

Strategic Leveraging of Cognitive Diversity in Multinational Project Teams: A Microfoundational Perspective

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Abstract. This study examines the microfoundational processes through which cognitive diversity influences collaborative dynamics within multinational project teams. By employing a mixed-methods approach, we analyze data from 24 teams across three continents, highlighting the contingent role of cultural intelligence in mediating team outcomes. Our findings reveal that cognitive diversity fosters innovation only when supported by high levels of cultural and emotional intelligence among team members. This research contributes to a nuanced understanding of diversity management in a global context, offering practical implications for enhancing team performance.

Keywords: Cognitive diversity, Multinational project teams, Cultural intelligence, Emotional intelligence, Diversity management

Introduction

In today's interconnected world, organizations increasingly rely on multinational project teams to drive innovation and maintain competitive advantage. Despite the potential benefits, managing these teams poses significant challenges, primarily due to the inherent cognitive diversity and cultural differences among team members. Cognitive diversity, characterized by varied perspectives and problem-solving approaches, can significantly

enhance team creativity and performance. However, it can also lead to communication barriers and conflicts if not managed effectively. This study seeks to unravel the microfoundational mechanisms through which cognitive diversity impacts team dynamics and outcomes in multinational contexts. We adopt a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative surveys and qualitative case studies, to investigate 24 multinational project teams across three continents. Our analysis emphasizes the critical role of cultural and emotional intelligence in mediating the relationship between cognitive diversity and team performance. The article is structured as follows: We first review the extant literature on cognitive diversity and team dynamics, identifying key gaps and research questions. Subsequently, we detail our methodological approach and present the empirical findings. Finally, we discuss the theoretical and practical implications of our study for scholars and practitioners in the field of management science.

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