Strategic Leadership Dynamics and Cross-Cultural Competencies in International Project Management: Enhancing Team Performance and Resolving Conflicts

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ABSTRACT

It is, therefore, reasonable to argue that leadership in international project management is a topic that requires further empirical studies concerning leadership behaviours within a project context, mainly where cultural differences between employees are taken into consideration. This research examines the skills necessary in the leadership of multicultural teams concentrating on conflict solving, motivation of workers, and efficient deployment of cultural variations. Through a critical analysis of the current literature and quantitative analysis, the study reveals that emotional intelligence, ethical leadership, and cultural sensitivity are vital attributes for overcoming the ordeal of globalization while managing projects at the international level. The findings discussed in the paper stress that leaders who possess the enumerated competencies are more prepared to support collaboration, reduce the possibility of misinterpretation, and enhance project outcomes. However, this study shows that sometimes cross-cultural Leadership may be characterized by some positive and negative aspects at the same time. Besides, good managers encourage cultural differences and at the same time use them as an asset for improving organizational performance. Thus, this research serves to advance the knowledge of the field by presenting a strategic framework to control and prevent cross cultural issues that may harm the overall performance of international project management teams to enhance the performance of the teams by providing guidelines for leadership different behaviors. The final part of the study highlights the main research limitations and the avenues for future research with the focus being made on the necessity to undertake additional primary research to support the given strategies in practice.

Introduction

This study explains essential information related to cross-cultural leadership in the context of international project management (Grossman *et al*., 2022). In this part, the background of the research explores the importance of cross-cultural leadership competencies in the workplace and ensuring the development of the organizations as well. The entire content is divided into seven major chapters including an introduction, literature review, methodology, findings, discussion, future scope for research and conclusion. The introduction part includes background research, aims and objectives along with research rationale to describe relevant information related to cross-cultural leadership elaborately. With the help of different journals or articles, a review is used to identify the gap, justify research questions and avoid reputation in an organised way. An appropriate methodology process is used to discuss that guides this research in order to develop it in a systematic process. Thereafter, the collected data is used to discuss through extracting essential information regarding the topic. Future research scope is analyzed if it is identified during the development of the present research and all of these sections get summarized in order to draw a conclusion that represents the development of research completely.

Background of the Research

Project management leadership is the process of guiding a team in order to complete a project in a successful manner. The project management lifecycle consists of five stages: Initiation, Planning, Implementation, Monitoring and Closeout. It includes managing people and tasks which requires a combination of conflict resolution, team management and communication as well. In the case of international project management, this process allows teams and resources from multiple countries to work together in order to achieve goals, which results in cross-cultural differences. In such scenarios, judicious use of critical thinking is a must for project managers, in order to make decisions determining the success or failure of the project. Critical thinking is the process of analyzing information in order to make better decisions and judgments as well (Cortázar *et al*., 2021). According to a statistical report, approx. 81% of recruiters in the world believe that cross-cultural competencies are the most important communication skills in the present time. In the case of diverse companies, there are approx. 70% of them potentially capturing new markets and approx. 87% of diverse teams make better decisions (Instride.com, 2022).

Aim and Objectives
Aim
This research aims to explore the leadership approaches and competencies of a project manager in a cross-cultural context.
Objectives
- To evaluate the importance of cross-cultural leadership in international project management.
- To identify the role of management, leadership, teams and ethical practice

- in successful optimisation of international project management.
- To contrast the advantages and disadvantages of cross-cultural aspects in international project management.
- To determine the strategies project managers, use to mitigate the issue identified in the cross-cultural leadership context.
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Research Rationale

International Project Management teams face challenges in the implementation of global projects due to cross-cultural barriers. Alongside, communication barriers, differences in values and norms, diverse work cultures and leadership styles are considered bi-products related to cross-cultural leadership. At this juncture, leaders use capabilities of critical thinking, decision making and other skills like empathy, self-awareness or creativity in order to craft strategies to handle cross-cultural differences. It is seen that communication barriers are a significant challenge in cross-cultural leadership as it led to misinterpretation and conflicts (Paais and Pattiruhu, 2020). Basically, these barriers come from differences in language, non-verbal communication processes and cultural values, attitudes and beliefs. On the other hand, cultural conflicts are another issue in cross-cultural leadership as different cultures have different communication styles, behaviors and norms as well. The symptoms of cultural conflict include complex dynamics, content or relational issues that don't resolve the conflict and conflicts reoccur or strong emotions arise over an insignificant issue which increases challenges for employees to work.

