Overcoming Barriers to Team Effectiveness

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Abstract

Teams have become an integral part of most organisations, to enhance co-ordination, co-operation, creativity and innovation, to empower individuals and to decrease overhead costs. The aim is to increase individual productivity, accomplish organisational goals and to gain and maintain a competitive position in terms of market share. However, these benefits of team-based work will only be realised if teams function effectively. Therefore, this study aims to assess the extent to which team goals/purpose, communication, decision-making, management support and team rewards act as facilitators or barriers to team effectiveness. The empirical analysis entailed data collection through the use of questionnaires, which were administered to a sample of 296 respondents, drawn using the stratified random sampling technique. Data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Qualitative data was also collected from managers using focus groups. Based on the results of the study, a model is generated which identifies the barriers to team effectiveness and presents recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness of teams.

Keywords: Barriers to team effectiveness, individual productivity, management support, organisational goals, team effectiveness, team goals, team organisation.

Problem Statement, Objectives and Research Questions

What is the prevalence and magnitude of the identified barriers to team effectiveness (lack of clarity of team goals/purpose, lack of efficiency and effectiveness of team communication and decision-making, lack of management support and lack of appropriate and salient team rewards) and what can be done to overcome these barriers?

The objectives of the study are:

- To determine the extent to which team goals/purpose, communication, decision-making, lack of management support and team rewards act as barriers to team effectiveness.
- To determine the extent to which team member perceptions of team effectiveness are influenced by biographical profiles (gender, age, race and tenure) respectively.
- To evaluate the impact of team goals/purpose, communication, decision-making, management support and team rewards on team effectiveness.
- To generate a model identifying barriers to team effectiveness and presenting recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of teams.

The research questions are:

- To what extent do team goals/purpose, communication, decision-making, lack of management support and team rewards act as barriers to team effectiveness?
- Are team member perceptions of team effectiveness influenced by biographical profiles (gender, age, race and tenure) respectively?
- What is the impact of team goals/purpose, communication, decision-making, management support and team rewards on team effectiveness?
- What are the barriers to team effectiveness and what can be done to minimize or overcome these obstacles?

Literature Survey

The nature of work in organisations has undergone fundamental changes

over the past few years. A significant percentage of organisations are now implementing team-based structures to help face the increasing levels of market competition and technological innovation (Sundstrom, 1999 cited in Chen & Klimoski, 2003). Thus, the use of teams has emerged as a popular phenomenon in organisations nationally and internationally and have become an integral part of them.

Teams form a vital link between the individual and the organisation because they attain tasks that cannot always be accomplished by individuals, merely as a result of the collective effort of a group of focused individuals (Schultz, Bagraim, Potgieter, Viedge & Werner, 2003). Hence, a team refers to two or more individuals who co-ordinate their activities and work together in order to attain a common purpose (Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006). Diverse forms of teamwork exist for different purposes, such as, self-directed work teams, virtual teams, parallel teams, project teams and quality circles. Although the process by which a group of individuals develop into an effective, operational team is different in each situation, they typically form as a result of five stages, namely, forming or cautious affiliation, storming or competitiveness, norming or harmonious cohesion and performing or collaborative teamwork (Dufrene & Lenham, 2002). Once a team is formed, the group energy has the ability to take control and give direction and purpose to the team. Although, successful teams, somewhat instinctively, develop a system of checks and balances, managers, team leaders and members still have to assist these groups towards the most effective practices. This is imperative as team efficiency has a fundamental impact on the performance and the competitiveness of any business (Steinmann, 2000). An increasing number of organisations have discovered that changing to team-based work has had far-reaching effects (Hayes, 2002; Williams, 1997; Delarue, Hootegem, Procter & Burridge, 2008). In addition, teams are a powerful management tool. They directly involve employees in decision-making, thereby increasing the power of employees in the organisation. They also improve the flow of information between employees and managers, thereby increasing employee satisfaction, organisation productivity and product quality. However, not all organsiations benefit from a team-based approach and numerous contingency factors are likely to affect the work team's functioning. These include team selection (individual traits, team size, team composition, team stability, should team members be

selected or trained, predicting team productivity)(Rabey, 2001), task design (workload/time constraints, team architecture/structure, technology) and training (teambuilding to facilitate team co-ordination) (Paris & Salas, 2000).

The effectiveness of a team may be determined by:

- task completion in relation to its accuracy, speed, creativity and cost,
- team development in terms of cohesiveness, flexibility and preparedness for new tasks and,
- stakeholder satisfaction referring to customer satisfaction and team satisfaction and other teams' satisfaction with the team's procedures and outputs (Hellreigel, Jackson, Slocum, Staude, Amos, Klopper, Louw & Oosthuizen, 2001).

Several variables impact on the performance of a team. Whilst Champion and Papper (1996) are of the opinion that effectiveness is determined by productivity and satisfaction, Cohen and Bailey (1997) argue that effectiveness should be measured in terms of performance, attitudinal and behavioural indicators. Overall, researchers believe that effectiveness is deduced through:

- team design relating to team size (Hellreigel *et al.*, 2001; Naude, 2001), educational level (Cohen & Bailey, 1997), age diversity (Farren, 1999), cultural diversity (Hambrick, Davison, Snell & Snow, 1998; Shachaf, 2008), heterogeneity (Champion & Papper, 1996; Cohen & Bailey, 1997) and diversity in terms of talents and contributions of all individuals (Chisholm-Burns, 2008).
- task design in terms of clear goals and purpose (Doolen, Hacker & Van Aken, 2003; Axelrod, 2002; Ulloa & Adams, 2004), employee attitudes (Kiffin-Petersen & Cordery, 2003), meaningfulness (Kirkman & Rosen, 2000), autonomy (Janz & Jason, 1997), responsibility (Shea, 1995), time pressure (Janz & Jason, 1997) and team rewards (Alpander & Lee, 1995; Dufrene & Lenham, 2002; Paris & Salas, 2000; Cox & Tippett, 2003).

