seven-point scale ranging from 0, "a few times a year," to 6, "every day" to complete this questionnaire. The nine items were averaged to reflect the overall level of emotional exhaustion experienced by employees ( $\alpha = .90$ ).

### 3.3.3.10 Screen for Post-Traumatic Stress Symptoms

To measure symptoms of post-traumatic stress, employees were asked to complete the Screen for Post-Traumatic Stress Symptoms (SPTSS) (Carlson, 2011). The SPTSS is a 17-item measure of the DSM-IV PTSD symptoms. Employees responded to the items using a

ten-point scale, ranging from 0 (never) to 10 (always) about how often they had experienced symptoms of post-traumatic stress in the past two weeks. Example items include "I have trouble getting to sleep or staying asleep" and "find myself remembering bad things that happened to me over and over, even when I don't want to think about them". Items were averaged to reflect an overall score for symptoms of PTSD for employees ( $\alpha = .90$ ).

### **3.3.4 Measurement Scales: Manager Survey**

The manager survey consisted of the following two measurement scales to measure the following variables:

#### **3.3.4.1 Multicategory Implicit Association Tests (MC-IAT)**

Implicit racial and religious bias was measured using the Implicit Association Test (IAT). The IAT measures automatic associations between concepts (e.g., black people, overweight people or gay people) and evaluations (e.g., good or bad) or stereotypes (e.g., clever, lazy or clumsy). The IAT is based upon the simple principle that individuals will perform better in tasks - from a speed and accuracy perspective -when they rely on automatic cognitive associations, as opposed to tasks that conflict with automatic associations (Rudman, 2011). When automatic or implicitly associated concepts share the same response key, response times are expected to be shorter and more accurate compared to when highly associated concepts are assigned to different response keys (Hall et al., 2015). The managers completed two four-category Multicategory Implicit Association Tests (MC-IAT) (Axt, Ebersole, & Nosek, 2014), one for race and one for religion. The race IAT measured the strength of associations between the four most prevalent racial groups in South Africa (Black, Indian, Coloured, and White), as well as positive or negative evaluations. For the race IAT, managers were asked to categorise like-valenced and unlike-valenced concepts by responding to one type of pair on a left-hand key (E) and the other pair on a right-hand key (I), thus automatically matching one racial group and one evaluation with either the left-hand key (E) or the right-hand key (I). In the race IAT, participants had to categorise the racial group category name (Black, Indian, Coloured, and White) with either positive words (e.g., love, pleasant, great, and wonderful) or "anything else" (e.g., hate, unpleasant, awful, and terrible). The religion IAT procedure was the same as for the race IAT, but with religious categories and items used in place of categories and items representing race. The religion stimuli consisted of words associated with each of the four most prevalent religious groups in South Africa: Christianity (gospel, Christian, Jesus, church), Islam (Koran, Muslim, Muhammad, mosque), Hinduism (Hindu, Krishna, Karma, Dharma) and

Judaism (Torah, Jew, Abraham, synagogue) (Axt et al., 2014). These four religions were selected as almost 80 percent of South Africa's population follows the Christian faith, with the other major religious groups being Hindus, Muslims, and Jews (Booyesen, 2007). Nosek, Bar-Anan, Sriram, Axt, and Greenwald (2014) provided guidelines for the scoring of the IAT: A D score for each racial and religious category. This analysis strategy provided an interdependent evaluation of each group in comparison with each other, based on the aggregate D scores for each race and religious contrast D score (e.g., the white score was the average of three D scores, i.e. White compared to Black, Indian, and Coloured people) (Axt et al., 2014). The four aggregate scores are interdependent, and the mean of the four scores will necessarily be 0. Positive scores indicate stronger implicit associations than the average evaluation across the four groups, and negative scores indicate more unfavourable evaluations than the average across the four groups (Axt et al., 2014).

#### 3.3.4.2 Self-Monitoring Scale

Managers' tendency toward self-monitoring was measured with six items relating to the "ability to modify self-presentation" factor, from the 13-item Self-monitoring Scale developed by Lennox and Wolfe (1984). The scale consists of items such as "I have trouble changing my behaviour to suit different people and different situations" and "In social situations, I have the ability to alter my behaviour if I feel that something else is called for". Managers responded to the items using a five-point scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The items were averaged to reflect an overall self-monitoring score for each manager ( $\alpha = .76$ ).

### 3.4 Data Analysis Strategy

The SPSS, AMOS, and Mplus statistical software packages were used to conduct the statistical analyses. I conducted one exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to understand the factor structure and the distinctiveness of the abusive supervision and racial microaggression scales, due to their conceptual overlap and the fact that they have not been measured together in previously published studies. Further, I examined the construct validity of all measurement scales using confirmatory factor analysis to verify the factor structure of the various scales. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was selected because all of the scales employed in the study have been previously validated in published work; I wanted to ensure that the variables in my sample loaded onto the factors similarly as in the original research. Overall model fit in the CFAs and Mplus analyses was assessed by the Chi-square statistic ( $\chi^2$ ) and comparative fit index (CFI). CFI was appraised using the recognised value of 0.90 as an indication of good

fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). CFI has been found to be more accurate and stable than other indices of fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Also, the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) was evaluated, given conventional standards. RMSEAs of less than .06 is an indication of good model-data fit (Lei & Wu, 2007).

### **3.4.1 Measurement of Abusive Supervision in South Africa**

For the abusive supervision measure, Tepper (2007) recommends that researchers explore the stability of the scale when assessing it in non-Western cultures, as it is possible that national culture impacts the understanding and interpretation of abusive supervision items. That is, what it means to be abused may vary across cultures. Thus, I tested for differences in perceptions of abusive supervision in South Africa by examining the factor loadings for each item and comparing the loadings to those reported in Tepper's (2000) seminal article on abusive supervision.

### **3.4.2 Hypotheses Testing**

To test my hypotheses, I used both 1) hierarchical linear modeling in Mplus to test the hypotheses where data was nested within the supervisor; and 2) the PROCESS macro in SPSS. By examining PROCESS output, I was able to make determinations about whether the direct, mediated, moderated and moderated-mediated relations I hypothesised were supported within the simultaneous model testing. PROCESS was used as it allows for the estimation of moderated mediation models in a linear regression framework. It was used to estimate both mediation and moderated mediation. Separate moderated mediation analyses were conducted for each of the distal employee outcomes in the theoretical model. When examining the output, I evaluated how the regression models were fitted, first predicting the mediator variable using the independent variable. Thereafter, the four dependent variables were respectively predicted using both the independent variable and the mediator; and finally, the four dependent variables respectively, using the independent variable. I examined if the independent variable significantly predicted the dependent and the mediator variables, confirming a mediation effect. I also studied the output to determine if an indirect effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable existed by considering the effect sizes and the confidence intervals, the latter of which should not include zero.

Tests of moderated mediation were conducted in PROCESS as the theoretical model predicted that self-monitoring moderated the relationship between managers' implicit racial



(H7) and religious (H8) bias and microaggressions, and that individualised consideration moderated the relationship between managers' implicit racial (H9) and religious (H10) bias and microaggressions. I further predicted that employees' external (H11a) and hostile (H11b) attribution styles moderated the relationship between racial microaggressions and abusive supervision and that employees' external (H12a) and hostile (H12b) attribution styles would moderate the relationship between religious microaggressions and abusive supervision. This involved moderated mediation and conditional indirect effects, where the strength of the hypothesised indirect effect is conditional on the value of the moderator (Preacher, Rucker, & Hayes, 2007). Also, the moderating effect of psychological capital (resilience and self-efficacy subscales only) on the relationship between abusive supervision and turnover intentions (H15), psychological distress (H16) and symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (H17) was tested to understand how psychological capital may mitigate these relationships. To test the moderating effect of external and hostile attribution styles and psychological capital on the mediated relationship between racial microaggressions and employees outcomes via abusive supervision, such that external and hostile attribution styles strengthen the path between racial microaggressions and abusive supervision, and psychological capital weakens the path between abusive supervision and employees' psychological distress (H19a), symptoms of PTSD (H19b) and turnover intentions (H19c), I used PROCESS.

### **3.5 Research Ethics**

Implicit bias tests such as the IAT have the potential to reveal personal, disconcerting and possibly unknown aspects of an individual and pose the potential to cause harm if misused (Project Implicit® - Ethical Considerations, n.d.). An example of misuse is an employer who would use this test to measure a job candidate's implicit racial bias, to decide whether or not he or she should be offered a job or a promotion. Therefore, privacy considerations were taken into account in the design and execution of this study. Individual responses were collected and recorded using a code number to link employees and their managers. I kept these codes numbers in the strictest of confidence.

No identifiable information about individuals or organisations was made known to anyone that may have resulted in the identification of participants, either in my dissertation, academic presentations or academic publications. Results were only shared at a collective level, indicating relationships between the variables in the theoretical model for the sample group as a whole. Participants were informed in the email requesting them to participate and on the first screen of the IAT test that their participation was voluntary and that their responses would be

kept confidential. Furthermore, only my supervisor and I viewed, captured, and analysed the data.

## 4. RESULTS

In this chapter, I discuss the results of the data analyses for this study. Firstly, the measurement model is discussed and represented in Table 3. Thereafter, the descriptive statistics and intercorrelations among study variables are documented. Finally, the results of the hypothesis testing are examined.

Unfortunately, as mentioned above, the religious microaggressions scale had a low alpha coefficient ( $\alpha = .56$ ). By deleting item 2, Cronbach's alpha was slightly improved ( $\alpha = .63$ ); however, it was still too low to be deemed reliable. I further conducted exploratory factor analysis which confirmed that the scale was unidimensional. But, based on these findings, I continued my data analysis excluding the religious microaggressions scale and any hypotheses including it.

### 4.1 Measurement Models

I first examined the validity of the measurement scales using confirmatory factor analysis. To evaluate the distinctness of the abusive supervision and racial microaggressions scales, I did an exploratory factor analysis. Confirmatory factor analysis was selected rather than exploratory factor analysis for the rest of the scales, as I used scales that have previously been validated in published studies. I conducted four sets of confirmatory factor analysis with SPSS AMOS 25.0, to determine the goodness-of-fit of the measurement model: one for the employee-rated variables relating to perceptions of the manager, one for employee individual differences, one for the manager individual difference variable and one for the employee outcomes. As recommended by Hu and Bentler (1998), when maximum-likelihood methods are used and when there are relatively small sample sizes, the Comparative Fit index (CFI) is reported, for which values of .90 or greater are required (Hu & Bentler, 1998). The root mean-squared error of approximation (RMSEA) is also reported. For RMSEA, values below .05 are considered excellent fit, values between .05 and .08 are considered good fit, and values between .08 and .10 are considered adequate fit (MacCallum, Browne, & Sugawara, 1996). The results of the confirmatory factor analyses are presented in Table 3, followed by a detailed description of each respective model.



**Table 3***Summary of Confirmatory Factor Analyses*

<u>Description</u>	<u>Original model</u>			<u>Alternative model</u>		
	$\chi^2$ (df)	RMSEA	CFI	$\chi^2$ (df)	RMSEA	CFI
Model 1: Employee-rated manager behaviour variables: abusive supervision, microaggression and individualised consideration	434.83 (223)***	.077	.91	878.95 (245)***	.140	.72
Model 2: Employee-reported employee individual differences: external attributions, hostile attributions and psychological capital	113.20 (87)*	.048	.96	271.07 (89)***	.124	.75
Model 3: Manager self-reported individual difference variable: self-monitoring.	17.78 (14)	.072	.95			
Model 4: Employee outcomes: psychological distress, emotional exhaustion and intentions to quit	360.23 (178)***	.088	.90	391.2 (179)***	.094	.89

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N=133

Alternative Model 1: Abusive supervision and microaggressions treated as a single factor, and individualised consideration.

Alternative Model 2: External and hostile attributions treated as a single factor, and psychological capital.

Alternative Model 4: Psychological distress and emotional exhaustion treated as one factor, and intentions to quit.

\* $p < .05$

\*\* $p < .01$

\*\*\* $p < .001$

#### 4.1.1. Model 1: The Employee-Rated Manager Behaviour Variables

In this model, I included the manager behaviour variables as reported by employees: abusive supervision, racial microaggression and individualised consideration. After removing cases with incomplete data, a sample size of 133 was available for confirmatory factor analysis. The original employee-rated manager behaviour model provided an inadequate fit to the data (CFI = .88).

An examination of the modification indices revealed that fit could be improved if items within the abusive supervision scale were allowed to correlate with the quite conceptually similar microaggressions scale. From a theoretical perspective, both abusive supervision and microaggressions are perceptual constructs that are based on employees' evaluations of their managers' behaviour as negative and potentially aggressive. Moreover, both microaggressive and abusive behaviours are characterised by small, subtle and often unintentional negative acts; thus, exposure to microaggressions could be interpreted by employees as abusive. I found that these two variables were highly correlated for the subsample of employee and manager dyads of different race groups ( $r = .709, p < .01$ ). Hence, I conducted an exploratory factor analysis (see Table 4) to ensure that the abusive supervision and racial microaggressions constructs were, in fact, discrete variables. Using Varimax rotation, all of the abusive supervision items loaded onto Factor 1, with loadings ranging from .48 to .85. The racial microaggression items loaded onto Factor 2 with loadings ranging from .85 to .94. Together these two factors explained 66% of the variance, 57% by Factor 1 and 11% by Factor 2. These results provide evidence of distinctiveness. Yet in the CFA with all employee-rated manager behaviour variables, items 1 ("My boss ridicules me"), 3 ("My boss gives me the silent treatment"), 5 ("My boss invades my privacy") and 11 ("My boss makes negative comments about me to others") from the abusive supervision scale cross-loaded on to the microaggression factor, defined as "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group" (Sue et al., 2007, p. 278).

