



IJMRBS

ISSN 2319-345X
Vol. 4, No. 4, October 2015

International Journal of Management Research and Business Strategy

www.ijmrbs.com



MEGHANA PUBLICATIONS

www.meghanapublications.com

ENHANCING TEAM PERFORMANCE: AN INVESTIGATION OF LEARNING STYLE DIVERSITY, TEAM LEARNING PROCESS AND TEAM CONFLICT

Varsha Dixit¹, Sharadindu Pandey¹ and Pooja Tiwari^{1*}

*Corresponding Author: **Pooja Tiwari** ✉ pooja2017@gmail.com

Purpose: For dealing with today's rapidly changing and complex business environment Indian IT industry need to understand the psychologically diversified workforce. The purpose of this study was to identify the relationship between learning style diversity, team learning process with mediating effect of task and relationship conflict on team performance. **Design/Methodology:** This paper is based on a qualitative research. The primary data has been collected through semi-structured interview. The sample size was 35 middle management employees of an IT industry. Learning style diversity has been taken as input variable; team learning process and conflicts has been taken as mediating variable and team performance as output variable. **Findings:** The result of this study indicates that the learning style diversity is significantly related to team learning process. The research finding indicates the positive relationship between learning style diversity and the team performance. It has been also indicated through study that team performance has been divided into two parts process based performance and output based performance. These outcomes will guide the IT industry to understand the implication of learning style diversity and its impact on team performance. **Research limitation:** The generalizability of this study is limited due to small sample size. The study focuses on only one industry which limits generalizing the research findings. **Practical Implication:** IT industry has contributed heavily to the GDP and exports, and brought tremendous foreign exchange to the exchequer. Due to globalization and competitiveness it is imperative for an IT industry to understand the psychologically diverse people, i.e., learning style diversity. So, the sample organizations need to understand the importance of learning style diversity and how to handle the organizational conflict. This shall have a great impact and take the organization toward competitive edge. **Originality/Value:** This paper would be of value to the researcher seeking information in the area of deep-level diversity and its impact on team performance. This is an original contribution and not published anywhere.

Keywords: Learning style diversity, Team learning process, Task and relationship conflict and team performance

INTRODUCTION

The rise of the IT industry in India must be understood within the larger political economic

context, as an outcome of globalization, spreading of new information and communication technologies and also the liberalization process.

¹ Assistant Professor, Gautam Buddha University, Greater Noida.

The Indian IT industry has grown leaps and bounds in the last two decades. It has contributed heavily to the GDP and exports, and brought tremendous foreign exchange to the exchequer. Due to globalization and liberalization, the IT industry has become highly competitive and pervasive, and hence, it requires a flexible and diverse workforce demographically as well as psychologically. As IT industry is knowledge intensive industry, it requires a workforce having diversified learning oriented behaviors and perspectives. Diversified learning oriented behavior can generate the variety of perspectives and viewpoints, which can contribute to flexibility and creativity within organizations, further it helps the organization and thrive in a complex and competitive global economy. Due to this, presently most of the IT companies are emphasizing on the diversity initiatives, and the companies like Infosys, Wipro, HCL and IBM are considering diversity as a strategic issue. By “stirring up the pot” in positive ways, diversity can encourage the intellectual debate and conflict which could lead to innovations, help various teams such as management or Boards of directors, to have a pragmatic approach toward problems. In view of impact of diversity in IT industry, the present study will revolve around same and would analyze the effects of learning style diversity on the team performance.

Some management scholars and organizational psychologist believe that team diversity can be a source for competitive advantage while others feel that it is a hindrance for optimizing organizational effectiveness. Team diversity refers to the distribution of personal attributes across members of an organizational work teams. This reflects a perspective that is sometimes referred to as surface and deep level

diversity (Harrison *et al.*, 1998). Surface level diversity describes individual aspects that can easily be visually identified and defined, such as age, gender and race. Deep level diversity includes personal traits that are not easily determined or defined, such as attitudes, beliefs, values, skills and learning style. The learning style diversity, which is being used in this study, is a deep level diversity.

Organizations increasingly rely on teams to carry out critical strategic and operational task. By implication, an organization's ability to learn that, is to improve its outcomes through better knowledge and insight (Fiol and Lyles, 1985), and is dependent on the ability of its teams to learn (Senge, 1990; Edmondson, 2002). The use of teams as fundamental building blocks of organization and its strategy seems to be premised on the assumption that, the team can gather the diversity of information, backgrounds and values necessary to make things happen (Jackson, 1992), so as to produce effective organizational action. However, many organizations have discovered that teams do have liabilities and can stifle ideas, which in turn, results in conformity and encourage free riding. As individual's dissatisfaction may influence team performance, the size and structure of the team, team stability, temporal scope and diversity in the group influence how a team performs (Alge *et al.*, 2003; Johnson *et al.*, 1991; Jaques, 2000; Koppenhaver and Shrader, 2003). Apart from this, team member's individual characteristics, such as psychological profile, collective orientation and learning preferences will also influence the team performance. While teams have become central to organizations, they present their own intrinsic problems of coordination, motivation and conflict management (Gladstein, 1984; Jehn, 1995).