- team tenure relating to age (Gellert & Kuipers, 2008), race (Baugh & Graen, 1997), gender (Devine & Clayton, 1999).
- team behaviour in terms of cohesion (Nelson & Quick, 2000), communication (Cox & Tippett, 2003; Doolen *et al.*, 2003; Ulloa & Adams, 2004), decision-making (Williams, 1997; Truter, 2003; Bunderson, 2003), management support (Daily & Bishop, 2003; Fedor, Ghosh, Caldwell, Maurer & Singhal, 2003) and team leadership (Frost, 2001; Bowen & Edwards, 2001; Sanders & Schyns, 2006).

Evidently, whilst a multitude of factors may influence the effectiveness of a team, this study aims to assess the impact of team goals/purpose, communication, decision-making and, management support and team rewards on team effectiveness. Research indicates that teams with clear goals/purpose that is aligned with organisational goals experience satisfaction (Doolen *et al.*, 2003; Axelrod, 2002; Fleming & Monda-Amaya, 2001; Taylor & Snyder, 1995; Yeatts & Barnes, 1996). Cox and Tippet (2003) add to this the importance of effective communication by leaders and management and Sidler and Lifton (1999) propose that open and clear communication is the first step towards maintaining team effectiveness and team performance (Stout, Salas & Fowlkes, 1997; McDowell & Voelker, 2008). In addition, teams need to become completely involved in the decision-making process in order for them to reach their full potential and to be optimally effective. Collaboration amongst team members ensures decision-making through consensus as well as sharing responsibility for the results (Lessard, Morin & Sylvain, 2008). Furthermore, managers can readily influence and control the design of teams to increase the possibility of positive outcomes. They can ensure that teams have adequate information access, that their membership is represented by diverse job functions and administrative backgrounds, and that the correct number of members are assigned to each team, with the right sets of skills, namely, people with technical expertise, people with problem-solving and decision-making skills and people with good listening, feedback, conflict resolution as well as other interpersonal skills (Anonymous, 2008; Chiu, 1999). According to Penstone (1999), good leaders play a supportive role, encouraging individual development and nourishing talent. Undoubtedly, a good reward system can

assist companies in assuring employees that their commitment to teamwork is real (Sheen, 1998; Mohrman, Cohen & Mohrman, 1995).

Research Methodology

A cross-sectional, formal study was undertaken to determine the extent to which the identified barriers to team effectiveness, namely, unclear goals/purpose, unclear communication, ineffective decision-making, lack of management support and lack of appropriate team rewards, exist. The goal is to present gateways or recommendations for overcoming these barriers.

Data Collection

The sample comprised of employees of a large communications Core Network Operations department in the KwaZulu-Natal region. The sample of 296 was drawn from a population of 412 employees using a stratified random sampling technique whereby the sample was proportionately stratified based on tenure, which was assumed to influence perceptions of team effectiveness. The sample comprised of 94.6% of males and only 5.4% of females due to the highly technical nature of the job. The majority of the subjects were 40 to 49 years old (58.1%), followed by those in the 30 to 39 years age group (21.6%), then those between 20 to 29 years (10.8%) and lastly, those who are 50 years and over (9.5%). The majority of employees are White (41.9%), closely followed by Indian (39.5%), then Black (18.2%) and only 0.4% of Coloured employees. The disparate racial composition is probably due to the fact that more Whites and Indians were in possession of the entry level qualifications in the past. The majority of subjects worked in the company for 16 years and more (41.2%), followed by those with tenures of 8 to 11 years (23.6%), 4 to 7 years (16.9%), 12 to 15 years (16.2%) and 0 to 3 years (2%). The high percentage of employees with long service in the organisation may be due to the job security and fringe benefits that this organisation offers. Tenure therefore, has the potential to impact on the perceptions of team effectiveness as these employees have worked in a team-orientated environment for a long period of time.

Furthermore, 34 managers making up the consensus were interviewed as part of a focus group session to brainstorm perceived barriers to team effectiveness.

Measuring Instrument

Data was collected using a self-developed, self-administered, pre-coded questionnaire, which comprised of two sections, namely, biographical data and the actual Team Effectiveness Questionnaire. Biographical data requested related to gender, age, race and tenure and was measured on a nominal scale using option categories. The Team Effectiveness Questionnaire comprised of 46 items which clustered into 5 sub-dimensions which were measured on a 1-5 point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5):-

- Clarity of goals/purpose of team (items 1 to 9)
- Efficiency and effectiveness of communication of team (items 10 to 14)
- Efficiency and effectiveness of decision-making of team (items 15 to 24)
- Managing support that the team receives (items 25 to 34)
- Team rewards (items 35 to 46)

An open-ended question was included at the end of the questionnaire to allow expression of thought regarding the sub-dimensions being measured.

Focus group interviews were also conducted with 34 managers regarding the perceived barriers to team effectiveness. The items included in the focus group interview closely resembled the items used to measure the sub-dimensions of the Team Effectiveness Questionnaire.

Procedure

After permission to undertake the study was received, the questionnaire was pilot tested on 15 employees and once it was established that the measuring instrument was clearly understood, it was administered to the sample over a 3 week period via e-mail as all employees had access. Thereafter, focus group sessions were conducted with 34 operational managers based on availability of groups.

Statistical Analysis

The psychometric properties of the questionnaire (validity and reliability) were statistically evaluated using Factor Analysis and Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha respectively. In computing the Factor Analysis, all values >0.5 were considered to reflect significant loadings and if an item loaded significantly on two factors, only that with the higher loading was considered (Table 1).

