

A STUDY ON CAPABILITIES REQUIRED FOR A MULTICULTURAL TEAM MEMBERS OF IT EMPLOYEES IN CHENNAI

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ABSTRACT

The study was an attempt to identify the challenges among the multicultural team members and capabilities required to meet out the challenges of employees in IT sector in Chennai city. Convenient sampling method, adopted for this descriptive study and 430 was the sample size. Descriptive analysis for percentage and frequencies and regression analysis carried out on data using SPSS. The result shows that communication, unawareness of culture and conflicts due to cultural difference were main challenges. The communication capabilities, cultural intelligence and talent to reduce the conflicts are expected capabilities from the team members of multicultural environment.

KEYWORDS: Cultural diversity, Capabilities of Multicultural team, Cross culture communication, unawareness of other culture, cultural difference conflicts

Two million years ago, men have been emigrating from continent to continent to search for food, place to live and better conditions for settlement. Currently, People move from one place to other place for various reasons including the exploration of work, family relocation, transfer, resettlement, marriage etc. (Labor source survey report, 2012).

Movements of the individuals allowed the mixture of people from different backgrounds and culture. In order to sustain in the business, the organizations has to manage these diverse groups. The organization, which operates internationally, has to sustain in their business in these sorts of complex business environment. As to meet this complex environment, organisations have to adapt themselves to the environment; adapting often driven by the factor called "Cultural diversity" (Salas et.al, 2009).

Adapting to cultural diversity in this rapidly modernized world is a demanding process, since changing of culture is slow in transformation. Mastering the ability to interact with different culture is thereby an important device for future business success (Thomas and Ink son 2004). One way for organizations to cope with this complexity is to establish work groups or teams that are composed of people differing in relevant dimensions such as culture to match the diversity of the environment, the organization try to deal with (Gibson, 2004).

Companies operating from different zones and countries have been depended on the multicultural working group. Different cultural group members experience gap in between them. Hence, catering different needs and preference of different customers became main task of these heterogeneous groups which offers both opportunities and as well as challenges to the companies (Adler, 2002). A clear understanding and management of diverse teams is a main concern of any organisation in order to get maximum efficiency from them.

Success in the global marketplace increasingly requires people from very different cultures to work

together to make global enterprises succeed (Steers & Nordon, 2006). Hence, the companies that operate globally expect special capabilities from the multicultural team members, where this multicultural team's performance becomes one of the key success factors. Currently there are number of issues pertaining to diverse group members exists, like communication problems, poor cultural sensitivity, cultural conflicts, mistrust and attitudinal and perception issues.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Campbell (2000) defines culture as a complex web of information that a person learns and which guides each person's actions, experiences, and perceptions. It is no longer acceptable to proceed with the study of teams as if its members are isolated from their cultural and national heritage (Earley and Gibson, 2002). Culture is a collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group from another (Hofstede, 1980). A Multicultural team is a group of employees selected from two or more countries who are brought together to coordinate, develop, or manage some aspect of a firm's global operations (Steers & Nordon, 2006).

Globalization affects the dynamics in the workplace by changing behavior, team composition and team dynamics as business are working with a more and more culturally diverse workforce (Dong and Liu, 2010). As indicated by Jaeger (1990), each and everybody firmly attached to their culture. An individual's behavior in an organization will chiefly guided by the outside society from which he or she comes. It is impractical that individuals can have an effect of one and only culture. Various cultures affect Individuals. "Individuals, however, can be amazingly complex 'cultural composites' (Schneider and Barsoux, 1997) who has a place with a few social substances like nation, school, games club, organization at a solitary point in time or through the span of a lifetime. Meantime distinctive culture also affects individuals. Therefore, it is not pertinent that individuals influenced by just their own culture they have a place with.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Statement of the Problem