As organizations become diverse in nature, it is also important to understand how different social and psychological attributes impact people's perceptions of themselves and others. Williams and O'Reilly (1998) have concluded that the positive aspects of team diversity are typically driven by how members process information, such as a diverse set of knowledge, skills and abilities to solve complex problems. To understand the impact of psychological attribute learning style diversity—a psychological attribute will be taken into consideration and its effect on team learning process and team performance will be analyzed. Furthermore, the effects of conflict on group performance have been studied and discussed extensively (De Dreu and Weingart, 2003; Stock, 2004), the relationship between conflict and learning has not been fully developed (Moye & Langfred, 2004). To understand the relationship between learning style diversity and conflict (Jehn, 1997) conflict typology will be considered. The focus of study in this study will be on task and relationship conflict. While considering the previous research some studies has been associated with team learning behaviour (Gibson and Vermeulen, 2003; Lau and Murnighan, 2005), conflict (Jehn, 1997; Jehn *et al.*, 1999) and team performance (Harrison *et al.*, 1998; 2001), but less attention has been given to the analysis of psychological attribute of team members, the way they learn and its relationship with the team learning process and relationship and task conflict in IT industry. The study addresses the concerns by examining the effects of one specific type of diversity, i.e., learning style diversity, mediating variable team learning process and task and relationship conflict and its effect on team performance. This study might prove to be significant for the field of organization

behavior. This study will expand the existing research in the area of deep-level diversity as less research has been conducted in this area and especially in learning style diversity. It may also prove to be useful as this study will focus on the task and relationship conflict and also understanding the positive aspect of task conflict.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Researchers have devoted considerable attention to how work teams can generate knowledge and insights beyond the reach of their individual members (e.g., Murray, 1983; Doise and Mugny, 1984; Perret-Clermont, Perret and Bell, 1991; and Garton, 1992). This research on emergent knowledge in teams suggests that social interaction among diverse perspectives can lead to the emergence of new insights through conceptual restructuring within the teams (e.g., Levine and Resnick, 1993). The creation of knowledge and the discovery of insight by teams appear to depend on the presence of diverse viewpoints and perspectives about the task (Damon, 1991; Levine and Resnick, 1993; Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995). The studies devoted to the subject of diversity have been showing highly inconsistent results for the past several decades (Williams and O'Reilly, 1998). The existing research has suggested that traditional way of assessment of team diversity, which is concentrated mainly on measuring the amount of diversity and not taking into account the other aspects of diversity, may not necessarily be a valid predictor of team outcomes. Therefore the researchers are calling for alternative approaches towards the study of diversity in work teams (Thatcher *et al.*, 2003; Knippenberg and Schippers, 2007).

Team oriented work environments provide opportunities for employees to learn from colleagues with expertise and to help one another through working together, sharing information and watching out for one another (Janz, 1999; Mikkelsen and Gronhaug, 2000). One of the expected yields of team-based working is the stimulation of collective learning (Critchley and Casey, 1989; Edmondson, 1999; Katzenbach and Smith, 1993; Kofman and Senge, 1993; Senge, 1990). Teams bring together complementary skills and experience that exceed those of any individual on the team (Katzenbach and Smith, 1993). According to Senge (1990) teams, and not individuals, are the fundamental learning unit in modern organizations, “unless the team can learn, the organization cannot learn”. The concept of team learning has prospered, in part, because of the increasing empirical support for its value in team performance (Edmondson, 1999; Druskat and Kayes, 2000; Gibson and Vermeulen, 2003), and consequently, for organization effectiveness. Jules (2007) defines the team learning process as a process by which organizational teams gain clarity about purpose, develop good working relationships and effectively accomplish their goals. It involves valuing individual differences and similarities, as members cycle through a four-phase cycle of idea creation, planning, decision-making and implementation.

Williams and O’Reilly (1998) indicated that several decades of work had produced inconclusive and often contradictory results on the topic of diversity and conflict, largely as a result of broad and often misunderstood classifications such as homogeneity and heterogeneity. Jehn *et al.* (1999) determined that these classifications were simply too broad and that once unbundled into more meaningful

themes such as informational diversity, structural category diversity (e.g., age, sex and ethnicity) and value diversity strong relationships has been analyzed with team performance. This established relationship of information diversity is the starting point for our deeper investigation into the broader theme of experiential diversity including diversity in education, experiences, learning and thinking styles.

