Sense of Community: Perceptions of "Inter-Intra" Collaborations in an Academic Environment through the Lenses of Botho Principles and the Field of Industrial Psychology

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Abstract

In the current study, I explored the concept of collaboration from Botho principles and the industrial psychology perspective in the specific higher learning institution. Using a qualitative approach, 13 participants performing academic and nonacademic roles formed part of the study. Overall, the participants experience regarding collaboration in an academic environment are reported to be in the form of shared goals, sense of unity, diversity, and solution-driven teams. Further participants experience in relation to collaboration is African culture [Botho principles]. The latter were perceived contributors to collaboration within departments (intra); and few barriers to collaboration were discovered, such as criteria, lack of shared leadership, lack of collaboration champions or ambassadors. The concept of Botho is defined as a social contract of mutual respect, humanity, and responsibility that members have with one another often referred to as bringing in humanity onto a set environment. Although there are commonalities between Botho and Ubuntu, they however have dissimilarities and are underpinned by different cultures and traditions. Ubuntu is seen often used by a slogan, "I am because you are". Botho is Setswana or Sesotho concept while Ubuntu forms part of Nguni languages. I then further conceptualize collaboration through the lens of industrial psychology from the results and offer future research recommendations in the current paper

Keywords: collaboration, African values, intra-collaboration, inter-collaboration, Botho, industrial psychology

1. Introduction

In this study, I examine collaboration among academic and nonacademic staff members in a selected higher learning institution. Collaboration in an academic environment has been studied as a way of broadening students' skill sets and, in some cases, as a means to give students practical experience. Some forms of collaboration studied in academic environments include cross-faculty, inter-university, university–community, and university–industry/business (Eddy, 2010). These concepts of collaboration have been explored in international markets within higher education (Cortese, 2003; Jones et al., 2012; Kezar, 2005, 2006, 2010), but minimal attention has been paid to collaboration in higher learning institutions within the South African context by integrating African values such as Botho principles, humanizing the academic environment within the auspices of Botho principles, or humanizing the academic environment via collaboration through the lens of industrial psychology.

2. Literature Review

Collaboration is a relationship process that occurs when two or more individuals or a group of individuals work jointly to achieve a common goal. During this process, individuals may share ideas, knowledge, and skills (Kezar, 2005, 2006, 2010). Kezar (2005, pp. 833) emphasized this point further by stating how collaboration is an "interactive process" built up as the relationship among individuals over time. Conversely, Edmondson (2012, pp. 11) emphasized how team effectiveness is achieved through collaboration with others and argued that "in most organizations, the work that produces value for customers is carried out by teams, and increasingly, by flexible team-like entities"

Other scholars described collaboration as a separate organization or entity entering a new structure committed to a commonly defined mission, structure, or plan (Perrault et al., 2011). Each organization contributes its resources to a pool of resources and work on a shared product or service to leverage collaboration. Collaboration is better understood in light of its opposite, isolationism or detachment, which suggests collaboration encompasses unity or a sense of

community (Sidhu, 2006). Perrault et al. (2011) thought it was clear why collaboration can be seen as a form of community: when two different groups merge to reach a common goal, they often develop their values, which will sustain them as a team and help them achieve their common goal. In this study, I echo how Sidhu (2006) defined collaboration as contributing to a sense of community. This study contributes to the definition of collaboration in a different light. What can be gathered is that collaboration is not merely something that happens when separate groups or entities come together; collaboration can happen within a group, where two or more team members (in this case, departments, faculties, and universities) integrate inter- and intra-collaboration with the lenses of African values such as Botho principles onto their policies, procedure and ways of running organisations.

One way of looking at collaboration is through team effectiveness. According to Mahembe and Engelbrecht (2014), team effectiveness refers to a group's or team's ability to achieve set organizational goals. Previous studies have proven that successful collaboration results from group members forming relationships professionally as teams and as individuals (Perrault et al., 2011). The latter argument is beneficial because it removes the burden of competition among team members and encourages members to work and unify effectively as a team. Establishing group norms is essential to creating a sense of unity in a group (Dorcas et al., 2014). To ensure effective performance, team members' attitudes, voluntary commitment to the group, and willingness to go beyond their contractual obligations are overarching pillars of collaboration as suggested by previous researcher (Mahembe & Engelbrecht, 2014).

2.1 Collaboration in An Academic Environment

In recent years, scholars introduced the phenomenon of collaboration from an organizational psychology perspective but focused mainly on traditional corporations, businesses, or industries, not on higher institutions. Cortese (2003) made an important point when speaking of higher education by emphasising that higher education "stresses individual learning and competition, resulting in professionals who are ill-prepared for cooperative efforts." According to Cortese (2003, pp 16), a sustainable human future requires a "shift toward a systemic perspective emphasizing collaboration and cooperation." In some collaboration studies within higher education institutions, researchers have examined the leadership perspective and how leadership influences collaboration (Kezar, 2005). Collaboration in higher learning institutions has also been studied primarily from the perspective of university business (Kezar, 2010), with universities collaborating with communities receiving minimal attention (Duffield et al., 2013).