Multicultural team consists of different group of people with different backgrounds and culture. The multicultural team members are not equally proportional in all respect. These diverse members work together to achieve the goal or target assigned to them. As the culture has impact on every individual, it influences on the group behaviour, job behaviour, decision-making process, and performance. All these processes need proper communication, when communication becomes complex it affects the group, and groups experience strong conflicts. Conflicts create less cooperation and thereby decrease group cohesion. Communication, conflicts, poor cooperation often leads to process losses which result in higher turnover and absenteeism rates (O'Reilly, 1989) and lower the work satisfactorily (Tsui, 1992). Therefore mastering the ability to interact with different cultures is thereby an important device for success. Hence, identification of the capabilities required to sustain in a multicultural team becomes essential. Likewise, corporate offices expect certain capabilities from the multicultural team members to withstand in these sorts of groups, and thereby improve the performance of the team.

Scope of the Study

Multicultural team members may have various backgrounds like different speaking language, state, country, social status, education etc. Experiencing challenges among the team members has become a common problem. Members belonging to a particular culture's perception and their ideas about the world, human beings and their attitudes are very different from each other (Miroshnik, 2002). National culture highly influences teamwork in multifaceted ways. Both forces of positive and negative dominations are apparent. Globalized business organizations expect more from the employees, in regards to quality of services to catch up the business and sustain in a continuous changing environment. Customized service to the customer became an important task and which need different cultural people from different countries. Main office may be in a continent or country and service may be required in some other continent or country. There by companies have to dependent local employees for better services and requirements. Aligned working between these two groups become important task of the company now. Hence, talented and capable people required to work on this sort of environment, where certain capacities like communication capabilities, cultural sensitivity, adaptation, flexibility, open-mindedness, problem-solving skills, learning attitude etc., are vital for employees.

Objective of the Study

To identify the challenges among the multicultural team members and capabilities required to

meet out the challenges of employees in IT sector in Chennai city.

Hypothesis of the Study

H1 H_0 . There is no significant impact of cultural diversity on the multicultural team employees in IT sector.

H_1 - There is a significant impact of cultural diversity on the multicultural team employees in IT sector.

H2 H_0 . There is no significant impact of communication problems on the multicultural team employees in IT sector.

H_1 - There is a significant impact of communication problems on the multicultural team employees in IT sector.

H3 H_0 - There is no significant impact of unawareness of culture on the multicultural team employees in IT sector.

H_1 - There is a significant impact of unawareness of culture on the multicultural team employees in IT sector.

H4 H_0 -There is no significant impact of culture difference conflicts on multicultural team employees in IT sector.

H_1 -There is a significant impact of culture difference conflicts on multicultural team employees in IT sector.

Area of the Study

Chennai city is one of the biggest metropolitan cities in Tamil Nadu with lots of MNCs operating from different parts of the world. The city itself a cosmopolitan city that consists of various background people lives together. Chennai IT parks are second biggest parks that hold many employees who work with various people throughout the world.

Sources of Data

Primary data: Primary data collected from the employees using direct, phone and e-mail interview with pretested, structured questionnaire.

Secondary data: The secondary data collected from various sources like library books, journals, research papers, thesis, reports, conferences, magazines, newspapers and web sites.

Sampling technique: The study conducted at Chennai city for identifying the challenges among the multicultural team members and capabilities required to meet out the challenges of employees in IT sector followed convenient sampling technique, which helped to interview the employees to whom ever happen to meet. Followed by the pilot study, 430 IT employees took part in this study.

Data Analysis and Statistical Techniques

Data analysis: The data analysis has been done using IBM SPSS20 (Statistical Package for Social Sciences).

Statistical Techniques

Descriptive Statistics: In order to identify the challenges faced by the multicultural team members and capabilities required to sustain in the team of employees in IT sector, the percentage analysis and frequency distribution done on the data collected.

Multiple regression: In order to study the effect of cultural diversity on the multicultural team members and its impact on communication process, unawareness of other culture and cultural difference conflicts in IT sector, the multiple linear regression analysis by Linear regression analysis has been applied. The functional form of multiple linear regression models is given below.