Diversity, generally defined as perceived differences, has been advocated by many diversity researchers for effective and productive workgroups and organizations (e.g., Jehn, Northcraft and Neale, 1999; McLeod, Lobel and Cox, 1996; Watson, Kumar and Michaelson, 1993). Diversity can be of two types: surface level diversity and deep-level diversity. According to Harrison *et al.* (1998), surface-level diversity is defined as differences among team members in overt, demographic attributes that are typically reflected in physical features. Surface-level diversity typically includes age, race and gender and are akin to what other researchers have labeled as “social category diversity” (Jehn *et al.*, 1999), “demographic” (Williams and O’Reilly, 1998), “visible” (Pelled, 1996), “readily detectable” (Milliken and Martins, 1996), “ascribed” (Tsui and Gutek, 1999), or “identity teams” (Alderfer, 1987). On the other hand, deep-level diversity (Harrison *et al.*, 1998) is defined as member’s psychological (Jackson and Ruderman, 1995) or underlying (Milliken and Martins, 1996) attributes. These attributes include differences among member’s personalities, abilities, beliefs, values, attitudes (Tziner and Eden, 1985; Jackson and Ruderman, 1995; Jackson *et al.*, 1995, Jehn *et al.*, 1997; Barrick *et al.*, 1998; Harrison *et al.*, 1998; 2002) and learning styles (Kolb, 1984) that are reflected in stylistic patterns of behavior.

Learning lies at the core of the management process. Learning is defined holistically as the basic process of human adaptation. This broad definition subsumes more specialized managerial processes such as entrepreneurial learning (Corbett 2005, 2007; Poltis 2005), strategy formulation (Ramnarayan and Reddy, 1989; Van Der Heijden, 1996; Kolb, Lublin, Spoth, and Baker), creativity (Brennan and Dooley, 2005; Boyle *et al.*, 1991; Ogot and Okudan, 2006; Potgieter 1999), problem solving and decision making (Donoghue, 1994; Jervis, 1983; Kolb, 1983; Selby *et al.*, 2004) and leadership (Robinson, 2005; Kayes *et al.*, 2005).

Previous research (Kolb, 1984) has shown that learning styles are influenced by personality type, educational specialization, career choice, current job role and tasks. It is generally accepted that the way individual choose or inclined towards the learning situation have an impact upon the learning outcome, team learning process and in turn team performance. In a team diverse kinds of people come together and they bring with them the learning preferences which shape the perception of the individual and affect the learning outcomes. While exploring thinking and learning diversity concept of experiential learning theory has been taken into consideration. Kolb (1984) defines Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) as a process by which knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. ELT argues that development in learning sophistication results from the integration of the dual dialectics of the learning process, i.e., conceptualizing/experiencing and acting/reflecting. The four basic learning styles—diverging, assimilating, converging and accommodating each characterize a particular pair of the four phases (concrete experience, reflective observation,

abstract conceptualization and active experimentation) in the experiential learning cycle.

Current research, involving different methodologies and different educational and workplace populations, has shown that Experiential learning theory is useful in understanding team learning and performance. Experiential learning theory (ELT) incorporates the notion of subjectivity into how participants both grasp and transform their experiences indicating that experiences inform both thinking and learning styles over time. As described previously, experience is the common bond between both the Learning style inventory (LSI) measured thinking and learning styles diversity as well as the diversity in actual education and work experiences. The Learning Style Inventory, (*LSI; Version 3, Kolb, 1999a*) proposed by David Kolb (1971, 1984) is an instrument which is used to measure learning preferences. The LSI is a self-report inventory comprised of 12 items, where participants are asked to rank a set of words to indicate to what extent the words are consistent with their self-perceptions. The way in which participants rank order the descriptors indicates their preference on the four different learning modes: Concrete Experience (CE), Abstract Conceptualization (AC), Reflective Observation (RO) and Active Experimentation (AE). Studies support the proposition that a team is more effective if it follows the learning cycle in its work process and emphasizes all four learning modes. There have been numerous studies that have investigated the impact of team member learning style diversity on team effectiveness.