South African universities tend to exist in a vacuum, isolated from the community and other tertiary institutions (Brown-Luthango, 2013). Brown-Luthango (2013) noted the importance and call for South African higher learning institutions to partner with communities to develop solutions to existing challenges through collaborative efforts. The higher learning institution–community collaborative relationship is crucial because when the community has the necessary resources and problem-solving techniques, they could share the resources with the university for instance.

Melber (2015) presented an analytic view of collaboration and stated that collaboration in the African context has been tied to complex power relations, where international countries had hegemonic power over education and the ways of knowing in Africa. The knowledge produced was not necessarily favourable or made to cater to the challenges that the continent faced. Teffo (2011) argued that African scholars must focus on how African knowledge systems can penetrate the global knowledge system on their own terms. African knowledge should be presented so that it complements the global (Western) system rather than acts as an addendum. Melber (2015) stressed the importance of African collaboration to generate African knowledge and build on the continent's educational capacity. Collaborative work has become imperative in higher learning institutions to provide the best services to students (Lester, 2009). Rather than working separately or individually, leaders in organizations or higher institutions can save time and resources by working collaboratively on campuses (Lester, 2009). A case study on South African open and distance learning revealed common challenges that higher education environments face, such as a lack of institutional collaboration, poor financial resources, and few postgraduate enrolments (Mafenya, 2014). Furthermore, an aspect that researchers have scarcely studied is how others perceive collaboration, specifically among staff members in an academic environment. In this study, I take into account the perceptions of collaboration among academic and nonacademic staff members in a higher education environment.

Introducing collaboration to higher education systems can lead to positive outcomes, allowing students to be better equipped with the skills necessary to meet global challenges. Cortese (2003) stated a college or university that models collaboration with local or international communities but does not involve students and faculty as an integral part of the collaborative process will lose about 75% of the value it holds in its efforts to collaborate and will be unable to fulfil its role in the society.

2.2 Inter- and Intra-Collaboration

The literature is further divided into internal, or same-department/same-discipline (intra), and external, or cross-department/cross-discipline (inter), collaboration. "Internal collaboration includes "cross-functional teams, or collaboration with regards to research, and student and academic affairs collaboration" (Kezar, 2005, pp. 834). "External collaboration includes "steering committees, interdisciplinary teaching/research, community partnerships, and business and industry collaboratives" (Kezar, 2005, pp.834). Both sides are important when considering collaboration in a higher education context. Colbry et al. (2014) asserted that collaboration can be explored from three levels: interpersonal, inter-organizational, and intra-organizational spheres. A literature review revealed that the primarily studied level is the topic of inter-organizational and intergroup collaboration (Colbry et al., 2014; Kozlowski & Bell, 2003; Popp et al., 2016; Scott & Kezar, 2019). Kozuch and Sienkiewicz-Malyjurek (2016) defined inter-organizational collaboration as any activity involving two or more organizations that have decided to work together to increase public value. This type of collaboration benefits all parties involved and establishes well-defined relationships between two or more organizations with common goals (Kozuch & Sienkiewicz-Malyjurek, 2016; Mattessich et al., 2001). The term *inter-organizational collaboration* is often misinterpreted or misunderstood, which questions whether inter-organizational collaboration is used for its reliability in delivering human services or used because of what it symbolizes: "The promotion of collaboration may have roots in its value as a symbol of rationality, efficiency, legitimacy, and social responsibility" (Chandler & Werther Jr., 2013; Gray & Stites, 2013; Longoria, 2005, p. 123). From the latter argument, one can view this concept of collaboration as highly relevant in current literature on organizations and collaboration.

The prevailing view on inter-organizational and inter-group collaboration is that people feel more comfortable identifying with a group rather than an entire organization. People identify more with groups that function similarly and have shared goals (Shu et al., 2015). In this study, I present various definitions and perceptions on the topic in the higher learning institution. I aimed to explore individual perceptions on the topic and how inter- and intra-organizational collaboration benefits the organization. Furthermore, I investigated challenges and barriers related to collaboration with lens of African values.

Importantly, collaboration differs from traditional teamwork because it requires mutuality among the people involved (Bedwell et al., 2012). Bedwell et al. (2012) outlined, the characteristics of collaboration first, include collaboration as a process rather than a relationship among individuals. With specific reference to socialization (which can be perceived as the process of learning about the world), collaboration evolves with personal resources, knowledge, ideas, opinions, and views (Bedwell et al., 2012). Second, collaboration requires "two social entities, this includes groups, organizations, or even societies. (Bedwell et al., 2012). In summary, collaboration requires a combined engagement of social entities, in a dynamic and evolving process, directed toward   a common goal (Scott, 2020). Bedwell et al. (2012) offered a clear example to explain collaboration. For example, a product, such as a car built on an assembly line, can be considered an example of a collaborative outcome: the process involves mechanics, engineers, and factory workers who work interdependently—or collaborate—to assemble the car (Bedwell et al., 2012).

2.3 Collaboration within the Field of Industrial and Organizational Psychology

Poocharoen and Ting (2015) perceived collaboration as a method of operating in a multi-organizational manner while helping solve problems that one organization could not rectify alone, at least without difficulty. The terms *collaboration* and *teamwork* are used interchangeably. These constructs require shared accountability among individuals, some interdependence among individuals, and clarity of roles and goals (Reeves et al., 2018). Similarly, Poocharoen and Ting (2015) asserts that collaboration can be defined as the practice of co-labouring, having the objective to accomplish common goals, and often having to work across disciplines and develop multi-sector and multi-actor relationships. I believe collaboration from a higher education perspective requires a link to industrial and organizational psychology. Linking collaboration to organizational psychology requires understanding organizational development (OD) and organizational effectiveness (OE).