Table 1: Validity of Questionnaire determined using Factor Analysis

Item	Component				
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Q31	**0.806**	0.235	0.154	-0.018	0.088
Q34	**0.789**	0.235	0.422	0.194	-0.071
Q45	**0.759**	0.125	0.035	0.160	-0.105
Q46	**0.748**	0.120	0.129	0.136	-0.059
Q32	**0.708**	0.225	0.129	-0.211	0.202
Q27	**0.704**	0.355	0.120	0.094	0.114
Q33.2	**0.704**	0.265	-0.014	0.267	0.000
Q33.3	**0.704**	0.283	0.479	0.224	0.024
Q28	**0.684**	0.297	0.513	-0.146	0.168
Q33.7	**0.675**	0.306	0.025	0.321	0.138
Q30	**0.655**	0.318	0.439	-0.021	-0.067
Q9	**0.651**	0.580	0.496	0.039	-0.231
Q24	**0.641**	0.450	0.078	0.130	-0.326
Q14	**0.606**	0.564	0.336	0.154	-0.373
Q25	**0.596**	0.240	0.336	-0.102	0.119
Q43	**0.560**	0.148	0.037	0.404	0.365
Q33.8	**0.548**	0.344	0.490	0.407	0.129
Q33.4	**0.538**	0.344	0.051	0.330	-0.074
Q33.6	**0.538**	0.283	0.369	0.501	-0.002
Q36	**0.508**	0.277	0.447	0.507	0.252
Q39	**0.508**	0.157	0.321	0.495	0.316
Q13	**0.505**	0.469	0.253	-0.170	-0.313
Q33.5	0.491	0.378	0.201	0.414	0.043
Q6	0.228	**0.838**	0.242	0.122	-0.071
Q1	0.218	**0.803**	0.409	0.164	-0.072
Q12	0.203	**0.758**	0.185	0.167	-0.214

Q10	0.361	**0.741**	0.266	0.051	0.065
Q7	0.461	**0.725**	0.104	0.056	-0.023
Q8	0.294	**0.720**	0.336	-0.138	-0.114
Q2	0.213	**0.712**	0.402	-0.049	-0.057
Q4	0.332	**0.710**	0.286	0.101	-0.204
Q11	0.427	**0.702**	0.279	0.133	-0.079
Q3	0.342	**0.640**	0.455	0.071	-0.031
Q15	0.388	**0.534**	0.500	-0.137	0.122
Q19	0.085	**0.529**	0.251	0.239	0.375
Q35	0.412	**0.500**	-0.266	0.448	0.187
Q18	0.080	0.449	0.019	0.037	0.257
Q17	0.263	0.271	0.268	0.045	0.027
Q20	0.256	0.430	**0.716**	0.173	0.028
Q21	0.388	0.403	**0.664**	-0.137	-0.163
Q38	-0.200	0.146	**0.659**	0.223	-0.199
Q22	0.333	0.494	**0.654**	0.013	-0.105
Q5	0.196	0.611	**0.627**	-0.045	0.063
Q29	0.588	0.278	**0.614**	0.033	0.146
Q33.1	0.535	0.241	**0.555**	0.303	0.082
Q23	0.457	0.519	**0.528**	0.069	-0.048
Q40	0.087	0.015	-0.042	**0.720**	-0.075
Q42	0.049	-0.038	0.226	**0.558**	-0.035
Q16	0.057	-0.331	-0.134	0.486	-0.014
Q37	0.147	-0.164	-0.016	-0.369	0.014
Q41	-0.012	-0.195	0.050	-0.163	**0.712**
Q26	0.425	0.200	0.400	0.403	-0.461
Q44	0.057	-0.001	-0.070	0.063	0.418
Eigen-value	**12.407**	**10.590**	**7.070**	**3.829**	**2.223**
% of Total Variance	**23.41**	**19.98**	**13.34**	**7.22**	**4.19**

The Factor Analysis (Table 1) generated 5 factors with latent roots greater than unity. Table 1 indicates that 22 items load significantly on Factor 1 and account for 23.41% of the total variance with the majority of items relating to management support and hence, Factor 1 may be labeled as

management support given to the team. Thirteen items load significantly on Factor 2 and account for 19.98% of the total variance with the majority of items relating to **clarity of goals/purpose of teams** and is therefore, labeled likewise. Factor 3 has 8 significant loadings and account for 13.34% of the total variance with the majority of items relating to the **efficiency and effectiveness of decision-making of teams**. Factor 4 has 2 significant item loadings and account for 7.22% of the total variance and these items relate to **team rewards**. Factor 5 has 1 item that loads significantly and accounts for 4.19% of the total variance and relates to **team rewards**. Evidently, two factors (4 and 5) surfaced as **team rewards** whilst none surfaced as the efficiency and effectiveness of team communication as items relating to the latter were perceived as relating to management support and clarity of goals/purpose instead.

The Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha of 0.9728 (Table 2) reflected that the questionnaire has a very high level of inter-item consistency and that the items reliably measure team effectiveness.

Table 2: Reliability Estimate using Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha

Cronbach's Coefficient	**0.9728**

Data obtained from the questionnaires were analysed using both descriptive (frequencies, percentages, measures of central tendency and dispersion) and inferential statistics (correlation, t-test, ANOVA and multiple regression).

Data Analysis

Respondents were required to indicate the extent to which their teams had clear goals/purpose, engaged in clear communication and decision-making, received management support and appropriate and salient rewards respectively. The higher the mean, the greater the perception that the sub-dimensions was being realised (Table 3).

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics: Key dimensions determining team effectiveness

Sub-dimension of team effectiveness	**Mean**	**Variance**	**Std. Dev.**	**Maximum attainable score**
Clarity of team goals/ purpose	3.0931	0.835	0.91360	5
Efficiency and effectiveness of team communication	3.0541	0.978	0.98878	5
Efficiency and effectiveness of team decision-making	3.0216	0.621	0.78809	5
Management support given to team	2.4849	0.795	0.89176	5
Team rewards	2.5270	0.265	0.51459	5

Table 3 indicates that, in terms of team effectiveness, teams reflect that they have clear goals/purpose (Mean = 3.0931), followed by efficient and effective communication (Mean = 0.0541) and decision-making (Mean = 0.30216). Least gratifying for teams is the team rewards (Mean = 2.5270) and management support received (Mean = 2.4849). Although teams reflected that they have clarity of goals/purpose, there is room for improvement in each of these sub-dimensions of team effectiveness as the mean score values against a maximum attainable score of 5 reflects room for improvement. To assess exactly where the barriers are and where the improvement is needed in each one of the sub-dimensions, frequency analyses were computed.

