

DYNAMICS OF MANAGEMENT IN MULTICULTURAL PROJECT TEAMS

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ABSTRACT

With the emergence of globalization, the business models have been completely transformed. A growing number of businesses are operating globally giving rise to diverse multicultural teams. Nevertheless, cultural differences have undermined the efficiency and decision-making of the international project teams as there is more cultural diversity in the teams than ever before. Hence, it has become imperative for the organizations to take cultural diversity into consideration. Prominent cultural studies postulate that having diverse teams in the organizations can have both challenges and opportunities, yet it lacks emphasis of cultural understanding in project management. Moreover, digitization of business operations has moved organizations towards more specialized roles instead of traditional roles. Therefore, this study highlights the importance of team dynamics, their cultural backgrounds, values, and beliefs. It also emphasizes project team development to adopt increased empathetic attitude and emotional intelligence. The research has employed qualitative data retrieved from questionnaires and interviews. A paradigm for project group development is provided in order to avoid disputes caused by a lack of cultural understanding. The findings indicate that cultural differences will cause disputes in multicultural project groups. Therefore, cultural awareness is essential for group members prior to beginning to collaborate. Cultural training, good communication, team-building exercises, and well specified project objectives are also important for avoiding team conflicts. Furthermore, project management approaches should include cultural components of project groups in addition to technical details, as present studies lack any cultural recommendations.

Keywords: Cross-Cultural Management; Teambuilding; Project Management; Conflicts; Multicultural Team



<https://doi.org/10.56249/ijbr.03.01.42>

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1. Introduction

Companies have been increasing their operations in developing countries such as China, India, and others in recent years as a result of greater global connectedness, integration, and interdependence on economic, social, technological, political, and cultural levels. In a nutshell, globalization has resulted in companies going global. In order to gain a competitive advantage on the global market, multinational corporations were founded through joint ventures and collaborations. As a result, outsourcing has grown in popularity, and firms are turning to outsourcing to other nations to stay competitive. Smaller businesses are also using the internet to join the global market. In terms of day-to-day interactions and working within the same organization, globalization has resulted in the mixing of various countries and cultures, making cultural sensitivity crucial. Culture sensitivity is the recognition that cultural similarities and differences exist between individuals. Extant literature has implied that in a multicultural team, culture sensitivity can enhance individual as well as group efficiency (Presbitero & Toledano, 2018). This led to various theoretical and empirical literature debate on cross-cultural comparisons with the organizational success (Steers, Nardon, & Sanchez-Runde, 2017). The emphasis of cross-cultural sensitivity is increased when the multicultural teams are working towards a common goal (Minbaeva et al., 2021). In the past ten years, researchers have paid increased attention to culture as one of the essential success factors of project management (Henrie & Sousa-Poza, 2005). On the other hand, working in the same country, can still pose cultural differences owing to the presence of sub-culture, depicting that there is lack of cultural understanding (Haenfler, 2013).

The global pandemic has brought an unprecedented change and has affected the global business dynamics. To combat the pandemic, the global economy came to a standstill. The manufacturing industry limited its output while the service industry shifted towards 'remote working' to continue their businesses. The remote work helped both the employers as well as the employees. The employees gained flexibility and saved the travel time, which also increased their productivity. On the other hand, the employer also saved huge costs, but the remote working has also led to various challenges as it has taken over 'physical working'. Working with 'remote' teams may possess benefits but it is challenging as team engagement and productivity is highly affected. Will organizations have to embrace remote working as the new normal, remains a debate. The researchers propose that remote working and freelancing may be the future (Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu India LLP, 2021). There is also a chance for organizations to focus on teams and people to build stability and long-term solutions for a healthy team. So, it is important to understand the cultural aspects and behaviors of teams made up of people from different backgrounds (Su et al., 2022).

The cultural aspect of a multicultural workplace receives little emphasis in present literature, despite the fact that it is now a standard aspect of working life (Lin, Xu & Xie, 2023). The literature now in existence does not address how to manage multicultural project groups throughout project management, especially in a remote context, despite the fact that culture and project management independently are given a lot of attention (Davids, 2023). This research looks at how cultures affect multi-cultural and/or international organizations. To be a successful model, the new ecology of remote working necessitates updated capabilities. New projects are handled by project groups, and understanding the consequences of culture in multi-cultural

project teams will be a crucial necessity to improve cross-cultural relationships and team productivity (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008).

Research Objectives

This study's primary goal is to analyze and examine the effects of culture on multicultural project groups/teams. After studying many aspects of project management, the study developed a model that can aid in preventing misunderstandings and disputes caused by cultural differences in multicultural project groups. It will assist organizations in incorporating this framework and model into the management of their multicultural teams, ultimately enhancing team engagement and productivity.