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_i X_i + e_i$$

Where:

Y = Dependent variable Cultural diversity / communication challenges / unawareness of other culture / Conflicts due culture difference

X_i = Independent variable - diversity factors

i = 1 to n

α = Intercept

β_i = Partial regression coefficients

e_i = Random error or stochastic disturbance term

The α and β_i are to be calculated through linear regression analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-Categorical Background of IT Employees

Socio-Categorical background of IT employees, collected for the analysis purpose. The Table 1 lists the result. The result shows that majority of the employees (60.2%) are belongs to age group of 41-50 years followed by 21-30 years (27.9%) and 31-40 years (11.9%). Out of total respondents, 53.5% were male and 46.5% were female. It is apparent that majority (78.1%) of the employees have completed their UG followed by PG of 17.2%, Diploma of 3.5% and PhD of 1.2%. Majority (53.3) of the employees falling under 21-30 years of experiences followed by 34% of 2-10 years experience and 12.8% of 11-20 years of experience. The result shows that majority (54.9%) of the employees are “High” level fluency in English, followed by 45.1% of “Medium” level fluency.

Table 1: Socio-Categorical Description of IT employees

Age	Fre.	Per.	Exp.	Fre.	Per.
21-30	120	27.9	2-10	146	34.0
31-40	51	11.9	11-20	55	12.8
41-50	259	60.2	21-30	229	53.3
Gender	Fluency in English				
Male	230	53.5	Medium	194	45.1
Female	200	46.5	High	236	54.9
Education					
Diploma	15	3.5	IT-employees N = 430		
UG	336	78.1	Fre. – Frequency		
PG	74	17.2	Per. – Percentage		
PhD	5	1.2	Exp. – Experience in years		

Diversity Factors That Affect Multicultural Team Members in IT Sector

Table 2 shows frequency and percentage value of dependent variables of cultural diversity impact, communication challenges, unawareness of culture and cultural conflicts.

The table shows that 61.9 % of the respondents agreed and 35.1% strongly agreed that cultural diversity has impact on the multicultural team. The 65.8 % of the

employees agreed and 32.1% strongly agreed that cultural diversity influences group behaviour.

The 74.4 % of the employees agreed and 19.8 % strongly agreed that cultural diversity influences job behaviour. The result also indicates that 61.6 % of the employees agreed and 31.4% strongly agreed that cultural diversity has impact on decision-making process also. Table shows that 70.7% of the employees agreed and 22.3% strongly agreed that cultural diversity has impact on the performance of the group members.

Table 2: Diversity factors that affect Multicultural team members in IT sector

Diversity factors that affect Multicultural team members	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Cultural diversity impact					
Cultural diversity does have impact on MCTs	148 (34.4)	266 (61.9)	7 (1.6)	6 (1.4)	3 (0.7)
Cultural diversity role on group behavior	118 (27.4)	282 (65.6)	17 (4.0)	8 (1.9)	5 (1.2)
Cultural diversity role in Job-behavior	144 (33.5)	264 (61.4)	10 (2.3)	9 (2.1)	3 (0.7)
Cultural diversity on decision-making process	122 (28.4)	283 (65.8)	15 (3.5)	8 (1.9)	2 (0.5)
Cultural diversity on the performance	96 (22.3)	303 (70.5)	19 (4.4)	10 (2.3)	2 (0.5)
Communication Challenges					
Communication is a major challenge	186 (43.3)	197 (45.8)	12 (2.8)	35 (8.1)	0 (0)
Communication on Performance	162 (37.7)	212 (49.3)	13 (3.0)	42 (9.8)	1 (0.2)
Communication challenges leads to Conflicts	138 (32.1)	125 (29.1)	118 (27.4)	47 (10.9)	2 (0.5)
Communication on Decision-making process	158 (36.7)	199 (46.3)	24 (5.6)	48 (11.2)	1 (0.2)
Communication influence the Knowledge sharing	90 (20.9)	276 (64.2)	19 (4.4)	13 (3.0)	32 (7.4)
Communication on Frustration and Mistrust	112 (26.0)	192 (44.7)	105 (24.4)	19 (4.4)	2 (0.5)
Unawareness of culture					
Unawareness of other culture creates Cultural Issues	171 (39.8)	204 (47.4)	45 (10.5)	10 (2.3)	0 (0)
Multiple Challenges due to Unawareness	133 (30.9)	243 (56.5)	43 (10.0)	11 (2.6)	0 (0)
Unawareness creates Intolerance	133 (30.9)	267 (62.1)	20 (4.7)	10 (2.3)	0 (0)
Cultural intelligence helps to overcome the obstacles	163 (37.9)	253 (58.8)	10 (2.3)	4 (.9)	0 (0)
Cultural Intelligence improves Performance	158 (36.7)	253 (58.8)	16 (3.7)	3 (0.7)	0 (0)
Cultural difference conflicts					
Cultural difference leads to Interpersonal conflicts	149 (34.7)	172 (40.0)	49 (11.4)	57 (13.3)	3 (0.7)
Conflicts influences Performance	128 (29.8)	277 (64.4)	17 (4.0)	7 (1.6)	1 (0.2)
Conflicts influences Decision-making process	151 (35.1)	259 (60.2)	19 (4.4)	0 (0)	1 (0.2)
Conflicts leads to Poor coordination	147 (34.2)	257 (59.8)	16 (3.7)	9 (2.1)	1 (0.2)

