Working like a “Real Team”: Cultural Diversity, Collective Intelligence and Interdependence in Multicultural Globally Dispersed Teams’ Performance

Cultural diversity, geographical dispersion and dependence on technology to communicate pose many challenges to effective work in multicultural globally-dispersed virtual teams (MGVTs), requiring more research to identify the factors that facilitate MGVTs’ performance. We integrate the research on processes and interdependence in diverse teams with the emerging literature on team capability as captured by collective intelligence (CI), to explain the relationship between MGVTs’ diverse cultural composition and performance. We suggest that deep-level diversity in team members’ collectivistic values contributes to higher team CI, especially under high overall levels of team collectivism, and that this effect is driven by team members’ communication. Next, we propose that only teams who work at a high level of interdependence (i.e. “real team”) will benefit from their high CI and reach higher performance. We explore these relationships in a project teams’ study that supports our predictions, and use a lab-based study to better understand the role of team communication. Integrating the cultural diversity, interdependence and CI literatures contributes to further development of these streams of research, and suggests important managerial implications.