



THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MULTICULTURAL TEAMS AND PROJECT PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study aims to investigate the cultural factors that influence the multicultural project team performance and determines the cultural dimensions that would impact on the project performance. It aims, therefore, to develop a framework that can be applied to address cross-cultural complexity in order to enhance the project performance and deliver a successful project.

Methodology/approach: Hypotheses are presented in a theoretical framework that proposes a relationship between national culture differences and the team and project performance.

Findings: The study shows that there are grounds for hypothesising that national culture does have an

impact on team and project performance. Therefore, a conceptual framework is formed in order to address the cultural complexity within multicultural project teams, and examine the relationship between national culture and team and project performance. The framework can provide all the crucial factors to be investigated in a rational way, and presents appropriate variables and aspects of reference for investigating national culture within the context of projects. An empirical study should be undertaken as a further study to validate this framework.

Practical implications: This framework offers a model that addresses the cultural complexities of project teams within a multicultural environment, in order to enhance the project performance and deliver a successful project.

Originality/value: This study makes a contribution to the literature by delivering a deeper understanding of cultural issues that influence multicultural teams in projects. Findings from this research may assist project directors and managers to better understand the role of national culture in the context of improving project performance.

Keywords: Multicultural teams, national culture, project team, project performance.

INTRODUCTION

To cope with the increasing pace of globalisation, project and working teams are becoming more diverse in their composition. Team members from various countries and distinct cultural backgrounds are working closely together (Adler, 2002; Hofstede, 1991; Maddox, 1993), and managing cultural diversity has become a significant element of today's organisation (Kochan et al., 2003). Recently, there has been a broad understanding of the necessity to deal with diversity in all kinds of organisations, and to recognise the benefits and difficulties for the different agents engaged (Dietz and Petersen, 2006; McKay et al., 2009).

While the use of multicultural teams is a growing organisational reality, several researchers (Bantel, 1994; Daily et al., 1997; Jackson, 1992) claim that the diverse teams have been shown to outperform the homogenous teams. For instance, Bantel (1994) observed that diversity may improve team functionality and performance by providing team members with a greater skill base and a broader range of visions. However, numerous researchers and authors studied and investigated culture in projects. They assert that our knowledge of how to most effectively manage them, and their understanding of cross-cultural management factors on multicultural project teams, is inadequately developed and somewhat limited (Barthorpe et al., 2000, 1999; Triandis et al., 1997; Meek, 1998; Ochieng and Price, 2010). Furthermore, there are limited theoretical and empirical studies concerning how the cultural diversity in teams could impact on project performance (Mannix and Neale, 2005; Moon, 2013; Nakui et al., 2011; van Knippenberg and Schippers, 2007).

To fill this gap, this paper examines whether an impact of national culture values on the team and project performance within a multicultural environment exists. Particularly, this study investigates the influence of five national culture dimensions developed by Hofstede (1980, 1991) on the multicultural team complexity variables; these include integration, communication, trust and knowledge-sharing. This study contributes to the literature by delivering a deeper understanding of cultural issues that influence multicultural teams in projects.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Cultural diversity and performance

Most of the tasks and projects within organisations are being accomplished by team-based - teamwork - project structures. This is aimed at assisting a team's relationship and communications in an effort to encourage successful project completion (Cannon-Bowers et al., 1993). This practice has proven to show an increase in productivity and skills, as well as minimising workloads for individuals (Marks et al., 2001; O'Connor et al., 2008). However, numerous teams tend to be unsuccessful and encounter failure for numerous reasons (Hackman, 1998).

According to Hall (1960s), Hofstede (1970s and 1980s), and Trompenaars (1990s), research shows that human interaction occurs in a social environment influenced by a sophisticated group of norms, values, policies and regulations, as well as rules and laws. It does not happen in isolation or a vacuum. Forming or being formed by these influencing mechanisms is a thing that we refer to and call "culture". Culture appears and develops in response to interpersonal desire for answers to issues typical to all teams and groups (Hofstede, 1991). In order to be a part of a social and interpersonal identity, all project teams and groups need to come with answers to these problems and complexities.

