Remote Work is the New Normal: Virtual Teams as a Prerequisite in Global Business Strategy

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ABSTRACT

The world has changed, and with it comes the obligation for us to adjust ourselves to what is truly normal for our organizations. Organizations today rely heavily on a geographically dispersed workforce to compete in the global economy. They establish teams that offer the greatest functional expertise from around the world coupled with deep, local knowledge of the most exciting areas. Despite virtual teams’ growing prevalence, relatively little is known about this new form of work team, particularly in most developing nations. The objective of the paper is to identify the antecedents of virtual team performance and critically examine the literature to filter the advantages and pitfalls of virtual teams. For this purpose, we conducted a search in Google Scholar with the keywords ‘virtual team performance’ and ‘determinants of virtual teams performance’. Given the ease with which the technological infrastructure required to support virtual teams is now available, more research into the wide range of difficulties surrounding virtual teams is required if we are to understand how to manage them effectively.

Keywords: Virtual teams; Trust; Cohesion; Communication; Leadership; Performance.

1.0 Introduction

With the advent of worldwide connectivity through the Internet and other telecommunication technologies, organizations are increasingly embracing virtual
teams that operate more independently of time and space than traditional organizations ((Mitzi et al., 2001). In today’s market, global virtual teams are not the exception but the rule as companies expand into the global market (Bergiel et al., 2006); separated by organisational, spatial and temporal distance (Vaidya & Seetharaman, 2008). Multinational organisations use virtual teams comprising of members from all over the globe to operate successfully in the global business environment (Khalil 2017) and gain a competitive advantage (Mogale & Sutherland, 2010). The growing popularity of alliances and flat organisational structures has increased the need for business firms to coordinate with other firms that transcend geographical and organisational boundaries. Consequently, global virtual teams, supported by information and communication technologies have emerged as a new form of organizational structure (Townsend et al., 1998). The technology must be in place before the team starts to work so that the team members can coordinate with each other and rely on the technology. Such teams require the provision of technology, strategy and work processes which are flexible enough to be adapted to the requirements of each team (Malhotra et al., 2001).

Globalization of business, knowledge intensive competition, and the constraints imposed by the international business environment; are all developments that have an impact on organisational management. This has made it obligatory to pool the talented workforce across organizations and geographical distances, and that increasing time demands are making it challenging to do so through traditional face-to-face collocated teams. Advancements in information and communication technology create new opportunities for organizations to build and manage virtual teams. Such teams are composed of employees from different genders, experiences, culture, backgrounds and geographic locations. Virtual teams have become a norm for organizations whose members work across diverse geographical locations, relying primarily on the usage of Information and Communication Technology for the accomplishment of common goals. Just as technology facilitates information transmission around the world, in a similar vein, it enables globally distributed people to collaborate on issues and challenges facing a company at the international level (Harasim, 1993; Ives & Jarvenpaa, 1991).

There has been a dramatic increase in the use of technologies like electronic mail, group support systems and other forms of groupware in organizations (Lloyd, 1994). Global virtual teams are geographically dispersed groups with an authority to make and/or implement decisions with international components and implications; immensely useful for international business. They are assigned tasks that are strategically important and highly complex; rarely meet in person; conduct most of their interaction and decision making using communication technology. Although they play an increasingly important role in multinational organizations, research on virtual teams is
still in its nascent stages. Despite the enormous contribution of employing virtual teams, the application of virtual teams by most enterprises, particularly in developing economies like India, is still at its infancy. This study is built around the review of research papers discussing the nature and conceptual aspect, advantages and challenges, global virtual team processes and performance over time, including the role of vital elements like trust, information sharing, leadership, and communication, in building virtual teams. To conclude, the study brings forth far reaching implications for organisations engaged in the international business.

Besides the introductory framework in the present section, the study offers an extensive review of the past work with the concept and nature in Section 2, the advantages and drawbacks in Section 3, antecedents of virtual team in Section 4 and conclusions and implications in Section 5, and limitations and directions for future research in the Section 6.