Conceptually these cross-loadings make sense as the perception of being ridiculed, being given the silent treatment, spoken about negatively, and privacy violation can be interpreted as indignities of a verbal, behavioural or environmental nature, akin to microaggressions. Thus, the adding of covariances for abusive supervision error terms  $e_1, e_3, e_5$  and  $e_{11}$  with the microaggressions factor was supported theoretically. Item 10 ("My boss expresses anger

at me when he/she is mad for another reason”) did not cross-load onto the microaggressions variable during exploratory factor analysis. However, the modification index in the CFA suggested that item 10 of the abusive supervision scale also loads onto the microaggressions factor. Tepper (2007) requested that for purposes of integrating abusive supervision knowledge, the full 15-item instrument for abusive supervision should be used and that items not be removed. Therefore, this item was not removed, and a covariance was added. After adding five covariances (abusive supervision e1, e3, e5, e10, and e11) with the microaggression factor, model fit of the manager behaviour model improved to acceptable levels (CFI = .91, RMSEA = .077).

I tested an alternative model to Model 1 (see Table 3), where abusive supervision and racial microaggressions were treated as a single factor, with individualised consideration as a separate factor, to see if an alternative model might result in an improvement in fit. The alternative model did not yield increased fit (CFI = .72, RMSEA = .14), so I retained my original employee-rated manager behaviour variables as indicated in Model 1.

**Table 4**

<i>Exploratory Factor Analysis: Abusive Supervision and Racial Microaggressions</i>		
<u>Item</u>	<u>Factor 1</u>	<u>Factor 2</u>
<i>Abusive Supervision</i>		
Ridicules me	<b>.476</b>	.658
Tells me my thoughts or feelings are stupid	<b>.795</b>	.321
Gives me the silent treatment	<b>.487</b>	.550
Puts me down in front of others	<b>.800</b>	.353
Invades my privacy	<b>.665</b>	.241
Reminds me of my past mistakes and failures	<b>.848</b>	.186
Doesn't give me credit for jobs requiring a lot of effort	<b>.485</b>	.401
Blames me to save himself/herself embarrassment	<b>.770</b>	.330
Breaks promises he/she makes	<b>.637</b>	.349
Expresses anger at me when he/she is mad for another reason	<b>.688</b>	.088
Makes negative comments about me to others	<b>.622</b>	.577
Is rude to me	<b>.563</b>	.584

Does not allow me to interact with my co-workers	.557	.315
Tells me I'm incompetent	.628	.311
Lies to me	.559	.502

Racial Microaggressions

My manager was unfriendly or unwelcoming toward me because of my race	.355	.865
My manager overlooked my opinion in a group discussion because of my race	.319	.849
I was ignored by my manager at work because of my race	.337	.881
My manager assumed that my work would be inferior to people of other race groups	.176	.936
My manager treated me differently than colleagues of other racial groups	.208	.850

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#### 4.1.2. Model 2: The Employee Self-Reported Individual Differences

In this CFA, I included the employee-reported employee individual differences variables: measures of external attribution style, hostile attribution style and two dimensions of psychological capital (n = 134). This model was found to have good fit (CFI = .96, RMSEA = .048). I tested an alternative Model 2 where I treated external and hostile attributions as a single factor. The alternative Model 2 did not yield increased fit (CFI = .75, RMSEA = .12), so I retained my original employee self-reported individual differences Model 2.

#### 4.1.3. Model 3: A Manager Self-Reported Individual Difference

In this model, I included the only manager-reported individual difference measure: self-monitoring (n = 53). The results showed that the measurement model fit the data very well (CFI = .95, RMSEA = 0.072).

#### 4.1.4. Model 4: The Employee Outcomes

In this model, the PTSD symptoms scale was omitted as it is a formative scale. A formative model is used when correlations between items are not anticipated, and scale scores do not adequately represent the construct (Hoobler et al., 2010). Exposure to traumatic circumstances has been described as a formative construct, while most standard psychological measures and indeed the rest of the measures in the current study, are reflective. Schell, in Marton et al. (2016), argued that PTSD is not a reflective construct

because the aim is not to measure the common cause, but rather to measure the common outcome. He further argued that summing items creates a measure of the common cause, but this method cannot be used unless events are uncorrelated and equally predictive of the defined outcome. As a result, he maintained that summing up PTSD items does not make theoretical sense, even though it is often done in practice. I proceeded by using his advice to treat PTSD as a formative construct.

In my employee outcomes CFA, I included the employee behavioural and psychological outcomes measures including psychological distress, that is, anxiety and depression, and emotional exhaustion (n = 134). Originally, the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10) was designed as a unidimensional scale to measure broad-spectrum psychological distress related to depression and anxiety (Kessler et al., 2002). All ten items were intended to predict a single psychological distress factor, and this has been used as a unidimensional scale to predict distress of social workers (Wu & Pooler, 2014). I used the two-factor model that has been examined in Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10), separating the “depression” items (items 1, 2, 5, 6 and 8) and the “anxiety” items (items 3, 4, 7, 9 and 10, italicised in Table 5) (Bougie, Arim, Kohen, & Findlay, 2016). I added emotional exhaustion to this model, to predict psychological distress together with anxiety and depression. The behavioural outcome, intentions to quit, was added to this model as well. This provided an inadequate fit to the data (CFI = .73). Modifications were made to improve the fit of the model to the data by inspecting the covariances between items. Modification indices indicated that depression items 5 (“How often did you feel restless or fidgety?”) and 6 (“How often did you feel so restless you could not sit still?”) shared common variance. This was likely because both items relate to feeling restless. Also, the error terms of items 4 (“How often did you feel hopeless?”) and 9 (“How often did you feel so sad that nothing could cheer you up?”) shared variance, as both relate to feeling overwrought. The error term of items 2 and 3 of the depression factor (feeling nervous), as well as emotional exhaustion items 1 (feeling drained), 5 (feeling burnt-out from work) and 6 (feeling frustrated by job) shared variance with intentions to quit. It makes conceptual sense that employees, who feel burnt-out, frustrated and nervous at work and are more likely to quit, would all share a common motivational cause for these reports. Therefore, I added these 3 covariances. After these modifications, model fit improved to acceptable levels (CFI = .90, RMSEA = .088). I tested in alternative Model 4 to see if it would result in better fit, where I treated psychological distress (anxiety and depression), and emotional exhaustion as a single factor. The alternative model 4 did not yield increased fit (CFI = .89, RMSEA = .09), so I retained my original employee outcomes model 4.



**Table 5**

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*Exploratory Factor Analysis: Psychological Distress*

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<u>Item</u>	<u>Factor 1</u>	<u>Factor 2</u>
1. How often did you feel tired out for no good reason?	.716	.326
2. How often did you feel nervous?	.666	.624
3. <i>How often did you feel so nervous that nothing could calm you down?</i>	.525	.740
4. <i>How often did you feel hopeless?</i>	.770	.425
5. How often did you feel restless or fidgety?	.762	.449
6. How often did you feel so restless you could not sit still?	.700	.589
7. <i>How often did you feel depressed?</i>	.568	.757
8. How often did you feel that everything was an effort?	.290	.811
9. <i>How often did you feel so sad that nothing could cheer you up?</i>	.628	.848
10. <i>How often did you feel worthless?</i>	.703	.531

---

#### **4.2 Descriptive Statistics and Correlations**

See Table 6 for the means, standard deviations, reliability coefficients and intercorrelations among the main variables in this study. The reliability coefficient for each scale (Cronbach's alpha) is reported in parentheses on the diagonal of each variable. In general, all scales displayed acceptable levels of internal consistency ranging from .70 to .96, except for religious microaggression, as discussed above. Moreover, the intercorrelations among variables were generally in the hypothesised direction. For example, as managers' individualised consideration increased, employees' experience of racial microaggressions and abusive supervision decreased. Also, a significant correlation of implicit racial bias with abusive supervision suggests that the stronger the implicit racial bias of managers, the more employees perceived their managers' behaviour as abusive. These results are presented in Table 6.

**Table 6***Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations Among Study Variables*

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. IAT Race Bias	.00	.30														
2. IAT Religion Bias	-.17	.24	.06													
3. Racial Microaggressions	1.21	.72	.20*	-.01	(.95)											
4. Religious Microaggressions	1.03	.17	.08	.05	.38**	(.56)										
5. Individualised Consideration	2.17	1.05	-.23**	-.05	-.35**	-.13	(.78)									
6. Self-Monitoring	3.71	.52	-.03	.14	.00	.13	-.08	(.76)								
7. Abusive Supervision	1.48	.73	.20*	.02	.61**	.07	-.55**	.02	(.94)							
8. External Attribution Style	4.11	1.86	.08	.14	.28**	.15	-.14	.11	.31**	(.88)						
9. Hostile Attribution Style	1.56	.84	.07	.04	.22*	.20*	-.23**	.01	.21*	.31**	(.75)					
10. Psychological Distress (Anxiety & Depression)	2.00	.70	.13	-.04	.20*	.03	-.26**	-.18	.29**	-.02	.38**	(.88)				
11. Emotional Exhaustion	1.30	1.18	.03	.011	.14	.19*	-.13	-.05	.21*	.22*	.42**	.53**	(.90)			
12. PTSD Symptoms	2.61	1.87	.06	-.09	.32**	.11	-.15	-.13	.29**	.18*	.34**	.62**	.43**			
13. Intentions to Quit	2.29	1.03	.16	.20*	.17	.19*	-.41**	.12	.27**	.10	.37**	.47**	.49**	.23**	(.91)	
14. Psychological Capital (Self-efficacy & Resilience)	4.70	.83	.12	-.20*	.04	.02	-.03	-.02	.04	.16	.11	-.14	-.03	-.06	-.17	(.80)

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Cronbach's alpha coefficients appear in parentheses along the diagonal

N = 137

### 4.3 Measurement of Abusive Supervision in South Africa

For the abusive supervision measure, Tepper (2007) recommends that researchers explore the stability of the scale when assessing it in non-Western cultures, as it is possible that national culture impacts the understanding and interpretation of abusive supervision items (i.e. what it means to be abused may vary across cultures). Thus, I tested for measurement equivalence of the abusive supervision measure in my South African sample. A lack of measurement equivalence poses a threat to the validity of measures, because it creates uncertainty as to whether a common construct is being measured across groups, making it impossible to draw meaningful group differences or to generalise findings (Robert, Lee, & Chan, 2006). I examined the factor loadings for each item to compare the loadings in my South African sample to those reported in published studies using Western samples. The results from my study are represented in Table 7.

**Table 7**

*Abusive Supervision Unstandardised/Standardised Factor Loadings: South Africa*

<u>My manager...</u>	<u>SA</u>
Ridicules me.	1.00 / .56
Tells me my thoughts or feelings are stupid.	1.33 / .72
Gives me the silent treatment.	1.04 / .56
Puts me down in front of others.	1.70 / .79
Invades my privacy.	1.45 / .70
Reminds me of my past mistakes and failures.	1.72 / .72
Doesn't give me credit for jobs requiring a lot of effort.	1.95 / .67
Blames me to save himself/herself embarrassment.	1.78 / .76
Breaks promises he/she makes.	1.39 / .61
Expresses anger at me when he/she is mad for another reason.	1.27 / .56
Makes negative comments about me to others.	1.56 / .75
Is rude to me.	1.38 / .75
Does not allow me to interact with my co-workers.	.75 / .49
Tells me I'm incompetent.	1.15 / .66
Lies to me.	1.58 / .73

In examining the construct validity of the abusive supervision scale in South Africa, I determined that, similar to the USA sample (Tepper, 2000), all the factor loadings, except for item 13 which was adequate at .49, were strong (greater than .50). Based on the factor

loadings achieved in the South African sample, it can be concluded that the scale seems to operate similarly in South Africa to the USA - where the scale was developed - in Tepper's (2000) seminal study.

#### **4.4 Hypotheses Testing**

In this section, I will address each hypothesis, indicate the variables involved and present the results of the data analyses.

Hypothesis 1 suggested that implicit racial bias and perceived racial microaggressions are positively related and Hypothesis 2 proposed that racial microaggressions are related to abusive supervision, both when employees are from a different race group than their manager. To control for the two organisations from which the sample was drawn, and to control for employees nested within managers, I used hierarchical linear modeling in Mplus to test the hypotheses, while controlling for nesting effects. Results failed to provide support for Hypothesis 1, suggesting that there is no significant relationship between managers' implicit racial bias and racial microaggressions ( $\beta = .16; p = .14$ ) when employees are from a different race group than managers. However, Hypothesis 2, which envisaged that employees' exposure to racial microaggressions might be related to abusive supervision, was supported ( $\beta = .76; p < .001$ ).