Each individual from the project team holds a different cultural background, which is not generally conscious. However, our culture is not necessarily explainable or conscious of others, as the cultural values and norms are delivered and passed on from the past to current people (Hofstede, 1991). This confirms that there no one culture is right and the other cultures are wrong, but for each cultural collection and grouping, regardless of whether ethnic or organisation, there is a propagated view of what is deemed and thought to be considered logical or illogical, right or wrong, reasonable or unreasonable.

Current changes with the cultural composition of the workforce have also triggered some sort of practical and functional concern with managing a multicultural team, a project-oriented team consisting of individuals with different culture and from different countries (Marquardt and Horvath, 2001). With the increase in globalisation in recent years, diversity in culture and the national background is very popular in today's projects and organisations. These kinds of teams tend to consist of individuals from distinct national backgrounds; they probably speak distinct 'languages' and grew up in distinct places that could have distinct norms and values. Therefore, it is worth addressing that today's organisations should understand and recognise the possible effects of diversity on the team's performance (Nam et al., 2009).

The relationship between cultural diversity and performance

Individuals' cultural value orientations have a significant impact on the way they process and understand information (Adler, 2002; Hofstede, 1980); it also has an effect on the preferred styles of social and interpersonal interactions with others (Bettenhausen and Murnighan, 1991; Earley, 1993; Zander, 1997). Once individuals from different cultural backgrounds meet together in a team, they could present a great potential for prime team efficiency and performance by the combining of different cultural views and perspectives. However, positive outcomes are not always obtained. Several cross-cultural researchers have contended that cultural diversity in teams creates obstacles and challenges that should be cautiously managed or overcome (Stahl et al., 2010).

Empirical research has so far disclosed an equivocal connection between cultural diversity and team performance (see Table 1); a number of research studies found this relationship and connection positive (e.g., Earley and Mosakowski, 2000; Thomas et al., 1996; Comu et al., 2010), while some found it negative (e.g., Jehn and Mannix, 2001; Kirkman et al., 2004). According to Stahl et al.'s (2010) study, these cultural diversity findings tend to increase the divergence and decrease the convergence in team functions and processes. Divergent functions and processes impose various ideas and values into a team; this could lead to positive results and outcomes, such as a higher level of creativeness, as well as negative results and outcomes, such as higher uncertainty and interpersonal conflict. Convergent functions and processes keep the team focussed on common goals, objectives, or commitments that guide to positive results and outcomes, such as improving team cohesion and communication, or to negative results and outcomes, such as groupthink. However, different connections and relationships between cultural diversity and team performance could be observed depending on how the team functions and operates (Cheng et al., 2012).

Researchers have often reported conflicting findings about a team's composition, whether the cultural diversity can affect its performance and dynamics. For example, several researchers (Bantel, 1994; Daily et al., 1997; Jackson, 1992; Watson et al., 1988) claim that diverse teams have shown to outperform homogenous teams. For instance, Bantel (1994) observed that diversity may improve team functionality and performance by providing team members with a greater skill base and a broader range of visions. Daily et al. (1997) also noted that culturally diverse teams with distinct national backgrounds have a higher response rate in the Group Decision Support System (GDSS) in certain issues concerning team decision making, such as expression of thoughts and discussing issues. Comu et al. (2010) observed that, in the initial stages, a multicultural team will have a negative impact on performance; however, sustained interaction of a culturally diverse team may, in the long run result, outperform the mono-cultural team.

Multicultural Teams and Project Performance

Moon (2013) asserts that cultural diversity's impact on performance differ in the long- and short-term. Moreover, this confirms Barthorpe et al.'s (2000) study, which declares that, in the long-term, the benefits of multicultural teams can be a broader process of problem solving, improved problem solving capability and greater creativity. Bebenova-Nikolova (2014) states that when cultural diversity is managed well, it is an asset and will enhance the performance; once it is ignored, it will increase the possibility of generating problems and reduces productivity.