Literature Review

Explain the significance of Cross-cultural Leadership in Multinational Companies

Cross-cultural leadership is essential for multinational companies as it positively impacts the performance of the organisation, employee satisfaction and the ability of the company to adopt agile market conditions. It involves understanding and navigating cultural differences in order to create an inclusive and productive work environment. According to Boussebaa (2021), cross-cultural management and cultural sensitivity in international business studies are more elaborately focused on evaluating the impact of cultural differences. Cross-cultural management is the process of managing and leading people from different cultures in a way that respects them. In addition, it uses their unique values while cultural sensitivity is the awareness, respect and inclusion of other cultures or identities. In international business, it is important as it helps to work in a multicultural framework and develop trust, respect and effective communication which are essential for optimising business operations successfully. It is seen that if cross-cultural nuances are not acknowledged, then it leads to offence, misunderstanding and business failure for the multinational company.

As opined by Haque and Yamoah, (2021), ethical leadership has played a role in managing occupational stress to innovation work behaviours in SMEs that issue cross-

cultural management. Cross-cultural leaders create supportive and positive work environments that focus on excellent communication, clarity of instruction and mutual understanding. It has been found that these types of leaders are able to influence employees' actions through tapping into their values which leads employees in order to practice moral values. However, leaders are involved in understanding and navigating cultural differences in order to create an inclusive and productive working environment in a significant manner. It requires global leaders to have cultural intelligence, effective communication, adaptability attitudes and conflict resolution skills to assist in managing a team in a cross-cultural context.

Analyse the Advantages and Disadvantages of Cross-cultural Leadership that Affect Employees' Productivity in a Company

Cross-cultural leadership has a plethora of advantages improving employee engagement understanding and better workplaces that assist in enhancing employee productivity in the organisation. When employees feel that the company values diversity, they are more potentially motivated and engaged which leads to increased productivity. In the view of Paiuc, (2021), cultural intelligence and effective leadership assist companies in shaping their business model. Cultural intelligence is an essential skill for business that assists employees in order to understand each other better and work more efficiently with colleagues from different backgrounds. In improving communication among employees, fostering cooperation, enhancing innovation and improving teamwork, in this

way, cultural intelligence helps businesses. Business leaders are able to leverage cultural intelligence in order to help their employees grow and develop by drawing out the unique attributes that make each employee strong. It is further beneficial for businesses to adapt their products and services, navigate international markets and build relationships with global partners as well.

On the other hand, Kai Liao *et al.*, (2021), argue that cross-cultural leadership has limitations that hinder the development of the company as well as the team and leaders. Building relationships with cross-cultural tea is a time-consuming process, specifically in the beginning when communication may not be open properly. Different cultures have different expectations for communication, leadership styles and decision making which makes it harder for a leader to understand the cultural dynamics of the team. A lack of cultural competence may negatively impact the effectiveness of ladders and put them at risk for not meeting the needs of their team. Furthermore, language and cultural differences have made professional communication difficult in order to understand others' perspectives and prejudice or negative cultural stereotypes make it difficult for multinational teams in order to integrate.

Evaluate the Competencies of Cross-cultural Leadership in the Context of International Project Management

In international project management, cross-cultural competencies are the ability to understand, communicate and interact with

people from different cultures. The most important competencies for cross-cultural leadership include understanding the business including the political and cultural environment, and working with people from different cultures simultaneously. It has been found that combining project management competencies with cultural awareness has provided a competitive advantage in the global marketplace. As opined by Yazdanshenas, (2021), core self-evaluation has positively impacted and significantly affected the competencies of managers among which psychological stability has the greatest effects. It is a subconscious of a person, fundamental evaluation of themselves, their abilities and their control. People with high core self-evaluation tend to be confident in their abilities and think positively of themselves.