Hypothesis 3 proposed that racial microaggressions mediate the relationship between managers' implicit racial bias and abusive supervision. Using MPLUS to control for managers nested in two organisations, employees nested within managers and racial dissimilarity, the estimated standardised coefficients showed a significant relationship between implicit racial bias (independent variable) and racial microaggressions (mediator) ( $\beta = .19; p < .05$ ). Additionally, a significant relationship was found between racial microaggressions (mediator) and abusive supervision (dependent variable) ( $\beta = .62; p < .001$ ). A significant relation was not found between implicit racial bias (independent variable) and abusive supervision (dependent variable) ( $\beta = .03; p > .05$ ). However, researchers have begun to question whether significance in this step is a necessary condition to demonstrate mediation and interpretation of mediation models of late has demonstrated that this path may not be necessary to indicate mediation (Hayes, 2009; Shrout & Bolger, 2002). Hayes (2009) recommends that researchers modernise the way we think about and test indirect influences. He identified the Sobel test using the Sobel calculation tool for mediation tests of Preacher and Leonardelli (2010), which is an inferential technique using the product of coefficients approach, as an analytical

approach to quantify indirect effects rather than concluding their significance from a set of their component paths. Hence, in congruence with the approach followed by researchers with similar findings (Harrison, Sluss & Ashforth, 2011; Hoobler & Brass, 2006; Liu & Fu, 2011), I performed a Sobel test to confirm the indirect effects of implicit racial bias on abusive supervision via racial microaggressions (mediator), (Hayes, 2009; Mackinnon & Dwyer, 1993; MacKinnon, Warsi, & Dwyer, 1995; Sobel, 1982) to ascertain if the indirect effect of implicit racial bias (independent variable) on abusive supervision (dependent variable) through racial microaggressions (mediator) is significantly different from zero. Significance was found ( $Z = 1.93, p = .05$ ). Hypothesis 3 was supported.

Hypotheses 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 12 and 20 could not be tested as the religion microaggressions scale did not achieve reliability ( $\alpha = .56$ ), and therefore hypotheses including this scale would not meet tests of construct validity.

Hypothesis 7 proposed that self-monitoring moderates the relationship between manager implicit racial bias and racial microaggressions, such that higher self-monitoring weakens the association between implicit racial bias and racial microaggressions. To test the hypothesised moderation, I used Hayes' PROCESS procedure version 3.00 in SPSS (Hayes, 2013). The moderation results based on the output of the PROCESS macro are summarised in Table 8. The interaction term was not a significant predictor of microaggressions. Thus, self-monitoring did not moderate the relationship between implicit racial bias and racial microaggressions, and the results failed to support Hypothesis 7.

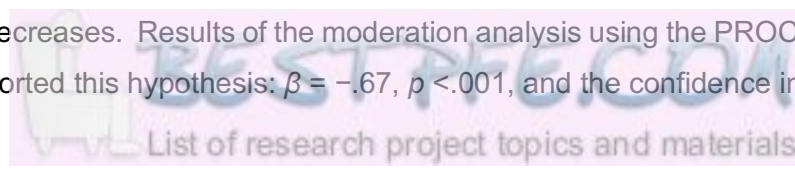
**Table 8**

<i>Moderating Effect of Self-Monitoring on Racial Bias and Racial Microaggressions</i>						
	$\beta$	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	LLCI	ULCI
Implicit racial bias	.52	.24	2.20	.029	.06	.99
Self-monitoring	.01	.13	.09	.932	-.25	.28
Implicit racial bias x self-monitoring	.15	.57	.26	.797	-.98	1.27

*Notes:*

*N = 117. Standardised regression coefficients are reported. Bootstrap sample size = 5000.  $p > .05$ .*

Hypothesis 9 envisaged that the relationship between implicit racial bias and racial microaggressions is moderated by individualised consideration, such that as individualised consideration increases, the association between implicit racial bias and racial microaggressions decreases. Results of the moderation analysis using the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2013) supported this hypothesis:  $\beta = -.67, p < .001$ , and the confidence interval does



not include zero. The results are displayed in Table 9. I next graphed the interaction to determine whether or not the shape conformed to the direction of the hypothesis. I graphed the significant interaction plots by following the two-way interaction procedure of Dawson (2014). I entered the standardised regression coefficients (including intercept/constant) in the Excel worksheet provided online by Jeremy Dawson at <http://www.jeremydawson.com/slopes.htm>. Figure 2 shows that high levels of individualised consideration negatively affect the relationship between implicit racial bias and racial microaggressions. Values are one standard deviation above and below the mean. Hypothesis 9 was supported.

**Table 9**

*Moderating Effect of Individualised Consideration on the Relationship Between Implicit Racial Bias and on Racial Microaggressions*

	$\beta$	SE	t	p	LLCI	UUCI
Implicit racial bias	-.37	.19	1.93	.059	-.01	.74
Individualised consideration	-.22	.06	-3.95	.000	-.25	-.11
Implicit racial bias x individualised consideration	-.67	.19	-3.58	.001	-.98	-.30

Notes:

N = 131. Standardised regression coefficients are reported. Bootstrap sample size = 5000.  $p < .001$ .

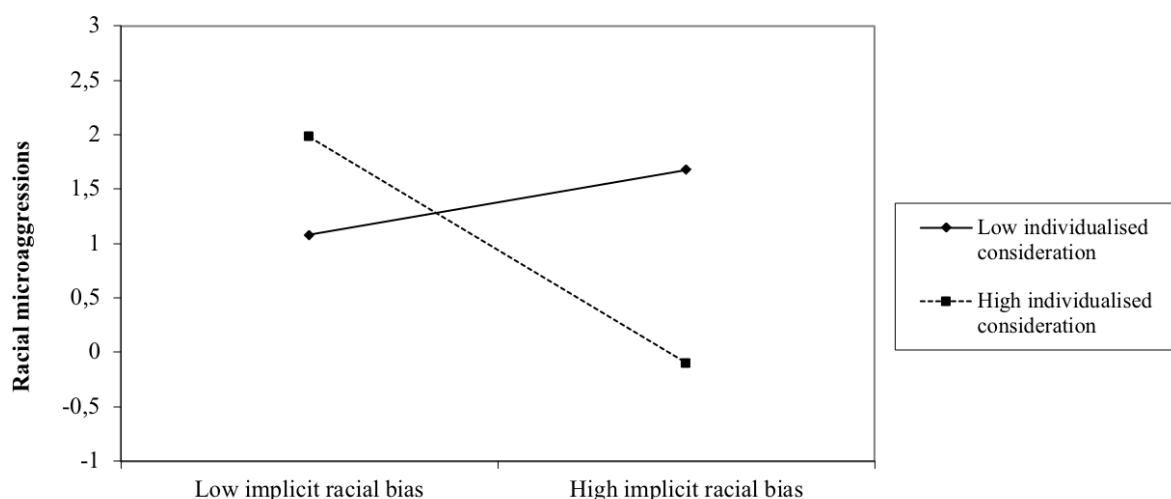


Figure 2: Moderating effect of individualised consideration on the relationship between implicit racial bias and racial microaggressions

Hypothesis 11 suggested that employees' external (H11a) and hostile (H11b) attribution styles moderate the relationship between racial microaggressions and abusive supervision, such that higher external and hostile attribution styles strengthen this association. Unfortunately, a significant moderation effect was not found ( $\beta = -.28, p = .054$ ), contrary to the hypothesis. Thus, the results failed to support hypothesis 11 using the full sample. Results of the moderation tests are presented in Table 10. However, considering how close the significance of .054 found in the full sample is to being significant, in exploratory fashion I tested the same moderation effects with a subsample consisting of the dyads where the manager and employee were racially dissimilar. I found the moderation effect of hostile attribution style on the relationship between racial microaggressions and abusive supervision to be significant ( $\beta = -.30, p < .05$ ; confidence interval does not include 0), but not the moderation effect of external attribution style. Results of the moderation tests for the racially dissimilar dyadic sample are presented in Table 11.

Also, Figure 3 demonstrates that higher attribution style is associated with stronger perceptions of abusive supervision under higher racial microaggressions, racially dissimilar manager-employee dyadic relationships. Hence, only for racially dissimilar dyads, Hypothesis 11b was supported.

**Table 10**

*Moderating Effect of External and Hostile Attributions on the Association Between Racial Microaggressions and Abusive Supervision in the Full Sample*

	$\beta$	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Racial microaggressions	.87	.24	3.69	.000	.40	1.34
External attribution style	.46	.04	1.31	.193	-.02	.12
Racial microaggressions x External attribution style	-.08	.09	-.97	.337	-.25	.09
Hostile attribution style	.04	.07	.52	.603	-.10	.17
Racial microaggressions x Hostile attribution style	-.28	.14	-1.95	.054	-.57	.01

$R^2$

Notes:

N = 115. Standardised regression coefficients are reported. Bootstrap sample size = 5000.  $p < .001$ .

**Table 11**

*Moderating Effect of Hostile Attributions on the Association Between Racial Microaggressions and Abusive Supervision in the Racially Dissimilar Dyadic Sample*

	$\beta$	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Racial microaggressions	1.22	.27	4.57	.000	.83	.48
Hostile attribution style	.49	.17	2.98	.004	.16	.81
Racial microaggressions x Hostile attribution style	-.30	.12	-2.48	.016	-.54	-.06

$R^2$

Notes:

$N = 73$ . Standardised regression coefficients are reported. Bootstrap sample size = 5000.

$p < .001$ .

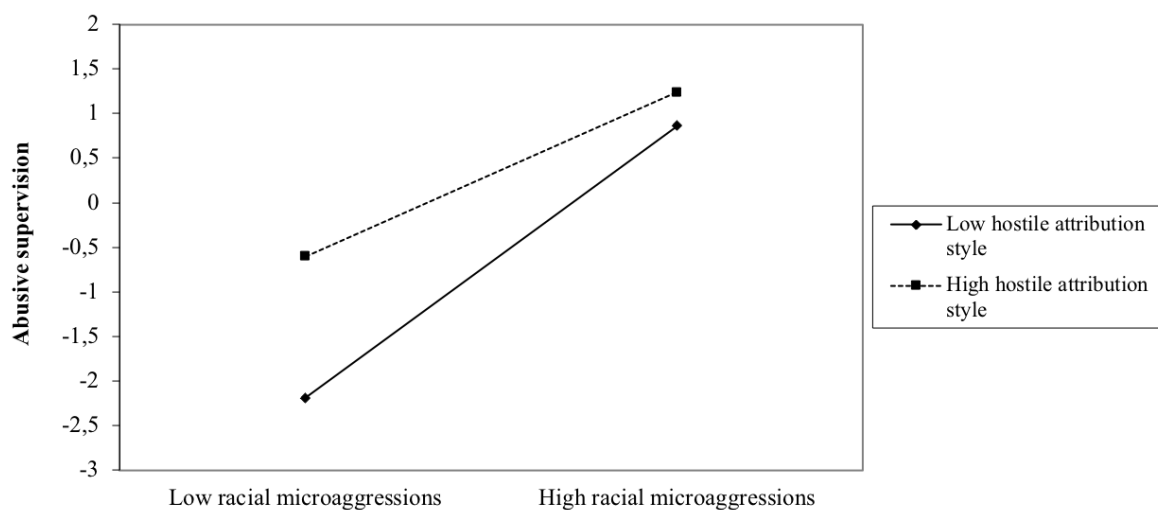


Figure 3: Moderating effect of hostile attribution style on the relationship between racial microaggressions and abusive supervision.

Hypothesis 13 predicted that abusive supervision is positively related to psychological distress in the form of anxiety (H13a), depression (H13b) and emotional exhaustion (H13c). It was also anticipated that abusive supervision is positively related to symptoms of post-traumatic stress (Hypothesis 14) and to turnover intentions (Hypothesis 15). Controlling for the organisation and racially dissimilar dyads, one simultaneous multiple regression analysis indicated that abusive supervision is positively related to anxiety ( $\beta = .21, p < .05$ ), depression ( $\beta = .24, p < .01$ ), emotional exhaustion ( $\beta = .17, p < .05$ ), symptoms of post-traumatic stress ( $\beta = .68, p < .01$ ) and intentions to quit ( $\beta = .30, p < .05$ ). Thus, Hypotheses 13a, 13b, 13c, 14 and 15 were supported.

Additionally, it was hypothesised that employees' psychological capital moderates the relationship between abusive supervision and employees' psychological distress in the forms of anxiety (H16a), depression (H16b), emotional exhaustion (H16c), symptoms of post-



traumatic stress (H17) and turnover intentions (H18), such that higher psychological capital weakens these associations. Results of the moderation analyses using the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2013) failed to provide support for the moderating effect of psychological capital on the various employee outcomes and are presented in Tables 12-16. None of these interaction terms were significant predictors of the respective outcomes. Hypotheses 16, 17, and 18 were not supported.