Table 1: The Relationship between Culture and Performance

No.	Author	Year	Positive	Negative	Null
1	Ancona and Caldwell	1992		X	
2	Jackson	1992	X		
3	Bantel	1994	X		
4	Smith <i>et al.</i>	1994			X
5	Thomas <i>et al.</i>	1996	X		
6	Milliken and Martins	1996		X	
7	Daily <i>et al.</i>	1997	X		
8	Harrison <i>et al.</i>	1998		X	
9	Hambrick <i>et al.</i>	1998		X	
10	Lau and Murnighan	1998		X	
11	Williams and O'Reilly'	1998			X
12	Earley and Mosakowski	2000	X		
13	Jehn and Mannix	2001		X	
14	Kozlowski and Bell	2003		X	
15	Kirkman <i>et al.</i>	2004		X	
16	Staples and Zhao	2006		X	
17	Lee and Ma	2007		X	
18	Kivrak <i>et al.</i>	2009	X	X	
19	Comu <i>et al.</i>	2010	X		
20	Ochieng and Price	2010	X	X	
21	Stahl <i>et al.</i>	2010	X	X	
22	Cheng <i>et al.</i>	2012	X	X	
23	Bebenova-Nikolova	2014	X	X	

Source: Devised by author

In addition, numerous studies (Ancona and Caldwell, 1992; Milliken and Martins, 1996; Staples and Zhao, 2006) confirmed that homogenous teams often avoid the loss in processes associated with poor communication among team members, and the extreme conflict that usually affects diverse teams. Staples and Zhao (2006) observed that heterogeneous teams were less cohesive, and had much more conflict than homogeneous teams. In addition, Harrison et al. (1998) found that there was clearly a negative relationship between performance and diversity, which means that team performance improved as diversity diminished. Negative issues of diversity in teams include communication problems, misunderstandings, increased conflict and decreased cohesion. These kinds of losses and failures may result in decreased satisfaction and performance (Hambrick et al., 1998; Lau and Murnighan, 1998).

Other research has claimed that there is a null relationship, which means that diversity has no relationship with team performance (Smith et al., 1994). For instant, Williams and O'Reilly's (1998) study reviewed about 40 years of diversity studies; they came to the conclusion that there is no constant major effect of diversity on organisational effectiveness and performance. Nonetheless, by taking a look at the process variables, Jackson (1992), and Kozlowski and Bell (2003) both agreed that team diversity has a negative effect on team cohesiveness. As a result, it is quite possible that homogeneous teams will probably demonstrate a greater degree of socially-oriented communication when compared to heterogeneous teams. A study conducted by Lee and Ma (2007) showed that cultural differences in teams are the most significant factors affecting team performance.

One more source of the equivocal connection and relationship between cultural diversity and team performance is derived from the ways cultural diversity has been identified; these could possibly be sorted into "surface-level" or perhaps "deep-level" (Harrison et al., 1998; Stahl et al., 2010; Wheeler, 2002). Surface-level involves variations in demographic indicators, such as nationality or ethnicity (Jackson et al., 1995; Williams and O'Reilly, 1998), while deep-level encompasses differences in norms, values and cultural attitudes (Jackson et al., 2003). Although almost all research and studies so far have focussed on analysing surface-level types of cultural diversity (Oerlemans and Peeters, 2010), growing studies (Harrison et al., 1998; Harrison et al., 2002; Vodosek, 2007) report a significant impact of cultural diversity on work outcomes. A meta-analysis released by Taras et al. (2010) on the impact of culture, shows the influence of cultural values endorsed by team members to be the strongest for emotional outcomes, then attitudes, and lastly performance. The disagreement between these reviewed researches raises essential concerns in regards to the characteristics of this issue and how best to analyse and investigate it.