2.0 Virtual Teams: Conceptual Framework

Team is defined as a small number of people with complementary skills who are equally committed to a common purpose, goal, and working approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable (Zenun et al., 2007). Virtual teams are groups of geographically and/or organizationally dispersed coworkers that are assembled using a combination of information and telecommunications technologies to accomplish an organizational task (Hertel et al., 2005; Anderson et al., 2007; Kankanhalli et al., 2006); they rarely meet in a face-to-face setting (Dulebohna & Hoch, 2017). It is worth mentioning that virtual teams are often formed to overcome geographical or temporal separations (Cascio & Shurygailo, 2003). They interact through interdependent tasks guided by a common purpose and work across links strengthened by information, communication, and transport technologies (Gassmann & Zedtwitz, 2003). From the perspective of (Leenders et al., 2003), virtual teams are groups of individuals collaborating in the execution of a specific project while geographically and often temporally distributed, possibly anywhere within and beyond their parent organization. Virtual teams are small temporary groups of geographically, organizationally and/or time dispersed knowledge workers who coordinate their work, predominantly with electronic information and communication technologies in order to accomplish one or more organization tasks (Warkentin et al., 1997). The teams rely on communication technology such as email, FAX, and video or voice conferencing services in order to collaborate (Lipnack & Stamps, 2000); providing the virtual team a natural environment to cope up with the dynamics of working (Gonçalves et al., 2014). The degree of
virtuality of a team is defined not only by the spatial, organizational or temporal distance; but also by the level of technology used by the team (Shin 2004; Burlea, 2007)). Global virtual teams are, thus, the groups that (a) are identified by their organization(s) and members as a team; (b) are responsible for making and/or implementing decisions important to the organization’s global strategy; (c) use technology-supported communication substantially more than face-to-face communication; and (d) work and live in different countries (Maznevski & Chudoba 2000).

Researchers have varying opinions with regard to identifying aspects which are important in distinguishing a virtual team from a traditional face-to-face team (Rad & Levin, 2003). Some authors emphasize on the geographical distance between team members while differentiating the two teams, while others stress the use of information and computer mediated communication between the virtual team members as the main factor that distinguishes virtual teams from the traditional ones (Kirkman & Mathieu, 2005). Thus, it seems logical that people who share the same premises but use computer related network only for communication instead of face-to-face communication, is a case of a highly virtual environment. The salient characteristics of virtual teams were identified as being temporary (constituted for the accomplishment of a specified task within the stipulated time), culturally diverse (members belong to different countries, culture and languages), geographically dispersed (people join from remote locations) and communicate electronically (use of information technology to connect with each other) (Jarvenpaa et al., 1999; Bhat et al., 2017).

3.0 Determinants of Virtual Teams

Several factors, such as task characteristics, member abilities, technological support, and organizational environment affect group development; which may be unique to the group setting. Virtual teams are learning entities and adapt to the environmental changes and transform into entities that are capable of modifying and developing over time (Ebrahim et al., 2010). Communication is possibly the salient issue in the virtual team environment. High levels of communication in the early life of virtual teams nurture mutual trust and team cohesiveness among the team; which then reduces barriers to communication and promotes a culture of cooperation in the organisations. The use of computer mediated technology for communication makes it imperative to analyse certain aspects of communication in virtual teamwork like, richness of communication, time spent on communicating and the frequency of communication (Gerda et al., 2009). Members’ perceived task interdependence and communication
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frequency are positively related to the perceived level of awareness and trust in virtual teams (Jang, 2009). Technical Communication found that the face-to-face meetings are significant in establishing a greater social connect among team members; members generally mentioned the value of putting a face on their remote counterparts in remote communication (Robey et al., 2000). Since virtual teams are not guided by strict power and authority relationships, constrained control systems; members must rely on the common purpose and cooperative goals to coordinate communication and action. Well-integrated technology is needed to sustain communication in virtual teams. Consequently, skilled staff is necessary to ensure networks are functioning, company databases are updated, and technology training is available for the virtual team members (Suchan & Hayzak, 2001). A dialogue technique facilitates the building of a shared understanding in virtual teams to overcome the initial lack of performance; this can assist newly constituted virtual teams to effectively attain better performance (Tan et al., 2000). When virtual teams are given sufficient time to develop strong intra group relationships and adapt to the communication medium, they may communicate as effectively as face-to-face groups (Gaudes et al., 2007). Individual characteristics such as role and status are less influential in computer mediated communication (Sproull & Kiesler, 1986). Various communication media differ in their ability to convey a social presence that is inherent in a face-to-face environment; rich nonverbal cues like voice modulations, gestures, face expression, may get distorted or lost through the computer-mediated communication (Kiesler & Sproull, 1992; Warkentin et al., 1997). Rich and frequent communication can help the organisational groups arrive quickly at a decision (Zmud et al., 1991). The task of connecting teams is much easier than coordinating teamwork; and that virtual teams should work on finding courses of action to integrate group activities and manage conflict to be successful when they use technology as a medium of communication (Mitzi et al., 2001). The virtual team structure is not static but continuously changing; different structures are created, reproduced and transformed through communication overtime (Sarker et al., 2001).