**Table 12**

<i>Moderating Effect of Psychological Capital on Abusive Supervision and Anxiety</i>						
	$\beta$	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Abusive supervision	.28	.09	3.06	.003	.10	.46
Psychological capital	-.16	.08	-1.93	.056	-.32	.01
Abusive supervision x psychological capital	-.05	.14	-.34	.733	-.32	.23

Notes:

N = 125. Standardised regression coefficients are reported. Bootstrap sample size = 5000. p < .01.

**Table 13**

<i>Moderating Effect of Psychological Capital on Abusive Supervision and Depression</i>						
	$\beta$	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Abusive supervision	.30	.09	3.21	.002	.11	.48
Psychological capital	-.03	.09	-.38	.703	-.21	.14
Abusive supervision x psychological capital	-.13	.15	-.88	.382	-.42	.16

Notes:

N = 126. Standardised regression coefficients are reported. Bootstrap sample size = 5000. p < .05.

**Table 14**

<i>Moderating Effect of Psychological Capital on Abusive Supervision and Emotional Exhaustion</i>						
	$\beta$	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Abusive supervision	-4.57	10.23	-.45	.656	-24.82	15.68
Psychological capital	-2.20	2.95	-.75	.458	-8.04	3.64
Abusive supervision x psychological capital	1.5	2.08	.75	.456	-2.56	5.68

Notes:

N = 126. Standardised regression coefficients are reported. Bootstrap sample size = 5000. p > .05.

**Table 15**

*Moderating Effect of Psychological Capital on Abusive Supervision and Symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress*

	$\beta$	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Abusive supervision	.76	.23	3.30	.001	.30	1.21
Psychological capital	-.14	.22	-.64	.524	-.58	.29
Abusive supervision x psychological capital	-.25	.37	-.70	.484	-.97	.47

Notes:

N = 121. Standardised regression coefficients are reported. Bootstrap sample size = 5000.

p < .05.

**Table 16**

*Moderating Effect of Psychological Capital on Abusive Supervision and Intentions to Quit*

	$\beta$	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Abusive supervision	.39	.13	3.12	.002	.14	.64
Psychological capital	-.22	.11	-1.95	.532	-.45	.00
Abusive supervision x psychological capital	-.03	.1	-.18	.861	-.42	.35

Notes:

N = 121. Standardised regression coefficients are reported. Bootstrap sample size = 5000.

p < .05.

Hypothesis 19 predicted that external and hostile attribution styles and psychological capital moderate the mediated relationship between racial microaggressions and employee outcomes via abusive supervision, such that external and hostile attribution styles strengthen the path between racial microaggressions and abusive supervision, and psychological capital weakens the path between abusive supervision and employees' psychological distress (H19a), symptoms of PTSD (H19b) and turnover intentions (H19c). I used the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2013) to test this two-stage moderated mediation model. Tables 17, 18 and 19 show the results from the two-stage moderated mediation model for hypotheses 19a, 19b and 19c respectively. I controlled for managers' race group and organisation, to neutralise any effect that these variables may have on the outcomes. Results from the mediation model confirmed that there is a significant indirect effect of racial microaggressions on psychological distress through abusive supervision, but the moderation effects of external and hostile attribution styles, and psychological capital were not significant. The bootstrapped standardized indirect effect was significant ( $\beta = -3.29$ ,  $t = -2.26$ , 95% CI [-6.18, -.40],  $p < .05$ ). Thus, the indirect mediation effect was statistically significant as the confidence interval did not contain zero, providing partial support for hypothesis 19a. The results of hypothesis 19a are represented in Table 17. There was not an indirect effect of racial microaggressions on PTSD symptoms through abusive supervision, moderated by external and hostile attribution

styles, and psychological capital. The bootstrapped standardized indirect effect was not significant ( $\beta = -.46$ ,  $t = -1.13$ ,  $p = .26$ ) and hypothesis 19b was not supported. The results of hypothesis 19b are represented in Table 18. However, a significant direct effect of racial microaggressions on symptoms of PTSD was found ( $\beta = .74$ ,  $t = 2.70$ , 95% CI [.20, 1.28],  $p < .05$ ). The mediation effect was statistically significant as the confidence interval did not contain zero. Results confirmed that there is a significant indirect effect of racial microaggressions on turnover intentions through abusive supervision, but the moderation effects of external and hostile attribution styles, and psychological capital were not significant. The bootstrapped standardized indirect effect was significant ( $\beta = -.47$ , -2.11, 95% CI [-.91, -.03],  $p < .05$ ). The indirect mediation effect was statistically significant as the confidence interval did not contain zero, providing partial support for hypothesis 19c. The results of hypothesis 19c are represented in Table 19.

**Table 17**

*Two-stage Moderated-Mediation Regression Analysis Predicting Abusive Supervision and Psychological Distress*

	First stage dependent variable = abusive supervision			Second stage dependent variable = psychological distress		
	$\beta$	SE	t	$\beta$	SE	t
Abusive supervision				6.04	6.48	.93
Racial microaggressions	1.49	.73	2.05*	.62	.99	.63
Hostile attribution style	.31	.18	1.67			
Racial microaggressions x Hostile attribution style	-.26	.15	-1.75			
External attribution style	.13	.09	1.36			
Racial microaggressions x External attribution style	-.07	.08	-.80			
Psychological Capital				.88	1.99	-.44
Abusive Supervision x Psychological Capital				.83	1.32	-.63
Manager's race <sup>a</sup>	-.01	.07	-.08	.66	.80	.83
Organisation <sup>b</sup>	-.26	.13	-1.98*	-3.29	1.46	-2.26*
F		11.23**			3.9***	
R <sup>2</sup>		.41			.17	

Notes:

$N = 121$ . Standardised regression coefficients are reported. Bootstrap sample size = 5000.

\*  $p < .05$

\*\*  $p < .01$

\*\*\* $p < .001$

<sup>a</sup>1 = Black, 2 = Indian, 3 = White

<sup>b</sup>1 = Organisation 1, 2 = Organisation 2

**Table 18**

*Two-stage Moderated-Mediation Regression Analysis Predicting Abusive Supervision and PTSD Symptoms*

	First stage dependent variable = abusive supervision			Second stage dependent variable = PTSD symptoms		
	$\beta$	SE	t	$\beta$	SE	t
Abusive supervision				1.82	1.80	1.01
Racial microaggressions	1.47	.74	1.99*	.74	.27	2.70**
Hostile attribution style	.30	.19	1.61			
Racial microaggressions x Hostile attribution style	-.25	.15	-1.71**			
External attribution style	.12	.09	1.29			
Racial microaggressions x External attribution style	-.07	.09	-.76			
Psychological Capital				.19	.56	.34
Abusive Supervision x Psychological Capital				-.33	.37	-.90
Manager's race <sup>a</sup>	-.01	.08	-.18	.05	.23	.23
Organisation <sup>b</sup>	-.26	.14	-1.96	-.46	.41	1.13
<i>F</i>		10.72***			3.3**	
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>		.41			.15	

Notes:

$N = 118$ . Standardised regression coefficients are reported. Bootstrap sample size = 5000.

\*  $p < .05$

\*\*  $p < .01$

\*\*\* $p < .001$

<sup>a</sup>1 = Black, 2 = Indian, 3 = White

<sup>b</sup>1 = Organisation 1, 2 = Organisation 2

**Table 19**

*Two-stage Moderated-Mediation Regression Analysis Predicting Abusive Supervision and Turnover Intentions*

	First stage dependent variable = abusive supervision			Second stage dependent variable = turnover intentions		
	$\beta$	SE	t	$\beta$	SE	t
Abusive supervision				.46	.97	.47
Racial microaggressions	1.50	.72	2.07*	-.02	.15	-.12
Hostile attribution style	.31	.18	1.70			
Racial microaggressions x Hostile attribution style	-.26	.15	-1.77			
External attribution style	.12	.09	1.35			
Racial microaggressions x External attribution style	-.07	.08	-.80			
Psychological Capital				-.15	.28	-.53
Abusive Supervision x Psychological Capital				-.02	.20	-.12
Manager's race <sup>a</sup>	-.01	.07	-.13	-.05	.12	-.44
Organisation <sup>b</sup>	-.24	.13	-1.88	-.47	.22	-2.11*
<i>F</i>		11.38***			3.0**	
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>		.41			.14	

Notes:

*N* = 124. Standardised regression coefficients are reported. Bootstrap sample size = 5000.

\*  $p < .05$

\*\*  $p < .01$

\*\*\* $p < .001$

<sup>a</sup>1 = Black, 2 = Indian, 3 = White

<sup>b</sup>1 = Organisation 1, 2 = Organisation 2

#### 4.5 Summary of Results

A summary of the results is presented in Table 20.

**Table 20**

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*Summary of Results of Hypotheses Testing*

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	<u>Supported</u>
H1: Implicit racial bias and perceived racial microaggressions are positively related when subordinates are from a different race group than their manager.	No
H2: Perceived racial microaggressions and abusive supervision are positively related when subordinates are from a different race group than the manager.	Yes
H3: Racial microaggressions mediate the relationship between managers' implicit racial bias and abusive supervision.	Yes
H4: Implicit religious bias and perceived religious microaggressions are positively related when subordinates are from a different religious group than the manager.	No
H5: Perceived religious microaggressions and abusive supervision are positively related when subordinates are from a different religious group than the manager.	No
H6: Religious microaggressions mediate the relationship between managers' implicit religious bias and abusive supervision.	No
H7: Self-monitoring moderates the relationship between manager implicit racial bias and racial microaggressions, such that higher self-monitoring weakens the positive association between implicit racial bias and racial microaggressions.	No
H8: Self-monitoring moderates the relationship between manager implicit religious bias and manager religious microaggressions, such that higher self-monitoring weakens the positive association between implicit religious bias and religious microaggressions.	No
H9: Individualised consideration moderates the relationship between implicit racial bias and racial microaggressions, such that higher individualised consideration weakens the positive association between implicit racial bias and racial microaggressions.	Yes
H10: Individualised consideration moderates the relationship between implicit religious bias and religious microaggressions, such that higher individualised consideration weakens the positive association between implicit religious bias and religious microaggressions decreases.	No
H11: Employees' external (H11a) and hostile (H11b) attribution styles moderate the relationship between racial microaggressions and abusive supervision, such that higher external and hostile attribution styles strengthen the positive association.	H11a – No H11b – Yes

H12:	Employees' external (H12a) and hostile (H12b) attribution styles moderate the relationship between religious microaggressions and abusive supervision, such that higher external and hostile attribution styles strengthen the positive association.	No
H13:	Abusive supervision is positively related to psychological distress in the form of anxiety (H13a), depression (H13b) and emotional exhaustion (H13c).	Yes
H14:	Abusive supervision is positively related to symptoms of post-traumatic stress.	Yes
H15:	Abusive supervision is positively related to turnover intentions.	Yes
H16:	Employees' psychological capital moderates the relationship between abusive supervision and employees' psychological distress in the form of anxiety (H16a), depression (H16b) and emotional exhaustion (H16c), such that higher psychological capital weakens the positive association.	No
H17:	Employees' psychological capital moderates the relationship between abusive supervision and employees' symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, such that higher psychological capital weakens the positive association.	No
H18:	Employees' psychological capital moderates the relationship between abusive supervision and employees' turnover intentions, such that higher psychological capital weakens the positive association.	No
H19:	External and hostile attribution styles and psychological capital moderate the mediated relationship between racial microaggressions and employees outcomes via abusive supervision, such that external and hostile attribution styles strengthen the path between racial microaggressions and abusive supervision, and psychological capital weakens the path between abusive supervision and employees' psychological distress (H19a), symptoms of PTSD (H19b) and turnover intentions (H19c).	H19a – Partially supported H19b – No H19c – Partially supported
H20:	External and hostile attribution styles and psychological capital moderate the mediated relationship between religious microaggressions and employees outcomes via abusive supervision, such that external and hostile attribution styles strengthen the path between religious microaggressions and abusive supervision, and psychological capital weakens the path between abusive supervision and employees' psychological distress (H20a), symptoms of PTSD (H20b) and turnover intentions (H20c).	No

## **5. DISCUSSION**

In this chapter, I review the purpose of the study and discuss the results in relation to the research questions. I put the results into context by examining them in relation to existing literature. Next, I address the limitations of the study, followed by highlighting my original contribution to theory and describing the practical implications of the findings. I conclude this chapter by suggesting follow-up research that may build on my theoretical model and findings.

### **5.1 Abusive Supervision and Racial and Religious Bias**

The primary purpose of this study was to examine whether abusive supervisory behaviour that is driven by implicit racial and religious bias may result in adverse psychological outcomes, such as psychological distress and symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, and, undesirable employee behaviours, such as turnover.

#### **5.1.1 Racial Bias**

In this section, I will discuss the results of Hypotheses 1, 2 and 3. Addressing the first research question, the results of Hypotheses 2 and 3 revealed that relationships do exist between managers' implicit racial bias, employees' perceptions of discriminatory conduct in the form of subtle statements and behaviours, and their perceptions of supervisory abuse. A direct relationship between implicit racial bias and racial microaggressions (Hypothesis 1) was not found. However, consistent with social identity theory (Tajfel, 1974), when managers and employees were from different racial groups, employees were more likely to perceive their managers' actions as abusive when managers had stronger negative bias against the employee's race group as observed by racial microaggressions. This finding extends the small body of knowledge exploring antecedents of abusive supervision, by linking implicit racial bias with abusive supervision.