The research objectives of this study are inclusive towards:

- Developing an understanding of different project management methodologies and how they address cultural aspects, conflicts, differences, and commonalities.
- Investigating how culture affects multicultural project groups.
- Developing a model to demonstrate how to avoid culturally based conflicts in multi-cultural project teams.
- Testing the model for resolving problems caused by a lack of cultural awareness.

The remainder of the research has been organized as follows: Part two of the literature study gives a theoretical foundation of empirical research on the subject. The third section elaborates on the research methodology and describes the technique employed. The fourth section includes empirical facts as well as discussion. The study is concluded in the final section, which includes policy implications and future directions.

2. Literature Review

Every project is started with the intention of achieving a certain business advantage or goal. Once the job is finished, the project is terminated. Project groups are the foundation of every organizational structure based on projects. It follows that project groups are essential to every project's success.

People are connected through social groupings or groups in the workplace, according to Milgram and Travers (1969). In project-based companies, where project groups handle the majority of the organizational activity, the value of groups is crucial (Davids, 2023). According to Kreitner and Kinicki (2001), organizations can be either casual or formal. In contrast, Homans (1961) (cited in Buchanan and Huczynski, 2004) put up a theory to explain how groups come to be. Every group, he argued, is a product of the environment that influences it. According to Homans (1961), background elements are a component of the external system that creates the environment for group activity. His approach also incorporates emergent or actual behaviors in addition to necessary and provided behaviors. He claimed that the external environment influences group behavior, and he used the term "internal system" to describe the real group behavior that the external environment influenced. Homans (1961) categorized the background variables in terms of the organizational, socioeconomic, technological, cultural, and physical factors. Furthermore, Homans (1961) emphasizes the necessity of group interaction and places it at the core of his paradigm. The group members' sentiments towards one another become more positive as their level of interaction increases (Davids, 2023). In the end, this results in solid

bonds between them. Similar to how interaction shapes attitudes, sentiments, and emotions. Therefore, it may be claimed that increased feelings of positivity among group members promotes increased contact (Su et al., 2022). According to Homans (1961), internal and external systems are dependent on one another and the environment. A modification to one system would result in a modification to the other (Enayat et al., 2022).

A new perspective on group formation is presented by Tuckman and Jensen in 1977. They proposed that groups mature and develop over time and that there are five unique stages to their growth, as shown in the following Figure 2.1:

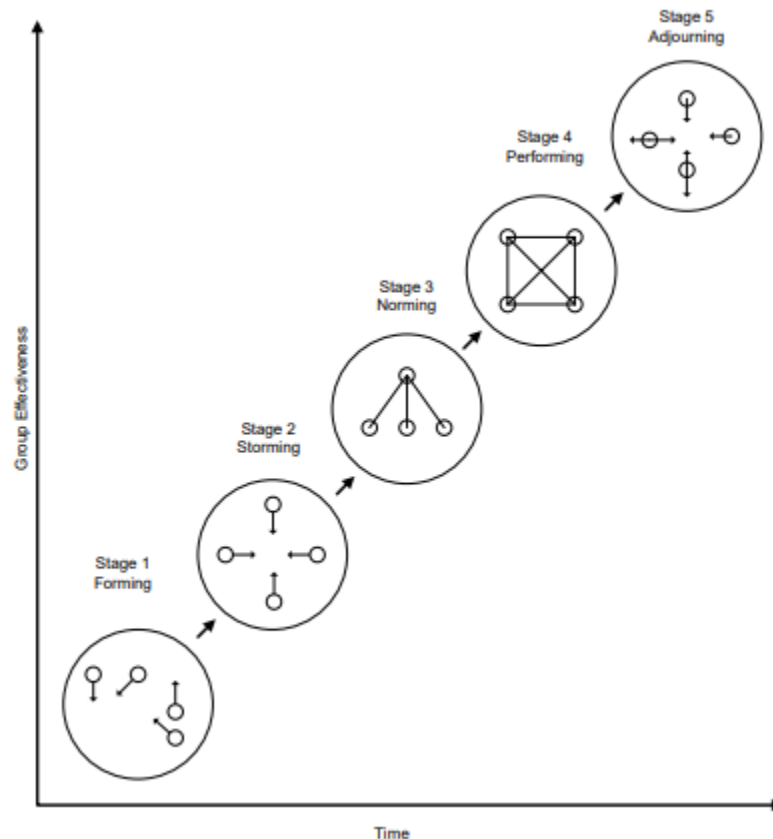


Figure 2.1: Stages of Group Development

Source: Tuckman & Jensen (1977)