The influence of culture on project performance

Numerous studies have investigated the impact of culture on performance. A research study conducted by Stare (2011) was particularly focussed on the role that organisational culture plays in project performance. A further study by Ochieng and Price (2010) investigated how cultural diversity in a multicultural team can influence the project performance. Additionally, several research studies on team performance have assessed the effect of national culture (Comu et al., 2010; Cheng et al., 2012; Rees-Caldwell and Pinnington, 2013), cultural diversity (Lee and Ma, 2007; Stahl et al., 2010), intercultural effectiveness (Simkhovych, 2009), cultural intelligence (Moon, 2013), and intercultural competencies (Bebenova-Nikolova, 2014), and how these can influence and impact directly or indirectly on performance. These research studies are summarised in Table 2 below, showing the main dimensions that have been investigated previously and their effect on performance.

Table 2: Previous studies on Culture and Performance

No.	Author	Year	Dimension	Relation /Impact
1	Lee and Ma	2007	Cultural Diversity	Team Performance
2	Ochieng and Price	2009	Cultural Diversity	Project Performance
3	Kivrak <i>et al.</i>	2009	Cultural Differences	Project Success
4	Simkhovych	2009	Intercultural Effectiveness	Team Performance
5	Comu <i>et al.</i>	2010	National Culture	Team Performance
6	Isah <i>et al.</i>	2010	Cultural Diversity	Project Management
7	Ochieng and Price	2010	National Culture	Team Performance
8	Stahl <i>et al.</i>	2010	Cultural Diversity	Team Performance
9	Stare	2011	Organisational Culture	Project Performance
10	Cheng <i>et al.</i>	2012	National Culture	Team Performance
11	Moon	2013	Cultural Intelligence	Team Performance
12	Rees-Caldwell and Pinnington	2013	National Culture	Project Management
13	Bebenova-Nikolova	2014	Intercultural Competences	Team Performance

Source: Devised by author

Almost all of the issues of culture and its influence on performance have been studied previously. However, the reviewed research studies do not cover other aspects of culture thoroughly. These include such things as multicultural complexity or individuals' background and how it influences the project performance, and how the national culture dimensions impact on not only the team performance but also the project performance, especially in a multicultural environment.

Multicultural team complexity:

Multicultural teams have many benefits from different viewpoints. For instant, multicultural teams would most probably respond better to external challenges, particularly in a complex environment that has greater uncertainty and is fast developing. In addition, solutions for older issues and challenges could possibly be resolved as multicultural teams have a broader range of opinions and viewpoints. However, the differences among the team members could lead to communication problems and interpersonal conflicts. Multicultural teams should take more control of the project process and challenges that cultural differences impose in order to utilise the possible loss of project resources, unsatisfactory outcomes, and missed opportunities (Chevrier, 2003; Schneider and Barsoux, 2003). Multicultural teams are likely to become the most efficient and effective compared to other teams, but at the same time are the least powerful teams (Adler and Bartholomew, 1992; Adler, 2002).

Successful utilisation of multicultural project teams can provide a new way of innovative thinking and experiences to enhance the possibility of project success and offer a competitive advantage for the organisation. However, cultural variations and differences, together with the associated complexities and conflicts, can hinder the successful completion of projects, especially in today's multicultural business organisations. To attain project objectives and get away from cultural misunderstandings, project managers need to be aware of cultural differences and encourage motivation and creativity through flexible leadership (Anbari et al., 2009). In their study, Anbari et al. (2009) concluded that multicultural project management can be successful when the leadership is culturally-aware, and there is effective cross-cultural communication, mutual and shared respect and reconciliation. Anbari et al. (2009) claim that without taking these aspects into consideration, multicultural project management is most likely going to fail.

Growing project management demands investigation of how the complexity of a project influences the project constraints of cost, time, and quality. Ochieng and Price (2010) stated that clients and project managers require this knowledge and understanding in order to handle and manage the project complexity. As stated, it is significant that clients and projects managers develop plans throughout the project life cycle and standardise them with the aim of handling and controlling project complexity in the best effective approach.