It is furthermore aligned with current literature on social identity conflict in South African organisations, highlighting that conflict can be expected where there are strong, negative biases and prejudice (Booyesen, 2007), even though people who are biased do not necessarily consciously or intentionally unfairly discriminate (Ramiah et al., 2010). Also, this finding is consistent with Wang (2006; in Martin & Krahnke, 2012), who specified that many people do not notice that their behaviour is discriminatory, as their actions result from their implicit bias. The significant relationship and large effect size found between racial microaggressions and



abusive supervision, build on other findings that racial microaggression is not only associated with feelings of self-doubt, frustration, a sense of discouragement and exhaustion (Solórzano et al., 2000), but, moreover, leaves one open to potential abuse from others. It is also in line with another research finding that indicated an inverse relationship between racial microaggressions and supervisory relationship quality (Beaumont, 2010 in Wong, Derthick, David, Saw, & Okazaki, 2014). Accordingly, the findings suggest racial microaggressions to be an antecedent of abusive supervision. In sum, my findings suggest that when managers have strong implicit bias towards employees' particular racial groups, employees are more likely to perceive supervisory abuse, and the manifestation of these beliefs, that is, what employees observe, are managers' racial microaggressions.

### **5.1.2 Religious Bias**

It is important to discuss why the religious microaggressions scale, which related to Hypotheses 4, 5, 6, 8, 10 and 12, performed poorly. Previous research suggests that experiencing microaggressions is commonplace for women, sexual minorities and people of colour. However, there is a lack of research regarding religious microaggressions (Nadal, Griffin, Hamit, Leon, & Rivera, 2012), especially in the workplace. Certain religious groups have been more subject to religious discrimination, mainly due to their minority status (Sue, 2010), and therefore are more likely to be victims of religious microaggressions. Qualitative research has highlighted that Muslim Americans are subjected to various types of religious microaggressions (Nadal et al., 2012). In the United States of America, the two religious groups with the highest prevalence of reported religion-based hate crimes in 2005 were Jews (68.5%) and Muslims (11.1%) (Hate Crime Statistics, 2005). In both the United States of America and South Africa, the most prevalent religion is Christianity, and in both countries Islam and Judaism are minority religions. Thus, the poor performance in the religious microaggressions scale may be explained by the underrepresentation in the sample of the most victimised religious groups, i.e. Muslims and Jewish people. Muslims comprised only 2.7% of my sample and Jewish people were not represented at all. Thus, it is possible that if I were to conduct a similar study in a sample with more religious variance, better scale properties may be obtained. Possible other reasons include that, similar to the United States of America, the Christian religion is viewed as the norm in South Africa (Nadal et al., 2012). During the Apartheid era, a strong Christian bias was established in the South African macroenvironment (Carrim, 2015), and therefore it is plausible that non-Christians are so used to Christian norms being part of the South African workplace and the South African culture, that non-Christians do not recognise biased behaviour toward them as discriminatory.

Examples of the strong Christian bias in South Africa include Christmas decorations during December, Easter celebrations in shopping centres, and Christian references in the government bureaucracy and the media (Kumar, 2006).

Another possible explanation is due to the nature of religious microaggressions. Examples of religious microaggressions include a person assuming his or her own religious identity as the norm, endorsing religious stereotypes, and assumptions of the inferiority of dissimilar religions. An example of the latter in South Africa is a Muslim manager who assumed that the work of a Hindu employee would be inferior: "He had been taught that they (Muslims) are superior to Hindus" (Motsei & Nkomo, 2016, p. 64). Also common is the denial of religious prejudice, e.g., a non-Jewish person telling a Jewish person that people of all religions experience obstacles (Nadal et al., 2012).

For certain types of religious microaggressions to occur, they would require those minority religious groups to be present in the sample. It should also be noted that for people to report these types of microaggressions, it would require people to have challenging conversations about religion (Sue, 2010) in the workplace. Given that talking about religion is discouraged in the South African workplace and the South African culture in general (Centre for Intercultural Learning, n.d.; Van Der Walt et al., 2016), it is conceivable that fewer religious microaggressions occurred in my sample, because people are reluctant to broach the subject of religion at all. In this way, subordinates may not be linking any mistreatment they experience to their religious affiliation. South Africans' reluctance to mention religion at work may explain the noticeable portion of missing data for the religious microaggressions scale in my sample, which may have contributed to the poor scale properties.

## **5.2 Positive Manager Behaviour, Bias and Microaggressions**

### **5.2.1 Self-monitoring**

I did not find support for Hypothesis 7, which argued that, for managers who are higher in self-monitoring, implicit racial bias would have a weaker association with microaggressions. This may be explained by the very nature of implicit bias, i.e. a process that occurs unconsciously. Self-monitoring is a deliberate attempt to alter behaviour, so that it would be acceptable to others. However, altering behaviour as a result of a bias held would require a person to be aware of such bias. Considering the decline in racist attitudes as captured by self-report measures (Ziegert & Hanges, 2005), new ways of capturing unconscious racism are

necessary, as I have done in this study with IAT. Thus, most individuals are not aware of their implicit biases, and would therefore not engage in self-monitoring to mask these beliefs. Another interpretation of this may be the argument that politically skilled managers are usually socially competent and attuned to nuances of the dynamics in organisations. The findings of Kisamore, Jawahar, Liguori, Mharapara, and Stone (2010) have shown that managers, who are higher in political skill and self-monitoring, act more abusively toward employees, possibly to influence their performance to facilitate the achievement of their own goals. Therefore, it is possible that, in some situations, self-monitoring may be related to higher levels of abusive behaviour, rather than acting as a buffer, as I hypothesised.

### **5.2.2 Individualised Consideration**

I found support for Hypothesis 9 that, while implicit racial bias was associated with managers' behaviour in the form of racial microaggressions, this effect was reduced when managers engaged in individualised consideration behaviours with their employees. Importantly, I did not find a direct effect between implicit racial bias and racial microaggressions, which may be explained by it not being a simple, direct association, but likely being qualified by other situational factors, such as positive manager behaviour that the manager could enact at the same time as the possible aggressive behaviours. This explanation is supported by the claim that implicit attitudes directly influence explicit judgements and evaluations (Pérez, 2010), but it is also in line with the opinion that the influence of implicit attitudes is mediated by related explicit constructs (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Therefore, the results cannot simply be explained by the fact that employees, who are on the receiving end of racial microaggressions, have managers with stronger negative racial bias against their employees' race group. Instead, my finding lends support to the idea that managers can simultaneously engage in negative as well as positive employee-directed behaviour. In the case of Hypothesis 9, individualised consideration buffered the negative effects of implicit bias on the distressing leadership behaviours of supervisory abuse. In support of the direct effect, social identity theory research has shown that managers are likely to treat employees who are of a similar race group in a more favourable manner than employees who are racially dissimilar (Dovidio, Gaertner, Anastasio, Bachman, & Rust, 1993; Jetten, Spears, & Manstead, 1997), and are more likely to discriminate against outgroups (Brewer & Miller, 1984; Diehl, 1990). Yet, I found that implicit racial bias was only related to racial microaggressions when individualised consideration was high, but not when it was low. This supports findings that the effects of intergroup perceptions can be moderated by positive human character and/or actions (Hong, Wong, Hansen, & Lee, 2004). When managers care about the unique needs and development of each employee,

this behaviour allows an employee to have the perception that he or she is being treated in a respectful, considerate manner by the manager (Kennedy, Yammarino, & Dansereau, 2001); perhaps the employee feels less “invisible” to that manager (Snell, Yi, & Chak, 2012), despite co-existing negative manager behaviour.

My finding is also consistent with research demonstrating that managers, who focus more on transformational behaviours (of which individualised consideration is one dimension), allow employees to orient themselves toward their leaders’ behaviour (Deinert, Homan, Boer, Voelpel, & Gutermann, 2015); this may be consequential for employees’ perceptions of their managers’ actions - they can still recognise the good in an otherwise badly behaving manager.

### **5.3 Microaggressions, Attribution Styles and Abusive Supervision**

In this section, the findings of Hypotheses 11a and 11b will be elaborated on.

#### **5.3.1 External Attribution Styles**

Although a positive correlation was found between external attributions and racial microaggressions, and, external attribution styles and abusive supervision, I failed to obtain support for Hypothesis 11a, which suggested that external attribution styles strengthen the relationship between racial microaggressions and perceptions of abusive supervision. This finding is contrary to the Burton et al. (2014) study where the authors found that external attributions for abuse were related to employees’ justice perceptions. This may be explained by employees attributing reasons for abuse perceptions to other parties than managers, or they may hold the organisation responsible for managers’ abusive behaviours (Breux et al., 2010). Another possible explanation relates to the South African historical context, explained by the assertion of Brink and Nel (2015) that, in the diverse South African work context, how individuals interpret and construct their realities may be influenced by the cultural and historical contexts within which they live. Thus, diverse employees in the South African workplace are likely to live with different social realities that can influence how they experience and attribute external stimuli, such as abusive supervision and microaggressions.

There are a multitude of elements in the South African context that can influence how employees attribute abuse from the media, education, South Africa’s political history and current instability, and cultural beliefs. Therefore, external attributions for abuse may explain some cognitive outcomes in certain contexts, but not others.

### **5.3.2 Hostile Attribution Styles**

The results provided support for Hypothesis 11b, the idea that employees who tend to project hostile blame onto others are more likely to interpret racial microaggressions as abuse. My results indicated that employees who are higher in hostile attributions were most likely to report abusive supervision under higher racial microaggressions. However, it should be noted that the shape of the interaction plot suggests that for scores higher than one standard deviation above the mean for racial microaggressions, it is likely that the low and high hostile attribution slopes will converge. Thus, the moderating effect indicates that employees, who are subjected to the highest levels of racial microaggressions, are likely to report higher supervisory abuse perceptions, regardless of their level of hostile attribution bias. These results are congruent with prior work on the moderating role that hostile attribution bias plays in relation to abusive supervision. Martinko, Harvey, Sikora, and Douglas (2011) showed that employees' hostile attribution styles were positively related to abusive supervision and leadership perceptions. Additionally, Hoobler and Brass (2006) found that when supervisors were higher in hostile attribution bias, violated psychological contracts were more likely to aggravate abusive supervision. This finding supports that acts of negativity and aggression in the workplace are quite perceptual and that the attributions employees make for these acts can determine whether costly consequences result for organisations and individuals alike.

### **5.4 Abusive Supervision and Employee Outcomes**

In line with previous research findings, I found support for Hypotheses 13, 14 and 15, positing that employees, who experience supervisory abuse, experience higher levels of psychological distress in the forms of anxiety, depression and emotional exhaustion. They are more likely to experience post-traumatic stress symptoms and to quit their jobs. These results correspond with existing research linking abusive supervision to psychological distress in the forms of anxiety, depression and emotional exhaustion (Chi & Liang, 2013; Rafferty et al., 2010; Tepper et al., 2007; Tepper, 2000), and intentions to quit (Tepper et al., 2009). These results were supported in separate, direct effect PROCESS regression tests, controlling for nestedness and racial dissimilarity in manager-employee dyadic relationships.

The supported results extend existing literature on the consequences of abusive supervision by testing the relationship between abusive supervision and symptoms of post-traumatic stress, finding a positive association. Although this relationship has been mentioned in

literature (Hoobler, 2014) and employment tribunal cases have demonstrated that abuse in the workplace - linked to racial discrimination - caused post-traumatic stress disorder in some victims (Nye, 2013), this association has as yet not been tested empirically.

This finding builds on work in the field of negative leadership, specifically workplace bullying, that has found that victims of workplace bullying display symptoms of post-traumatic stress (Nielsen, Tangen, Idsoe, Matthiesen, & Magerøy, 2015; Verkuil, Atasayi, & Molendijk, 2015), similar to symptoms evident in victims of rape (Leymann, Heinz, & Gustafsson, 1996). Although a causal relationship could not be established, it is important to, as a minimum, consider the significant relationship between abuse and symptoms of post-traumatic stress. Organisations may have a moral, but certainly a legal in some contexts, obligation to provide a safe and healthy workplace for their employees.

## **5.5 Abusive Supervision, Psychological Capital and Employee Outcomes**

The absence of support for Hypotheses 16, 17 and 18 that psychological capital moderates the associations between abusive supervision and employee outcomes, merits consideration. In the context of the job demands-resources model, psychological capital is a coping resource that may buffer the harmful impact of stressors (such as abusive supervision) on undesirable employee outcomes. However, my results did not agree with previous job demands-resource research that has found psychological capital to be a resource one can use to fend off the consequences of abusive supervision. For example, findings of one study showed that psychological capital mediated the negative relationship between abuse and organisational citizenship behaviours, and also the positive relationship between abuse and counterproductive work behaviour of subordinates (Ahmad, Athar, Azam, Hamstra, & Hanif, 2018). Another study found that psychological capital is a critical personal resource for employees who reported higher psychological distress under supervisory abuse (Li, Wang, Yang, & Liu, 2015). My unsupported hypotheses may possibly be explained by the results of a meta-analysis on the impact of psychological capital on employee outcomes (Avey, Reichard, Luthans, & Mhatre, 2011). Avey et al. (2011) reported that the impact of psychological capital on employee outcomes is stronger for employees in organisations based in the United States of America than in other countries. The authors also found that psychological capital had a stronger effect size in studies conducted on service industry employees as opposed to those in the manufacturing industry. Avey et al. (2011) argued that this is possibly explained by service work, which relies on interpersonal interactions characterised by “emotional norms favoring the expression of positive affect” (p. 146),

requiring strong psychological resources; whereas technical and/or mechanical skills and knowledge may contribute more effectively to employee outcomes in manufacturing organisations.