The original paper by Tuckman solely described how he perceived groups to evolve. In the real world, groups frequently form and disband, and each time they do, they can progress to a new Tuckman Stage. When a new member forces a group back into the Storming phase, the cycle continues. Moreover, Buchanan and Huczynski (2004) assert that the sequence of these phases may not be sequential. McGrew et al. (1999) suggested that after reaching the "Performing" stage, groups may regress. They called this "Group decay." De-norming, De-storming, and De-forming were all suggested as extra steps. McGrew et al. (1999), on the other hand, made a more realistic model that takes into account how group members' natures and hobbies change over time, as well as how they interact with and get along with each other. Table

2.1 summarizes the phases and describes the group structures and task activities associated with each in brief.

Tuckman & Jensen Group Development Stages	Group Structure	Task Activity
Forming (Orientation, Testing & Dependence)	Testing and Dependence	The task's orientation
Storming (Resistance to group influence and task requirements)	Intragroup Conflict	Emotional reaction to work requirements
Norming (Openness to other group members)	Internal harmony and cohesion emerge, and new roles and norms are embraced	Open discussion of pertinent interpretations; expression of very personal views
Performing (Constructive action)	Roles become adaptable and practical; structural problems are fixed; Structure can aid in the accomplishment of tasks	Group energy is directed towards the goal, interpersonal structure becomes a tool, and solutions may emerge
Adjourning (disengagement)	Sadness, feelings of separation and termination, and attitudes towards the group leader and other members	Self-evaluation

Table 2.1: Stages of Group Development

Source: Tuckman & Jensen (1977)

Homans (1961) and Tuckman and Jensen (1977) have different ideas about how groups form. The first one talks about the stages of group growth, while the second one talks about several things that affect how a group acts (Enayat et al., 2022). Both of these models are crucial in understanding cultural influences on project groups, and the study is based on these principles. This issue is especially important in multi-cultural initiatives, since culture influences how project groups work (Backmann et al., 2020).

A multi-cultural project is one that involves people from several cultures and countries. A multi-cultural project with people from several countries might be carried out within the same country. Due to various cultural backgrounds and expectations, multi-cultural projects are typically more difficult to manage (Davids, 2023).

2.2 Attributes of a Project

There are numerous types of projects based on time, cost, resources, and other variables. Projects can vary in scale and complexity. On the other hand, multi-cultural projects might be the most involved and hard to finish because they involve more than one culture in addition to general project constraints. Different authors classify project attributes differently. Shenhar and

Dvir (2004), on the other hand, have established three dimensions to categorize projects: Uncertainty, complexity, and speed are all factors to consider.

In contrast to Shenhar and Divr (2004), Lock (2000) classified project qualities into three dimensions based on their objectives: performance and quality, budget, and time to completion. Lock (2000) and Shenhar and Divr (2004) share one dimension of time and pace. Kliem and Ludin (1992) have placed the human aspect at the center of project qualities such as uncertainty, complexity, time and pace, performance and quality, and budget, in addition to these five dimensions. Managing such a diversified human resource becomes critical in multi-cultural enterprises (Vohrer, 2022). Kliem and Ludin (1992) place the human aspect at the center of the project qualities.

Before beginning a project, organizations should determine which category can be compromised the most. Management must prioritize its goals and decide how to order these goals based on their priority. According to Lock (2000), it is not a straightforward choice because alterations to one objective tend to impact the others. It is conceivable that they only wish to limit the project's budget and not its duration.

2.3 Project Management Methodologies

Reiss (1995) says that project management is just managing change. Managing a project is the process of putting new and creative ideas into action. To find out if a project was a success or not, you must compare it to its goals. The people who are commissioning a project are the best people to measure its success because they chose and prioritized the project objectives. Harrison (1992) identified three key variables that contribute to project success: organization, planning and control, and human factors.

To make sure that all these steps are taken with the project goals in mind, it is important to have a combined structure in place. Due to the size and complexity of the project, especially when working with people from different cultures, advanced tools and methods are needed (Minbaeva et al., 2021). To set up a good framework for project management, many different methods have been used. The goal of project management approaches is to come up with a way to handle projects that is fully integrated. The main goal is to combine all of Meredith's (2003) stages into a single system by addressing organizational structure, planning and control, and human factors.