Team Integration

Baccarini (1996) suggested that complexity might be handled and controlled through the use of integration, that is, by control, coordination, and communication. It is essential to predetermine the order between activities and events. There is an effect from unforeseen events that can maximise the project complexity and

multiply project changes that can make time delays hard to handle and monitor.

Project performance has been extensively investigated by means of quite a small number of researchers (Baiden, 2006, Cheng et al., 2012, Kumaraswamy et al., 2004, Ochieng, 2008; Ochieng et al., 2013), and the outcomes of these investigations have clearly shown that the best project performance is accomplished when the entire project team is thoroughly integrated and incorporated with the project objectives. According to Egan (2002) and Loosemore et al. (2012), there is an increasing view and evidence suggesting that integrated team work is a main key in efforts towards enhancing product delivery within the construction sector.

Multicultural team integration is a unique issue and a challenging problem for project managers and clients. Once the multicultural teams are established, it is claimed that they outperform the mono-cultural teams, especially in areas where they deal with problem identification and solving. This is all due to the sheer strength of diversity (Earley and Mosakowski, 2000). Each culture has its unique value, assumptions, and concepts that differ from other cultures; understanding these and identifying the cultural complexity are a core skill required for each project manager (Kang et al., 2006; Vonsild, 1996).

Team Communication

One of the most significant contemporary complexities faced by project managers in the industry in today's market is communication problems (Loosemore and Al Muslmani, 1999). Dieckmann (1996) highlights that communication is also considered to be one of the most overlooked and neglected areas of international business. According to Pardu (1996), one of the biggest reasons for project failure cited in the literature is the lack of communication.

Dinsmore and Benitez Cudas (2006) suggest that globalisation impacts on all types of projects that employ their labour force from different countries. They argue that it is critical to develop an efficient understanding and communication between project team members who are from different cultural backgrounds as this could affect the success and failure of projects.

In order for cross-cultural communication to perform successfully among multicultural team individuals, Smith and Noakes (1996) noticed that it is necessary to understand the influence of cultural diversity on the social interactions between individuals in these teams. Developing effective communication is essential for the success of international projects, which ranges from extended cultural understanding in order to eliminate waste and motivation of those involved. Encouraging successful communication is required to be task specific and personalised instead of "broad-brush" (Feiner and Edward, 1992). Effective communication can lead to the identification of problems sooner (Dahle, 1997), may assist in controlling

uncertainty (Laufer et al., 1997), and might develop ideas that contribute to create better solutions and problem solving (Dahle, 1997).

Effective communication may increase motivation, encourage teamwork and ensure better engagement of the key stakeholders (Gannon, 1994). Pearson and Nelson (2003) agree with Earley and Mosakowski (2000), that communication in multicultural project teams motivates the creation of an emergent and developing project team culture. In addition, they confirm that an efficient and effective multicultural project team has a solid influence on culture as team communication and performance. With regard to the project team, communication is regarded as a critical success factor that has an essential impact on project performance. Moreover, communication is crucial in creating effective cooperation and collaboration among project stakeholders, including the project manager and project team members (Anantatmula and Thomas, 2010). According to Koivu et al. (2003), mistrust caused by cultural differences during the contracting phase impacts the project timeline and costs; this eventually increases the communication as external help is required to be attained, and project complexity is therefore increased, which leads to delays in the overall project.

Team Trust

Trust has an influence in reducing complexity and assists in building up and developing teams. It holds different types of certain characteristics as it is considered intangible, fragile and hard to measure in general; however, it is fundamental to the success of teamwork, especially in multicultural teams (Ochieng and Price, 2009). The reason that makes trust substantially more complex is the existence of a cultural effect in which an individual could consider an act as trust while others feel exactly the opposite (Rowlinson et al., 2008).