Considering that my study was conducted in the manufacturing industry, and in South Africa, it is possible that a similar study in a service setting and/or in the United States of America, may demonstrate results in support of the job demands-resource model. Another explanation may be the high unemployment levels in South Africa, and even more so in Kwa Zulu-Natal, where my sample is based. The official unemployment rate there is 33%, compared to 21% in the Western Cape and 26% in Gauteng provinces (Census, 2011). Stressors, such as the fear of unemployment, may be a major factor adding to the strain associated with abuse (Karasek, 1979), and may limit the resource power of psychological capital.

## **5.6 Moderated Mediation Model**

I found partial support for hypotheses 19a and 19c, in that the mediated relationship between racial microaggressions and psychological distress (H19a) and turnover intentions (H19c) through abusive supervision, when controlling for managers' race and their organisation, was significant. However, employees' external and hostile attribution styles and psychological capital did not moderate the mediated effects. The support for the mediated relationships is congruent with prior research linking racism to negative psychological and behavioural outcomes, such as psychological distress, physical health issues, anxiety, depression, substance abuse and even eating disorders (Williams, Malcoun, Sawyer, Davis, Bahojb-Nouri, & Levell, 2014), through negative perceptions of leaders' behaviour at work. Contrary to my prediction, employees' external and hostile attribution styles and psychological capital did not moderate the mediated relationship between racial microaggressions and PTSD symptoms (H19b) when tested as a full moderated mediation model. However, posthoc analyses found a significant direct effect of racial microaggressions on PTSD symptoms. In South Africa's historical context, it is likely that these microaggressions happen frequently, not just in the workplace, but in most aspects of everyday life. It is possible that employees who experience racial microaggressions such as vague insults disguised as compliments, brief remarks or even refusal to sit next to a person of colour in a restaurant, lose important mental resources such as psychological capital, in trying to simply to figure out the intentions of their managers. These ambiguous, confusing events, can lead to victims believing that they must be losing their minds (Williams, Chapman, Wong, & Turkheimer, 2012). The direct effect of racial microaggressions on PTSD symptoms in this study supports other research investigating

racial discrimination and psychopathology across three U.S. minority groups, finding that African Americans experiencing racism were likely to experience PTSD symptoms (Chou, Asnaani, & Hofmann, 2012). Seeing race-related news reports featured on television or on social media can trigger or bring up racially charged memories of negative experiences either suffered personally or by parents and grandparents during the Apartheid era. This may prime employees for trauma when they experience racial microaggressions. Therefore, it is possible that this direct effect may have been impacted by factors external to the workplace, such as racism or traumatic events experienced in everyday life in a country riddled with crime and the legacy of Apartheid.

There were some contradictory findings in testing parts of the model in more piecemeal fashion compared to testing the full theoretical model (minus the IAT results) as represented by H19. Most notably, some of the moderation findings were supported, namely H9 and H11b, that is individualised consideration moderated the relationship between implicit racial bias and racial microaggressions, and employees' hostile attribution styles moderated the relationship between racial microaggressions and abusive supervision. But these moderation effects were not supported in the full model test. There could be several reasons for this. First, my relatively small sample size could lack the power to estimate all of the parameters as well as relations indicated by the full moderated mediation model. Hence, in a larger sample, perhaps some of these moderated effects may be supported. Second, I acknowledge this theoretical positioning of mediators and moderators may be mis-specified. That is, while some of these moderators did predict their respective dependent variables, they may not play a role in the prediction of the ultimate distal variables in the full model: psychological distress, turnover intentions, and PTSD. Future research may wish to formulate different process models that examine these moderators within a different theoretical chain that begins with microaggressions and ends with other possible distal outcomes.

## **5.7 Contributions to Theory and Literature**

Firstly, the findings of my study contribute to the modest, but growing body of knowledge investigating the antecedents of abusive supervision. By 2013, only six studies on abusive supervision had investigated supervisor factors that may predispose managers to display abusive behaviours (Martinko et al., 2013). A recent meta-analysis and empirical review on abusive supervision (Tepper et al., 2017), highlighted that individual differences such as the Big 5 personality factors and various leadership styles have subsequently been tested. However, my original contribution to knowledge on abusive supervision is establishing that,



consistent with social identity theory, abusive supervision may be a reflection of managers' implicit bias toward employees who are different from them, through the enactment of microaggressions. Supporting social identity theory, managers who have racially dissimilar employees seem to categorise themselves as distinct from these subordinates and act in ways that confirm these employees' outgroup status. The related methodological contribution I made was to measure managers' implicit bias through means other than self-report questionnaires. That is, I employed IAT, a computer-based test requiring test takers to rapidly categorise target concepts such as racial category with positive or negative words to determine hidden bias. I feel this was convincing in showing that implicit stereotypes may be the reason for managers' discriminatory behaviour and subordinate reports of abusive supervision.

Secondly, studies of abusive supervision now include findings from many international samples (Martinko et al., 2013). However, there is a need to assess - on a meta-analytical level - how abusive supervision perceptions differ across cultures. This is not yet possible, because of the limited number of published studies on abusive supervision with participants from different, especially non-Western, countries (Mackey, Frieder, Brees, & Martinko, 2017). One exception is abusive supervision work that has begun in Nigeria (Awopetu, Omadu & Abikoye, 2017; Onyishi, Ugwu, & Anike, 2011). I added to the limited knowledge about whether the abusive supervision scale performs similarly across cultures, by observing factor loading differences for Tepper's 15-item abusive supervision in South Africa, and finding that abusive supervision seems to extend to more collectivistic societies as well. South Africa has a relatively collectivistic culture, as expressed by the value we place in *Ubuntu*, a philosophical belief that, "I am because we are" (Nkomo & Kriek, 2011). *Ubuntu* is a concept that is inextricably linked to the values of and places a high premium on dignity, compassion, humaneness and respect for humanity of another" (Lamont, 2011, p.11).

Approximately 90% of the South African population comprises Black, Coloured and Indian people, who were severely oppressed during the Apartheid era. These groups are considered to be more collectivistic, while white people who make up 9.6% of the population are considered to have more individualistic values (Adams, Van de Vijver, & De Bruin, 2012). However, additional analysis of my data indicated that abusive supervision was higher when managers were black and Indian (South African cultures are considered to be more collectivistic in nature), compared to abuse reports when managers were white (more individualistic culture). Thus, abusive supervision seems to extend to collectivist societies too. This stands in contrast to Tepper's (2001; 2007) conceptualisation of abuse as quite individualistic behaviour. One would expect managers in collectivistic societies to be less

likely to engage in abuse as they value relationships and group accomplishments, which may be diametrically opposed to mistreatment of subordinates.

Thirdly, I supplemented the small body of research, acknowledging the influence of employees' attributional styles on their evaluations and perceptions of their managers' negative leadership behaviour. Very few studies have tested the role of employee attributions in perceiving abusive supervision (Brees, 2012; Burton et al., 2014; Harvey & Martinko, 2009; Liu, Liao, & Loi, 2012). Since the abusive supervision construct is grounded in employees' *perceptions* of their managers' behaviour, it is critical to understand the important role that employees' attribution styles play in their evaluations of their managers' behaviour. Congruent with social identity theory, I found that when employees were from different racial groups than their managers, employees' hostile attribution bias is associated with abusive supervision under higher racial microaggressions. However, external attribution style did not influence the relationship between abusive supervision and racial microaggressions in my sample. This suggests that perhaps employees are more likely to perceive their managers' behaviour as abusive when they project antagonistic and hostile intent into the manager's behaviour (Dodge & Coie, 1987), compared to only assigning blame or responsibility for the manager's actions onto the manager (Martinko & Zellars, 1998).

Fourthly, I contributed to the list of consequences of abusive supervision by empirically testing symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder as an outcome. This relationship has been mentioned as a possibility in the literature, but has never been empirically tested. This result is a particularly important contribution considering the serious implications of this finding for organisations and individuals. Possible consequences of experiencing symptoms of post-traumatic stress may include changes in victims' personality (Botha, 2008), abuse of prescription medication to temporarily cope, nightmares and a lack of sleep; the latter which may make it difficult to be punctual for work, perform effectively and pay attention to duties. PTSD and these consequences may result in increased safety incidents (De Vos & Kirsten, 2015). It also causes gastro-intestinal problems, diabetes, cardiovascular-related problems such as hypertension, resulting in taking long periods of sick leave; also social health effects such as withdrawing from professional relationships (De Vos & Kirsten, 2015). Although post-traumatic stress disorder is considered to follow a single, highly distressing event, the results of my study add to the small, but growing body of knowledge that believes that chronic stressors, such as negative workplace experiences through bullying and supervisory abuse, may also be considered sources of post-traumatic stress (Bond, Tuckey, & Dollard, 2010; Botha, 2008; Tehrani, 2004). Finding that abusive supervision and post-traumatic stress

symptoms are positively associated is in harmony with job demands-resources theory, as the psychological demand of abuse may generate stress symptoms.

However, I found that psychological capital, considered a job resource that conceptually should reduce the effect of job demands and protect individual health (Balducci, Fraccarolib, & Schaufeli, 2011), did not function as a compensatory mechanism in this way, which contradicts job demands-resources theory. This lack of support for job demands-resources theory may be related to contextual factors of the sample, which was based in the manufacturing industry in Kwa Zulu-Natal in South Africa. In a meta-analysis measuring the effect sizes of psychological capital's association with positive individual-level outcomes, weaker effect sizes were found in studies conducted in the manufacturing industry and non-USA samples (Avey et al., 2011). That maps exactly onto the demographics of my sample. Also, the high unemployment rate of 33% in Kwa Zulu-Natal, where my sample is based, may have reduced the effectiveness of psychological capital as a resource (Karasek, 1979), by compounding the demands associated with abuse.

Finally, my findings supported previous research findings (e.g., Tepper et al., 2009; Wu & Hu, 2009), linking abusive supervisory behaviours to lower-level undesirable employee actions, such as turnover; also psychological outcomes, such as psychological distress.

## **5.8 Practical Contributions**

This study's results have several practical implications for organisational leaders, industrial and organisational psychologists and human resource professionals. By definition of implicit bias, managers may not be aware that their implicit bias impacts their behaviour. Yet, bias seems to result in discriminatory and abusive supervisory behaviour, which holds legal (Martin & Krahnke, 2012), financial (King, Shapiro, Hebl, Singletary, & Turner, 2006; Tepper et al., 2011), reputational (Tepper et al., 2009), and safety risks - the latter due to health effects such as insomnia and inattention to job tasks (De Vos, 2013) - for organisations.

The first step in eradicating this social problem may be for managers to take cognisance of their bias and for managers to be provided with tools to manage their bias, mitigating its effects on employees. Meyerson and Fletcher (2000), in their manifesto for eliminating gender bias, advocate that the first step in eliminating demographic-based bias is simply making managers aware of these shortcomings and behavioural tendencies. In my study, approximately three months after data collection, I did provide such a training workshop for all managerial

participants in organisation 2. I provided each participant with his or her IAT results in the form of a confidential individual report. During the training workshop, we explored topics such as the definition of implicit bias, myths related to implicit bias, the malleability of bias, how it shows up in our leadership behaviours, ethics and legislation related to bias in the South African context, and how to mitigate the impact of bias in leadership roles. Qualitative feedback following the training illustrated the following insights gained by participants in this study:

- “I may have made wrong decisions before this workshop due to a lack of bias knowledge” – white male manager.
- “I now know my own limitations (acknowledge my bias) and how to conduct interviews in a fair, unbiased way. I was very biased due to Apartheid/upbringing” – Indian male manager.
- “We all have bias, but don’t know what it is or how to identify it and manage it better. This course helped me do that. I will focus more on the unconscious bias side to try and mitigate it better” – Indian female manager.
- “I’ll be actively aware of my bias and work on changing it AND hold people responsible when they are biased” – white female manager
- “I tend to be more critical and harder on my own race. I will treat and attend to my Indian subordinates in a more unbiased way” – Indian male manager, whose results were contrary to the expectations of social identity theory.

Providing the participating managers with their IAT results was helpful in understanding their own automatic racial and religious preferences. However, they were cautioned that their IAT results might reveal disconcerting aspects of themselves which may cause them to feel uncomfortable. They were also cautioned that while, at face value, it may seem useful to use the IAT in making selection decisions, that is, to determine if job candidates are racially biased, they should not use it in that way due to legal and ethical implications. I advised that the IAT should be used solely as a developmental tool to create awareness of implicit preferences (Project Implicit - Ethical Considerations, n.d.).