New project managers can be trained with the aid of project management methodologies. Before beginning work on the project, their personnel must be trained in the established procedures. A standardized project management (SPM) process, according to Milosevic (2003), is made up of process stages, milestones, and technical and managerial outputs. According to Milosevic (2003), the project management toolset consists of several collections of tools and techniques centered on processes or deliverables in an SPM (Standardized Project Management) process. However, the toolset can be substituted with a project management methodology that encompasses the entire SPM procedure. Almost all project management approaches are now computer-based, thanks to advancements in computer technology. Allen (2006) recognized the following techniques as popular in organizations: PRINCE, PRINCE 2, BPMM, Chestra, and IDEAL.

2.4 Group Conflicts & Avoidance

Conflicts are unavoidable in organizations and groups, according to Ivancevich (1996). However, he believes that these confrontations can have both positive and harmful consequences. Traditional viewpoints view all conflicts as terrible, whereas contemporary viewpoints view them as neither good nor evil, but rather as inevitable. An excessive amount of disagreement within a group can be detrimental, as it dissipates time and resources that could be used for more productive endeavors (Su et al., 2022). According to Ivancevich (1996), a lack of conflict can have a negative effect by nurturing monotony and providing little or no inspiration for creativity. Hatch (2006) developed a threshold of tolerance for the level of conflict that is tolerated in organizations. She associates the level of friction with the group's performance. She claims that a lack of conflict leads to poor decision making and a lack of focus in the group. Similarly, greater disagreement can result in uncooperative attitudes and antagonism among group members, resulting in instability and isolation. Hatch (2006), on the other hand, claims that ideal conflict can lead to group member cohesion, which can lead to productive and innovative work. Hatch (2006)'s theory is congruent with Ivancevich's (1996) viewpoint. Conflicts may be unavoidable, but it's hard to have a conflict-free workplace as conflicts become more important in multi-cultural businesses. Because of this, it's impossible to deny that conflicts exist and are important.

Robbins (2001) says that there are two types of disagreements that can happen in a group: those that are "functional" and those that are "dysfunctional." Jen (1997) has categorized group conflicts into three categories: Task Conflict, Relationship Conflict, and Process Conflict. According to the study, personality and interpersonal issues can have a substantial impact on overall project performance, and it is feasible to disregard Hatch's (2006) perspective in multinational firms with many cultures involved. Due to a lack of cultural awareness, group members may insult each other, resulting in personality and relationship disputes. Hofstede (1994) describes the issues that arise because of intercultural contacts. Although he did not link them to dysfunctional conflicts, they can be associated with dysfunctional disputes that occur among group members (Su et al., 2022).

The major goal of project management is to avoid and resolve these conflicts; however, there is a paucity of literature on cultural difficulties in project management. Personality clashes and differences in personality traits among group members are unavoidable, and as Hofstede (1991) observed, it is extremely difficult to change core cultural attitudes developed throughout childhood. Even though different cultures have different ways of doing things, the main goal of project management should be to handle project groups and get the most work out of them (Minbaeva et al., 2021). The only method to attain this goal is to recognize group cultural variety and build an understanding of group members' cultures (Means & Mackenzie Davey, 2023).

According to the study, resolving group conflicts in multicultural project groups becomes more complex and intimidating (Stahl and Maznevski, 2021). Every group has its own dynamics, as do its members' behavior and customs. It is critical to investigate the attitudes of group members when resolving conflicts. Some individuals pursue victory at any expense, while others prefer to reach an agreement. Similarly, some individuals prefer to avoid conflict, whereas others prefer to compromise. The attitudes of group members will aid in determining which group conflict resolution strategy will be most effective.

Though there is extant literature on how to resolve group conflicts, there is limited literature on how to prevent them. The study recommended a method that seeks to reduce as much as possible the dysfunctional conflicts that are brought on by cultural misunderstandings and inequities in multi-cultural project groups. Additionally, it provides conflict resolution strategies for effective project team management, which will affect the advancement of the overall project. Project Group Formation and Project Group Development represent the two categories into which this study divides the anticipated stages of conflict incidence. De-forming and de-storming are two steps that show how project team members must realign themselves and go through the remaining procedures again.

3. Research Methodology

The purpose of the study is to investigate the impact culture can have on certain multi-cultural and multi-national project teams. It was further investigated how conflicts may arise due to cultural misunderstandings and how to avoid these conflicts. This paper develops and describes a project group paradigm for preventing cultural disputes within a group.

An online and email survey in the form of a questionnaire was used as the primary data collection method. It was the most efficient and acceptable method for doing this inquiry. The questionnaire was designed to elicit responses from a variety of organizations participating in multi-cultural project groups, and every effort was made to elicit responses from diverse cultures for a more comprehensive analysis. To elicit the respondent's opinion and opinions while avoiding limiting their possibilities, the questionnaire incorporates both open and closed inquiries.