The figures in the parentheses are percentage total; primary and computed data.

Table 3: Influences of diversity factors on the employees of IT sector-Multiple regression

Diversity factors	Regression coefficients	t-value	Sig.
Cultural diversity impact on MCTs			
Cultural diversity has impact on the multicultural team	1.910**	9.524	.000
Cultural diversity role on group behavior	.426**	5.349	.000
Cultural diversity on Job-behavior	.268**	5.074	.000
Cultural diversity on Decision-making process	.036	0.681	.496
Cultural diversity on the Performance	-.168**	-1.981	.048
Dependent Variable: Cultural diversity does have impact on MCTs			
Communication challenges			
Communication is a major challenge	1.058**	8.344	.000
Communication on Performances	.429**	5.786	.000
Communication challenges leads to Conflicts	-.172**	-3.544	.000
Communication on Decision-making process	.337**	4.985	.000
Communication influence the Knowledge sharing	.027	.572	.568
Communication on Frustration and Mistrust	.150**	3.321	.001

Dependent Variable: Communication is a major challenge			
Unawareness of other culture			
Unawareness of other culture creates Cultural Issues	.887**	3.693	.000
Multiple Challenges due to Unawareness	.551**	11.955	.000
Unawareness creates Intolerance	.023	.447	.655
Cultural intelligence helps to overcome the obstacles	.454**	9.603	.000
Cultural Intelligence improves Performance	-.231**	-4.904	.000
Dependent Variable: Unawareness of other culture			
Cultural difference conflicts			
Cultural difference leads to Interpersonal conflicts	4.411**	13.921	.000
Conflicts Vs Performance	1.317**	15.678	.000
Conflicts vs. Decision-making process	-.911**	-9.656	.000
Conflicts vs. Poor coordination	-.494**	-5.929	.000

Dependent Variable: Cultural difference conflicts

** Indicates significant at 1% level

Cultural diversity has impact on Multicultural team

H1 H₀ . There is no significant impact of cultural diversity on the multicultural team employees in IT sector.

In order to identify the influences of cultural diversity impact (dependent variable) on team members, the multiple regression analysis by linear regression carried out and results presented in Table 3. The result shows that the coefficient of multiple determinations R² = 0.310 and adjusted R² = 0.304. It reveals that about 30.4% of the variation in dependent variable (cultural diversity impact) explained by the independent variables (diversity factors).

The ANOVA test to examine the impact of cultural diversity on the multicultural employees in IT sector, the F-value of 47.803 (p=0.00) statically significant at 1% indicates that there is an impact of cultural diversity on multicultural team. Hence, we reject the null hypothesis that there is no significant impact of cultural diversity on the multicultural employees in IT sector and accept H₁ that there is a significant impact of cultural diversity on multicultural teams.