Studies have found that awareness of bias encourages white people to seek meaningful intergroup contact when such an interaction is positioned as a learning opportunity (Trawalter & Richeson, 2006). When white people are told that implicit racial bias is malleable, they are more likely to seize opportunities to learn about interracial interactions so as to behave more effectively and better understand the challenges of these interactions (Neel & Shapiro, 2012). Awareness training and anti-bias interventions, however, are unlikely to have lasting effects

without addressing organisational culture and processes that are imbedded in organisations (Stuber, 2015). Bias awareness training has been found to have minimal impact on organisational female and racial minority representation in senior roles, following such interventions (Kalev, Dobbin, & Kelly, 2006).

Perry et al. (2015) found that even when participants were high in both bias awareness and self-reported prejudice, they were more likely to reject working with minority patients than to acquiesce. This was explained by their levels of interracial anxiety. Their finding validates my concerns about the effectiveness of a one-day unconscious bias training intervention, confirming that it will not be a “silver bullet” to eradicate subtle and direct discrimination and generate an inclusive organisational culture. This sort of intervention must be bolstered by broader diversity and inclusion initiatives, such as embedding inclusion in overall organisational values and processes (O’Mara & Richter, 2017).

Implicit bias training and broader diversity and inclusion initiatives must be considered a core value that plays a fundamental role in the organisation’s success. Organisations should ensure senior leaders commit to and are held accountable for clear diversity, including vision, goals and objectives. Ideally, there would be a person on the management team who is dedicated to diversity and inclusion, has full access to leaders and the board, and the authority and financial support to implement diversity and inclusion effectively. Also, broader diversity and inclusion initiatives should be used to attract and retain diverse people. A deliberate effort should be made to source candidates from diverse groups, to build a workforce that demonstrates diversity across all levels and functions in the organisation. Referral systems, where current employees refer potential recruits who are similar to them, have been criticised. Yet, based on social identity theory, most organisations continue to reproduce their status quo racial demographic composition, a phenomenon called homophily (Reskin, McBrier, & Kmec, 1999). Thus, organisations, especially in South Africa where “good jobs” remain racially segregated, should reconsider referral systems’ effectiveness in promoting heterogeneity (Montgomery, 1991). Other practices that would support inclusive organisational cultures include: a work-life integration perspective, monitoring equity in remuneration via demographic characteristics (Agerström & Rooth, 2011), ensuring job descriptions are based on the inherent requirements of jobs, and other training interventions that address diversity and inclusion in the organisation (O’Mara & Richter, 2017).

Another practical contribution of this thesis for organisational leaders, industrial and organisational psychologists, and human resource professionals lies in understanding the value of transformational leadership. In my study, racial microaggressions co-occurred with

individualised consideration (IC); manager behaviour that is concerned with employees' personal development is supportive and involves coaching employees (Avolio & Bass, 1995), and delegating stretch assignments as a means to empower and provide opportunities for growth (Bass, 1999). I found that IC reduced the implicit racial bias resulting in racial microaggressions. To foster IC, perhaps especially in the face of potential discrimination, practitioners may ask whether transformational leadership is trainable. Barling, Weber, and Kelloway's (1996) field experiment found evidence that training sessions on transformational leadership increased the organisational commitment of direct reports. They also found that managers who attended training in transformational leadership were more likely to be rated by their subordinates as being stronger in transformational leadership, compared to a control group that received no such training. Human resource professionals are thus encouraged to hire managers who are strong transformational leaders, and also train existing leaders across all levels in their organisations to increase individually considerate behaviours in their managers. Industrial and organisational psychologists may conduct a leadership audit using transformational leadership assessments (self-reports or 360-degree reports) at an organisational level to understand their current reality in this regard. It may also be useful to guide focused development activities to be entrenched by human resources.

Organisational leaders are urged to understand the impact of microaggressions and abusive supervision on co-workers who observe such abuse in their work environment. Observers can vicariously experience negative effects of these behaviours too (Heames & Harvey, 2006). As revealed in a South African study on workplace bullying (Botha, 2008), co-workers were distressed by witnessing abuse of a colleague. Witness accounts showed that co-workers felt at a loss as to how to help victims; they felt guilty for not doing more to help victims out of fear for losing their jobs and of becoming victims of abuse themselves. Empirical research findings indicate that when co-workers are aware of a colleague being abused, they display decreased levels of task performance, are less likely to engage in helping behaviours toward colleagues (Tepper, Duffy, Hoobler, & Ensley, 2004), and report more negative outcomes for themselves upon becoming aware of a colleague being treated unfairly (Peng, Schaubroeck, & Li, 2014).

Organisational leaders, industrial and organisational psychologists and human resource professionals need to be aware that abusive supervision may result in victims suffering symptoms of post-traumatic stress. Critical to minimising such severe effects of abusive supervision is to ensure that senior leaders in the organisation are committed to creating and implementing policies and practices that protect their employees' dignity, psychological health and well-being (Bond et al., 2010). They need to emphasise the detrimental consequences of abuse to their managers. Further, senior leaders should communicate that negative

leadership behaviours, such as abusive supervision and microaggressions, will not be condoned and, if necessary, take corrective action. This will demonstrate that there are consequences for the perpetrators of abuse, which may reduce its occurrence.

According to Milner-Smyth (2017), employees are making increased use of ethics hotlines to report ethical and legal violations. South African companies are expected to promote an organisational culture of integrity and ethical conduct, and are expected to put whistle-blowing systems in place for employees to report not only fraud or financial misconduct, but also ethical and legal violations, such as discriminatory and abusive supervisory behaviour. Managers should also be trained on non-retaliation obligations to ensure that an employee, who, in good faith, reports a violation, will not suffer adverse consequences, harassment or retaliation. Finally, managers should be trained on remedial measures to deter reoccurrences of abuse (Milner-Smyth, 2017).

## **5.9 Limitations**

This study has a number of methodological strengths, i.e. collecting data from multiple sources - both managers and employees - to avoid common-source bias, and using a more objective measure of implicit bias rather than relying purely on self-report measures to avoid common-method bias. Yet, this study does have limitations. The first limitation of this study is the sample size of 137 dyads, which is considered small. It is probable that smaller effect sizes and perhaps null findings were found as a result of the smaller sample size. Even more problematic is the small size of subgroups, i.e. the racially dissimilar dyads, which totalled 73. Future studies should seek to collect larger sample sizes to explore these relations. Also, future samples should purposively seek to include more coloured, Muslim and Jewish people in the sample to test the religious microaggressions part of the model.

A second limitation of this study stems from the sample being drawn from one industry, albeit from two organisations. Industries, such as manufacturing, that are characterised by heavy work demands, fast pace, complex challenges, pressure, risk and high costs associated with failure, might arouse aggressive or abusive behaviours in managers (Martinko et al., 2013, Tepper, 2007), as opposed to service industries that expect employees to “display friendliness and good cheer” (Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987 p. 23). A study investigating the prevalence of workplace bullying in South Africa found that employees working in the mining and manufacturing industries are most likely to experience direct bullying by their supervisor, compared to other industries such as financial, call centres, government and academia

(Cunniff & Mostert, 2012). This may mean limited generalisability of my findings about abusive supervision to other industries that are more focused on positive workplace interactions. Future research could be directed towards more industries to understand industry effects on perceptions of abuse.

A third limitation is the lack of an exhaustive list of control variables. I controlled specifically for racially dissimilar manager-employee dyadic relationships, as these aspects were conceptually relevant to my theoretical model (Carlson & Wu, 2012), and for nestedness in organisations and employees nested within managers. However, I did not include an extensive list of control variables in my study. Control variables that have been determined to be important in abusive supervision research include age, gender and tenure with the organisation and work group, respectively (Hoobler & Brass, 2006; Mayer et al., 2012). Beyond using demographics strictly as controls, I incorporated racial and religious social category groupings in my study. I encourage future aggression research to model other measures of supervisor-subordinate dissimilarity, such as age, gender, education level and tenure. In the South African context, mother-tongue language (Motsei, 2015; Pietersen, 2007) would be important as a demographic difference, as it has been found to be a contributing factor to workplace bullying in South Africa.

A fourth limitation is that the data was collected within a period of three months only, and, as such, was treated cross-sectionally. Therefore I acknowledge that causal inferences cannot be made. Longitudinal research designs may enhance the understanding of my results. For example, it can help establish whether the effects on outcomes will be sustained over time, or whether the effects of bias and abuse may have dissipating effects in the longer-term (Hoobler et al., 2010; Kacmar, Harris, & Whitman, 2000). It would be important to understand how these specific negative psychological constructs impact employees' health and well-being across organisational and supervisory tenures.

A fifth limitation of this study is the low reliability of the religious microaggressions scale. The low reliability of this scale made it impossible to empirically test any of the hypotheses that included this variable. Given the criticality of this measure in this study, a limitation is that I neglected to conduct a pilot study to test the reliability of this measure in my population before moving forward with my study.

## **5.10 Directions for Future Research**



My lack of support for the findings relating to the moderating effect of psychological capital on the relationship between abusive supervision and negative employee outcomes is possibly explained by my sample being based in the manufacturing industry. The manufacturing industry relies less on social interactions that require positive expression of emotions and more on mechanical and technical skills and knowledge (Avey et al., 2011). Also, Tepper (2007) highlighted that industries that are characterised by high pressure, high work demands, risk and high costs may influence managers to engage in abusive behaviours. Martinko et al. (2013) confirmed in their review of abusive supervision that industry effects have still not been studied and the most recent meta-analysis on abusive supervision makes no mention of industry. Thus, I conclude that a lack of research regarding industry effects remains (Mackey et al., 2017). To confirm whether certain industries are more prone to abusive supervision, also in which contexts psychological capital may best function as a mitigating resource, further research to explore industry effects is recommended.

In this study, the measure of religious microaggressions exhibited poor scale properties, therefore, I failed to test several hypotheses relating to religious discrimination. This particular type of discrimination is a vastly under-researched area in the field of organisational psychology and management sciences (Van Der Walt et al., 2016). Future research could explore this in larger samples with more religious diversity to address unanswered questions pertaining to whether employees who belong to different religions than their managers may perceive their managers' microaggressive behaviours as discriminatory and abusive.

Abusive supervision has been linked to negative psychological outcomes such as psychological distress in several studies (Breux, Perrewé, Hall, Frink, & Hochwarter, 2008; Haggard, Robert, & Rose, 2011; Tepper et al., 2007). In this study, I found support for the relationship between abusive supervision and symptoms of post-traumatic stress, which is likely to result in somatic complaints (Tepper et al., 2017). Future research may wish to include objective measures of somatic symptoms, such as sick leave taken and time off for doctors' visits and absenteeism. These will assist in determining the variance that abusive supervision may play not only in reports of distress, but also in more physical health outcomes, such as dementia, traumatic brain injury, substance abuse, chronic pain, sleep problems, poor cardiovascular health, diabetes and gastro-intestinal and musculoskeletal symptoms (Jankowski, n.d.).

Aquino and Bommer (2003) found that social status - hierarchical position and race - plays a role in predicting the victimisation of employees by actions of others. This has traditionally been explained by social dominance theory (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Based on post-hoc

analyses with very small subsample sizes, I found that abusive supervision was higher as reported by black and Indian subordinates, compared to white subordinates in my sample. In South Africa, this indicates that members of previously disadvantaged racial categories perceived higher supervisory abuse than white employees. It may thus be worth exploring the moderating effect of social status through race groups; also possibly the hierarchical level in the relationship between bias and abuse. Questions could explore, for example, whether the hierarchical position obtained could compensate for lower social status due to racial category membership.

## **5.10 Conclusions**

In this study I showed that abusive supervision in dissimilar manager-employee dyadic relationships may stem from implicit bias, when such bias manifests in aggressions attributed to social group identity by employees. This type of bias is clearly illegal in South Africa under the Labour Relations Act, 66 of 1995 and the Employment Equity Act, 55 of 1998. Thus, my study provides evidence that labour legislation such as the Labour Relations Act and the Employment Equity Act, intent on racial equality and religious freedom, together have not eradicated discrimination and diversity-related abuse in the workplace. Since 1996, South Africans have put their faith in the new Constitution, together with these Acts, to right the wrongs of our Apartheid past. Yet, my study does not only confirm that bias exists, but that it has perhaps become more subtle and insidious.

I also found that racial bias was linked to abusive supervision, through subtle acts of racial discriminatory behaviour. The negative outcomes from this for diverse employees are clear. Moreover, the effects of this type of disruptive work cognition and treatment (Barnes, Lucianetti, Bhave, & Christian, 2015; Felps et al., 2009; Sy & Choi, 2013) can extend to employees from all social categories, if not addressed adequately. I hope that my study will encourage organisations to take action, focusing on encouraging managers to become considerate leaders who take responsibility for their own thoughts, beliefs and actions, and who value employees for who they are and not based on the categories to which they belong.