We know from Jehn that diversity in education and information can increase cognitive conflict (Jehn *et al.*, 1999). We also know that diversity in belief structures, age, and sex can drive affective

conflict (Jackson *et al.*, 2003). We conjecture that the thinking and learning styles of executives might also influence the intensity and frequency of both affective and cognitive conflict. Furthermore previous research (Amason and Schweiger, 1994; Jehn, 1994; Jehn, 1995) has suggested that personal attacks and interpersonal disagreements within teams cause dissatisfaction among members and decrease the amount of individual effort put into completing the team task adequately. Members do not feel comfortable working in a team in which members are attacking one another. When relationship conflict is perceived in a team, feelings of dissatisfaction with the team experience will prevail. Following the logic of Amason (1996) and Jehn (1994, 1995), we also predict that task conflict will affect performance in teams working on non routine tasks such as decision-making and consulting projects. Drawing on the social psychological and management literature to understand the relationship between conflict, learning style diversity and team process, Jehn's (1997) conflict typology will be considered.

A recent study by Jules (2007) examined the influence of both learning style diversity and experiential learning team norms on team performance in a survey of 33 work teams from 6 different industries. Overall both team member learning style diversity and experiential learning work norms were positively related to a team's ability to make decisions, to achieve its goals and to overall team performance. However, learning style diversity was not related to team experiential learning norms suggesting that other factors than member composition such as team leadership, team task or organization culture influence team norms. Furthermore the study of Jules (2007) was based on the demographic and learning style

diversity and its impact on team performance and considering the process conflict as an outcome variable but this study will be based on the team learning process and learning style diversity on team performance and considering the task and relationship conflict as the mediating variables. Jules (2007) have considered the six different industries as a sample both from public as well as private sector but in this study the target population will be from IT industry in private sector. To bridge the gap in learning styles, the management educator must respond to pragmatic demands for relevance and the application of knowledge, while encouraging the reflective examination of experience that is necessary to refine old theories and to build new ones. Much study has been done in the area of learning behaviour (Gibson and Vermeulen, 2003; Lau and Murnighan, 2005), frequency of communication (Zenger and Lawrence, 1989), conflict (Jehn 1997; Jehn *et al.*, 1999) and team performance (Harrison *et al.*, 1998; 2001). Less attention has been paid to the deep level diversity, i.e., learning style diversity. The linkage between the learning style diversity and team learning process, relationship and task conflict on team performance has not been considered as much. To bridge this gap this study will consider the learning style diversity, team learning process, relationship conflict and task conflict as a mediating variable and its effect on team performance.

Overall this study will investigate the effects of learning style diversity on team learning process and team performance. Further, this study will try to analyze team learning process of Indian IT industry, finding out whether these learning oriented behaviors are essential for optimal learning and also whether they could lead

to improved team performance. Finally, this study builds on previous research related to the diversity of learning style in teams to suggest that teams comprising of members where all four learning styles are represented will learn and perform better than teams comprising of members with similar learning styles. By the same token, heterogeneous learning style teams will respond and adapt to a wider range of demands in organizations. Drawing on the social psychological and management literature, the theory and research related to team diversity, team learning, conflict and team performance guide my thinking and empirical investigation.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESIS

Team Learning Process and Learning Style Diversity

In the present scenario, most of the companies have to face changes or uncertainty. In order to avoid its impact, the team must engage in learning behaviour to understand the environment, its customers and coordinate member's actions effectively (Edmondson, 1999). The team learning process is comprised of a series of interdependent behavioral activities that have been found to be positively related to performance (Argote, 1999; Edmondson, 1999; Zellmer-Bruhn and Gibson, 2006). The core issue in team learning is that, people can learn not just from their own direct experiences, but also from the experience of other team members. It is also indicated as learning from secondary or indirect experience (Ickes and Gonzalez, 1994; Jarvis, 1995). Experiential learning theory and learning styles relates to the problem-solving and decision making (Kolb, 1976). Kolb (1976) illustrates that the learning processes in each phase of the

experiential learning cycle are most effective for the achievement of certain learning activities. Based on the previous studies, it can be hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 1: *Team learning process will be positively affected by the learning style diversity.*

Learning Style Diversity and Relationship Conflict

Relationship conflict refers to the personal tension in which negative emotions like annoyance; frustration and anger play an important role (Jehn, 1995). Groups with diverse members often prove ineffective at capitalizing on the potential benefits of their informational diversity (Stasser and Titus, 1985, 1987). Managers have expressed frustration, with the time and resource demands of functionally diverse teams, while on the other hand, the team members have bemoaned the difficulty of motivating their members to work together effectively (Dumaine, 1994). Even in groups, the demonstrating performance benefits from membership diversity, group members report finding the experience frustrating and dissatisfying (e.g. Baron, 1990; Amason and Schweiger, 1994). Relationship conflict decreases communication, cooperation and understanding among team members (Jehn & Bendersky, 2003) leading to a decrease in team performance. The meta-analysis from De Dreu and Weingart (2003) shows an overall negative relationship between relationship conflict and performance. Based on earlier study on deep-level diversity and relationship conflict it can be concluded:

