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Challenges and Critical Success Factors in Managing Virtual Teams: The Workplace of Future

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Abstract: The current working environment is constantly changing due to digitalization, automation, and individualization. The most recent industrial revolution, Industry 4.0 (4IR) has been introduced in several manufacturing industries globally which is characterized by the application of information and communication technologies. Many organizations responded to these changes by introducing virtual teams (VT) whose members are geographically dispersed, and their work is organized and communicated through ICT tools. This allows organizations to optimize teams by using only the best talent available. Therefore, this paper aims to identify contributing factors and barriers in managing a virtual team as well as examining its challenges using the systematic literature review. The COVID 19 pandemic even increased the need for modern literature to identify management challenges related to virtual team performance because organizations across the world suddenly have to work remotely from home, and an increasing number of employees now engage in full-time virtual teamwork. The findings found that the society, using of the technology, lack of face-to-face meetings and language are challenges when in remote work while kickoff meeting face-to-face, selection of partners, characteristics of mission, composition of teams and description of the project are the factors affecting the successful of virtual team.

Keywords: Virtual Team, Challenges, Critical Success Factor, Workplaces

1. Introduction

During this age of globalization, quality, and excellent service in an organization are highly demanded by customers and stakeholders. To achieve this expected level, quality and productive human capital are needed as only such human capital alone leads to organizational excellence. Every member of the organization, regardless of whether the manager or employee needs to build unity and understanding to ensure high-quality services and products. To realize this kind of situation, strong teamwork construction needs to be established in an organization. According to Aldrin [3], the working team consists of individuals working in a group, and they have the same goal of comparing a task or

work. It will be formed when there are new problems or roles that the organization will implement. From there, several individuals will be combined to address these issues and responsibilities. Each person in a team is required to be able to work together in a project team by attempting to offer the best even in any work team situation [3]. To achieve the objectives and targets of joint organizations, each member of a team needs to work hard in playing a team role accordingly. As determined by Hanaysha [10], they were widely accepted that teamwork is not only the key foundation of successful management but also an important tool for improving overall organizational productivity.

Teamwork can also be categorized as a two-way communication because all problems or disadvantages or information will be shared so that decisions can be made jointly [14]. Decisions will not be made by some individuals, but the entire team member should be involved in determining the results. Each member of a team is complementary to other members. Teams are not just carrying out tasks, but they also receive instructions. Instructions will be given by the leader, and the leader will act as a facilitator or team guide. Therefore, communication in a team is of great importance. Gibbs, Sivunen & Boyraz [8] said that the virtual team is one of the types of teams that exist. A virtual team is a rather different team because it requires online communication. A virtual team means a group of people working for mutual purposes but in separate locations. Each member of this team has never met physically with each other. Members of this team are separated by different geographical positions. For example, there may be members who are in Perlis, Kuala Lumpur, Johor, Terengganu, Sabah, Sarawak, and so on. Each member will meet assisted by various technologies that can connect them.

The concept of virtual teams has been introduced with increased technology. In this team, people do jobs in a virtual work environment created and operated through IT and software technology [8]. For example, applications via webcam, telecommunications, conscientious spaces such as yahoo messenger, Myspace and many others that can be used during the revolutionary period are now. The concept of virtual teams is relatively new for project management areas and IT. Most of its processes are outsourcing in a virtual work environment. Since virtual teams simply rely on electronic communications media, they work in different time zones and various cultural boundaries. More team members can work on virtual teams. In Malaysia, communication technology is growing and organizations often use a variety of communication technologies to communicate for work purposes. The working phenomenon of virtual teams in Malaysian organizations needs to be explored as Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is growing and organizational management is now crossing geographical borders [1]. According to Ma, Hen & Chooi [13] research on virtual teams in Malaysia is still at a new level and this change needs to be explored and researched to expand the virtual team's work phenomenon.

The ICT developments only help accelerate work dealings but team relationships and challenging virtual work environments need to be seen in the virtual team's work phenomenon [11]. Although communication technology helps facilitate job management in virtual teams, there are certain problems when team members work with each other [1]. This is evident when Malaysian workers are said to be uncomfortable and increasing the stressfulness when it comes to Work From Home (WFH) during the COVID-19 pandemic invades Malaysia recently [2]. Communicating online logically has its shortcomings and advantages as communicating face-to-face and online are two very different atmospheres. The main difference between virtual and face-to-face teams is that virtual team members work separately in remote locations and use information technology to communicate while traditional team members work closely, not separated by distance, and communicate through face-to-face interaction [4]. All human beings have been disclosed through communication that requires clear facial and body style expressions to communicate something information. This string will be clumsy and unexpected for them if communication is done online, especially for a virtual team. However, with every challenge, some factors influence successful virtual teams.