The creation and development of trust is considered one of the crucial aspects of establishing multicultural project teams. Trust works as an invisible glue agent to hold the disrupted team together (Tenzer et al., 2014). Teamwork is a significant and challenging area for the formation and maintenance of trust, especially when more than one party is involved (Ochieng and Price, 2010). Trust has been defined by Lipnack and Stamps (1997) as the confidence or belief in an organisation's or individual's reliability, fairness and integrity. According to Mayer et al. (1995), trust represents the behaviour of risk-taking towards the trustee; therefore, trust comes with the sensation that the trusted entity would not take advantage and make use of the other (Porter et al., 1975; Webster and Wong, 2008).

Trust and culture are usually reviewed and examined on different levels; trust on a team or individual level, and culture on a national or organisational level. Numerous researchers (Huff and Kelley, 2005; Issa and Haddad, 2008; Whitener et al., 1998) have observed that there are correlations between these levels

as a whole, proposing that culture on national and/or organisational levels has an impact on trusting behaviours between team individuals. Researchers also examined the cultural dimensions that have been proposed by Hofstede (1980), for instance individualism vs. collectivism (Huff and Kelley, 2005; Kuwabara et al., 2007) and power distance (Khan and Maalik, 2011), as having an influence on trust. Doney et al. (1998) emphasised that collectivist cultures have more interest in engaging in trusting behaviours compared to individualist cultures. This indicates that in collectivist cultures, people are looking for more collective interests and try to maintain group beliefs and values; they are most unlikely to be motivated or encouraged by self-interest. On the other hand, Huff and Kelley (2005) observed that managers and leaders who come from individualist cultures, such as the United States, had a higher tendency to trust compared to managers and leaders from collectivist cultures, such as Asian nations. In addition, it is important to note that there are certain commonalities concerning both of these aspects of trust and culture. Both trust and culture require sufficient time to develop as they are associated with interpersonal and cultural interactions and establish the nature of relationships (Wiewiora et al., 2014). However, trust is bound to specific relationships and actors and seems to be more context-dependent (Issa and Haddad, 2008).

Team Knowledge Sharing

Today, cross cultural research is attaining growing importance in industry due to globalisation and the complexity of diverse workforces (Abdul-Rahman et al., 2012; Akiner and Tjihuis, 2007; de la Cruz et al., 2008). Knowledge is considered one of the most significant assets for any organisation (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995). Recognising the way to manage knowledge effectively is essential to the survival and growth of companies (Al-Ghassani et al., 2006; Kale and Karaman, 2011). Knowledge has been defined by Davenport and Prusak (1998) as, “a fluid mix of framed experience, values, contextual information and expert insight”. There are a number of different categories of knowledge; these include tacit and explicit, internal and external, and practical and theoretical. Polanyi (1967) introduced the category of tacit and explicit knowledge first, and explains that tacit knowledge is context-specific and highly personal. Thus, it is difficult to communicate and formalise. In contrast, explicit knowledge can be made available to others as it can be maintained and stored in procedures and written documents.

Knowledge management is concerned with producing, securing, recording, coordinating, incorporating, locating, and distributing knowledge. According to Tserng and Chang (2008), the most significant objective of knowledge management is knowledge sharing. Knowledge sharing creates an opportunity for the creation of new knowledge by utilising the exchange of know-how between team members: thus, it is important and significant to an organisation's success (Tserng and Chang, 2008; Egbu, 2005). National culture is considered to be one of the most critical

aspects that may hinder knowledge sharing. Previous research has revealed that knowledge sharing could be substantially affected by individuals' cultural values (Hutchings and Michailova, 2004). This is most likely the case where teams consist of individuals from different cultural backgrounds, particularly in international and multicultural projects.

Theoretical Framework

The previous section showed that there are grounds for hypothesising that project complexities in multicultural teams do have an impact on team performance. Table 3 shows a summary of the main project team complexity dimensions on which national culture has a crucial impact. Current changes with the cultural composition of the workforce have triggered some sort of practical and functional concern with managing multicultural teams; a project-oriented team consisting of individuals with different culture and from different countries (Marquardt and Horvath, 2001). With an increase of globalisation in recent years, diversity in culture and in the national background is very popular in today's projects and organisations. These kinds of teams tend to consist of individuals from distinct national backgrounds, who probably speak distinct 'languages' and grew up in distinct places that could have distinct norms and values. Therefore, it is worth addressing that today's organisations should understand and recognise the possible effects of the complexity of cultural diversity and its impact on the team performance (Nam et al., 2009).