Hypothesis 2: *Learning style diversity is positively associated with the relationship conflict and latter is negatively related to team performance.*

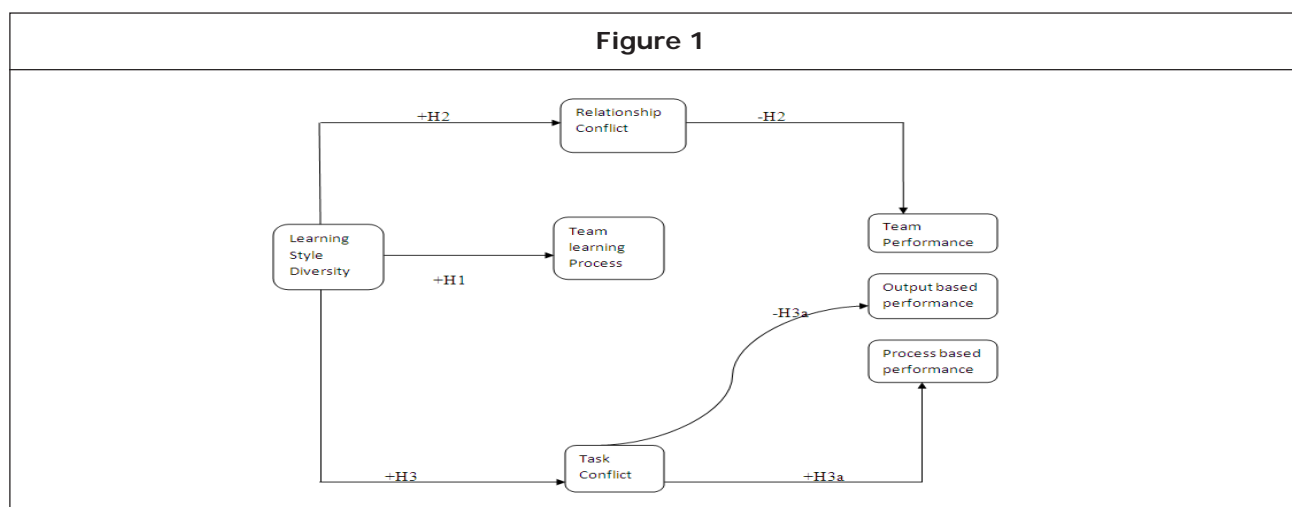
Learning Style Diversity and Task Conflict

While any type of diversity may trigger task conflict, some are more prominent, based on the relevance of their corresponding belief structures (Pelled, 1999). Task conflict is a condition in which group members disagree about task issues, including goals, key decision areas, procedures and the appropriate choice for action (Jehn, 1995, 1997). Learning style affects the kinds of information about the situation that a team member may attend to in their social environment. Thus, learning style influences how an individual perceives a task and the appropriate approach to go about completing it to guide behaviour (Jules, 2007). It may also lead members in a team to disagree about tasks that involve establishing team goals, generating creative ideas, action planning, solving problems, making key decisions and selecting the appropriate course of action. For example, members who are more prone to thinking and feeling typically see opportunities and issues from vantage points that differ from those who are more prone to action and reflection (Kolb, 1984). Due to their respective preferences, team members with different learning styles may have divergent perspectives and interpretations of task issues, including goals, key decision areas and procedures. The theorized relation between task conflict and team

performance is less clear. On the one hand task conflict may increase team member’s tendency to scrutinize task issues and to engage in deep and deliberate processing of task-relevant information, resulting in better team performance. On the other hand, task conflicts may also result in an increase in cognitive load leading to a decrease in team performance. Some studies report positive effects of task conflict on performance (Jehn, 1994, 1995; Jehn & Mannix, 2001), other studies find negative effects (Jehn, Northcraft, and Neale, 1999; Lovelace, Shapiro, and Weingart, 2001; Thatcher, Jehn, and Zanutto, 2003) or no significant effects (Kurtzberg, 2000; Pelled *et al.*, 1999). However, since the meta analysis of De Dreu and Weingart (2003) has shown that in general task conflict is detrimental to team performance. It has been also hypothesized that task conflict have positive effect on team learning process as it provides the platform to discuss various task related information while on other hand sometimes it delays the delivery of project on time and ultimately it effects the final output. Thus:

Hypothesis 3: Learning style diversity is positively associated with the task conflict.

Hypothesis 3a: Task conflict is positively related to process related performance while it is negatively related to output related performance.



