

Full Length Research Paper

Mediating effect of constructive controversy: Team personality composition and team performance

Syeda Nimra Batool, Tahir Masood Qureshi*, Hira Waheed and Syed Tahir Hijazi

University of Central Punjab, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.

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The purpose of this study is to find out the effectiveness of team personality design over team performance. Team performance is also affected by the relationship of team members on how they help other members to do their work. With extensive data support, the significance of this relationship was discussed. Evaluation of the results explains that there is a positive relationship among team personality design, constructive controversy and the overall performance of the team. In this paper, a trial was made to provide significant solution for the banking industry in Pakistan to make the organization performance better. The results will help the management of the organization to take decisions while putting different aspects into consideration.

Key words: Constructive controversy, personality composition, team performance.

INTRODUCTION

Teams are one of the important key factors which play an imperative role in the success of organizations. Nowadays, the performance of any organization is largely reliant over the effective performances of the diverse teams in the various departments of the organizations. These days, every industry struggles to maximize its resources in order to get greater share in the market. The concept of individualism is altered in collectivism. The literature supports the argument that organizations focus on those processes which help them build efficient and effective teams that ultimately affect the organization's outcome positively. According to Cordery et al. (2010), organizations should carefully select the members of a team, focusing on the fact that they have required functional skills in a specific area. Sometimes, due to insufficient skills and characteristics of team members, performance of the overall team is affected.

Competition in the banking industry of Pakistan is very strong and is getting stronger. To build high level competences and to meet the future challenges, banks also realize the need for team work; so, they are also paying attention on effective team building. According to

Bantel and Jackson (2007), in the banking sector, those banks showing good performance are those whose top management teams consist of highly qualified and practically skilled team members of different areas of specialization. The relationship between team performance and trained team members becomes more significant if the team size and locations are controlled. Where team culture is promoted, many controversies (either constructive or destructive) will be raised. Most of the time, the word 'controversy' is portrayed in the negative sense which means to be destructive (Hashim et al., 2010). Controversy can be positive and can generate a healthy effect over team performance. The term 'constructive controversy' refers to open minded discussions among people which helped out in problem solving, support in beneficial risk taking and increase in the organization's creativity or innovation (Tjosvold and Yu, 2007). Previous studies explain constructive controversy as the different people's thoughts discussed open heartedly without personal dislike, which may increase the team trust and team performance (Shalley and Zhou, 2004).

Although, constructive controversy, which explains how different thoughts create a significant positive change in the outcome of the team, has been immensely discussed in the previous literature, very few studies focused on those antecedents of constructive controversy like

*Corresponding author. E-mail: tahir@ucp.edu.pk. Tel: +92-42-35880007, +92-3455090550.

individual characteristics of team members, leadership style, task interdependence, cooperative conflict management, etc. Basically, constructive controversy exists in cases where conflict ensued due to a difference in perceptions, views, thoughts and ideas among two or more people and when there is need to build a constructive discussion (Johnson and Johnson, 2009). Constructive controversy develops an idea which stipulates that positive discussions improve the understanding of any complicated phenomena and provide guidelines on how it can be solved.

Team personality composition is the major antecedent which has significant effect over constructive controversy rather than cooperative goals. Managers of the organizations who are looking for employees to put them into a team should consider the design of team composition to cultivate constructive controversy (Wang et al., 2010). When the atmosphere of an organization supports constructive controversy, it brings many proposed alternative solutions for the problems and a lot of significant efforts are made to finalize the solution which satisfies each aspect of the problem. If the controversy is structured for the benefit of all, it significantly improves performance because it explores the different dimensions of creativity and improvements in the organization which leads to ultimate goal of the organization (Alam, 2009). However, large organizations focus on work teams, composition of effective work teams and the individual characteristics of a team member. Organizations focus on how individual characteristics are utilized to improve team performance and organization effectiveness. According to Moynihan and Peterson (2001), the personality of an individual is that dynamic factor which has the most considerable and direct effect on team procedures, team environment and team performance, because personality traits vary from individual to individual.

The purpose of this study is to find out how constructive controversy affects the decisions of team members, their behavior and attitude over conflicting issues within their team. Also, this study was carried out to decipher if team performance was improved through positive critiques over task related conflicts or not. Through this study, a trial was made to find either a team's design or a combination of teams' design to make a team more effective and constructive. This study also explores the mediating effect of constructive controversy on the relationship of team design and team performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Constructive controversy strongly affects the relationship of team personality composition and team performance. If the team is designed putting into consideration the personality of each individual and skills required for the specific task, it will increase the efficiency and

effectiveness of the team. On the other hand, if the style of constructive controversy is adopted by team members, it will provide great support to this relationship. When the productivity of the team increases, it will be beneficial for the organization.