OD is an applied field of change that uses behavioural science knowledge to improve organizations to function, perform, and increase their capability to change (Jex & Britt, 2014). OD allows for a planned, systematic approach to improving OE, which aligns an organization's strategies, people, and processes (Cummings & Worley, 2013). To compete globally, achieve high performance, and gain competitive advantage, organizations look at the foundations of change management. Jex and Britt (2014) emphasized how a change in OD deals with complex issues such as change of strategies, structures, or systems or more minor issues such as a change in skills, behaviour, attitudes, leadership, or culture. Halász (2010) suggested possible areas of change in higher education institutions and specifically noted the higher education context requires change in academic structures as well as within student affairs structures. Halász

(2010, pp. 2) also suggested two paradigms of change: "a top-down (planned change) and a bottom-up (emergent change)." The emergent change can be in line with the need to adopt agility collectively in higher learning institution.

Bedwell et al. (2012) related an example of the positive contributions of collaboration from an organizational psychology perspective. The latter can be translated as follows: collaboration can be seen as a human resources strategy integrated into personnel psychology, a subfield of industrial and organizational psychology. Personnel psychology consists of subfields such as strategic planning, selection, rewards and remuneration, training and development, and performance appraisal (Bedwell et al., 2012). For example, in terms of training and development, these actions can be perceived as "the most important human resource practice[s] in organizations. In this context, collaboration is a critical strategy to train and develop employees. Through collaboration, one can argue that employees may be taught their "workplace system," or a means of getting things done, as Scott (2020) suggested. For example, with an increase in technological advances, organizations are forced to train and develop employees to keep up with the increased pressures of globalization (Halász,2010). With the advent of globalization (worldwide interconnected systems), organizations must train and develop their employees to remain competitive in the global market (Bach, 2005). Bedwell et al. (2012) emphasized how collaboration should be used as a human resource strategy to train and develop employees. Collaboration among employees is beneficial for "generic training," whereby employees actively learn knowledge areas, skills, and abilities from others in the organization (Bedwell et al., 2012, p. 140). Training and development interventions can use collaboration to understand employees' collective behaviours and attitudes, which may be necessary to perform the job. Through this collaboration process, employees can learn specific skills (Bedwell et al., 2012).

Researchers have examined university professionals and stated that collaboration will be affected if knowledge transfer and spillover occur; they have called for university entities and stakeholders to become business partners and to capitalize on win-win solutions (Ting et al., 2018). Another concept often investigated in close subfields of industrial psychology is job satisfaction, including collaboration cosmopolitan among doctoral-level researchers. The collaboration cosmopolitan is defined as the institutional and academic researchers' collaboration patterns, experienced favourably and leading to job satisfaction (Jung et al., 2017). When discussing collaboration, trust must be at the centre of reciprocal, mutual relationships and successful project management. In further looking at trust and collaboration factors (e.g., commitment), incentives that manage conflict form part of a latent variable (Bond-Barnard et al., 2018). The incentive of managing conflicts and trust are some factors which forms part of industrial and organizational psychology and may ultimately influence collaboration.

2.4 African Values and Collaboration

Researchers have described African values as connectedness, sharedness, accountability, reciprocity, and the willingness to share information or resources; these aspects are often driven by collectivism, which is connected to the concept of Ubuntu (Kwamwangamalu, 1999; Nussbaum, 2003). Ubuntu is a communalist concept in the sense that an individual is part of the community or whole. The African values is often described using the concept of   Ubuntu or Botho principles. The two characteristics of African values are similar but differs slightly with norms, customs, and traditions. The concept of Botho can be explained as a social contract of mutual respect, humanity, and responsibility that members have with one another (Mihigo, 2019). The process can be implemented in sharing resources and knowledge as a culture, including ensuring equality and humanizing the process of collaboration on the set environment. Although the concepts are similar in definition, I believe ideologies from traditions, customs, and perceptions drive these two concepts because Ubuntu is widely used in Nguni languages (i.e., Isizulu, Isixhosa, Siswati). By contrast, Botho is used in Setswana, Sesotho, or Sepedi, with South Africa as a multifaceted environment. There is a call for Ubuntu to be implemented in the workplace or corporate setting to form part of a catalyst for transformation (Kayange, 2018). Humanizing the academic environment can be evoked by practising Botho principles. The phenomenon of Botho as a concept has been investigated in Botswana as a key driver of sustainable development (Mihigo, 2019). Mkhize (2018) investigated Ubuntu principles from an ethics-governing psychology lens and argued that the process is Western and that African perspectives must be incorporated. Using the concept of Ubuntu, Maphalala (2017) provided a conceptual framework on interpersonal value, intrapersonal value, and environmental value. One can deduce that a shift from individualism to collectivism within the auspices of Botho is needed to increase collaboration in the academic context. Within the notion of transformation, part of social justice can be related to culture, whereby a society focuses on how knowledge is generated. The concept of transformation can be seen as instilling Africanism because it incorporates collectivism, inclusivity, and engagement. Collectivism is further reinforced with collective efficacy and transformation in higher learning institutions.