PROPOSED RESEARCH MODEL

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research approach in this paper is qualitative in nature, i.e., its findings are not meant to be universal rather it is subjective and in-depth. The sample consisted of 35 middle level employees working in various IT firms. I have selected ten IT companies for the purpose of data collection out of which some companies are of CMM level 5 and some companies are of CMM level 3. The Capability Maturity Model (CMM) is a methodology used to develop and refine an organization's software development process. The model describes a five-level evolutionary path of increasingly organized and systematically more mature processes. CMM was developed and is promoted by the Software Engineering Institute (SEI), a research and development centre sponsored by the US Department of Defense (DoD). The CMM is similar to ISO 9001, one of the ISO 9000 series of standards specified by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO). The ISO 9000 standards specify an effective quality system for manufacturing and service industries; ISO 9001 deals specifically with software development and maintenance. The main difference between the two systems lies in their respective purposes: ISO 9001 specifies a minimal acceptable quality level for software processes, while the CMM establishes a framework for continuous process improvement and is more explicit than the ISO standard in defining the means to be employed to that end. Almost 3 or 4 team leaders from each company have been interviewed for data collection. All the respondents are working as a team leader and data has been collected to understand the phenomenon understudy within the team. Team leaders were selected as the main interviewee

as they are handling the various members of team and can provide the insights regarding various issues related to various stages of team learning process, learning style diversity and also the effect of conflict and other factors on team performance. The name of the companies and also the various team leaders has not been disclosed due to ethical reasons.

The authors collected data with help of semi-structured in-depth interview of the individuals. Face-to-face interview was preferred with the obvious benefit of being able to observe and record nonverbal as well as verbal behavior.

Data Analysis

The responses of the various respondents have been summarized through open and axial coding. Most of the respondents were working as middle manager and few of them as a top level manager. Similar responses have been clubbed together and it has been mentioned in front of the each statement that how many respondents have given that response. By analyzing the responses given by the middle and top level manager's authors have tried to give the findings for the hypothesis.

Q1. According to you in what way the learning styles of the team members play an important role in team learning process and in turn how it influences the overall performance of the team?

Breadth in alternative generation (R1, R4, R8, R21, R29, R31, R33, R35)

Possibility of decision implementation (R2, R8, R31)

Help to understand situation (R3, R10)

Help to understand client need (R4, R19)

Designing services according to client need (R5, R13)

Emphasis on final performance not on Learning Style diversity (R6, R12)

More important in complex and non-routine task (R7, R11, R15, R28, R32)

Consider learning style diversity as decision-making (R9, R14, R22)

Learning style impact the decision making style (R16, R17, R18, R20)

LSD if not managed properly leads to conflict (R23, R30)

Idea to be organized properly (R24)

Delayed decision making due to immense discussion (R25, R26, R34)

Breadth in alternative generation and helps in evaluation of idea (R27)

Q2. Explain how the feeling of anger, jealousy or frustration comes as one of the hindrances during the team learning process of the team?

Increase competitiveness. Maximum output. (R1, R6, R8, R13)

Increase delivery time. Increases the overhead expenses (R2, R3, R4, R5, R8)

Restricts flow of information. Increase delivery time (R7, R11, R12, R15, R16, R17, R20, R22, R23, R25, R26, R30, R31, R33).

Increases individual creativity and decision-making (R10, R31)

Lack of harmony (R14, R32, R38)

Show domination (R21)

Disturbs team cohesion (R24)

Disturbs Emotional quotient of the individual (R25, R28, R29, R34)

Limits Processing Ability (R35)

Q3. In your opinion what are the major reasons for conflicts among the team members during the team learning process. Also, identify the stage of the team learning process at which majority of the conflicts occurs

Work pressure and deadlines and implementation stage (R1, R34)

CMM level-5 Minimum chances of conflict - Idea generation stage (R2, R5, R7, R16, R28)

Relationship conflict and idea generation stage (R3, R9, R14, R30)

Task conflict and idea generation stage (R5, R11, R15, R18, R20, R25, R29, R31)

Task and relationship conflict both. Responsibility allocation and implementation stage (R6, R33)

Task conflict and implementation stage (R8, R10, and R32)

Process and relationship conflict. Decision making (R12)

Task related – Beneficial for all the stages of SDLC but delay in delivery of project. In some CMM 5 companies known as proof of concept. (R13, R16, R23, R25, R35)

Relationship conflict and planning (R19)

Task conflict and idea generation (R22)

Relationship conflict and implementation stage (R24, R26)

Q4. What is the role of task related issues such as key decision area, procedures and the appropriate choice of action on impeding or fostering team performance?