In terms of **clarity of team goals/purpose**, 37.8% of the respondents indicated disagreement when it came to prioritizing goals. With regards to **efficiency and effectiveness of communication of teams**, 54% of the subjects felt that there is no proper communication between the team and other teams with the organisation, that is, inter-team communication. Regarding the barriers relating to **efficiency and effectiveness of decision-making of the teams**, 48.6% reflected that all team members need to participate in decision-making and 45.9% of the respondents felt that team members need to be involved in making decisions about setting goals and targets.

Several barriers with regards to **team rewards** were identified as follows:

- 83.8% of the respondents felt that employees are not rewarded promptly when they do an exceptional job.
- 83.8% of the respondents do not feel motivated to perform better by the current team award system.
- 81% of the respondents felt that the current method of rewarding good performance through team awards is unsatisfactory.
- 81% of the respondents felt that team members do not feel recognised for their job performance within the team.
- 59.4% of the employees felt that they are not adequately rewarded for good performance within their team.

Significant barriers surfaced with regards to **management support to teams**:

- 72.9% of the respondents indicated that communication from senior management is not frequent enough.
- 62.1% highlighted management's lack of regular feedback to the team about its progress.
- 59.4% reflected management's lack of communication regarding the performance of teams.
- 54% of the respondents felt that team members lack the resources, information and support that they need from management.
- 51.3% reflected management's lack of value for individuals as assets.

The sub-dimensions determining team effectiveness were inter-correlated to assess whether they relate to each other.

Hypothesis 1

There exists significant inter-correlations amongst the sub-dimensions determining team effectiveness (clarity of goals/purpose, efficiency and effectiveness of communication of teams, efficiency and effectiveness of decision-making of the teams, management support to teams, team rewards) respectively (Table 4).

Table 4: Intercorrelations amongst sub-dimensions determining team effectiveness

Sub-dimensions determining team effectiveness	r / **p**	Clarity of goals/ Purpose	Efficiency & effectiveness of communication of teams	Efficiency & effective-ness of decision-making of teams	Mngt. support of teams	Team re-wards
Clarity of goals/purpose	r **p**	1				
Efficiency & effectiveness of communic-ation of teams	r **p**	0.932 **0.000****	1			
Efficiency & effectiveness of decision-making of teams	r **p**	0.820 **0.000****	0.800 **0.000****	1		
Mngt. support of teams	r **p**	0.756 **0.000****	0.747 **0.000****	0.809 **0.000****	1	
Team rewards	r **p**	0.488 **0.000****	0.490 **0.000****	0.551 **0.000****	0.741 **0.000****	1

****p < 0.01**

Table 4 indicates that there exists significant inter-correlations amongst the key sub-dimensions determining team effectiveness (clarity of goals/purpose, efficiency and effectiveness of communication of teams, efficiency and effectiveness of decision-making of the teams, management support to teams, team rewards) respectively at the 1% level of significance. Hence, hypothesis 1 may be accepted. The implication is that any improvement in each of the dimensions determining team effectiveness has the potential to have a snowballing effect thereby enhancing team effectiveness exponentially.

The impact of the biographical variables on perceptions of the effectiveness of teams was also evaluated in order to obtain biographical correlates.

Hypothesis 2

There is a significant difference in the perceptions of employees varying in biographical profiles (gender, age, race, tenure) regarding the effectiveness of their teams in terms of each of the sub-dimensions (clarity of goals/purpose, efficiency and effectiveness of communication of teams, efficiency and effectiveness of decision-making of the teams, management support to teams, team rewards) respectively (Tables 5-8).

Table 5: t-test and Post-Hoc Scheffe's Test - Gender

Sub-dimensions determining team effectiveness	**t-test for equality of Means**		**Post-Hoc Scheffe's Test**		
	t	**P**	**Sub-groups of gender**	**Mean**	**Standard deviation**
Clarity of goals/purpose	-2.350	**0.019***	Male Female	3.0635 3.6111	0.90908 0.86066
Efficiency and effectiveness of communication of teams	-0.606	0.545	-	-	-
Efficiency and effectiveness of decision-making of the teams	-2.251	**0.025***	Male Female	2.9971 3.4500	0.77060 0.98116
Management support to teams	-0.476	0.634	-	-	-
Team rewards	0.548	0.584	-	-	-

***p < 0.05**

Table 5 indicates that there is a significant difference in the perceptions of male and female employees regarding the clarity of goals/purpose and efficiency and effectiveness of decision-making of their teams respectively at the 5% level of significance. In order to assess exactly where these differences lie, a Post-Hoc Scheffe's Test was conducted and it was found that females displayed greater confidence that their teams had clarity of goals/purpose and engaged in efficient and effective decision-making respectively than males. No other significant differences were noted

in terms of gender. Hence, hypothesis 2 may only be partially accepted in terms of gender differences.

Table 6: ANOVA and Post-Hoc Scheffe's Test - Age

Sub-dimensions determining team effectiveness	**ANOVA**		**Post-Hoc Scheffe's Test**		
	F	**P**	**Sub-groups of age in years**	**Mean**	**Standard deviation**
Clarity of goals/purpose	9.929	**0.000****	20-29 30-39 40-49 50+	2.9722 2.8056 3.0956 3.8730	1.38806 0.92645 0.77021 0.55077
Efficiency and effectiveness of communication of teams	6.231	**0.000****	20-29 30-39 40-49 50+	3.1500 2.8000 3.0209 3.7286	1.26389 0.97720 0.92022 0.78356
Efficiency and effectiveness of decision-making of the teams	1.404	0.242	-	-	-
Management support to teams	5.771	**0.001****	20-29 30-39 40-49 50+	2.1618 2.4191 2.4747 3.0672	0.64973 0.76986 0.94849 0.79820
Team rewards	17.315	**0.000****	20-29 30-39 40-49 50+	2.0208 2.4167 2.6337 2.7024	0.29558 0.33858 0.53580 0.51989

****p < 0.01**

Table 6 indicates that there is a significant difference in the perceptions of employees varying in age regarding their teams' clarity of goals/purpose, efficiency and effectiveness in communication and the management support and rewards given to teams respectively at the 1% level of significance. In order to assess exactly where these differences lie, the Post-Hoc Scheffe's Test was conducted and it was noted that:-

- Older employees (>40 years) viewed the team as having clear goals/purpose as opposed to younger employees (<40years).
- Older employees (>50 years) perceived their teams as engaging in efficient and effective communication as opposed to younger employees (<50 years).
- Older employees (>40 years) perceived management support and team rewards in a more positive view than younger employees (<40 years).