Trust was considered as an important variable due to the increase in virtualization during the covid-19 pandemic and organisations, therefore, must consider measures such as task, leadership, communication and cohesion; due to their positive influence on trust (Garro-Abarca et al., 2021). There are challenges for maintaining and creating trust in global virtual teams with members across space, time and culture and that virtual teams may develop swift trust which tends to be very tender (Jarvenpaa et al., 1999). A person has trust in a group when the group makes an effort to behave in accordance with the commitments, members are honest in the negotiations and do not
take advantage of one another even when there is an opportunity to do so (Cummings & Bromiley, 1996). Trust is an important component to prevent psychological distance among virtual team members (Snow et al., 1996) and it builds the confidence in relationships by promoting open exchange of information (Hinds & Bailey, 2000). The research holds that trust is positively related to knowledge sharing in virtual teams (Ertuğrul, 2012; Usoro et al., 2007), team performance and teamwork satisfaction, and the teams reporting higher levels of trust also demonstrated more mature teamwork development (Hungwei & Heng, 2011). Trust is a pivotal element of virtual teams and a significant predictor of virtual team members’ desire to get and exchange information; members may come and talk about a particular topic but will trust others only if they are aware of something personal about them (Catherine et al., 2002). Measures of relational trust were significantly strongly related to the quality and commitment of the relationship, while measures of global trust were slightly strongly related to indicators of personality and emotion (Couch & Jones, 1997). It was identified that trust, information sharing and communication are factors which are significant for virtual teams’ members to achieve efficacy in their performance (Bhat et al., 2017). When team members have the willingness to collaborate, they develop trust and are open to share information with each other resulting in innovative and cohesive teams which perform their tasks in a cooperative manner (Suchan & Hayzak, 2001). Trust plays a crucial role in developing user behavior; teachers trust to use information technology for knowledge sharing in distant teaching only if they find that the technology is fulfilling their purpose (Khawaja, 2015). When individuals are honest in virtual environments, their socializing level in virtual environments increases, but it increases the level of Internet addiction as well (Ertugrul et al., 2014). Trust is important in teams because it reduces transaction costs; members who do not trust their fellow team members will verify others’ work to ensure the quality of work which increases the amount of resources needed to accomplish the task (Watson-Manheim & Belanger, 2002). Lack of alignment in virtual teams will result in team conflicts that will undermine trust, weaken project commitment, and damage open communications (Suchan & Hayzak, 2001).

Cohesion is another important aspect of virtual teams; it results in effective performance (Lurey & Raisinhgani, 2001; Maznevski & Chudoba, 2000) and greater satisfaction (Chidambaram, 1996). While computer mediated communication might be effective for creating an effective communication environment for virtual team members, a sense of cohesion and satisfaction may still be lacking among group members (Warkentin et al., 1997). Cohesion and process satisfaction increase over time in all types of electronic support, irrespective of differences in richness (Burke & Aytes, 1998). Most real-world groups have a longer life span than a month; they also have a
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history of working together in the past and expectations of working together in the future (Chidambaram & Bostrom, 1993). The lack of a social context may obstruct the process through which team members develop trust for each other (Jarvenpaa et al., 1998). Leaders must be able to create the social climate required for ensuring team unity and cohesiveness since group cohesion is a necessary requisite for group effectiveness (Keller, 1986; Summers et al., 1988). Well-coordinated teams recognized the importance of developing trust and cohesion among the members and predicted the efficacy of social networking and communication channels in the early phase of the project to enhance that development (Jolanta et al., 2017). Frequent interaction among team members is positively related to interpersonal attraction which in turn increases cohesion and task commitment; and consequently task productivity and performance (Zaccaro & Charles, 1988). Cohesiveness exerts considerable influence over work group performance (Seashore, 1954; Goodman et al., 1987). Highly cohesive groups possess more power over their group members which causes members to conform to the group standard (Bettenhausen, 1991). In the study on comparison of behaviour of group decision support system and manual groups, the authors concluded that groups with computer support and those without computer support exhibit different patterns of development, however, cohesion and ability to manage conflict were higher for manual groups initially but the pattern reversed overtime (Chidambaram et al., 1990).