After reflecting on the above explanation, the themes of collaboration emerge underpinned by the lenses of Ubuntu and Botho, and I believe the concepts of Botho and Ubuntu can act as missing links to how academic environments are managed. The Ubuntu principles clustered under African values have been investigated in the corporate environment (Kaynage, 2018; Manasoe, 2017; Maphalala, 2017; Mkhize, 2018), but little attention has been paid to Botho in the workplace or academic environment. However, Botho efforts have been explored in Botswana concerning sustainable development and the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Mhigo, 2019) and in Lesotho, with Botho promoting well-being and empowerment (Lephoto, 2020). However, there is a non-existent exploration of Botho in the South African context with the integration of industrial psychology in the field of collaboration.

2.5 Positive and Negative Behaviours on Collaboration

Many authors have suggested the positive impacts of collaboration, such as promoting self-analysis, holistic thinking, skills development, and problem-solving capabilities (Cortese, 2003; Fulford, 2016). Moreover, collaboration allows for an effective pooling of talent, increased efficiency, and higher job satisfaction (Kezar, 2005). The most common barrier to collaboration is distance (Kezar, 2010). With an increasing dependence on technology in the workplace, more organizations—especially in the 21st century—have turned to technology for communication among employees, managers, executives, and stakeholders (Pitsoe & Letseka, 2020). Additionally, culture and language, more specifically in the South African context, are common barriers to collaboration (Booysen, 2014). For example, one employee may not function well in a working environment that does not fit their value and cultural system. They may find it challenging to collaborate with other employees because of differences in cultural thought systems or language (Booysen, 2014).

Moreover, an individual's expertise or position in an organization may hinder collaboration because of differences in power and decision-making (Kezar, 2010).   A department head at a university may have difficulty collaborating with a first-year student. There may be a situation whereby "cross-boundary teaming," which refers to an effective collaboration strategy which occurs between two different boundaries (i.e., a CEO and an employee with a lower ranking), takes place (Edmondson & Harvey, 2017). Much like a neoliberal corporate environment, a higher education institution may be grounded on principles of bureaucracy and hierarchy. Therefore, it becomes increasingly important to seek change in such an environment.

Barriers to collaboration can be avoided by creating a space for capabilities to flourish (Scott & Boyd, 2017). Identifying collaborative work can bring out these capabilities, starting with identifying a task that adds value to an organization, selecting the persons to be involved, and setting a time frame for their involvement. Edmondson (2012 pp 11-12) discussed such stage when he referred to teaming as the process of identifying collaborative work. Capability as part of collaboration is described as "configuring and orienting teams and then enabling them to access essential resources," which involves providing teams with the tools necessary to implement the following: "platform of protocols, tools, [and] shared spaces" The final capability focuses on solving challenges to ensure collaborative work can be achieved. Moreover, cross-boundary teaming within and across organizations is another way to avoid barriers to collaboration. This type of teaming allows for an array of knowledge areas as well as team diversity, which positively contribute to organizational goals (Edmondson & Harvey, 2017).

After reflecting on the aforementioned literature, five research questions form part of this study.

3. Research Questions

- How is intra- and inter-collaboration understood and perceived in an academic environment?

- How can collaboration be integrated through the lens of African norms in an academic environment?

- What are the positive behaviours that promote collaboration in an academic environment?

- What are the negative behaviours that inhibit collaboration in an academic environment?

- How is collaboration conceptualized within the field of industrial psychology in an academic environment?

4. Research Methodology and Design

I used a qualitative approach in this study, with empirical data to support it and to strengthen its main focus: the perceptions of 13 participants fulfilling academic and nonacademic roles. To understand these perceptions and the themes they produce, one would be unable to use a quantitative design, indicative of statistical representations and numerical data. Instead, a more in-depth description is needed, which is evident in qualitative research (Bell et al., 2018). This form of detailed description, in-depth analysis, and content-specific design allows for a holistic account of academics' subjective perceptions (Bell et al., 2018). Finally, the nature of inquiry is exploratory and thus conducive to investigating how academics perceive and interpret the sense of community in an academic environment. In terms of

sampling, I used purposive sampling (a nonprobability sampling type) to select the participants in the current study. I used purposive sampling because I require a particular population group, not one randomly chosen for inclusion criteria. I gained ethical clearance from Rhodes University (tracking number PSY2018/18).

Qualitative research methods usually produce an abundance of detail concerning a small number of people (Creswell & Creswell, 2017); depth emerges during interviews by asking probing questions. I conducted interviews, used audio recording, and noted key words throughout the interview process. I employed a qualitative interpretivism research paradigm (Sim et al., 2018). Interpretivism can be understood as an effort to understand problems, ideas, and situations from other people's perspectives and experiences (Hammarberg et al., 2016; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). In addition, the interpretive paradigm is aimed at giving people a voice regarding specific issues and providing a detailed description of those people's experiences and perceptions (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This approach was appropriate for an in-depth understanding of academic and nonacademic experiences and perceptions and for examining collaboration and African culture, integrated within the latter context.