According to Caligiuri and Caprar, (2022), the organization assesses cross-cultural competencies to select the roles requiring an understanding of cultural context and provide international experience as a part of a global leadership or talent development program. Once an organisation has assessed the cross-cultural competencies of its employees, it uses cross-cultural competence in order to select the right people for roles that require an understanding of cultural context.

Transformational Theory of Leadership

Transformational leadership is a type of leadership that focuses on inspiring and motivating team members in order to achieve a shared vision. Leaders are able to create a sense of purpose and meaning in their work

and they are able to get their members to buy their vision (Siangchokyoo *et al*., 2020). It is important for decision-making as it helps leaders in order to create a more inclusive and collaborative decision-making process. Transformational leaders have a clear vision for the future and they are able to communicate this vision to their team members which guides leaders in making effective decisions while keeping focus on the long-term goals of the company.

Furthermore, transformational leadership is able to inspire employees in order to think critically regarding the issues and come up with a creative solution and achieve great things as well. In creating a collaborative environment, transformational leaders encourage employees to share their ideas comfortably (Asbari, 2020). This collaboration leads to better decision-making as it allows leaders to tap into the collective intelligence of their team. In order to think critically, transformational leadership may be able to weigh the pros and cons of different options and make decisions that are in the best interest of the firm.

Literature gap

There are various gaps seen in the used articles which increases challenges to evaluate the essential information. In the paper of Kai Liao *et al*., (2021), the author has discussed the importance of the emotional intelligence of leaders despite analyzing the cultural competencies that help to develop the productivity of a company. Although emotional intelligence like empathy or understandability are essential

competencies for a leader, there are some other qualities like knowledge of languages, respect for cultural beliefs and conflict resolutions as well. These qualities are important for a cross-cultural leader in order to manage their team members, motivate them and create a positive working environment. On the other hand, another paper by Haque and Yamoah, (2021), conveys challenges that are found in the cross-cultural working environment. This article has been focusing on employee performance and organisational productivity instead of leadership capabilities which are important in making effective decisions.

Methodology

Research philosophy is used as it helps to understand the assumptions regarding the characteristics of knowledge and truth. This research follows an *interpretivism research philosophy* which helps to understand the experience of people regarding the social world in a subjective way. A research approach has been used to provide an objective roadmap to follow and develop the research in a systematic way. As a qualitative study, this research follows the *inductive research approach* which allows research findings to emerge from the data without the constraints of structured methodologies. Research design is a type of framework that provides an organised process in order to conduct research and ensure that all elements of the study are carefully planned and executed. For this research, *exploratory research designs* are used to discuss which has provided a general idea or specific

question to study, however, there is no existing knowledge to use. *Qualitative research methods* are used to gain knowledge regarding cross-cultural leadership through exploring others' perspectives, experiences and behaviours as well. Alongside this, *a secondary qualitative data collection* process has been used to discuss which explores different insights that the primary data analysis process is unable to provide. This data collection process allows secondary sources like case studies, websites, articles, journals and newspaper articles which explore relevant data regarding the important competencies of cross-cultural leadership specifically in decision-making and critical thinking. In order to evaluate essential information, this study has followed *a thematic analysis process* which helps to identify patterns in data to create themes for analysing data. It is useful for analysing a large number of data, specifically looking for subjective data like experience and opinions as well. In the case of ethical considerations, confidentiality and data security are the most important and are going to follow in this present research. The collected data in qualitative research are able to be in-depth and increase the risk of identification, so it is important to maintain confidentiality and security as well.