Overall, younger employees have a more negative view of their teams' effectiveness and management support and team rewards than older employees do.

Table 6 also reflects that there is no significant difference in the perceptions of the teams' efficiency and effectiveness in engaging in decision-making. Hence, hypothesis 2 may only be partially accepted in terms of age differences.

Table 7: ANOVA and Post-Hoc Scheffe's Test - Race

Sub-dimensions determining team effectiveness	**ANOVA**		**Post-Hoc Scheffe's Test**		
	F	**P**	**Sub-groups of race**	**Mean**	**Standard deviation**
Clarity of goals/purpose	12.735	**0.000****	Black White Indian	3.2531 2.7885 3.3343	0.90484 0.78904 0.95476
Efficiency and effectiveness of team communication	15.265	**0.000****	Black White Indian	3.3926 2.6984 3.2684	0.95638 0.87141 1.01171
Efficiency and effectiveness of team decision-making	16.132	**0.000****	Black White Indian	3.2926 2.7298 3.1974	0.69169 0.69773 0.82467
Management support to teams	25.383	**0.000****	Black White Indian	2.9346 2.0930 2.6828	0.92252 0.72620 0.87458
Team rewards	18.377	**0.000****	Black White Indian	2.7546 2.3306 2.6218	0.59752 0.34807 0.54706

****p < 0.01**

Table 7 indicates that there is a significant difference in the perceptions of employees varying in race regarding each of the sub-dimensions determining team effectiveness (clarity of goals/purpose, efficiency and effectiveness of communication of teams, efficiency and effectiveness of decision-making of the teams, management support to teams, team rewards) respectively at the 1% level of significance. Hence, hypothesis 2 may be accepted in terms of race differences. In order to determine exactly where these differences lie, a Post-Hoc Scheffe's Test was conducted and the results indicate that:

- Black and Indian employees have a more positive view of their teams in terms of clarity of goals/purpose, efficiency and effectiveness of communication and decision-making as well as of management support and team rewards respectively, than their White counterparts.

Table 8: ANOVA and Post-Hoc Scheffe's Test - Tenure

Sub-dimensions determining team effectiveness	**ANOVA**		**Post-Hoc Scheffe's Test**		
	F	**p**	**Sub-groups of tenure in years**	**Mean**	**Standard deviation**
Clarity of goals/purpose	11.168	**0.000****	0-7 8-11 12-15 16+	3.4683 2.6222 3.2917 3.1129	1.04290 0.88857 0.75032 0.81374
Efficiency and effectiveness of communication of teams	8.123	**0.000****	0-7 8-11 12-15 16+	3.4786 2.6571 3.2000 3.0295	1.08857 0.85949 0.88294 0.96814
Efficiency and effectiveness of decision-making of the teams	3.532	**0.015***	0-7 8-11 12-15 16+	3.2679 2.8314 3.1042 2.9852	1.03715 0.57522 0.79331 0.73425
Mangt. support to	1.872	0.134	-	-	-
Team rewards	4.382	**0.005****	0-7 8-11 12-15 16+	2.4048 2.4024 2.6042 2.6243	0.49016 0.58959 0.40843 0.49553

***p < 0.05 **p < 0.01**

Table 8 indicates that there is a significant difference in the percep-

tions of employees varying in tenure regarding clarity of goals/purpose of their teams, efficiency and effectiveness in their teams' communication and team rewards respectively at the 1% level of significance. In addition, there is a significant difference in the perceptions of employees varying in tenure regarding the efficiency and effectiveness of their teams' decision-making at the 5% level of significance. In order to assess exactly where these differences lie, the Post-Hoc Scheffe's Test was conducted and the results indicate that:-

- Employees with tenure of 0-7 years have the most positive view of their teams' clarity of goals/purpose, efficiency and effectiveness in communication and decision-making but are unhappy with team rewards.
- Employees with tenure of 8-11years are most unhappy with their teams in terms of clarity of goals, communication, decision-making and, team rewards.
- Employees with tenure of 12-15years hold a fairly positive and consistent view of their teams across all four sub-dimensions determining team effectiveness.

Table 8 also indicates that there is no significant difference in the perceptions of employees varying in tenure regarding management support to teams as all sub-groups have a fairly negative view of management support to teams. Hence, hypothesis 2 may only be partially accepted in terms of differences based on tenure.

The extent to which the clarity of goals/purpose, efficiency and effectiveness of communication of teams, efficiency and effectiveness of decision-making of the teams, management support to teams and team rewards impact on team effectiveness respectively was measured using multiple regression (Table 9).

Hypothesis 3

The respective sub-dimensions of clarity of goals/purpose, efficiency and effectiveness of communication of teams, efficiency and effectiveness of decision-making of the teams, management support to teams and team

rewards significantly account for the variance in determining team effectiveness.