Team personality composition

The personality of a person develops from those unique characteristics which he adopts from his environment and which he uses to create his individuality in the society. These unique characteristics make an image of that person in the society. When a team is designed for some business activity, each individual member of the team has its own distinctive characteristics which eventually affect the overall team members' performances. It is a very difficult task for the organization to select the right person for the right job. Work teams may differ in size, location and functionality, but each team performance has a significant impact on the organization's performance.

Team building process is critical because different people have different kinds of characteristics due to their different background. Some team members have influencing personality which affects the other team members' perceptions and performance. In this article, this relationship is explored and measured. People belong to different areas, which account for the difference observed in their behaviors and dealings. According to Kline and O'Grady (2009), the personality traits of a team member differ from a normal individual, and the tendency of trust which a team member has for his team in general affects his performance and the team's performance collectively. If each member actively participates in the group, their collective effort will foster the team's performance as well as promote the organization.

In the article of Baer et al. (2008), creativity of an individual was compared with collective team creativity and it was demonstrated that when a team is composed primarily of persons with different characteristics, after the initial times, their personalities merged and their collective effort makes the team's performance to be superior. Personality dissimilarity of a team member to other team members affects the team member's satisfaction. Members of a team will be highly satisfied with one another when they are emotionally stable and more agreeable, but high range of dissimilarity leads to dissatisfaction and it damages the overall performance of the team (Peeters et al., 2006). If personal differences are not settled properly, they become problematic and then it is very difficult to handle them.

The structural way of team composition, consisting of people with different personalities, is known as group personality composition which at last affects the team performance. Thus, this effect is highly significant in the field studies rather than lab studies (Halfhill et al., 2005).

Team composition is one of the critical processes for the organization because it is difficult to identify that either the group or team developed for specific task is competent enough to deal with it in difficult situation. To avoid this situation, most of the time, organizations completely try to avoid such kind of situations because it is a time taking process. Morgeson et al. (2005) defined some common techniques which are highly recommended for the selection of effective team members in order to maximize their relative performance. These tools, which are more suitable for the job, are recommended for the appropriate selection of team members.

Team performance

Performance of a team is dependent on many factors, one of which is the collaboration among team members on how they treat one another. Team work is a collective effort which requires a lot of energy to accomplish the needed goals. The previous literature suggest that collective teamwork is promoted in organizations, and to evaluate individual differences, it is necessary to predict how they will jointly perform different tasks in the form of a team (Driskell et al., 2010). Due to different specialized skills required for the tasks, organizations keep focusing on group building procedures all the time. According to Herold and Shalley (2010), an organization should design the team while focusing on the task requirements and the personality characteristics of employees because it will significantly affect the outcomes of the teams. Selection of team members according to task priorities will increase the team creativity and if most of the team members are open minded, it will bring more innovative and creative ideas to solve the issue or accomplish a given task.

Most of the time, social isolation is ignored while composing the group which has an enormous impact on individuals' psychology, especially when group members also comprise members from opposite gender. At this stage, the need for self esteem arises in ostracized individuals (Wittenbaum et al., 2010). Every one wants respect and importance from others when working in a team and trying to produce results jointly. So, while composing or developing the team, if a person who thinks that he can do the job is ignored by others, it will affect his productivity and creativity and he will be more sensitive regarding his or her self esteem.

In team composition, social factor should be considered and every individual should be treated according to the self-worth he required. Every individual plays his role in team work according to his perception and in reward, he requires self-respect. According to Yan et al. (2009), team performance is directly affected through those individual personality traits which they put on due to their different background of cultures. There are many antecedents of personality traits like age, gender, trust,

occupation and different conflict management styles that are either cooperative or competitive. As a result of this personality differentiation, each individual has a significant effect on team performance due to effect observed on the work quality of the team's output.

The behavior of an individual team member about team productivity and team performance is affected through his perceptions about goal importance and task interdependence; as such, they workout goals in the group according to their own perceptions. According to Vegt and Janssen (2003), those who perceived that there is low level of goal interdependence do not pay serious attention towards the goal, but those who perceive that there is high level of goal interdependence become more innovative and thus pay serious attention to achieve their goals by increasing creativity or innovation.

In prior research, many researchers focus on those factors which affect team performance and team creativity. Hsu et al. (2009) explored the significance of those factors that affect team performance by using Grey Relational analysis. Then, he prioritized each factor which has an effect on team performance according to its significance. According to his argument, he stated that further study should be conducted to explore the relationship between the significance of each factor and team performance.

Constructive controversy

Constructive controversy builds a positive relation among people and is very beneficial in resolving queries and reaching an agreement. A group, which consists of those members who believe that collective efforts give them the ability to accept and accomplish changeable goals, is more successful as compared to that group whose members achieve their goals in a short time span. Sometimes, they have opposing views regarding their values, beliefs and perceptions which they discussed openly even if conflict arise over any argument. They focused on constructive controversy to make their team more effective and efficient (Polman et al., 2010). The concept of constructive controversy will be applied in a situation where every one in the team is willing to participate for the common benefit of all.