Group cohesion can also differ by gender; women are found to report greater cohesion in comparison to men (Bettenhausen, 1991). Males are more open to socialization and sharing in virtual environments than females, addicted to the internet and trust other individuals in virtual environments more in comparison to their female counterparts (Ertugrul et al., 2014). The impact of gender on virtual collaboration in comparison to face-to-face teams; women reported to have perceived more than the men that groups remained unified and members helped each other in the virtual team environment (Lind, 1999). Also, women may work well in the virtual team, but they may be confining their career growth if they use media with less social presence like email, to work with others rather than rich face-to-face team work. Gender is an important factor that must be considered in computer mediated communication; women are taking advantage of this mode of communication, more satisfied with the group process, place high value on consideration for the wants and needs of others and report high levels of group development than the mix or male groups (Savicki et al., 1996). Individuals also differ across age in the virtual environment. People who are 30 and older feel that they behave more honest in virtual environments than the individuals who belong to other age groups (Ertugrul et al., 2014).
Apart from trust, communication effectiveness and cohesion as key factors in the success of a project, effective learning of team members and team performance; the organisation should provide a favourable climate for improving the comfort and motivation level of the virtual team participants (Sridhar et al., 2008). Virtual teams offer flexibility and agility that are essential for businesses to cope with the competitive pressures in a global market (Jang, 2009). Organizations are experiencing environments that require quick responses to customer needs; flexibility as needs change overtime, and workers with requisite knowledge, technical skills and well-developed interpersonal abilities to accomplish tasks (Suchan & Hayzak, 2001). Training, a shared mental model, and social norms that affect the performance of virtual teams with the help of media synchronicity theory (Birgit & Ulrike, 2017; Dennis et al., 2008). Strong business and social pressures were found to be compelling reasons for the adoption of virtual teams in organisations due to its immense benefits in dealing with the competitive work environment (Ebrahim et al., 2009). Global virtual teams are a necessity due to the increasing pressure on organisations to put together people from diverse locations (Kayworth & Leidner, 2000). Computer mediated communication when participants are interdependent over time; they adopt more intimate and sociable relational behavior from the inception of interaction and throughout (Walther, 1995). Computer-mediated groups increased in several relational dimensions to more positive levels and these levels were almost the same as those of face-to-face groups (Walther & Burgoon, 1992). The challenges of virtual teams based on the dispersal of team members and dependence on technology relate to trust, distance and time-related issues and cultural diversity and that effective e-leaders can contribute by choosing the right communication tool, learning new skills, and adapting behaviour to virtual settings (Lilian, 2014). For virtual teams to achieve efficiency, clarification of the goals is extremely significant since people who work across distance tend to lose their focus after meeting. When people work from distance, the leader needs to unite them to be able to work in one direction either intellectually (when everyone has clarity on the goals) or emotionally (personally, they feel that the task is worth doing) (Borget et al., 2018).

Other variables like human resource policies, leadership, support from top management and training lead to improved communication and trust building which is important for virtual team performance, reduction in conflict and improvement in the quality of work (Ahuja, 2016). Among the most striking variables that influence the effectiveness of small-group decision making are leadership and structuring of the group process (Fjermestad & Hiltz, 1999). Virtual teams led by supportive leaders had higher levels of participation and trust among members than teams led by commanding leaders (Furumo et al., 2012). The media must support not only information transfer and other
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Effective implementation of projects is dependent on the instructor’s ability to help students overcome barriers in intercultural communications and on not on the proficiency in technology (Ryssen & Godar, 2000). Teams that were given appropriate training showed improved perceptions of the interaction process over time, particularly with regard to trust, commitment and free expression between members (Warkentin & Beranek, 1999). There are a variety of factors necessary for effective leadership in virtual teams; which include the ability to communicate, leader’s understanding, role clarity and attitude toward team members (Kayworth & Leidner, 2002).

Co-presence in a virtual team as a situation in which, members share consciousness of each other’s presence beyond their physical presence; through combinations of text, auditory and visual contact, which can help team members connect (Sarker et al., 2001). Members of a virtual team may face pressures to collaborate for reasons other than being part of the team like task characteristics comprising information intensity of the task and sources external and internal to the team. Team members exhibit different dispositions to collaborate in their approach to task execution; impacted by the organisational culture and decision-making style in which the team is rooted (Vaidya & Seetharaman, 2008); in virtual organizations, decision making, is more decentralized especially with regards to operational issues. The quality of decision making for intricate business issues depends on how rationally the decision making process was organized rather than whether the interactions were computer-mediated or face-to-face (Archer 1990).