Table 9: Multiple Regression - Impact of sub-dimensions of team effectiveness

Model	**R**	**R Square**	**Adjusted R Square**
1	0.931	0.868	0.867
Model	**Unstandardized Coefficients**		**Standardized Coefficients**
	B	**Std. Error**	**Beta**
(Constant)			
Clarity of goals/purpose	0.200	0.000	0.250
Efficiency and effectiveness of communication of teams	0.200	0.000	0.270
Efficiency and effectiveness of decision-making of teams	0.200	0.000	0.216
Management support to teams	0.200	0.000	0.244
Team rewards	0.200	0.000	0.141

a. Dependent Variable: Team Effectiveness

Table 9 indicates that the five sub-dimensions (clarity of goals/purpose, efficiency and effectiveness of communication of teams, efficiency and effectiveness of decision-making of the teams, management support to teams and team rewards) significantly account for 86.7% (Adjusted R Square = 0.867) of the variance in determining team effectiveness. The remaining 13.3% may be due to factors that lie beyond the jurisdiction of this study. Whilst the five dimensions impact significantly on team effectiveness, they do so in varying degrees as reflected in the beta loadings in Table 9, which in descending level of impact on team effectiveness are:-

- Efficiency and effectiveness of communication of teams (Beta = 0.270)
- Clarity of goals/purpose (Beta = 0.250)
- Management support to teams (Beta = 0.244)
- Efficiency and effectiveness of decision-making of teams (Beta = 0.216)
- Team rewards (Beta = 0.141)

Qualitative Analyses

The results of the focus group discussions revealed the following barriers to team effectiveness as perceived by managers:-

- Insufficient time spent with employees out at site due to workload results in the lack of visibility of operational managers with employees and leads to negative perceptions and a feeling of disinterest in what employees do.
- Workload forces operational managers to delegate at least one operational staff to assist with spares and store management thus, impacting on productivity and possibly affecting team targets for the year.
- The company's handling of gainshare issues and reasonable salary increases does affect employees to such an extent that a large percentage of the staff work with no commitment and dedication. Furthermore, employees begin to view the company negatively.
- Lack of skills of some staff due to restructuring can hamper the accomplishment of team goals as it can take up to three years for staff to gain enough experience.
- Negative attitudes of team members may result due to the way in which the company handles sensitive issues, such as, gainshare, Performance Development Management System (PDMS), spares availability.
- Operating systems that do not work are not realistically accepted.
- Staff grievances are sometimes not listened to.

- Rewards are sometimes not equitably allocated.
- Communication problems exist in some groups.
- Targets are not effectively measured and rewarded to teams and team members.
- The importance of customer-focus and customer satisfaction is not sufficiently reiterated as team goals.

Answers to Research Questions

The results of the study were compared and contrasted with that of other studies so as to add value to its perspective and applicability.

Clarity of Goals/Purpose

Employees perceived their teams as having clear goals/purpose (Mean = 3.0931). In fact, from the sub-dimensions studied, clarity of goals/purpose of the team was seen in the most positive light. Similarly, research conducted by Fleming & Monda-Amaya (2001), in a Delphi study of wraparound team members, revealed that the highest rated item related to the team having a clear purpose. The clear goals category was rated second highest. Other items that were rated high in Fleming & Monda-Amaya's (2001) study included goals that were understood by all members, established by the team, modifiable and regularly reviewed. Likewise, research indicates that clear goals are important for establishing and developing an effective team (Axelrod, 2002; Taylor & Snyder, 1995; Fleming & Monda-Amaya, 2001). However, in the current study, the mean score value (3.0931) against a maximum attainable score of 5 indicates that there is room for improvement in the degree of clarity of team goals/purpose. Gordon (1996) advocates that the lack of a clear performance-related goal as the main focus of the team is a serious cause of team failures. Doolen et al. (2003) emphasizes that when management process associated with establishing a clear team purpose is aligned with organisational goals and the allocation of essential resources, team members experience increasing satisfaction.

In the current study, 37.8% of the respondents indicated that their teams did not effectively prioritize team goals. Teams may prioritize goals based on their perceived importance but it must be noted that methods of

prioritization may be impacted upon by, interalia, time and resource constraints (Team goals, 2005).

Research conducted by Yeatts and Barnes (1996) focussed on two teams, namely, the Section 8 Team and the Sales Team. This study reflected that the Section 8 Team members had clear, specific goals and measures of these, which took the form of monthly reports displaying, for example, the number and accuracy of verifications completed. These reports helped the team to maintain its focus on what was important, and to make team decisions that would enhance the team's ability to heighten its performance. Weekly meetings proved to be an excellent vehicle for establishing and clarifying team goals. Contrary to this, Yeatts and Barnes (1996) found that the Sales Team did not have measurable goals. Hence, team members were sometimes unsure of what they could do to help the team perform at a high level and spent their time doing things that were not directed to accomplishing the team goal.

Efficiency and Effectiveness of Team Communication

Although employees displayed a fair degree of confidence that their teams engage in efficient and effective communication, the mean score value of 3.0541 against a maximum attainable score of 5 indicates that there is room for improvement in this regard. This would be imperative as Sidler and Lifton (1999) propose that open and clear communication is the first step towards maintaining team effectiveness in both decision-making and conflict. In the current study, 54% of the respondents felt that there is no proper communication between the team and other teams within the organisation, that is, inter-team communication. According to Doolen et al. (2003), an organisational culture that encourages communication and co-operation between teams and the integration of teams was found to have a significant and positive linear relationship with two different team leader ratings of effectiveness and with team member satisfaction. Several studies have shown positive relationships between effective team communication and team performance (Oser, Prince, Morgan & Simpson, 1991 cited in Stout *et al.*, 1997).

Efficiency and Effectiveness in Decision-making

Although employees displayed a reasonable degree of confidence that their teams engage in efficient and effective decision-making, the mean score value of 3.0216 against a maximum attainable score of 5 indicates that there is room for improvement in this regard. This is essential because teams need to become completely involved in the decision-making process in order for them to reach their full potential and to be optimally effective. Furthermore, teams need to become more responsible in the daily managing of their work as opposed to just executing their daily work (Williams, 1997; Truter, 2003).

According to research (Brass, 1984; Finkelstein, 1992; Hambrick, 1981; Ibarra, 1993 each cited in Bunderson, 2003), patterns of intra-team decision involvement are strongly influenced by the formal positions that team members are in. More especially, team members who are in positions involving control over vital resources or dealing directly with primary task uncertainties are likely to be more involved in decision-making (Finkelstein, 1992; Hambrick, 1981 each cited in Bunderson, 2003). Furthermore, research has indicated that decision involvement is greater for team members who are more educated (Ibarra, 1993 cited in Bunderson, 2003) or who have more prestigious backgrounds (Finkelstein, 1992; Ibarra, 1993 each cited in Bunderson, 2003). The above findings propose that team members whose functional backgrounds allow them to contribute expertise and support to their team's decision process will be more involved in decision-making (Bunderson, 2003).