Delay in delivery. (R1, R24, R32)

Proof of concept. Breadth in alternative generation. (R3.R4, R5, R9, R17, R22, R33, R35)

Increase quality of process but affects final output. (R4, R5, R6, R7, R9, R11, R15, R34)

Focus on own idea. (R8, R28)

Channelized properly enhances performance. (R7, R13, R18, R26)

Do not reach consensus. (R12, R19)

Negatively affects team performance. (R14, R20)

Increases cognitive loading (R16, R31)

Useful only in complex task. (R23, R29)

FINDINGS

i) According to the responses by the various team leaders, it signifies the positive relationship between team learning process and learning style diversity. It means that if team is heterogeneous in terms of learning styles of the people, it will positively impact the different stages of the team learning process. As the people spend more time together the effect of surface-level diversity diminishes but the effect of deep level diversity become more salient. Some managers were of the opinion that while going through the different stages of team learning process, difference based on learning style might be useful to consider the situation from various points of view, to understand the client need and in turn it is more likely to increase the performance of the team and achieve its objectives. Along with this most of the team leaders are in view that people with diverse learning styles will benefit the process

more in case of non-routine and complex task. Furthermore, respondents also But the response of the team leader varies according to the CMM level of the company. As the team leader are in view that in CMM level-3 companies sometimes due to deadlines companies don't follow SDLC which has been referred to team learning process in this study. But the team leaders in these companies also are in an opinion that learning style diversity increases the breadth of idea generation and enhances the quality aspect of the process.

ii) The result indicates the partial support for the hypothesis. As learning style diversity increases relationship conflict also increase sometime and sometimes it decreases relationship conflict. It means that heterogeneous learning style teams have less relationship conflict as compared to homogenous learning style teams. Most of the team leaders feel that if there is more relationship conflict between the team members than it disturbs the communication flow between the team members. Furthermore, the result indicates the negative association between relationship conflict and team performance. Meaning, as the relationship conflict increases team performance decreases.

iii) The result indicates the positive association between task conflict and learning style diversity. As the learning style diversity increases task conflict will also increase. Furthermore, the result also indicated that if task conflict is present than it will positively influence the different stages of team learning process. Idea generation stage of team learning process is highly influenced by the presence

of task conflict in team. As task conflict occurs between team members it provides the various view points, different innovative ways and procedure to perform the task and which in turn will positively influence process related performance. In some of the CMM-level 5 companies where the team members comes up with different ways to perform the task is referred as “proof of concept” and it is appreciated that more and more members should come up with various innovative ideas rather than performing the task in a standardized manner. But, in turn due to discussion between team members regarding the various aspects of task it negatively affects the output related performance.

- iv) Findings also suggest that there is negative relationship between task conflict and team performance. Two aspects of team performance have been analyzed, i.e., process related performance and output related performance. Based on the previous finding it can be concluded that task conflict positively influence the various aspects of process while performing the task. Furthermore, results also indicated that there is a negative relationship between task conflict and output related performance. As task conflict is present in the team, it will delay the delivery of project on the given deadlines.

IMPLICATIONS OF RESULTS

This study can have several implications on organizational behavior as well as for the organization. Primary implication of the finding is that investigating the role of learning style diversity on team learning process and its implication on team performance is a fruitful one for understanding team behavior. This study might

be beneficial for researcher examining the phenomenon of team learning. Secondary deeper investigation on learning modes and task and relationship conflict might be useful, especially for understanding the effectiveness of team learning process. Two aspects of the team performance has been analyzed which may prove to be useful for the organization to understand the positive aspect of the task conflict which may be useful for the team.

The implications of this study might be important for the team leaders and organizations. To enhance the performance of the team it is important for the organization to identify the appropriate climate in which team members are able to learn collectively. It is also important for team leaders to understand the positive aspect of the task conflict and enhancing the qualitative aspect of the team learning process.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

It is the belief of authors that this study will be beneficial to organizational psychologist and management scholars. This study will contribute towards the understanding of concept of work teams and learning style diversity in an organization. The current results have shown that, the positive relationship between learning style diversity and team performance on one hand. On the other hand effect of task conflict and relationship conflict on team performance. While relationship conflict is detrimental to team performance, task conflict improves process related team performance. Based on the responses from various team leaders one new concept regarding task conflict has emerged. Team performance has been divided into two parts: process related performance and output

related performance. It has been analyzed that task conflict is beneficial for process related performance and it shares the inverse relation with team performance.

The authors are of the opinion that Indian IT companies both CMM level-5 and CMM-level 3 needs to emphasize upon identifying the learning style of their companies. The learning style of team members can be identified and we can make different groups of people with similar learning styles. Such groups must be trained together with the suitable mode of training in their respective areas. This will have an impact on learning and retention of the talent in an organization. It will also improve the rhythm of understanding between the team members. Hence the relationship conflict can be controlled to an extent as this will lead to increase team performance. It has been also analyzed during the study that CMM level 5 companies give more importance to learning style of the employees as compared to CMM level3. So more work can be done in the CMM level 3 companies. Companies like Wipro, Infosys, etc., are coming up with the concept of learning officer and working to understand the learning styles of the employees. Current findings suggest that conflict has functional and dysfunctional side and in future more research can be done in the area to handle the dysfunctional side of conflict.