2. Virtual Teams Challenge

Virtual teams are systems that require dynamic connecting bridges that are among the communications chains among members and team leaders on a bilateral basis, close team relations, recognized team job accolades and openness members to receive virtual work environment changes to ensure team members are effective in terms of team achievement, satisfaction and decision-making [9]. Obviously most of the workers especially in Malaysia have a variety of positive and negative impacts from WFH [1]. Teams in organizations today are equipped with modern communication technologies that allow tasks to be done easily and quickly. This enables the production or productivity of the subordinate, top, and professional management to be increased. Communication technology, such as live video and audio increasingly days, will reduce face-to-face encounters. In addition to the changing communication technology, individuals working on the team, are now faced with challenging and diverse job patterns especially for virtual teams as these groups not only involve team members in the same organization but need to work with possible team members from different organizations either locally or overseas. Such an environment already has its challenges. In the light of the Kupa [12], language, using the technology, lack of face-to-face meetings, and the society are the challenges faced by virtual teams within an organization.

Language. Communication is very important in everyday life, especially in an organization involving many interactions needed, either orally or in writing. However, in the context of virtual communication teams, the language used is a key factor that should be prioritized. A virtual team is a team that involves members from various states or countries. Therefore, the use of different language skills can be a major challenge. Different levels of communication efficiency can lead to misunderstandings, misconceptions, and conflicts [16]. Meanwhile, most members of the virtual team who are less skilled at communication will exclude themselves from communication and are less involved during group discussions [18]. According to Presbitero [17], Foreign language skills are closely related to the individual performance of virtual team members

Using the Technology. The working phenomenon of virtual teams in an organization needs to be explored as communication and information technology is growing, and organizational management is now across geographical boundaries. The development of communication and information technology can help accelerate work dealings but team relationships. Although communication technology helps facilitate job management in virtual teams, there are certain problems when team members work with each other. Following Kupa [12], The factor that the use of different communication technologies is the cause of the virtual team to continue to succeed. According to him, technological communication requires certain elements to continue communicating, such as continuous electrical access, high-speed internet, and more. However, this element does not necessarily belong to each team member. As determined by Sharon & Bartol [19], Most teams often ignore technical communications that suit their tasks, thus causing problems. The use of appropriate technologies will form a simple communication to communicate information and save time [12].

Lack of face-to-face meetings. One of the challenges that virtual teams have to face is a lack of face-to-face reunions. As mentioned by Kupa [12], obviously virtual teams have a lack of social presence such as face-to-face meeting engagement, team-building meetings, and informal chats among team members. When lacking face-to-face interaction, trust issues will exist between team members. This will increase the negative feelings, and the uncertainty will occur [8]. In line with Ford, Piccolo & Ford [6], circumstances will worsen, and a lack of trust will occur if there are suspicions towards team members, organizations, or team leaders. It also stated despite a virtual wise group in managing online communications strategies, but uncertainty would but be an issue if group members had a problem of trust in each other. Therefore, every team member should be wise in managing their communication methods because the lack of face-to-face meetings is a very challenging challenge to go through them working together.

The Society. In addition to changing communication technology, individuals working in these virtual teams are faced with challenging and diverse job patterns. Today teamwork not only involves team members in the same organization but needs to work with possible team members from different organizations either locally or overseas. Team members work with individuals with different cultural backgrounds, work practices, languages, attitudes, and levels of communication technology usage. Differences in communication dialects, regulations for decency, and knowledge should be considered. Since most team members consist of different cultures, e.g. citizenship, religion, education, and others [12]. According to him, there is a study of conflicts in Asian Pasik countries that show that Australia is more prone to honesty and seventh culture while people in Thailand love to avoid open criticism for considering it as a barbaric act that can damage fellow human relations. Every country or state has a multicultural background that has been applied especially in terms of how to communicate, and this is a challenge for virtual teams to continue to be accomplished.

3. Virtual Team Efficacy Factor

Team capabilities working with individuals from various locations and backgrounds will determine the success and improvement of organizational performance. A team communication chain comprising various team members will have a cross-organizational, cultural, cross-functional organizational illusion as well as providing the skills and knowledge of the tasks required by team members, regardless of the physical location factor. Despite the challenges faced by virtual teams, aspects of the effectiveness of virtual teams should also be considered to identify factors that contribute to the effectiveness of virtual teams for each organization. These challenges can pose a threat to any global virtual teams' success [7]. Therefore, several efficacy factors exist on virtual teams such as face-to-face kickoff meetings, partner selection, task characteristics, team composition, and project description [17]. According to Dulebohm & Hoch [3], the word 'effectiveness' is often a synonym for the term 'success' or 'Execution'.

Kickoff meeting face-to-face. The kickoff meeting was the first meeting, attended by all the major stakeholders to discuss the objectives, planning, and interests of other companies. Usually, organizations will bring their virtual teams together for the first time by starting a kickoff start meeting or project through a video conference. Slavina, Zhumaev, Chadkina & Tereshenko [16] mentioned that kickoff meeting and administration with the department team to a clarification of the tasks of the experiment, the theoretical and functional basis for virtual structures. According to Tan et.al [21], a face-to-face kickoff meeting can be seen as a management intervention that can have a positive effect on mutual commitment when socializing problems are integrated into the meeting. It also said that when work challenges are integrated into the meeting, the intervention may have a positive effect on the insight into the team task. This means that a virtual team can succeed if the kickoff meeting remains to run even when only online.