The questionnaire is divided into two pieces. The first segment had 27 questions while the second section had only 12. In the first section, respondents were asked to describe a specific instance in which they worked as a project group member, project manager/team leader, or both in a multi-cultural and/or multi-national project group. The respondent was next asked to answer situation-specific questions. In the second section, respondents were questioned about their prior experience working as a project team member, project manager, or team leader in a multi-cultural and/or multi-national project group.

The sample demographics were extremely diverse. In the pilot survey, a variety of industries were represented. Responses were received from organizations in eight distinct business sectors. Most of these organizations (66%) were significant organizations, such as those in the construction and telecommunications industries. They are a large organization, employing more than 5,000 individuals. The organizations surveyed represent a variety of geographical regions, including Asia, South America, Europe, the United States, Scandinavia, the United Kingdom, Africa, Australasia, and the Middle East. In these organizations and cultures, the roles of respondents were project group member, project manager/team leader, and program manager. Most initiatives were either short-term (less than six months) or relatively long-term (one to three years). The project crew was comprised of a mixture of dominant and minority cultural representations.

4. Findings & Analysis

The study examined the effect of culture on project organizations. It is believed that dysfunctional groups are the primary cause of animosity among project group members. A multi-

cultural project group model has been proposed with the goal of preventing these conflicts, as well as describing approaches to conflict resolution for the effective management of a project group, which will impact the overall project's progress.

Project Group Development Model

The dysfunctional conflicts that can arise at any time during any of Tuckman and Jensen's (1977) and McGrew et al.'s (1999) stages of group development. It is challenging to anticipate which dysfunctional conflicts will emerge at which stage of group development, but the model identifies the expected stages of conflict occurrence. The model classifies the stages of group development into two primary groups:

1. **Project Group Formation** – The term "forming, storming, de-forming, and de-storming stages" refers to the time when project groups are formed as well as the early period of project group work. The steps of De-forming and De-storming indicate that the project team members must realign themselves, and the remaining stages are repeated.

2. **Project Group Development** - The remaining group stages such as "norming, performing, adjourning, and de-norming" are included in the project group development stage. Until the project is completed or the group is disbanded, these phases focus on the interactions among group members.

According to Goleman (1998), everything is accomplished through collaboration, and the value of collaboration and group work is extremely high. According to the famous football coach Chuck Noll (quoted in Goleman, 1998), the sum of the parts does not equal the whole. It is always greater or smaller based on how effectively individuals collaborate. Project group disputes may negatively affect the way the group functions and lead to internal divisions. A project group development model, as described below and illustrated in Figure 4.1, is proposed to avoid dysfunctional disputes caused by cultural differences and to optimize the productivity of project groups. To prevent group conflicts, the first three stages, as shown in the diagram, are advised. The final stage looks at the five conflict resolution techniques that can help project managers resolve cultural differences as well as how project managers should be trained to cope with challenges. The four stages are as listed below:

1. Stage 1: Employees Induction

Each person in the company goes through this stage. It is applicable to every newly hired employee in the company, regardless of whether they take part in a project or not. Two types of training have been proposed at this juncture:

- a. Emotional Awareness
- b. Overt-Self & Shadow-Self Awareness

One should be conscious of one's own feelings and how they affect others. According to Druskat and Wolff (2001), emotional intelligence is critical in forming an effective team. According to Druskat and Wolff (2001), groups should be aware of their members' emotions. Furthermore, they have proposed that organizations consider the emotions of other groups. Hede (2007) expands on Jungian (1966) philosophy's concept of intergroup conflict. Jung's (1990)

viewpoint is like Goleman's (1998) idea of emotional awareness, which is about being aware of your own feelings. Both researchers thought that self-awareness was an important part of emotional intelligence. This supports the suggested emotional training because it would make it easier for employees to work in project groups.