Language, education, attitudes and values, organisation culture, time zone problems, individual’s characteristics and technology impact the individual’s knowledge sharing activities (Kangning, 2007). According to the Social Information Processing Theory perspective, the repeated use of computer support despite some initial inhibitions changed the attitudes of members from highly negative to partially positive (Chidambaram, 1996).

To conclude, various factors as discussed above affect the member-team fit and consequently the culture of virtual team; which includes the level of cohesion, communication, trust, preference for innovation and risk-taking behaviour, emphasis on attention to detail, task versus people orientation, openness to information sharing and preference for stability (Shin, 2004). If these factors are positive, they enhance the
effectiveness in performance of the organisations engaged in international business and provide solutions to complex business problems.

4.0 Advantages and Drawbacks of Virtual Teams

Virtual teams are a necessity; result in enormous benefits like better team output, talented workforce, greater freedom, quick response to a changing environment, higher team effectiveness and coordination. In the words of Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg, “People are more productive working at home than people would have expected. Some people thought that everything was just going to fall apart, and it hasn’t. And a lot of people are actually saying that they’re more productive now. Times of India (2022)” The use of virtual team structures in today’s competitive environment represents a growing response to the need for low-cost and quick solutions to complex organizational problems. Nowadays companies are heavily investing in virtual teams to enhance their performance and competitiveness; allowing organisations to pool the talents and expertise of individuals by eliminating time and space barriers.

4.1 Advantages of virtual teams

Virtual teams offer multifarious advantages as they can do things collectively that collocated teams cannot. A glimpse of some important advantages of virtual teams has been highlighted in Table 1.

Table 1: Advantages of Virtual Teams

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ability to assemble teams that maximise functional expertise by including professionals from geographically dispersed locations</td>
<td>Hossain &amp; Wigand 2004; Steinfield 2002; Kankanahalli et al., 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enables continuous productivity by using different time zones</td>
<td>Hossain &amp; Wigand 2004; Mulebeke &amp; Zheng 2006; Steinfield 2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowering costs by reducing travel, relocation and overhead</td>
<td>Bergiel, et al., 2008; Cascio, 2000; Lipnack &amp; Stamps 2000; Hossain &amp; Wigand 2004; Nydegger &amp; Nydegger; 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing knowledge across geographic boundaries</td>
<td>Hossain &amp; Wigand 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better output, talented workforce, greater freedom, quick response to changing environment</td>
<td>Ojasalo, 2008; Gaudes et al., 2007; Piccoli et al., 2004; Cascio, 2000; Bergiel et al., 2008; Mulebeke &amp; Zheng, 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allows people to work at any time during the day, increase in participation from retired personnel, maintain high degree of contact, experience more involvement in the group and satisfaction in the outcomes</td>
<td>Gaudes et al., 2007; Guinea et al., 2005; Piccoli et al., 2004</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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| Offer flexibility, lower costs and better utilization of resources to meet the dynamic state of global business environment | Powell et al., 2004; Hunsaker & Hunsaker, 2008; Piccoli et al., 2004 |
| Provides opportunity to coordinate business tasks across nations and regions, reduce travel costs and redundancies across different units of organization | Kankanhalli et al., 2006; Paul et al., 2005 |
| Maximize potential without relocating themselves, offers a pool of talented workforce, offers the opportunity to unite different cultures, understand their perspectives and avoid biases | Piccoli et al., 2004 |
| Reduction in costs and cycle time, coordinating dispersed members, improved decision making and problem solving skills | Rice et al., 2007; |
| Virtual teams are communication intensive and operate in a dynamic environment | Ebrahim et al., 2011 |
| Create highly integrated teams with the help of information rich media | Ramesh & Dennis, 2002 |
| Means of increasing productivity | Piccoli et al., 2004; Guinea et al., 2005 |
| Higher degree of cohesion | Cascio, 2000; Gaudes et al. 2007; Kratzer et al., 2005 |
| Better team outcomes in terms of quality, productivity and satisfaction | Mulebeke & Zheng, 2006 |
| Reduces time to market and consequently the cost associated with it | Mulebeke & Zheng, 2006; Lipnack & Stamps, 2000; Sridhar et al., 2008; Shachaf & Hara 2005 |
| Helps to promote proactive employment practices for disadvantaged people | Bergiel, et al., 2008 |
| Higher level of efficiency and effectiveness in teams | May & Carter, 2001; Shachaf & Hara 2005 |
| Organisations are able to respond quickly to increased competition | Hunsaker & Hunsaker, 2008; Pauleen. 2003 |
| Highly effective in decision making | Hossain & Wigand 2004; Paul et al., 2005 |
| Effective research and development continuation decisions | Cumming & Teng, 2003 |
| Help in cultivating and managing creativity | Leenders et al., 2003 |
| Integrating talent to facilitate cross border innovation processes | Gassmann & Zedtwitz, 2003 |
| Employees can work in multiple teams and maintain a work-life balance | Cascio, 2000 |
| Performance is high and self-assessed | Chudoba et al., 2005; Schumacher & Poehler, 2007 |
| Provides an instrument for global collaboration and coordination of research and development activities | Paul et al., 2005 |
| Taps talent regardless of location | Cascio, 2000 |
| Gives greater degree of freedom to people working in development projects | Ojasalo, 2008 |