Open minded discussions are necessary for the solutions of the team problems as well as enhancing the creativity, but sometimes ethical's issues arise and should be taken under consideration. Organizations should develop some rules which should be followed, but it would be better to focus on constructive controversy rather than imposing the rules and regulations from top management (Snell et al., 2010). According to a prior research of Tichy et al. (2010), the procedure of constructive controversy increases the ethical skills of an individual.

When people share their knowledge within a

community, their personal learning increases and facilitates others to solve the complex problems. Due to globalization, people are willing to learn outside the organization like internet, video conferencing, etc. To create such kind of global environment is not easy; as such, organizations set their target for online communities by using constructive controversy to solve the serious issues. To keep the balance in any environment, it is necessary for the organization to develop a community which also focused on personal transformation of a person as well as constructive controversy.

In the previous literature of Wagner and Christiansen (1999), they argued that there is always a relationship between team performance and personality of team members. As a consequence, organizations should focus on the aspects of team personality composition and effective performance of the team. If the personality traits of individuals are opposite from one another and the percentage of agreeableness is high among themselves, there will be a positive relation among team performance and team personality design.

Conceptual framework

In this study, the relationship between team personality design and team performance was studied. More so, constructive controversy as the mediating variable affecting the relationship between the independent and dependent variables which have a positive impact on team performance was also studied.

Based on the aforementioned literature review, a diagram was drawn, which shows the independent impact of team personality design with respect to constructive controversy over ultimate performance of teams: (Figure 1).

H₁: Team personality design has a significant effect on team performance.

H₂: Constructive controversy mediates the relationship between team personality design and team performance.

METHODOLOGY

The study type of the model explained in the foregoing was applied and was co-relational. This study was conducted on all the banking sectors of Pakistan. The banking sector of Pakistan was chosen because it is very strong and it is a growing industry. To check the impact of increase in team performance, the banking sector of Pakistan was selected. This industry was selected because the main purpose of this study was to enhance the profitability of the banking sector by team working culture. Through this applied research, we tried to provide solutions to those future hurdles which they can face due to global changes. All private and public sector banks were included in the sample to check the explained phenomena. However, the sample data were taken from 135 respondents.

RESULTS

The results of the calculated data are subsequently shown and those of the descriptive statistics and correlation coefficients are presented in Table 1. Table 1 presents the means, standard deviation and coefficients of the variables. Team personality design ($r = .672$, $p < .01$) and constructive controversy ($r = .326$, $p < .01$) were positively and significantly related with team performance.

Multiple regression analysis test proposed by Sobel (1982) and Baron and Kenny (1986) was used to determine either the existence or non-existence of mediation; moreover, Table 2 shows the results of the regression analysis. In this study, it was observed that all independent variables were highly significant, and the study's measure of team personality design was highly significant ($r^2 = 0.672$, $p < 0.01$) as well. Thus, in support of hypothesis 1, team personality design was positively related to team performance.

The mediation relationship between all independent and dependent variables was studied, and the analysis showed that in hypothesis 2, a slightly significant relationship existed between the variables. However, the result showed that the mediator variable influenced the relationship of the dependent and independent variables to some extent.

DISCUSSION

In today's challenging and competing environment, it is becoming difficult for organizations to be at the top, but if they work on team infrastructure, they can easily become market leaders. To become pace setter, an organization should be very realistic and careful regarding the team composition, that is, which kind of duties will suit which person and how much skill is required to complete this task.

The reason behind this study was for it to benefit the banking sector in Pakistan. Moreover, ways on how team management and team building can affect their business processes should be made clear for this sector. They can utilize the opportunity of covering maximum shares from the market if they critically focused on team work. One individual can not do everything all alone, but with the collective effort of the team, they can get high performances results which ultimately make them threat to other competitors.

Previous literature suggest that as the culture of teams is developing day by day, organizations should take interest in team composition style because it affects team performance as well as internal functioning of organizations (Offerman and Gowing, 1990; Mohammed and Angell, 2004). Some researchers explored that each employee have different personalities, so while developing a team, important characteristics should be

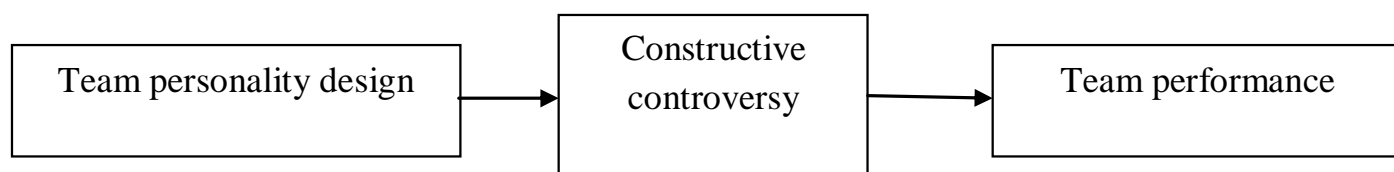


Figure 1. Conceptual model.