4.1 Participants and Procedure

I recruited 13 participants with diversity in age, marital status, home language, educational background, professional background, and seniority in an academic environment. The recruitment was through the head of departments [HODs] facilitation and asked HODs to forward the advertisement to the rest of the staff members to avoid coercing or targeting participants individually. I employed the latter process after obtaining ethical clearance and the gatekeeper human resource director's approval at a well-known higher learning institution in South Africa. The participants individually consented to the study. I informed participants of their right to withdraw from the study without penalty and I ensured the confidentiality and anonymity of the data they provided.

4.2 Data Collection Procedures and Research Scenery

I selected in-depth interviews as the data collection method. I chose this method because it is less structured in nature (Bell et al., 2018), which allowed for the participants' perceptions to be expressed and understood in a natural environment where they felt comfortable and willing to express themselves openly. This qualitative method also ensures a greater interest in the interviewees' (participants') points of view. This method thus captures rich, detailed answers, which is essential for the detailed description in a qualitative design. In this study, I used an interview schedule that listed the topics to be covered; however, the guide was not strictly enforced but rather used to guide the interview sessions. In addition, I used methods such as probing and clarifying to gain deep insight into participants' experiences and perceptions. In this study, I made use of audio tapes with the participants' consent. Participants' responses was influenced by which questions researchers will ask subsequently (Salkind, 2012). I also followed the procedures by Tracy (2010) for rich rigour using a clear data collection plan aligned to the study's objectives.

4.3 Units of Analysis

I used thematic content analysis leveraging Braun and Clarke's systematic processes, and an inductive process followed. Inductive thematic analysis is results-driven because the themes identified are strongly related to the results and do not necessarily relate to specific questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019). Furthermore, I developed the themes without looking at my own subjective interests. Braun and Clarke (2006, 2019) emphasized this point and stated how an inductive analysis is done without trying to fit it into a pre-existing coding frame, or the researcher's analytic preconception. In this study, I read and reread the data for any themes relating directly to the topic or research questions instead of reading for preexisting coding frames or my own interests. I identified the themes from a latent level rather than a semantic level, and I focused on interpretating themes and identifying underlying assumptions, ideologies, and ideas (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019).

5. Results and Discussions

The following themes emerged from thematic qualitative: shared goals, sense of unity, diversity, and solution-driven teams. Further participants experiences in relation to collaboration is in the form of African culture [Botho principles]. Botho than Ubuntu principle came out strongly because the participants were Setswana, Sepedi and Sesotho speaking academics and non academic staff members. The latter were perceived contributors to collaboration within departments (intra); and few barriers to collaboration were discovered, such as criteria, lack of shared leadership, lack of collaboration champions or ambassadors.

5.1 Shared Goals and a Sense of Unity

Participants understood and defined collaboration quite similarly in an academic environment. They perceived collaboration as working together (two or more individuals) towards a common goal within the pillars of academic roles and duties, closely associated with a sense of unity.

Participant A explains as follows:

"*Look, simply I would just say it is people working together. So, people coming together as a group to work towards something, so to work towards a common goal or whatever it is. Collaboration term on its own implies Botho*"

Participant C used a captivating example to illustrate the idea of unity and cohesiveness:

"*Unity is about having something shared, something core, you know, like the core of the earth, like the sun and things orbit around that and you can have a whole bunch of things orbiting; but you know, it is all around the same kind of thing. A part of it is also pulling in the same direction. If you have unity that is, I suppose a symptom of it.*"

At this point in defining collaboration, the interviewees' academic context became evident (i.e., specific roles and terms commonly used for perceptions of collaboration that made sense to them). Participant B summarized these roles briefly by stating how collaboration in an academic context would include particular aspects:

"*Teaching, collaboration in teaching, and it is in research collaboration, so that might be whether it is phases of the research or co-authoring or so on. Community engagement, course coordination, quality assurance, and administrative roles . . . foster collaboration.*"

Conversely, participants often spoke of research collaboration from the point of view of a research paper, as Participant D did:

"*So, we would be united towards a common goal, for example, producing our research paper.*"

A motivating factor related to income arose within this academic role, as Participant E noted:

"*In research certainly, there is big research money for collaborative projects.*"

Moreover, the role of community engagement collaboration was an area in which most participants conveyed the intention to increase intra- (same-department) collaboration. Participant D suggested they wanted to increase intra-collaboration:

"*I think individual researchers have their own, sort of community engagement that they have been involved in. But we are trying to get something together as a department to work on that.*"

Participant E explained the challenges hindering inter-collaboration:

"*An academic environment, such as silo effect norms, needs to be disrupted to create a communal space (common eating area, etc.) for networks to be built. Academics and non academics are not working as one as usually there is some frustrations and hidden agendas or undermining happening. This space could increase intra- and inter-collaboration within the university departments.*"

From the results above, collaboration is understood as a sense of unity and shared common goals, which is consistent with previous studies (Dorcas et al., 2014; Sidhu, 2006). This finding benefits the process of examining the nexus of teaching, research, and community engagement in this study. Results showed that intra-collaboration is preferred, with slow progression to inter-collaboration. Slow progression may be preferable because people feel more comfortable working in a group with similar traits or characteristics (Shu et al., 2015). Collaboration should not be about competing against one another but about working together to achieve a common goal. In cooperative and collaborative groups, members improve outcomes by assisting one another to achieve success, which emphasizes the importance of inter- and multidiscipline collaboration. Collaboration flourishes if knowledge transfers and spills over, so university entities and stakeholders should become business partners and capitalize on winning solutions (Ting et al., 2018). Through collaborative practice, organizations can deliver services more effectively and experience job satisfaction, commitment, and project success (Bond-Barnard et al., 2018; Jung et al., 2017; Kozuch & Sienkiewicz-Malyjurek, 2016).