Findings

Identify the Essential Factors that Enhance the Capabilities of a Leader to Manage Conflict Within Team Members and Motivate Them to Work Together in International Project Management

Keywords	Authors	Findings	Significance
Ethical leadership capabilities, emotional intelligence	(Zaim *et al*., 2021) and (Bhatti *et al*., 2021)	These articles are selected as they explore the importance of the ethical leadership process in order to improve employee engagement and boost the productivity of the company. In addition, these articles explore	These articles are selected as it help to explore ethical leadership capabilities and emotional intelligence is used to discuss and explore its effectiveness in international project management.
Conflict resolution, team engagement and motivate team members	(Robijn *et al*., 2020) and (Davidavičienė *et al*., 2020)	These articles are selected as it discusses how both engaging leadership and open conflict norms have impacted the work workplace culture enhancing job satisfaction.	These articles are significant as it helps to explore the importance of effective leadership completions in handling team motivation and fostering a positive working environment in an equal manner.

Table 1: Effective Factors of Leadership in International Project Management

International project management is an important element as it includes people belonging to multiple cultures. According to Zaim *et al*., (2021), emotional intelligence and ethical leadership processes are considered as the most effective leadership aspects that help to manage a team in a cross-cultural context. With a strong emotional intelligence, leaders are able to understand the perspectives of team members which helps to work in a collaborative way. Furthermore, it streamlines the team's capabilities during work in a cross-cultural working environment. On the other hand,

Bhatti *et al*., (2021) stated that emotional intelligence is an effective skill that reduces the communication barriers among team members in the cross-cultural working environment. Understanding other's perspectives, respecting their beliefs and communicating with each other which provides better results in the projects. In the view of Robijn *et al*., (2020), conflict resolution is another key competency that enhances the capabilities of cross-cultural leaders. Due to language barriers, misunderstandings among team members are often seen which impacts the outcome of the

project. In that case, conflict resolution is an effective aspect that helps team leaders to handle conflict within and work together. In the view of Davidavičienė *et al*., (2020), it is important for international project managers, to optimise project initiation sustaining employee or team satisfaction at the same time. Communicational aspects or language barriers are the most significant challenge that increases challenges for leaders in order to work properly in international project management.

The role of management, leadership, teams and ethical practices in successfully optimising international project management

Keywords	Authors	Findings	Significance
Management and leadership	(Khan *et al*., 2020)	This article is selected as it explores the role of leadership in monitoring and controlling international project management successfully.	This article is significant as it helps to evaluate the effectiveness of leadership skills in controlling and monitoring international project management along with employee satisfaction.
Ethical practices and teamwork	(Shaukat *et al*., 2022)	Ethical practices and team management are the most essential aspects of international project management as it includes team members from different parts of the world.	This article is chosen as it signifies the importance of ethical practices and team collaboration in the workplace in order to work together.

Table 2: The Role of Management, Leadership, Team and Ethical Practices

Management, leadership, team and ethical practices play significant roles in monitoring success in international project management. Project management skills are an essential aspect of successful project execution from beginning to closure. As opined by Khan *et al*., (2020), management and leadership have been playing the most important role behind a successful international project. Management retains employee's talents and selects them for the specific international project. Leaders guide those selected candidates with their own knowledge and experience and this ensures the success cases for the project management. It has been seen that effective leaders ensure that the project is completed on time, within budget and in line with the organisation's goals. Project managers are needed to be able to motivate and inspire teams, negotiate, communicate as well as listen to them. Project managers have organised, directed and coordinated the work of project teams, motivating members and resolving conflicts. As opined by Shaukat *et al*., (2022), stakeholders have been playing a significant role that ensures engaging team members and enhances the success of the project through developing relationships between members. Stakeholders like leaders or managers have encouraged employees, boosted motivation and inspired them which assists them in concentrating on the project and making sure it's successful as well. Ethical leaders help team members understand that project success is possible when they are transparent with each other, discuss their goals and challenges along with working together to coordinate their actions. In the case of ethical practice, it includes a critical aspect in project management decision-making and has an ethical duty to stand up for what's right including addressing corporate contact in the workplace. Ethical leaders must have exhibited courage, kindness, respect, responsibility, fairness and honesty and a further account table for making appropriate decisions that move the project forward.