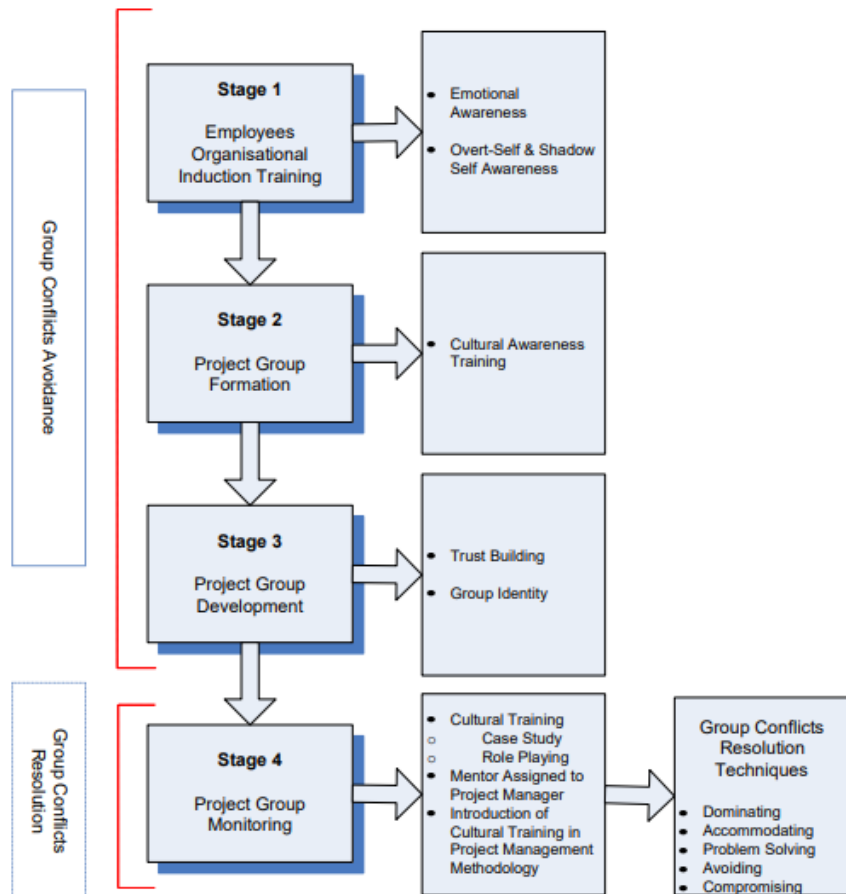


Figure 4.1: The Multi-cultural Project Group Development Model

Source: Author

2. Stage 2: Project Group Formation

During the second stage, consideration is given to project group training, which should begin only when the group is formed. Suggested training includes:

- a. Group Formation Awareness
- b. Cultural Awareness Training
- c. Project Group Members On-going Discussion

As a prerequisite for group creation, a formal group structure should be established (Buchanan and Huczynski, 2004), and team profile roles should be filled out by group members

according to Belbin's (1993). Second, Kerzner (2006) contends that culture has a considerable impact on project groups. In his group formation theory, Homans (1961) includes cultural features as one of the external influences that can influence group members' behavior (Enayat et al., 2022). This concept is supported by the research of Buchanan and Huczynski (2004) and Krietner and Kinicki (2001), who believe that excellent communication is required to build an effective group. To construct a successful project group, both background elements and respective roles in the project group should be considered during group creation. The suggested trainings may not be able to completely avoid cultural conflicts, but they will work to prevent unintentional conflicts caused by a lack of comprehension of one another's cultures and will strive to achieve and maintain harmony within the project team (Means & Mackenzie Davey, 2023).

3. Stage 3: Project Group Development Stage

This phase is crucial to the success of the project because it ensures that it will be completed on time and within the specified parameters. Members of the group must work together to tackle problems from the shaping and storming stages in this stage. The following criteria are critical at this stage:

- a. Trust Building
- b. Group Identity

According to Jehn (1997), trust is the most important and moderating component in determining group members' performance. Trust can be a very important factor in cultural disagreements, as Goleman (1998) describes effective group members as having faith in their colleagues. Group identity was listed as one of the three requirements by Druskat and Wolff (2001) for a high-performing team. Group identification has more of an impact in a multicultural environment (Lin, Xu & Xie, 2023). This paradigm is supported by the fact that group members will lack trust and group identity if they lack emotional intelligence and are unaware of one another's cultures (Stahl and Maznevski, 2021). As a result, the training advised in the third step is largely reliant on the model's previous two stages to be successful.

4. Stage 4: Project Group Monitoring Stage

Monitoring project groups and resolving disagreements among group members is required. The project manager usually monitors the project group, and this stage is mostly focused on the project manager's leadership characteristics. Three major ideas for successfully managing multi-cultural project groups have been offered.

- a. Cultural Training of Project Manager
- b. Mentor Assigned to Project Manager
- c. Introduction of Cultural Training in Project Management Methodology
- d. Group Conflict Resolution Methods

According to Trompenaars (2000), great leadership requires determining what style and attitude are most suited for a certain culture and then adapting oneself accordingly. A mentor can be useful in complex situations where the project manager is unable to resolve issues (Vohrer, 2022). The mentor could be from the HR (Human Resources) Department or someone with extensive managerial and cultural expertise. Furthermore, project management approaches do not

contain project manager cultural training. Cultural awareness training, according to this approach, can be implemented into project management methodologies. A 'Project Office' is established in PRINCE2 to provide the essential assistance for the project and to regulate the management.