Table 3: Main Team Performance Cultural Complexity Dimensions

No.	Author Name	Year	Integration	Communication	Trust	Knowledge Sharing
1	Lee and Ma	2007		X	X	
2	Kivrak <i>et al.</i>	2009		X		X
3	Anantatmula and Thomas	2010		X		
4	Ochieng and Price	2010		X	X	
5	Kale and Karaman	2011				X
6	Stare	2011		X		X
7	Cheng <i>et al.</i>	2012		X		
8	Schermerhorn <i>et al.</i>	2012		X		X
9	Loosemore <i>et al.</i>	2012	X			
10	Naoum <i>et al.</i>	2013		X		X
11	Ochieng <i>et al.</i>	2013	X			
12	Tenzer <i>et al.</i>	2014			X	
13	Wiewiora <i>et al.</i>	2014			X	

Source: Devised by author

Multicultural Teams and Project Performance

It is necessary to have a conceptual framework in order to investigate the empirical relationship between national culture and team and project performance. This is because the framework can provide all the crucial factors to be investigated in a rational way, and presents appropriate variables and aspects of reference for investigating national culture within the context of projects field. This section aims to develop such a conceptual framework, discussing the objective of this article, which is developing a framework that can be applied in addressing cultural complexity in multicultural project teams, and examining the relationship between national culture and team and project performance.

Based on the literature review, a conceptual framework is developed as shown in Figure 1. The framework shows the relationship between cultural dimensions and team dynamic performance, and how these cultural dimensions can impact on the project performance in general and its dimensions in particular.

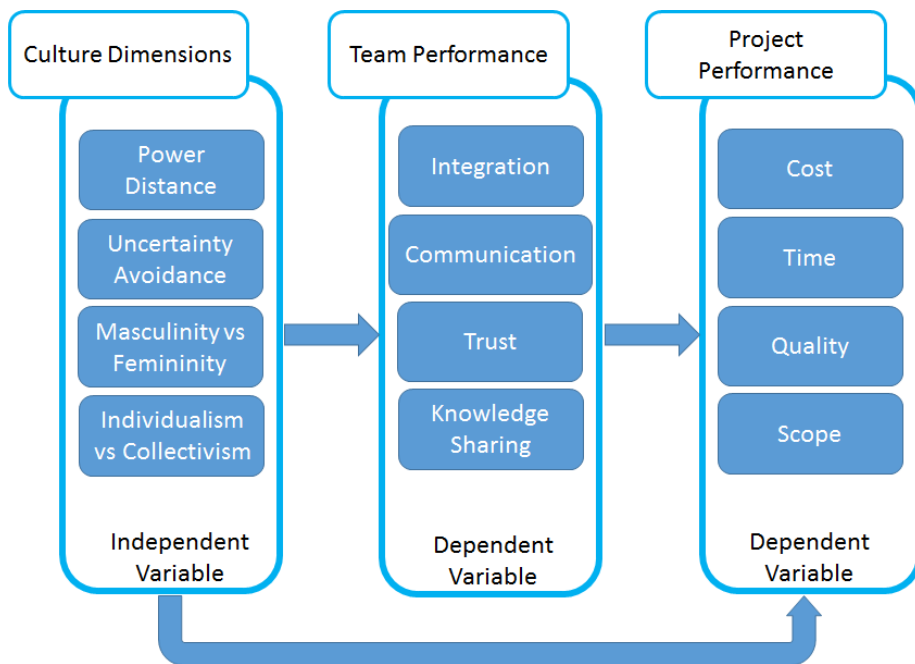


Figure 1: Conceptual framework emerged from the literature

Source: DeVised by author

The theorised framework of this research study takes into consideration Hofstede's cultural dimensions (1991); these are power distance, individualism and collectivism, masculinity and femininity and uncertainty avoidance, and their relationship to project performance. According to Hofstede (1991), culture appears and develops in response to interpersonal desires for answers to issues typical to all teams and groups. In order to be part of a social and interpersonal identity, all project teams and groups need to come with answers to these problems and complexities.