In the current study, regarding the barriers relating to efficiency and effectiveness of decision-making of the teams, 48.6% of the respondents reflected that all team members need to participate in decision-making and 45.9% of the respondents felt that team members need to be involved in making decisions about setting goals and targets. Flood, Hannan, Smith, Turner, West and Dawson (2000) conducted research using data from 79 high technology firms in the United States and Ireland and found that consensus decision-making emerged as a significant predictor of perceived team effectiveness. Furthermore, Knight, Pearce, Smith, Olian, Sims, Smith and Flood (1999) found that groups employing consensual decision-making usually have greater levels of agreement and member satisfaction than those groups employing other decision-making techniques, such as, dialectical enquiry or devil's advocacy.

Management Support Received by Teams

Employees reflected that they were least happy with the management support that their teams received. This was clearly evident in the low mean score value (2.4849) for management support received by the team, which against a maximum attainable score of 5, depicts tremendous room for improvement. Specifically, the frequency analyses indicated that 72.9% of the respondents indicated that communication from senior management is not frequent enough and 62.1% highlighted management's lack of regular feedback to the team about its progress. Furthermore, 59.4% reflected management's lack of communication regarding the performance of teams and 54% of the respondents felt that team members lack the resources, information and support that they need from management. Undoubtedly, managers can influence and control the design of teams in such a way that it increases the possibility of positive outcomes.

Management support can encourage teams in other ways. When management supports outcomes and objectives for which teams are responsible, it sends a strong signal to team members about the significance of their teams and teamwork (Daily & Bishop, 2003). Research shows that team effectiveness has been found to be higher when the team receives more resources and support (Cannon-Bowers & Salas, 1997 cited in Fedor *et al.*, 2003).

Team Rewards

Employees displayed unhappiness with the rewards that the teams and team members received and this was evident in the low mean score value of 2.5270, which against a maximum attainable score of 5 indicates that there is substantial room for improvement in this regard. Specific barriers to team effectiveness were identified in the frequency analyses where 83.8% of the respondents indicated that they do not feel motivated to perform better by the current team award system and 81% felt that the current method of rewarding good performance through team awards is unsatisfactory. In addition, 81% of the respondents felt that team members do not feel recognised for their job performance within the team and 59.4% of the employees felt that they are not adequately rewarded for good performance within their team.

These results possibly surfaced because most reward and recognition systems for work teams stems from the premise that uniform rewards for all team members are good for teamwork and that individual recognition and rewards are detrimental to teams. It is important that the organisation examines the extent to which its reward and recognition system motivates individual, team and organisational performance improvement (Alpander & Lee, 1995). Organisations utilising a team structure found that performance appraisals should reward team accomplishments, not just individual contributions and that the company should have systems in place to measure and assess the effectiveness of team development (Dufrene & Lenham, 2002). A survey was conducted on the Engineering and Support Center, Huntsville's (NC) workforce in order to assess employee opinions and attitudes about teams and the team reward process. The survey focussed on measuring support for the idea of rewards and recognition for individual contributions to teams as opposed to a uniform team reward process. The results of this survey reflected strong support for the notion that people should be rewarded for individual contributions to the work team. This result supports the American archetype for teams, which focuses on individual achievement and success as the key to effective teams (Cox & Tippett, 2003).

Researchers argue that team members should take complete responsibility for the success or failure of work, and that the behaviour of the whole team decides the performance and rewards of members (Mohrman *et al.*, 1995). Hence, the team must influence its performance by changing behaviour and, team rewards may be used to reinforce behaviour which leads to effective teamwork (CIPD, 2008).

Intercorrelations Amongst the Sub-dimensions Determining Team Effectiveness and, Biographical Correlates

The sub-dimensions of clarity of goals/purpose, efficiency and effectiveness of communication of teams, efficiency and effectiveness of decision-making of the teams, management support to teams and team rewards significantly inter-correlate with each other. The implication is that any improvement in even one sub-dimension has the potential to have a rippling effect to result in enhanced team effectiveness. Hence, we may conclude that an improvement

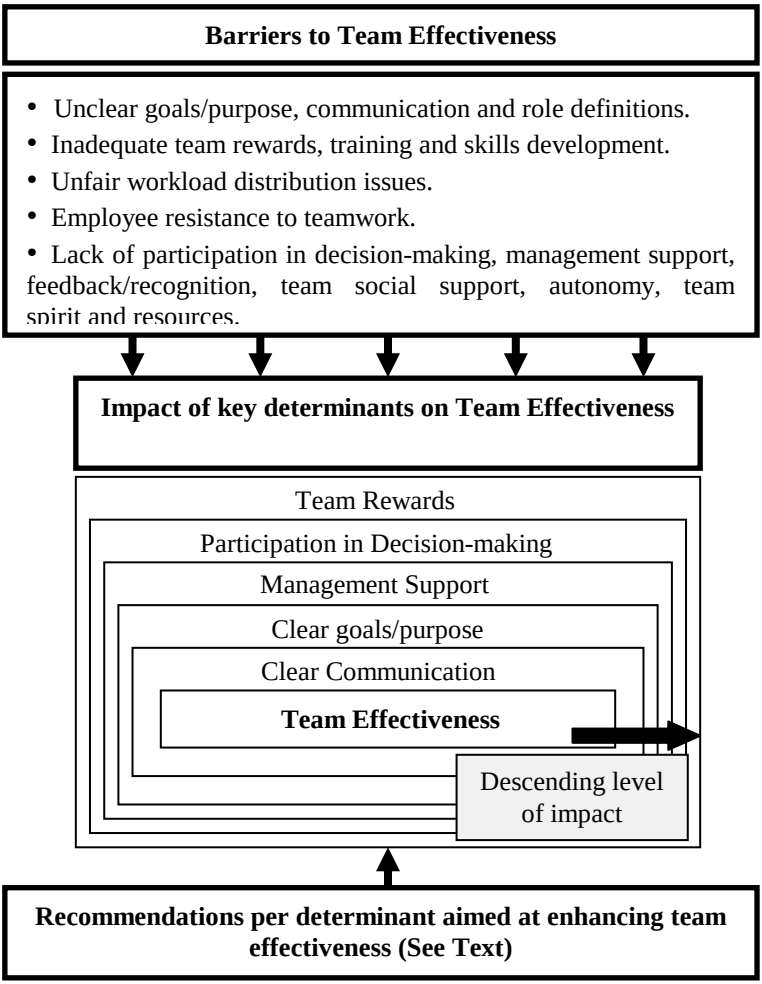
in each of the sub-dimensions will have a snowballing and positive impact on overall team effectiveness.