'Pre-project Group Selection' and 'Project Group Selection and Working' are the two aspects of the model. While project group selection and working makes recommendations for personnel chosen to work in project groups, pre-project group selection does so for all new hires. The latter contains the remaining three stages of the model, while the former only makes up one step. The stages of project group creation and development in the model are like those in Tuckman and Jensen's (1977) and McGrew et al.'s (1999) descriptions of group development.

The dysfunctional conflicts, their occurrence stages, and their associated avoidance strategies are summarized in Table 4.1. The model also argues that organizational induction training for employees would assist group members in avoiding all dysfunctional conflicts, as they will become more aware of their emotions and behaviors and thus be subjected to all conflicts. Furthermore, the project monitoring stage encompasses the entire project group progress and is thus communicated as well. The project group development model contains interconnected training and recommendations. Therefore, it is recommended that the entire model be implemented, as omitting any of the training may influence others and prohibit the achievement of the desired results. Any strategy is only as good as the individuals who put it into action. To effectively manage their team, project managers must be emotionally intelligent (Arora et al., 2023). The importance of senior management cannot be overstated. No one else will take the training seriously if they do not completely support it.

Dysfunctional Conflicts	Conflict arising Stages	Group Conflict Avoidance		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Culture Shock and Acculturation > Ethnocentrism and Xenophilia > Parochialism > Simplification 	<p>Project Group Formation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forming Storming De-forming De-storming 	<p>Group Formation Awareness</p> <p>Cultural Awareness Training</p> <p>Project Group Members On-going Discussion</p>	Emotional Awareness Training	Overt-Self and Shadow Self Awareness Training
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Group Encounter: Auto and Heterostereotypes > Language and Humour 	<p>Project Group Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Norming Performing Adjourning De-norming 	<p>Trust Building</p> <p>Group Identity</p>		
			Project Monitoring Stage	

Table 4.1: Dysfunctional Conflicts and Project Group Development Model

Source: Author

According to the questionnaire results, group disputes can occur in multi-cultural teams, albeit it is difficult to determine if the conflict is useful or dysfunctional in character. The study is also limited in its ability to determine how frequently dysfunctional conflicts emerge in project groups and teams. The data reveal that projects that continue more than a year frequently produce group disagreements. The responses to the questionnaire came from businesses in eight distinct industries, with the majority (66%) being large. It was also unable to precisely identify multi-national organizations while administering questionnaires because these organizations operate in multiple nations within the same geographical area. It is also conceivable for large firms with more people to operate just in one country, while tiny organizations can operate in multiple countries. The respondents came from a variety of occupations and backgrounds, but their roles had no bearing on the analysis. Respondents have worked on projects with groups of different sizes and lengths, and it has been found that group disagreements tend to get worse as a project goes on. The results also show that group conflicts are worse when there are more people in a project group and when one culture is more dominant than others. When more than two different cultures are represented evenly, 60% of the people in the group have problems, while 40% do not. It follows the group growth stage model, which says that as the project group gets older, people are more likely to be honest with each other. Another result shows that teams with more than ten people have a lot more disagreements than teams with fewer than ten people. This backs up Belbin's idea that a team of eight people is the best number.

The way team members interact and collaborate can be difficult due to a lack of cultural understanding. For example, in each culture, people greet each other differently, and eating habits change as well. Due to their lack of cultural awareness, they may insult each other, resulting in personality and interpersonal issues (Stahl and Maznevski, 2021). Employees in international organizations are typically foreigners, and the first challenge for these employees in project groups is cultural shock. Cultural shock, according to Hofstede (1994), is the most basic form of intercultural interaction. When a foreigner enters a new organization or joins a project team, he or she must acclimatize to the new culture and surroundings. As a result, learning a new culture normally takes some time. The duration of the time scale varies from person to person. Similarly, foreigners returning to their home countries for work may experience "Reverse Culture Shock," making it difficult to acclimatize to their new surroundings. According to Hofstede (1994), in such cases, polycentrism can develop into 'Xenophilia'. The belief that everything is better in the culture of the foreigner. Some members may develop a sense of superiority at first, which is known as "Parochialism." However, according to Hodgetts and Luthans (2003), it is essential to approach many cultures in a variety of ways to form an effective group. Hofstede (1994) says that each group has its own character, and that members of other groups are often stereotyped. Examples of heterostereotypes include the French being unpleasant and the Chinese looking same. Finally, according to Hostede (1994), language might be a significant communication obstacle in multicultural project teams (Backmann et al., 2020). A common language is vital to the functioning of any project group because it might lead to misunderstandings and misconceptions among group members. As a result, if a firm wants to start operations in a new country, it must adjust its management processes and practices to fit that country's cultural requirements.