Selection of Partners. The selection of spouses in this context means the selection of partners who will jointly make the success of a project. Tan et.al [21] stipulated that partner selection is very important for virtual project teams because team job vision, team members' commitment, and cooperation are things that need to be on every virtual team. The selection of partners based on contacts and closeness often occurs in virtual teams. This statement is supported by Ooms, Werker & Caniels [15] which states that they distinguished between four categories of proximity, of which social similarity is essential for the virtual teams' partner choice variable, as 'social similarity allows trust-based communications between partners'. This will have a positive impact on the vision of the team's assignments and mutual engagement, depending on their professional skills and the way will work together, based on experience [4]. Therefore, partner selection will be a factor in the effectiveness of a successful virtual team.

Characteristics of Mission. Work features mean autonomy, task diversity, task importance, task identity, and task feedback. The characteristics of the task are very important in all scope of

employment. According to Tan et.al [21], There are four types of team tasks that need to be available, i.e. generate ideas when performing tasks, choose to solve problems, negotiate if there is a conflict between members, and conduct the activity of tasks. The task of the team leads to the characteristics of a task that is of interest to each working team. Every activity in the virtual team has its task characteristics, however, whether the mission vision will be readily obtained and whether cohesion will be reached depends on the task of the virtual team [5]. Each team member needs to know and understand each task assigned so that it can perform tasks well, even if they are connected online. The easy-to-understand feature of the task will make it easier for all team members to discharge their responsibilities. Therefore, these flexible task features can lead as a factor for the effectiveness of successful virtual teams.

Composition of teams. Teamwork depends on the skills of team members, allowing them to contribute directly to the achievement of goals. Therefore, weekly schedules of employees, writing skills, functional roles, and technical skills should be considered before someone is assigned to a team. This division of duties is known as the composition of the team where each member is given a task position that corresponds to their qualifications and capabilities before starting work. The composition of the team on a virtual team is very important to facilitate the affairs of all members. Team leaders who successfully inform team members of their specific role will have an impact on the effectiveness of a virtual group. As stated by Tan et. al [21], Management intervention in team composition can only be used before work starts alone as it will have a negative influence in the event of post-work starts. This is because each member of the virtual team has a different background from different geographical positions. Therefore, the composition of the appropriate team has a huge impact on the effectiveness of the virtual team.

Description of the Project. The description of the project is very important to achieve the goals of a virtual team. Description of the project includes descriptions of projects, goals, scope of duties, resources, and so on. Job descriptions can also be defined as a full description of the responsibilities and tasks required by the job. Making a job description is important for Human Resource Management (HRM) managers before the organization advertises vacancies. This is to ensure that the appropriate candidate applies for work after reading the job description. Candidates know in advance what their roles and responsibilities are when they are selected for the task as well as the tasks they have to do. The job description contains the designation, working conditions, the nature of duties, relationships with employees and another top, necessary qualifications, and the tasks and responsibilities that candidates expect to perform. This is very important for virtual teams because the situation of those with different backgrounds, especially geographical positions, will make it difficult for them to start work. Therefore, the project description must be communicated to each virtual team member because a clear description will help virtual teams carry out their responsibilities easily without a doubt [4]. It also stated that Regarding the above, when the project description has already been addressed by the team or when the organization has completed the project description before the virtual team begins, the interference for the whole team to write the description of the project would undoubtedly have a positive impact on the visibility into the team mission and on the mutual engagement.

4. Conclusion

In summary, the characteristics of a virtual team are individuals who require to meet goals despite separated geographical distances of different, limited time-space, and cross-functional field of duty from various departments or organizational units. Virtual teams rely on communication to coordinate tasks and build relationships. The division of duties and the construction of relationships among team members requires members to communicate with each other using the communications media. The level of dominance in the team may be affected by the level of use of the communication media, whether members only use virtual communications or members combining face-to-face communications and virtual communications. Undoubtedly the various types of challenges are passed by virtual teams, but

this challenge is not a deterrent for them to continue to exert the responsibilities given. Although there are many challenges virtual team members have to go through, the effectiveness of the team continues to progress as well as an example. With this can be concluded that the virtual team has its advantages and disadvantages, and it depends on the way each member handles it. Each member of the group has its responsibilities and expertise to be utilized to produce the results of the assigned tasks. Close cooperation by holding on to the same goal is the platform that brings success to any member of the group. The working group needs to set aside the differences in each group member's background and need to work to achieve that goal. Most workers care and emphasize being the best individually. Employees are rarely exposed to an environment that emphasizes cooperation, and we are familiar with assessing human diversity in terms of ideas, background, and experience. But in virtual teams, we can create a healthy work culture team up by doing some things right without looking at the background of group members. If done diligently and appreciate value, this can be achieved despite the many challenges and barriers achieved by virtual teams.

Acknowledgement

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