5.2 Diversity and Solution-Driven Teams

Participants viewed collaboration through a positive rather than a negative lens. They explained how collaboration can better a higher education environment and thus lead to increased effectiveness.

Participant D stated as follows:

> *"Collaboration helps solve problems on a bigger scale rather than just locally. So, because you are solving problems on a bigger scale, that is a benefit to the university. It is more useful for the university if we solve a problem in a faculty than if we solve a problem in a department because it has [a] wider application."*

Another participant expressed a benefit of collaboration was that it allows people to voice and contemplate various opinions and perspectives. Participant D also explored the issue of diversity:

> *"We have different perspectives, different expertise, and that allows for the diversity within. . . . There are some very complex problems in our immediate vicinity that [call] for this multidisciplinary approach, and I think there are various people who are starting to work together to deal with that."*

Participant C also touched on the issue of diversity:

> *"I mean, without collaborating with other people, you are not exposed to their ideas, and your ideas are not held up for their inspection. You do not get new perspectives on what you are doing; you do not understand it in different contexts. . . . All of which become beneficial in an academic context given the various roles attached to such a position."*

Intra-collaboration occurred in the academic environment; however, what stood out most was the varying natures of such associations.

5.3 Emotional and Personal Ties

Participant D suggested how collaboration is more straightforward when two people have personal or emotional ties:

> *"I have chatted to colleagues on that personal level, so working with them for a common goal is easier."*

Participant A mirrored this sentiment:

> *"You do not just group together, sort of on a superficial level, it's . . . you also have emotional ties, so while you have professional ties, the unity I think comes from also having personal ties to each other."*

Some participants emphasized the presence of professional associations above personal associations. For successful intra-collaboration, professional associations allow for additional benefits, such as those Participant E stated:

> *"It must also be said that all of us collaborate a lot with people outside of the institution, both out of South Africa and internationally. Moreover, one of the reasons is that it is for having those professional networks but also in terms of us getting rated and esteemed."*

The interview answers suggest this study's participants experienced collaboration through a positive lens with few challenges or barriers resulting from the importance attached to collaboration among academics and nonacademics in selected higher education institutions. They saw collaboration in a higher education environment as a necessary component of organizational effectiveness. For better teaching strategies and course coordination, collaboration increased research publications and overall higher quality assurance for students, similar to findings by Bond-Barnard et al. (2018), Hargreaves and O'Connor (2017), Jung et al. (2017), Kezar (2005, 2006, 2010), Kozuch and Sienkiewicz-Malyjurek (2016), and another benefit of collaboration was that it allows for people to voice and think about others' opinions, and perspectives. Differences in opinions, perspectives, and views have proven to be of great benefit to higher education institutions. Higher education now may align their visions with societal needs to reach to a solution or common ground jointly with societies. Intra-collaboration occurred in the academic environment, but the varying nature of such associations was notable.

The data suggest more personal than professional associations among academic colleagues were seen in specific departments, consistent with research conducted by Scott (2017). This outcome was mainly discovered because of each department's culture, such as working in silos and determining its own culture as opposed to adopting the same culture as the whole system including communities, students and industry professionals. Participants who had constant interaction with one another developed better personal associations than colleagues who were constantly travelling and out of the department. The data suggest that for successful intra-collaboration, professional associations allow for additional benefits, such as becoming rated and esteemed. As Kezar (2010) pointed out, networks become essential for collaboration; this point was reiterated by participants who said, "People's power becomes central to enabling collaboration"

5.4 Lack of Shared Leadership in An Academic Environment

In this study, the topic of leadership became important when a mechanical system characterized by organizational hierarchies arose. Participant F explained as follows:

"*There is no shared leadership in these cases; instead, important decisions such as budgets were left [to] superiors.*"

Participant G explained as follows:

"*As my department is quite small, more natural relationship process, one grounded on personal associations and social relations, [it] is fully affected through support by deans and departmental chairs.*"

Participant E noted the following:

"*Certainly, when there are decisions that affect us as a department, everybody's opinion matters, and we try to gain consensus rather than, you know, just go with the majority. So, yes, there is shared leadership and also through the department being represented by different academics on different faculty committees. We have someone who represents us on the ethics committee, we have someone who represents us on the teaching and learning committee, [and] we have someone who represents us on the research committee or administration, so in that sense, there are also different people putting forward the department's interests or representing the department.*"

The academic community has varying perceptions of leadership. Participants widely addressed the topic from an internal rather than an external perspective. Conflicting perceptions emerged because some participants believed in shared leadership, whereas others did not have much confidence in shared leadership. Members of leadership in a higher learning institution are essential to fostering collaborations, as explained by Blessinger et al. (2020), Manasoe (2017), and Pitsoe and Letseka (2020). Kezar (2005, 2006, 2010) suggested how one way to model collaboration is in how the president (e.g., head of the department) works with their cabinet (e.g., academic and non academic members). On collaborative campuses, "presidents do not make unilateral decisions; they work with other members of their administrative teams to plan, make decisions, and allocate resources". Furthermore, the results of this study are consistent with those of previous studies in terms of humanizing the academic environment and collaboration from the leadership perspective, as advocated by Blessinger (2020) and Pitsoe and Letseka (2020). The higher learning institution–community collaborative relationship is crucial because one party has the necessary resources and problem-solving techniques, and the other knows the problems that need to be solved. Therefore, this collaboration yields positive results when higher learning institutions produce graduates who understand the problems South African society faces and can help solve those problems (Brown-Luthango, 2013; Melber, 2015).