REFERENCES

1. Boyatzis R E and Kolb D A (1995), "From learning styles to learning skills: The Executive Skills Profile", *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, Vol. 10, No. 5, pp. 3–17.
2. De Dreu C K W and Van Vianen A E M (2001), "Responses to relationship conflict and team effectiveness", *Journal of Organizational Behaviour*, Vol. 22, pp. 309–328.
3. De Dreu C K W and Weingart L R (2003), "Task versus relationship conflict, team performance, and team member satisfaction: A meta-analysis", *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 88, No. 4, pp. 741–749.
4. Devi Akella (2010), "Learning together: Kolb's experiential theory and its application", *Journal of Management & Organization*, Vol. 16, pp. 100–112.
5. Kayes D C (2002), "Experiential learning and its critics- Preserving the role of learning in management learning and education", *Academy of management learning & education-JSTOR*.
6. Edmondson A E (2002), "The local and variegated nature of learning in organizations: A team level perspective", *Organization Science*, Vol. 13, pp. 128-146.
7. Harrison D A., Price K H, Gavin J H and Florey A T (2002), "Time, teams, and task performance: Changing effects of surface- and deep-level diversity on team functioning", *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 45, No. 5, pp. 1029-1045.
8. Hulya Julie Yazici (2005), "A study of collaborative learning style and team learning performance", *Emerald Team Publishing Limited, Education & Training*, Vol. 47, No. 3, pp. 216-229.
9. Jehn K A., Northcraft G B and Neale M A (1999), "Why differences make a difference: A field study of diversity, conflict, and performance in workgroups", *Administrative*

- Science Quarterly*, Vol. 44, No. 4, pp. 741-763.
10. Jehn KA (1994), "Enhancing effectiveness: An investigation of advantages and disadvantages of value-based intergroup conflict", *International Journal of Conflict Management*, Vol. 5, pp. 223-238.
 11. Jehn K and Mannix E (2001), "The dynamic nature of conflict: A longitudinal study of intrateam conflict and team performance", *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 44, pp. 238–251.
 12. Jules C (2006), *Member composition and team learning: An examination of learning style as a deep-level difference*, Unpublished qualifying paper. Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, OH.
 13. Jackson C J (2002), "Predicting team performance from a learning process model", *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, Vol. 17, No. 1, pp. 6-13.
 14. Kaplan R S and Norton D P (2001), "Transforming the balanced scorecard from performance measurement to strategic management", Part 1, *Accounting Horizons.*, Vol. 15, No. 1, pp. 87-104.
 15. Kolb D A, Boyatzis R E, and Mainemelis C (2000), "Experiential learning theory: Previous research and new directions", In R J Sternberg and L F Zhang (Eds.), *Perspectives on cognitive, learning, and thinking styles*, (pp. 227-27). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
 16. Kasl E, Marsick V J and Dechant K (1997), "Teams as learners: A research-based model of team learning", *The Journal of Applied Behavioural Science*, Vol. 33, No. 3, pp. 227-246.
 17. Marianne van Woerkom and Marloes L Van Engen (2009), "Learning from conflicts: The relations between task and relationship conflicts, team learning and team performance", *European journal of work and organizational psychology*, Vol. 18, No. 4, pp. 381–404.
 18. Pelled L H, Eisenhardt K M and Xin K R (1999), "Exploring the black box: An analysis of work team diversity, conflict, and performance", *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 44, No. 1, pp. 1-28.
 19. Van de Vegt G and Bunderson S (2005), "Learning and performance in multidisciplinary teams: The importance of collective team identification", *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 48, No. 3, pp. 532-547.
 20. Wageman R, Hackman J R and Lehman E (2005), "Team diagnostic survey: Development of an instrument", *The Journal of Applied Behavioural Science*, Vol. 41, No. 4, pp. 373-398.
 21. Yorks L, O'Neil, J and Marsick V J (Eds.) (1999), *Action learning: Successful strategies for individual, team, and organizational development*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Communications, Inc
 22. Zellmer-Bruhn M and Gibson C (2006), "Multinational organization context: Implications for team learning and performance", *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 49, No. 3, pp. 501-518.



International Journal of Management Research and Business Strategy

Hyderabad, INDIA. Ph: +91-09441351700, 09059645577

E-mail: editorijmrbs@gmail.com or editor@ijmrbs.com

Website: www.ijmrbs.com

