

Teamwork

Subjects: **Business**

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Teamwork is a process in which team members, using their individual knowledge, experience and skills through dynamic interaction with other team members, seek to achieve the common goals of the organization, and thus achieve a synergistic effect. According to Driskell et al., “teamwork is the process through which team members collaborate to achieve task goals. Teamwork refers to the activities through which team inputs translate into team outputs, such as team effectiveness and satisfaction” [1] (p. 334). Yang [2] stated that “teamwork behavior is considered an effective way to create synergy in work teams. A team can achieve effectiveness by creating team synergy through the mechanism of process gain and loss. Teams can maximize process gain and minimize process loss to maintain high levels of teamwork through members’ cooperation with colleagues, volunteering for tasks that go beyond their formal work requirements, and exhibiting helping behaviors toward others” (p. 4).

teamwork

teamwork effectiveness

teamwork performance

1. Introduction

Teamwork is a vital aspect of the functioning of any organization. Teams, as a basic structural component of an organizations’ design, should contribute to a more efficient and improved business performance of the organization. Improperly structured and led teams can make it impossible for an organization to work and develop; this is why it is necessary to know the nature and characteristics of the teams in order to achieve their goals. Another highly important issue is the level of team effectiveness, which should answer the question of whether or not a given team is capable of achieving its goals and performances [3][4]. This is essential, especially given that more and more business processes are performed by teams and not by individuals [3][4][5], and that the sustainability of organizations and corporate performances are positively related to successful teamwork [6][7].

Today, numerous managers in organizations encourage teamwork in performing the tasks of employees, so as to improve their knowledge and improve their professional skills. Teamwork allows employees to collaborate, improve individual skills, and provide feedback without any conflict with other team members. Teamwork is a crucial strategy for the organization’s business, because team members upgrade their skills, knowledge and abilities by working in teams, and this affects the performance and efficiency of the organization [8].

Organizations today concentrate on teamwork to provide a competitive advantage, solve problems through collaboration, and encourage employee creativity [9]. Teams can offer greater adaptability, productivity, and creativity, and they also offer more complex, innovative, and comprehensive solutions for organizational problems [10]. Therefore, teamwork is one of the most important issues in contemporary business.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Understanding Teamwork Effectiveness

One of the well-known approaches for understanding team effectiveness models was given by McGrath, who proposed an input–process–outcome (I-P-O) framework for studying team effectiveness ^{[11][12]}: “Inputs are factors that enable and constrain members’ interactions like competencies, personalities, task structure, external leader influences, organizational design features, and environmental complexity. Processes describe how team inputs are transformed into outcomes. Outcomes are the results of team activity that are valued by one or more constituencies that may include performance (e.g., quality and quantity) and members’ affective reactions (e.g., satisfaction, commitment, viability)” ^[13]. For years, there have been several adaptations of the model, and today it is seen as one of the starting points in understanding team effectiveness.

Apart from I-P-O, there is another significant model, which started out as a criticism of the I-P-O model: the input moderator outcome (IMO) model. This second framework included time and distinguished among multiple types of processes and outcomes in teamwork ^[14]. Actually, the authors of the IMO models showed that, in the case of P—processes, “many of the mediational factors that intervene and transmit the influence of inputs to outcomes are not processes, but emergent cognitive or affective states”, that the “I-P-O framework limits research by implying a single-cycle linear path from inputs through outcomes”, and that the I-P-O framework “tends to suggest a linear progression of main effect influences proceeding from one category to the next” ^[15] (p. 520), without considering emergent states that develop during team existence and have an impact on team outcomes. The IMO model is currently widely accepted in the team management literature ^[16].

After presenting the main views on teamwork frameworks, it is important to emphasize that teamwork can have various implications and that managers need to know what steps to take to ensure effective teamwork. Therefore, team adaptation as the adjustment to relevant team processes ^[17] is a critical issue to be observed and implemented.

A functional approach to team efficiency focuses on goals, integration, decision making, meeting management and decision implementation as well as creating a healthy team climate ^[18]. Of course, some of these functions will be different in different teams, for example in manufacturing or service industries, in management teams or engineering teams, etc.

2.2. Understanding Teamwork Performances

Team performances can be seen from a different point of view. Hackman found that productivity, cohesion, and learning are the three most important criteria for team effectiveness ^[19]. Other authors presented team performances in terms of quality as decision quality, product quality, production quantity, etc. ^[20]. Rosen and Dietz found that the main teamwork outcomes are task outcomes such as error rates, completion time; member satisfaction; and learning outcomes like enhanced knowledge, skills, and attitudes ^[21]. One of the potential

indicators of teamwork performance is consumer satisfaction [22]. When measuring team performance, there are also criteria which refer to the team members' affective reactions and team viability [16]. Affective reactions generally refer to team atmosphere and how members are treated; team viability is usually associated with the team-level criterion, while members who wish to remain a team member, satisfaction, team climate, team commitment and group cohesion are used as indicators of viability [13] (p. 418). In the case of teamwork behaviors, a recent study by Young showed that teamwork behaviors obtain group-level coworker communication, cooperation, and helping behavior [2].

Regardless of the type of performance that is measured, team performance can be investigated as organizational-level performance, team performance behaviors and outcomes, and role-based performance [16] (p. 100):

- “organizational-level performance refers to top management teams but may concern the question of teams interdependence too,
- team performance behaviors (e.g., team feedback seeking; learning behaviors, error discussion) and outcomes as a result of performance behaviors (e.g., managers' rating scale usage, measuring sales or indices of effectiveness),
- role-based performance refers to team members competencies necessary to perform their jobs,
- performance composite, as a blended measure of team outcomes, which is based on different team functions, and as a result produces a blended set of different indicators, from planning and problem-solving measures to productivity and overall effectiveness”.

In the case of productivity, authors usually refer to the results that are expected from a team as the teamwork outcome. Some of the potential indicators of team productivity are the level of reached output, achievement of goals, whether results are achieved in a timely manner, how effective the outcome was, new product development, improved market share, etc. In general, the productivity criterion asks whether the teams output meets the standards of those who use it—end users [23] (pp. 36–37). For example, in the latest study of teamwork, three dimensions of teamwork performance were used, i.e., achieving sales objectives, the extent of technical knowledge, and administrative performance [24].

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