Participant B explained how the work environment can be modified to facilitate collaboration:

"*Universities or departments do not allow for many opportunities for people to bump into each other, connect, [or] build a network unless they deliberately went out [of] their way to look for people to do that. So, I think we tend to be structured and operate as a university very much in silos no Botho at all. Those are departmental silos, and we then need to make a very conscious effort to step out of that to collaborate. So, if the university had perhaps a staff canteen or restaurant or, you know, somewhere like that may be where academics, nonacademics, students and community members eat. [Having a] diversity day or open day where academics show off their work, specify their interests, let other colleagues sit in their classes, and team-teach [would] contribute immensely.*" Same goes for nonacademics, students and community members to showcase projects they are working on to simply build the botho spirit.

The varying nature of such personal and professional associations within various departments could be due to the departmental culture and structure. Kezar (2010) posed a question in this regard: "How can colleges and universities move from bureaucratic structures and siloed disciplinary units to an organizational context that supports collaboration" (p. 52) Although communal spaces may assist in this regard, barriers to collaboration would need to be addressed. One vital barrier was that of the superiority complex among higher education departments. One way to break down existing egos (which lead to bureaucratic structures and siloed disciplines) is to understand the value of other disciplines' opinions, perspectives, and views.

Participant G mentioned challenges that larger departments impose:

"*It is larger departments [that] highlighted the presence of a hierarchical relationship process between colleagues (i.e., seniors and juniors).*"

5.5 A Criterion

A criterion was the presence of personal associations with a close link to a social component in the relationships among collaborating colleagues. According to the participants, a criterion in determining who to work with served as a barrier to collaboration in the higher learning institution Participant A explained as follows:

> *"If you can create [a] sort of knowledge-sharing and helping-one-another space where you are comfortable with each other, [then] you can be social with them. You know, just sit down and have a cup of coffee type of thing. That, for me, makes it easier. Yeah, the social part of it is essential."*

Apart from this criterion, the criterion of interest arose. Participant C stated as follows:

> *"So, I mean, the first one is that we have to have some shared interest, whether it is in teaching or research, so you know, in terms of, for example, research collaboration, the person to collaborate with is obviously with whom there is synergy in terms of the topics and the research approach and so on."*

Participant H asserted as follows:

> *"If we are working as colleagues or in the early academic career, no one takes us seriously. You will be regarded as, your CV is very weak. There is nothing much you can contribute."*

5.6 Lack of Collaboration Champions or Ambassadors

> Participant A added the determining factor of the age and qualification gap between juniors and seniors:

> *"[A] big gap contributes to how the seniors view the juniors, and so I find it very . . . I view that it would be challenging for a junior to approach a senior and say, 'Let us work together.'"*

Participant I elucidated further:

> *"If senior professors can initiate those collaborations, it is relatively easy for juniors to join because it is difficult for a junior guy to go to a senior guy and say, 'Let us collaborate.'"*

Participant J mentioned her view on the unfriendliness and unapproachability of seniors:

> *"When some people get a level or a position, a higher position, they think that it is their time to be mean or oppress somebody."*

Participant H felt similarly:

> *"You find people [who] are regarded as high level who do not want to share anything with young people, they do not want to interact with you, and they would rather go to people [who] are highly skilled."*

Participant A explained further:

> *"At the departmental levels, I think we need to prioritize collaboration, and more so, I think we need to be honest about what the barriers are, why is it that one staff member is not willing to collaborate with a certain staff member, and how [we can] break these barriers."*

Participant X reflected on how he has made efforts to initiate collaboration:

> *"I have also tried to approach one of the other colleagues who are around the same age as me to try and see if we could write something, a research article, relating to both our fields, and so it has been difficult getting it off the ground. The capacity constraints in the faculty have also been a challenge in that regard because we are both quite busy."*

Additionally, an academic's personal goals or life choices affect the frequency with which they collaborate. Criteria used to collaborate were perceived as barriers within the current context, which is inconsistent with previous research on strengthening capabilities (Scott, 2017). Unlike that in corporate environments, collaboration in higher education is a topic that needs more attention, especially considering the changing nature of the 21st-century university context through shared leadership (Blessinger et al., 2020; Faini et al., 2017; Manasoe, 2017; Pitsoe & Letseka, 2020). Collaboration can be introduced as a means for achieving a positive transformation, as Faini et al. (2017) stated.

5.7 Botho Principles: African Perspective

The African perspective and humanizing the workplace through collaboration in an academic environment emerged through the concept of Botho principles.