The biographical correlates indicating the influence of gender, age, race and tenure indicate that careful cognisance must be given to biographical profiles of individuals when the composition of teams are being determined. Evidently, from the results of the current study, biographical variables influence employee perceptions of teams and their functioning relating to the sub-dimensions determining team effectiveness, particularly with regards to age, race and tenure rather than gender.

Recommendations

As a result of the quantitative and qualitative analyses undertaken, this study has identified several barriers to team effectiveness as reflected in Figure 1. Furthermore, Figure 1 depicts the impact of the sub-dimensions on team effectiveness based on the results of the multiple regression analyses, with efficiency and effectiveness of communication of teams being at the innermost part of the figure indicating its greatest impact on team effectiveness. Likewise, based on the results of the multiple regression analysis, team rewards lies in the outmost segment as it is perceived to have the least impact on team effectiveness. Hence, as one progresses from the innermost segment to the outermost segment the impact of the dimensions on team effectiveness diminishes as indicated by the black arrow (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Barriers to Team Effectiveness and impact of key determinants



Based on the results of the study the following recommendations are presented for each determinant of team effectiveness in order of impact:

In order to enhance communication within teams, it is important to take cognisance of the following:

- Frequent communication between employees and managers is essential – regular meetings ensure face-to-face interaction.
- An atmosphere of friendliness/openness should be created and nurtured so that employees feel free to discuss issues that are of concern to them.
- It is imperative that management follow through on promises made to employees and play an active role in resolving problematic issues.
- Give employees an opportunity to suggest ways to improve current communication within the organisation.
- Weekly or monthly newsletter or brochures should be disseminated to create an awareness of new or current occurrences within the company so that employees do not feel alienated from the organisation.
- Develop ways in which team members and management get to know each other better.
- All team members should accept responsibility for the communication process.
- Feedback on performance must be regular, timely, clear and objective.
- Adopt an open door policy to encourage employees to speak to superiors/team leaders so as to improve trust and reduce stress.
- Hold quarterly feedback sessions with team members to discuss problems and exchange relevant information.
- Encourage peer coaching, information sharing and developmental feedback in teams.

The team's goals/purpose may be improved by ensuring the following:

- Goals and targets need to be set in consultation with employees.
- Goals must be specific, measurable, attainable and relevant.
- Goals/purpose need to be agreed upon and understood by each employee – clear positive communication ensures that team members fully understand team goals.
- Employees need to be made aware of the purpose of the team.

- Regular team meetings ensure regular feedback and identification of discrepancies towards goal accomplishment.
- Evaluation sessions ensure that all team members have the same understanding of team goals/purpose.

Management support can contribute effectively to team effectiveness, when cognisance is given to the following:

- Regular meetings should be held with the team leader and manager to identify and resolve any problems.
- Follow-up meetings should be scheduled to check whether problems have been addressed.
- Suggestions from employees should be considered.
- Provide opportunities for education, training and integration of new practices.
- Create a climate within which members can challenge long-standing, outdated practices.
- Develop clarity of the nature/purpose of tasks and reinforce this regularly within the team.
- Develop a sense of pride among team members, for example, by giving challenging tasks, recognition of performance, feedback, guidance, responsibility for decision-making.
- Plan regular team-building activities with employees so that they will be able to get to know and respect one another.
- Management should provide employees with the necessary resources required to perform their jobs.

Team participation in decision-making is imperative and cognisance may be given to the following:

- There should be increased employee involvement and participation in decision-making as this encourages ownership of company goals.
- Encourage equal participation and joint decision-making.
- Assign personal tasks/objectives that are aligned with team goals/objectives. Evaluate these on a regular basis.
- Ensure that team members develop a clear understanding of their task role and contribution to the team.

- Involve all relevant stakeholders, more especially, employees and union representatives when major decisions need to be made regarding the organisation.
- Encourage teamwork and co-operation.
- Team members must be able to identify problems, examine alternatives, and make decisions.
- Create a platform for employees to air their grievances and encourage union participation/involvement.
- Create a platform for employees to contribute to decision-making.

Taking cognisance of the following aspects of team rewards can contribute to team effectiveness:

- Ensure equitable rewards that are consistent with performance as this results in high levels of employee satisfaction.
- Management should structure rewards such that an employee's good performance is recognised.
- Employees should be given incentives and rewards to good effort as this improves individual and group performance.
- Rewards should be structured according to who the best team is or which team has exceeded their targets for the month.
- Rewards, such as, pay and promotion, can reinforce employee involvement when they are linked directly to performance outcomes.

The aforementioned recommendations are aimed at enhancing each of the sub-dimensions determining team effectiveness so that each could have a positive and rippling effect on the other thereby, ultimately enhancing team effectiveness.

Conclusion

Teams have become a cornerstone of modern organisations, and knowledge pertaining to the factors that contribute to team performance have widespread implications for organisations aiming to improve team effectiveness (De Dreu, 2002). The question of how to work and sustain

individual and team effectiveness is a core challenge for organisations. Thus, the model proposed in this study can contribute to, and serve as, reparation for this contemporary challenge.

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