Table 1. Mean, standard deviation and correlations.

Variable	Mean	S.D.	TP	CC	TPD
TP	5.67	0.94	1		
CC	5.11	0.93	0.326**	1	
TPD	5.74	1	0.672**	0.181	1

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); *correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed); ^an=86.

Table 2. Multiple regression analysis.

Variable	Model 1			Model 2		
	B	R ²	ΔR ²	B	R ²	ΔR ²
Step I: Independent						
Team personality design	0.672***	0.452	0.452	0.634***	0.495	0.388
Step II: Mediator						
Constructive controversy	-	-	-	0.211	0.106	0.106

*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***0.001, n = 86.

put into consideration because they shape the team's processes and overall team performance (Barrick et al., 1998; Mohammed and Angell, 2004).

The banking sector should focus on the teams that are highly concerned with constructive controversy because it will bring more innovative solutions to these organizations. Also, these organizations are more competitive if the team members open-mindedly discuss their problems and views and then record their comments without any hesitation. According to Chen and Tjosvold (2007) and Tjosvold (1998), the efficiency of team performance increased in teams, whose members use constructive controversy style to solve issues regarding their team. Different researchers suggested that when team members work for a common goal by using controversy as a positive sign to resolve problems, discuss them open-mindedly and converge old information into new ones, the overall team performance increased (Gilson and Shalley, 2004; Shalley and Zhou, 2004; Gruenfeld, 1995). This study shows that the mediating variable has a very slight effect on team performance. This study was done in Pakistani culture which is the reason why constructive controversy has a very slight effect on it because in Pakistani culture, cooperation is already

highly promoted.

When constructive controversy plays a vital role for the development of team culture in banking, the performance becomes better. If the banking industry will not seriously focus on this issue, it might have to face some serious issues regarding threats and market challenges. To become pace setter, it should focus on its activities and team based culture should be introduced.

Organizations should focus on team composition because team members' performance critically affects the team's performance. Moreover, people are more diverse if their personalities do not match with each other. Organizations should focus on the fact that diversified people come into a team to make performance more effective. Previous researchers explained that people differ because of their personality characteristics like ability, attitude and values (Bell, 2007; Harrison et al., 2002). Our studies show that team composition will highly affect team performance if the people who work in a team do not work comfortably. According to our results, every organization should focus on team personality design.

Due to globalization, market demands are changing, but paying little attention towards it can result to high performance. To build a team-based culture within an

organization is very difficult, but adaptation to change is important. The benefits of constructive controversy should be stressed in a team, and team members should participate in healthy discussion in order to enhance their knowledge ultimately. Overall, organizations become more competitive than ever.

Conclusion

As the main objective of this study is concerned, a trial was made to explore how the team based culture is getting popular in this industry and how the teams are performing. Currently, the banking industry is facing the problem of which kind of team composition that could return maximum team performance should be done. To compete in this win-loose environment, the industry should pay serious attention on creating a competitive environment within the organization. Our study results interpret that the significance of constructive controversy is not very high as compared to team personality composition or team personality design. It will slightly affect the relationship of team composition designs and team performance. Banks will take maximum benefit of this study because they are facing high challenges from their market. In today's competent environment, it is very difficult for organizations to retain the skilled employees; although, utilization of those skills in a constructive way is also a very crucial factor. So, this study will help the banking industry to solve their issues regarding their team. When these employees work as one in a team, the outcome will be remarkable and ultimately the organization will take the lead in the market. So, in this era of competition among organizations, banks should maintain highly skilled work force and identify the techniques used to know how a team structure should be developed to utilize the maximum skills of employees in the organization.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The basic limitation of this study is that it is particularly done by focusing on the banking industry in Pakistan. As such, the results of these measures should be generalized over other organizations in Pakistan. Another limitation is that the population size of this study was limited, in that a large sample may show different impacts regarding the interpretation of this study's results. In this study, the focus was on team personality design only; although, there are many other variables, like ownership style, organizational culture and motivational factors which can affect the performance of teams. Future research should be done in this dimension to explore more areas of this study. There could be many antecedents mediating the variable of constructive controversy like trust, task interdependency, moral development, etc. In future research, these specific areas should be

considered for future exploration. This study was unable to cover all the areas regarding individual personality, constructive controversy and team performance; as such, other areas should be further explored. Nonetheless, the relationship of those areas and the significance of the critical variables should be researched. Another limitation is that this is a cross sectional study; so, it is advised that a longitudinal study should be done next time.

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