Discussion

In order to manage conflict and motivate team members, leaders must have qualities such as active listening, early intervention, encouraging open communication and emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is the most crucial thing that helps to communicate with each other and ensure the success of the projects at the same time (Larsson and Larsson, 2020). It has been found that cross-cultural leaders focus on communicating with every team member the capabilities to resolve conflict, inspire them as well as motivate them to work together. On the other hand, management, stakeholders, leadership, ethical practices and teams are identified as playing a major role in monitoring and controlling international projects. Project managers are needed to manage the influence of stakeholders in relation to project requirements while balancing the interests of stakeholders regarding the project requirements. They are required to have leadership qualities, personal traits and managerial competencies in order to ensure the successful implementation of complex projects.

Policy Implications

Thus, the outcomes of the present study indicate the importance of the establishment of overall organizational policies focused on the enhancement of cross-cultural competencies and leadership in IM activities. It is required that governments and regulation authorities promote use of the training programs which deal with issues on CI, ethical leadership and conflict management. They may contribute towards the rationalisation of leadership practices in multinational teams and allow the project managers to acquire adequate skills in managing diversity. Also, the cross-cultural leadership competencies should be included in the accreditation and certification criteria of project managers as a way of mainstreaming this kind of skills.

Practical Implications

From the pragmatic angle, managers should focus on the effective HR training strategies that can make an organization prepare its leaders to successfully work at the international level. Managers can also attend topic-specific workshops and practical examples of conflicts related to international projects and how to resolve them, simulations of team motivation can also be arranged. Business should also seek to include such principles in their HRM system by conducting cultural intelligence assessments to promote the qualification of the right kind of staff for leadership in international business projects. In so doing, organisations are able to improve the efficiency of the teams, decrease the likelihood of conflict and deliver improved project outcomes.

Theoretical Implications

In theoretical terms, this research helps to add knowledge to the field of cross cultural leadership as well as introducing the integrated strategy that concerns leadership processes, team outcomes, and conflict management in the international environment. That's why emotional intelligence, ethical leadership, and cultural sensitivity are at the heart of the company's competencies. Further developmental studies for this framework may specify real-world cultural-mediation patterns and their correlation with the outlined competencies in an attempt to come up with anew typology of cross-cultural leadership suited for project-related cultural environments.

Limitations and Future Directions

This paper has also looked at the identified area of research on cross cultural leadership in the framework of the IMC during the IDC. Thus, the study has collected data from literature showcasing methodological approaches such as website, journal, article, and newspapers as a secondary qualitative research method (Moon, 2021). Although this has added real valuable and relevant information data gathered through this study is superficial and not as accurate as actual firsthand data. Therefore, the outcomes can be considered limited since they do not provide sophisticated insight into the nature of cross-cultural leadership in action. Consequently, future research should embrace this study's primary quantitative approach for gathering empirical data that would more effectively evaluate and corroborate the identified strategies and competencies. Due to limitations in the current research, the subsequent studies are capable of having a broader approach that was developed by applying the direct observations and quantitative analysis to the role that cross cultural leadership plays in the overall team performance and conflict resolution in actual international project management situations.

Conclusion

It has been concluded that this research work evaluates essential information related to cross-cultural leadership aspects in order to manage international projects. Project management leadership aspects in the context of cross-cultural aspects have been used to discuss and explore its importance in managing team members who belong to different cultures. Cross-cultural leadership is an important thing as a request for misunderstanding or language barrier leads to conflict among team members. In analysing the challenges, it has been found that cross-cultural teams often face challenges like communication barriers and conflict which decrease team motivation and further influence the process of projects in a significant manner. This research has been following a secondary qualitative research method which helps to collect relevant information. In this section appropriate theories approaches and designs are used which helps to guide the research and an organised way. In addition, this research has followed thematic analysis which explores new insights regarding leadership team management conflict resolution and ethical practices. The role of management team leadership stakeholders is playing a crucial role in ensuring a successful international project.

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