Participant B mentioned how collaboration can assist with the challenges facing South African higher education environments through the principles of considering African perspectives and humanizing the workplace:

"*You will be able to collaborate with others to get in particular diverse perspectives to address issues of creating a more inclusive culture, for example, and deliberately seeking out those who may be [or] have been excluded, or people on the margins or people in other disciplines who maybe previously you didn't think would have anything to say about your discipline but in fact could have some contributions. I think to read those kinds of things can contribute to the transformation of curricula and the kind of academic endeavours in the university.*"

The integration of Africanism through Botho is said to contribute to student's success in the current study. The students' success and a helping hand in transitioning out of lockdown and returning to the academic environment is encouraged, and I asserts that the helping hand and creating necessary accommodation is underpinned by the Botho or Ubuntu principles. I offer more empirics in humanizing the academic environment through Botho and Ubuntu principles.

Participants Z stated as follows:

"I think collaboration needs to be looked at from Botho perspectives. As an academic in Africa, my values and principles form part of my identity, then comes my professional identity. The collaboration through the lens of Botho would mean that I practice humility [and] understanding and offer a helping hand to a colleague who is struggling or is [suffering] family crises. I can take his or her class. Botho principles should be reciprocal because if I also cannot make it one day, I expect assistance from other colleagues."

Participant X further added to this point:

"The Botho principles in my understanding account for humanizing the workplace, humanizing the process through diversity and cross-cultural dynamics . . . workshops are held where aspects such as facial expressions, gestures, [and] understanding each language and diversity in terms of contribution from the diverse background can make [a difference] in the organization."

The responses above are inconsistent with previous research because prior researchers have not focused on Botho principles in a South African academic environment. However, there was a study on Ubuntu principles in leadership in the education sector when technology and the industrial revolution brought needed change and enhanced performance (Pitsoe & Letseka, 2020). Blessinger et al. (2020) echoed Pitsoe & Letseka (2020) discovery in calling for leadership development and a humanized academic environment, which is consistent with the current study's findings. Although the principles of Botho and Ubuntu are similar, different ideologies, traditions, and customs govern these African values. Per the results, there appears to be a strong need for collaboration, and perceptions of its importance differ from those in previous studies (Duffield et al., 2013).

5.8 Ways of Facilitating Collaboration within the Field of Industrial Psychology

To further add to the theoretical framework, I analyzed the results through the lens of industrial psychology. I referred to quotations and codes from participants. The following provides a framework and contributes practically to enhancing the culture of collaboration through the lens of industrial psychology:

- Humanization of the workplace through mindfulness and necessary accommodation
- Diversity and cross-cultural awareness to enhance collaboration, diversity, acknowledgement of individual differences.
- Empathetic and flexible shared leadership through accountability and responsibility, leadership underpinned by the Botho principles, team teaching, research, and community engagement
- Multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary collaboration centred around Botho principles
- Humanization of the academic environment and efforts to collaborate through positive psychology, humour, cheerful personalities, and mindfulness in facial expressions and gestures

5.9 Behaviours to Avoid That May Inhibit Collaboration through the Lens of Industrial Psychology

- Inconducive physical environment where employees must fit the organization without efforts being made to modify the environment to meet the individual
- Lack of succession planning policies
- Emotional intelligence, which promotes self-awareness and awareness during interaction with others, not being given attention in the academic environment

- Lack of policies that intersect with skills, capabilities, ethnicities, genders, ages, and Botho principles in the collaboration, innovation facilitation, shared leadership, and diversity areas

6. Conclusion

In this study, I focused on collaboration among academics and nonacademics in select higher learning institutions and answered particular research questions. How is collaboration perceived in an academic environment? The study participants perceived collaboration from a positive lens through shared goals; a sense of unity; solution-driven teams; and emotional and personal ties mostly experienced internally or within a department, which references "intra collaboration" in this context. Collaboration can be integrated through the lens of African norms in an academic environment by embracing Botho principles and diversity. The use of Botho principles begins to humanize the process of facilitating collaboration and positive behaviours in an academic environment. Further lenses of Botho are personal ties over professional ties, cup of tea, sharing of knowledge, research and sense of unity showing humanity in one's role, diversity and inclusion. The botho principle was experienced by academic than nonacademic participants, which may be influenced by the scope of work, value system or language. In answering the question regarding negative behaviours or inhibitors to collaboration, the participants said that criteria used to determine who to collaborate with, questioned abilities, lack of shared leadership, limited physical space, and a lack of collaboration champions and ambassadors are behaviours inhibiting collaboration. After reflecting on the study's results through the lens of industrial and organizational psychology, I find collaboration is achieved through positive psychology, humour, mindfulness, emotional intelligence, humanization of the workplace and awareness of diversity and cross-cultural dynamics. However, the study has limitations. I interviewed a small convenience sample of academics and nonacademics, and having a small sample resulted in the inability to generalize results to a broader population (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). In addition, a qualitative study is time-consuming, and participants can withhold information (Sim et al., 2018). Further limitations include scarce literature on collaboration within higher learning institutions, especially in the South African context. As part of future research recommendations, I suggest researchers explore the concept of collaboration from students' perspectives in South African tertiary institutions with the integration of Botho principles.

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