Based on the results, it has been found that all cultures should be represented nearly equally in a multi-cultural project team, with no one culture predominating. The questionnaire research demonstrates that when one culture dominates a project group, conflicts become more significant. Most respondents said that effective project collaboration required interpersonal skills training, as outlined in the methodology, to make staff members aware of their emotions as well as their overt and shadow selves. The trust-building exercises in the proposed methodology have also been acknowledged as a basis for winning over group members' confidence, and most respondents agreed that trust is essential for project teams to function effectively (Arora et al., 2023). The research also showed that an effective project group collaboration requires a strong group identity. It motivates team members to work together to accomplish shared goals. Most firms with a diverse workforce do not train their personnel in cultural sensitivity. This supports the conclusion of the literature assessment and the proposed theoretical framework that organizational cultural issues are not given enough consideration. The model presented in this study suggests that successful methods for addressing cultural disputes include cultural training, effective communication, team-building activities, and clearly defined project objectives.

Most respondents support the hypothesis that cultural misunderstanding and differences may lead to group disputes. They both agree that culture can influence how the project group operates. Moreover, they believed that project administrators should have greater cultural awareness and training than their project teams. These findings corroborate the proposed model for project manager cultural training (Backmann et al., 2020). The responses of the project managers support the notion of a mentor who can be contacted for cultural counselling. According to the questionnaire replies, few project management approaches provide any advice or direction on coping with cultural challenges. Thus, according to the proposed model in this study, cultural factors should be addressed in approaches and should not be disregarded.

4. Conclusion

Multicultural teams have become popular in the workplaces. Globalization has impacted on how organizations work and there is more cultural diversity than the traditional organizational settings. Hence, it has become significant for the organizations to incorporate cultural diversity in their project groups and teams. Though the global pandemic has greatly affected the traditional work settings and working in virtual work environment, team engagement, productivity, trust, communication, and collaboration have been greatly affected. This study's primary objective was to examine the impact of international culture on recent tendencies towards multi-cultural and/or multi-national initiatives. Rarely discussed in the literature, culture in project management is a neglected subject (Means & Mackenzie Davey, 2023). To accomplish this goal, the study reviewed existing research in the fields of culture, project management, project groups, and conflict generated in both functional and dysfunctional multicultural project teams. The study developed a project group development model based on a literature review to reduce conflicts in multi-cultural project groups caused by cultural misunderstanding and discrepancies. The study also chose a questionnaire as the most acceptable tool for testing the model's feasibility.

Conflicts in multi-cultural project groups might arise as a result of cultural misunderstandings and differences. Therefore, cultural awareness assistance is essential for group members prior to beginning group work. Cultural training, efficient communication, team-

building exercises, and well defined and understood project objectives are also necessary to reduce disputes in a multi-cultural project group. Aside from technical issues, project management methodologies should address cultural aspects of project organizations.

5. Recommendations & Future Directions

The proposed model has practical implications and can be practically tested in organizations to determine how this model has been effective against resolving dysfunctional conflicts at the different proposed project group development stages. After adapting the proposed model in this study, and after conducting a thorough monitoring of the group, the assessment regarding the model's effectiveness can be analyzed.

A large sample size can be used to investigate the study so that the results can be statistically supported and justified. The intended audience should be multinational businesses, and the message should be addressed to the international program manager. It is also recommended to monitor how the duration of the initiative affects the group's identity and level of trust. It would be interesting to investigate the impact of religious diversity on project teams in the future. In addition to religious studies in project groups, gender roles and how the group interacts with members of different genders can also be considered. Lastly, the impact of organizational culture and the project team culture can also be explored on how different prevailing cultures of organization and project team are connected.

6. Limitations

The study aimed at exploring a survey which is statistically significant. It involved a range of various industries and several survey responses. A pilot survey was conducted because due to time limitations a mass survey could not be conducted. The survey involves a range of industries which have diverse responses and presents new avenues for future research as well. As the survey was limited to only a pilot study, the results presented could not be generalized to wide ranging industries. Therefore, these suggestions and results can be set as a starting point to further study of this subject area.

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