Choosing not to identify and understand the cultural differences complexity limits the chance of controlling it. Project managers of multinational companies typically do not consider the cultural differences as an important issue, especially in areas where the individuals, who came from different areas, are collected together to form a team. In addition, the first analysis conducted by Hofstede (1980) proposed that 80% of the cultural differences in employees' behaviours and attitudes are influenced by national culture, which still has resonance today.

According to Ankrah and Proverbs (2005), performance within projects is considered as being how well the project team pursues the project objectives, while performance measurement is the process of evaluation of the final project output and outcomes depending on the project input utilised in the process (Takim et al., 2003). Performance measurement provides the techniques for determining aspects of unnecessary costs in the project process; therefore, through improvements in processes, implementation of change, project output and outcomes could be attained (Cain, 2004).

Numerous performance measurement frameworks and performance measures exist for the aim of measuring performance. The most notable among these are the Constructing Excellence KPIs, the 'star of David' and the 'iron triangle' (Ankrah and Proverbs, 2005; cf. Chan et al., 2002). A detailed review of the literature on performance measurement was conducted by Griffith et al. (1999) and Ankrah and Proverbs (2005), who concluded that there is no existence for 'one-fits-all' approach. Therefore, in this research study, it is argued that the selection of the frameworks and performance measures should be based on the purpose or the motivation of the measurement. This study attempts to examine the extent to which the national culture of construction projects influences the project team and the project performance. It is argued that the best suited process will be to concentrate on those performance measures that evaluate the outcomes of projects that are associated with the dimensions of culture.

In determining the proper measures to be utilised in this research study, the current performance frameworks showed useful insights. According to Atkinson (1999), it is obvious that the corner stones of performance measurement are the measures of time, cost and quality, the so-called 'Iron Triangle'. These measures are a regular feature of almost all the frameworks that have been examined by Ankrah and Proverbs (2005). This is despite the fact that time, cost and quality, or the 'Iron Triangle', are not generally an accurate representation of performance due to the fact that some projects are justifiably delayed or over-budget (Ming Tam and Harris, 1996). However, these three measures still express the most significant and ultimate project performance measures (Belout, 1998; Chua et al., 1999; Xiao and Proverbs, 2003). As it is argued that these measures indicate the bottom line measures of project performance; they should also be highlighted and utilised as

the project performance dimensions and measurement in this study.

CONCLUSIONS

Managing cultural differences successfully is found to be one of the significant elements that lead to project success. In contrast, mismanaging or ignoring cultural differences within teams is considered to be one of the major causes for project failure (Kivrak et al., 2009). Choosing not to identify and understand the cultural differences complexity limits the opportunity of controlling it. Project managers of multinational companies typically do not consider cultural differences as an important issue, especially in areas where the individuals, who come from different departments, are collected together to form a team. Moreover, the first analysis conducted by Hofstede (1980) proposed that 80% of the cultural differences in employees' behaviours and attitudes are influenced by national culture, which still has resonance today.

The literature review showed that there are grounds for hypothesising that national culture does have an impact on team and project performance. Therefore, a theoretical framework is formed in order to address the cultural complexity within multicultural project teams, and examine the relationship between national culture and team and project performance. The framework can provide all the crucial factors to be investigated in a rational way, and presents appropriate variables and aspects of reference for investigating national culture within the context of projects field. This study makes a contribution to the literature by delivering a deeper understanding of cultural issues that influence multicultural teams in projects. Findings from this research may assist project directors and managers to better understand the role of national culture in the context of improving project performance. An empirical study should be undertaken as a further study to validate this framework.

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