Communication Challenges

(H2) H₀ There is no significant impact of communication problems on the multicultural team employees in IT sector.

Linear regression analysis was done on the independent factors that create communication challenges. The result shows that the coefficient of multiple determination R² =0.658 and adjusted R² =0.654 indicating that the regression model is good fit. It inferred that about 65.8% of the variation in dependent variable (communication problems) explained by independent variable of communication factors. The communication problem influences performances negatively, communication challenges leads to conflicts, communication influences decision-making process and communication influences the knowledge sharing are statistically significant at 1% of

level and these factors have influenced the communication process of multicultural team members of IT sector.

The ANOVA test to examine the impact of communication problems on the multicultural employees in IT sector, the F-value of 162.854 (p=0.000) indicates that the regression model is good fit between communication problems and its independent variables. F value statically significant at 1% shows that there is significant impact of communication problems on the multicultural employees in IT sector. Hence, we reject null hypothesis (H₀), there is no significant impact of communication problems on the multicultural employees in IT sector and there by accept H₁.

Unawareness of other culture

(H3) H₀ There is no significant impact of unawareness of culture on the multicultural employees in IT sector.

Linear regression analysis was done on the independent factors that influence unawareness of culture. The result shows that the coefficient of multiple determination R² = 0.597 and adjusted R² = 0.593 indicating that the regression model is good fit. It inferred that about 59.3% of the variation in dependent variable (unawareness of culture) explained by independent variable of unawareness of culture factors. The unawareness of other cultures create multiple challenges among team members, cultural intelligence helps to overcome the cultural obstacles and cultural intelligence improves the performance are statistically significant at 1% of level and these factors have influenced multicultural team members of IT sector.

The ANOVA test to examine the impact of unawareness of culture on the multicultural employees in IT sector, the F-value of 157.431 (p=0.000) indicates that the regression model is good fit between unawareness and its independent variables. F value statically significant at 1% shows, that there is significant impact of unawareness of culture on the multicultural employees in IT sector. Hence, we reject null hypothesis, there is no significant impact of unawareness of culture on the multicultural employees

in IT sector and accept H_1 that there is a significant impact of unawareness of other culture on multicultural teams.

Conflicts due to cultural difference

(H4) H_0 -There is no significant impact of culture difference conflicts on multicultural employees in IT sector.

Linear regression analysis was done on the independent factors that influence cultural difference conflicts. The result shows that the coefficient of multiple determination $R^2 = 0.401$ and adjusted $R^2 = 0.397$ indicating that the regression model is good fit. It inferred that about 39.7% of the variation in dependent variable (cultural difference conflicts) explained by independent variable of conflicts factors. The culture difference create conflicts among team members, conflicts affects the performance of the team, conflicts influences decision making process and conflicts leads to poor coordination among the team members are statistically significant at 1% of level and these factors have influenced multicultural team members of IT sector.

The ANOVA test to examine the impact of cultural conflicts on the multicultural employees in IT sector, the F-value of 95.064 ($p=0.000$) indicates that the regression model is good fit between conflicts and its independent variables. F value statically significant at 1% shows, that there is significant impact of cultural conflicts on the multicultural employees in IT sector. Hence, we reject null hypothesis, there is no significant impact of culture difference conflicts on multicultural employees in IT sector and accept H_1 that there is a significant impact of cultural difference conflicts on multicultural teams.

CONCLUSION

In order to improve the performance of the multicultural members of IT sector, the employees should have certain capabilities. The result shows that cultural diversity has its impact on multicultural team members in job behaviour, performance and decision-making processes. Communication challenges exist among the team members, which affect the overall performance of the group. Unawareness of culture also has impact on team members and cultural difference conflicts affect the team member's performance. It concludes that communication capabilities, cultural intelligence and talent to reduce the conflicts are important capabilities expected from the multicultural team members.

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