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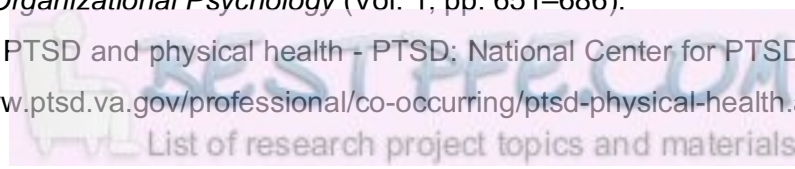
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**APPENDIX A**

**- Data Collection Instruments –**

## Employee Survey

Demographic questions:

<p>What is your gender?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Male</li> <li>• Female</li> </ul>	<p>What is your race group?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Black African</li> <li>• Indian</li> <li>• Coloured</li> <li>• White</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul>	<p>What is your age?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 18-29 years old</li> <li>• 30-39 years old</li> <li>• 40-49 years old</li> <li>• 50-64 years old</li> <li>• 65 years and over</li> </ul>
<p>What is the highest level of education you have completed?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grade 10</li> <li>• Grade 12</li> <li>• Trade/technical/vocational training</li> <li>• National diploma</li> <li>• Bachelor's degree</li> <li>• Honours degree</li> <li>• Master's degree</li> <li>• Doctorate degree</li> </ul>	<p>What is your religious preference?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Muslim</li> <li>• Christian</li> <li>• Jewish</li> <li>• Hinduism</li> <li>• Not religious</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul>	<p>What is your home language?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Afrikaans</li> <li>• English</li> <li>• isiNdebele</li> <li>• isiXhosa</li> <li>• isiZulu</li> <li>• Sepedi</li> <li>• Sesotho</li> <li>• Setswana</li> <li>• siSwati</li> <li>• Tshivenda</li> <li>• Xitsonga</li> </ul>
<p>What is your sexual orientation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heterosexual</li> <li>• Bisexual</li> <li>• Gay/Lesbian</li> <li>• Transgender</li> <li>• Asexual</li> <li>• Closeted</li> <li>• Androgynous</li> <li>• Questioning</li> <li>• Cross-dresser/drag</li> </ul>	<p>What is your marital status?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• single/never been married</li> <li>• married or domestic partnership</li> <li>• separated</li> <li>• divorced</li> <li>• widowed</li> </ul>	

Section 1: This section provides a description of your manager's leadership behaviour. For each item, please report how often your manager does each of these behaviours by putting a check in the appropriate box.

	Not at all	Once in a while	Sometimes	Fairly often	Frequently, if not always
<b>1a. My boss...</b>					
Spends time teaching and coaching.					
Treats me as an individual rather than just as a member of the group.					
Considers me as having different needs, abilities, and aspirations from others.					
Helps me to develop my strengths.					

Section 2: Please indicate the number of times you experienced the following from your manager during the past 6 months by putting a check in the appropriate box. Remember your response is confidential.

<b>1b. My boss...</b>	Did not experience this event in the past six months	I experienced this event 1-3 times in the past six months	I experienced this event 4-6 times in the past six months	I experienced this event 7-9 times in the past six months	I experienced this event 10 or more times in the past six months
My manager was unfriendly or unwelcoming toward me because of my race					
My manager overlooked my opinion in a group discussion because of my race					
I was ignored by my manager at work because of my race					
My manager assumed that my work would be inferior to people of other racial groups					
My manager treated me differently than colleagues of other racial groups					
My manager was unfriendly or unwelcoming toward me because of my religion					
My manager overlooked my opinion in a group discussion because of my religion					
I was ignored by my manager at work because of my religion					
My manager assumed that my work would be inferior to people of other religious groups					
My manager treated me differently than colleagues of other religious groups					

Section 3: Please indicate how often your boss directs the following behaviours towards you by putting a check in the appropriate box.

<b>1b. My boss...</b>	I cannot remember him/her ever using this behaviour with me	He/she very seldom uses this behaviour with me	He/she occasionally uses this behaviour with me	He/she often uses this behaviour moderately with me	He/she often uses this behaviour with me
Ridicules me.					
Tells me my thoughts or feelings are stupid.					
Gives me the silent treatment.					
Puts me down in front of others.					
Invades my privacy.					

Reminds me of my past mistakes and failures.					
Doesn't give me credit for jobs requiring a lot of effort.					
Blames me to save himself/herself embarrassment.					
Breaks promises he/she makes.					
Expresses anger at me when he/she is mad for another reason.					
Makes negative comments about me to others.					
Is rude to me.					
Does not allow me to interact with my co-workers.					
Tells me I'm incompetent.					
Lies to me.					

Section 4: Please think of a time when you experienced a supervisor or manager (your current boss or a past one) acting abusively toward you. Then answer the questions below indicating your perceived reasons for that behaviour.

	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Somewhat disagree</b>	<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<b>Somewhat agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
My supervisor chooses to act the way he or she does.							
My supervisor's behaviour is due to something about him or her (e.g., the type of person he or she is).							
The cause of the supervisor's behaviour is something controllable by the supervisor							

Section 5: This section asks about how you tend to view other people. Remember there are no right or wrong answers. We are interested in your personal views.

	<b>Not at all</b>	<b>Once in a while</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Fairly often</b>	<b>Frequently, if not always</b>
I commonly wonder what hidden reason another person may have for doing something nice for me.					
Most people are honest chiefly through fear of being caught.					
I think most people would lie to get ahead.					

I have often found people jealous of my good ideas, just because they had not thought of them first.					
People pretend to care more about one another than they really do.					
A person is better off not trusting anyone.					

Section 6: Below are more statements about yourself with which you may agree or disagree. Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
If I should find myself in a jam, I could think of many ways to get out of it						
Right now, I see myself as being pretty successful						
I can think of many ways to reach my current goals.						
I am looking forward to the life ahead of me						
The future holds a lot of good in store for me						
Overall, I expect more good things to happen to me than bad						
Sometimes I make myself do things whether I want to or not						
When I'm in a difficult situation, I can usually find my way out of it						
It's okay if there are people who don't like me.						
I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events.						
I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort.						
I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities.						

Section 7: Please indicate your level of agreement with the statements below regarding your intentions to leave your current role.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I plan on leaving this organisation very soon.					
I expect to change jobs in the next few months.					
I will look to change jobs very soon.					

Section 8: These questions relate to how you've been feeling over the past four weeks. Please choose an answer that best reflects your thoughts, feelings and behaviours. There are no right or wrong answers.

	None of the time	A little of the time	Some of the time	Most of the time	All of the time
How often did you feel tired out for no good reason?					
How often did you feel nervous?					
How often did you feel so nervous that nothing could calm you down?					
How often did you feel hopeless?					
How often did you feel restless or fidgety?					
How often did you feel so restless you could not sit still?					
How often did you feel depressed?					
How often did you feel that everything was an effort?					
How often did you feel so sad that nothing could cheer you up?					
How often did you feel worthless?					

Section 9: Please rate how frequently you have felt the following ways in the past 12 months:

	Never	A few times a year	Once a month or less	A few times a month	Every week	A few times a week	Every day
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
I feel emotionally drained from my work.							
I feel used up at the end of the workday.							
I feel fatigued when I get up in the morning and have to face another day on the job.							
Working with people all day is really a strain for me.							
I feel burnt out from my work.							
I feel frustrated by my job.							
I feel I'm working too hard on my job.							
Working with people directly puts too much strain on me.							
I feel as if I'm at the end of my rope.							



Section 10: In this section we want to know about your experiences over the last two weeks. Use the scale below to indicate how frequently you had the experience in the past two weeks. Put "0" if you never had the experience during the past two weeks, and "10" if it was always happening to you or happened every day during this time. If it happens sometimes, put in one of the numbers between "0" and "10" to show how much.

0(*never*)   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10(*always*)

I don't feel like doing things that I used to like doing	
I can't remember much about bad things that have happened to me.	
I feel cut off and isolated from other people.	
I try not to think about things that remind me of something bad that happened to me.	
I feel numb: I don't feel emotions as strongly as I used to.	
I have trouble concentrating on things or paying attention to something for a long time.	
I have a hard time thinking about the future and believing that I'm going to live to old age.	
I feel very irritable and lose my temper.	
I avoid doing things or being in situations that might remind me of something terrible that happened to me in the past.	
I am very aware of my surroundings and nervous about what's going on around me.	
I find myself remembering bad things that happened to me over and over, even when I don't want to think about them.	
I get startled or surprised very easily and "jump" when I hear a sudden sound.	
I have bad dreams about terrible things that happened to me.	
I get very upset when something reminds me of something bad that happened to me.	
I have trouble getting to sleep or staying asleep.	
When something reminds me of something bad that happened to me, I feel shaky, sweaty, nervous, and my heart beats really fast.	
I suddenly feel as if I am back in the past, in a bad situation that I once was in, and it's as if it was happening all over again.	

## Manager Survey

Demographic questions:

<p>What is your gender?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Male</li> <li>• Female</li> </ul>	<p>What is your race group?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Black African</li> <li>• Indian</li> <li>• Coloured</li> <li>• White</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul>	<p>What is your age?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 18-29 years old</li> <li>• 30-39 years old</li> <li>• 40-49 years old</li> <li>• 50-64 years old</li> <li>• 65 years and over</li> </ul>
<p>What is the highest level of education you have completed?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grade 10</li> <li>• Grade 12</li> <li>• Trade/technical/vocational training</li> <li>• National diploma</li> <li>• Bachelor's degree</li> <li>• Honours degree</li> <li>• Master's degree</li> <li>• Doctorate degree</li> </ul>	<p>What is your religious preference?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Muslim</li> <li>• Christian</li> <li>• Jewish</li> <li>• Hinduism</li> <li>• Not religious</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul>	<p>What is your home language?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Afrikaans</li> <li>• English</li> <li>• isiNdebele</li> <li>• isiXhosa</li> <li>• isiZulu</li> <li>• Sepedi</li> <li>• Sesotho</li> <li>• Setswana</li> <li>• siSwati</li> <li>• Tshivenda</li> <li>• Xitsonga</li> </ul>
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Section 1: Race IAT

Section 2: Religious IAT

Section 3: Please indicate to what extent you agree with the statements below. These are statements about you, and there are no right or wrong answers.

	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
In social situations, I have the ability to alter my behaviour if I feel that something else is called for.					
I have the ability to control the way I come across to people, depending on the impression I wish to make.					
When I feel that the image I am portraying isn't working, I can readily change it to something that does.					
I have trouble changing my behaviour to suit different people and different situations.					
I have found that I can adjust my behaviour to meet the requirements of any situation I find myself in.					
Even when it might be to my advantage I have difficulty putting up a good front.					
Once I know what the situation calls for, it's easy for me to regulate my actions accordingly.					

## **APPENDIX B**

**- Informed consent form: Manager -**

**Informed consent for participation in an academic research study**

**Dept. of Economic and Management Sciences**

Research conducted by:

Mrs. C. Bergh (96164272), Cell: 083 442 1057

Dear Respondent,

You are invited to participate in an academic research study conducted by Carin Bergh, a doctoral student from the Department Human Resources at the University of Pretoria. The purpose of the study is to understand how manager beliefs and behaviours can impact follower beliefs and behaviours.

Please note the following:

- This study involves a confidential survey and the answers you give will be treated as strictly confidential. All the data and samples will be processed without a name, ID number or other directly recognisable type of information. In order to link your responses to those of your employee, the researcher will use a code number to match your responses with your employee's responses. This will be managed on a list of names which will be maintained by the researcher and not disclosed to anyone else.
- Your survey will include 2 exercises that examine your beliefs, attitudes and preferences. In one exercise you will be presented with words and will be asked to categorise these into one of two groups placed on the left or right hand of the screen. It is okay to make a few mistakes, everyone does. Full instructions will be provided when you start with that test. The second exercise is the attached questionnaire. Please complete it as completely and honestly as possible.
- The two exercises together should not take more than 30 minutes of your time.
- The results of the study will be used for academic purposes only and may be published in an academic journal. We will provide you with a summary of our findings on request.
- Please contact my supervisor, Prof. J. Hoobler (012 420 4664, [jenny.hoobler@up.ac.za](mailto:jenny.hoobler@up.ac.za)) if you have any questions or comments regarding the study.

Please sign this form to indicate that:

You have read and understand the information provided above.

You give your consent to participate in the study on a voluntary basis.

---

**Respondent's signature**

---

**Date**

## **APPENDIX C**

**- Informed consent form: Employee -**



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Economic and  
Management Sciences

**Informed consent for participation in an academic research study**  
**Dept. of Economic and Management Sciences**

Research conducted by:

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- Your participation in this study is very important to us. You may, however, choose not to participate and you may also stop participating at any time without any negative consequences.
- Please answer the questions in the attached questionnaire as completely and honestly as possible. This should not take more than 25 minutes of your time.
- The results of the study will be used for academic purposes only and may be published in an academic journal. We will provide you with a summary of our findings on request.
- Please contact my supervisor, Prof. J. Hoobler (012 420 4664, jenny.hoobler@up.ac.za) if you have any questions or comments regarding the study.



Please sign this form to indicate that:

You have read and understand the information provided above.

You give your consent to participate in the study on a voluntary basis.

---

**Respondent's signature**

---

**Date**

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