Source: Author’s own
4.2 Drawbacks of virtual teams

The major challenges surrounding virtual teams, inherent to their dispersed and impersonal nature, relate to issues arising out of lack of face-to-face interaction, lack of cohesion, mistrust, challenges in managing conflicts and reduction in monitoring and control of activities. According to Dan Springer, CEO, Docusign, “Working from home makes it much harder to delineate work time from personal time. I encourage all of our employees to have a disciplined schedule for when you will work, and when you will not, and to stick to that schedule.” Some of the main drawbacks are given in table 2.

Table 2: Drawbacks of Virtual Teams

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drawbacks</th>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication and collaboration difficulties, low levels of media richness, lower team engagement by members, difficulties in creating trust and shared responsibility among members, isolation, high levels of social distance, challenges in managing.</td>
<td>Hossain &amp; Wigand 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mistrust, challenges in managing conflicts, reduction in monitoring and control of activities</td>
<td>Cascio, 2000; Paul et al., 2005; Kayworth &amp; Leidner, 2002; Shachaf &amp; Hara, 2005; Piccoli et al., 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust, distance, time-related issues, and cultural diversity</td>
<td>Szewc, 2013; Morrison-Smith &amp; Ruiz, 2020; Bergiel et al., 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographic dispersion, computer-mediated communication and trust obstruct interaction among members</td>
<td>Morrison-Smith &amp; Ruiz 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural differences, geographical distance, communication problems and lack of shared goals</td>
<td>Nydegger &amp; Nydegger 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Failure to communicate and retain contextual information, unevenly distributed information, difficulty in understanding the significance of information, difference in speed of information access, and difficulty in interpreting the meaning of silence</td>
<td>Morrison-Smith &amp; Ruiz 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer of early experiences into later time frame, huge time required to maintain technology</td>
<td>Garro-Abarca et al., 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More time required in communication and completion or work</td>
<td>Nydegger &amp; Nydegger, 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delayed communication, misunderstandings arising out of lack of response and inability to monitor team members</td>
<td>Nydegger &amp; Nydegger, 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team leadership presents a significant challenge in managing virtual teams</td>
<td>Borget et al., 2018</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Communication may appear without focus and out of context resulting in misinterpretation and distortion of information by members. Nydegger & Nydegger, 2010; Kayworth & Leidner, 2000

Managing knowledge dispersed across time and place, determining appropriate task-technology fit. Qureshi & Vogel, 2001; Szewc 2013

May perform and communicate less efficiently than traditional teams. Steinfield 2002

Geographic separation causes adverse effects on communication, sharing of knowledge and coordination amongst members. Bhat et al., 2017; Garro-Abarca et al., 2021

Lack of physical interaction. Morrison-Smith & Ruiz, 2020; Nydegger & Nydegger 2010

Cultural and work process diversity and mobility of employees have an adverse impact on virtual team performance. Chudoba et al., 2005

Virtual team members need special training and motivation. Ryssen & Godar, 2000

Diversity in virtual team members leads to differences in their thought process. Shachaf & Hara, 2005;

Difficult to develop trust among the members. Nydegger & Nydegger 2010)

Difficult to hold a meeting for every decision. Garro-Abarca et al., 2021

Everything is done in a highly structured and formal manner. Ebrahim et al., 2011

Distance between the team members is a bigger challenge than the cultural and language differences. Martinez-Sanchez et al., 2006

Lack of cohesiveness in the team members. Nydegger & Nydegger 2010)

Source: Author’s own

Advantages of working based on virtual teams far outweigh its drawbacks (Ebrahim et al., 2010). Given the challenges related to communication, technology, logistics, and culture, virtual team environments may be more complex than their traditional counterparts (Warkentin & Beranek 1999). These challenges can be overcome to some extent if the members communicate frequently, acknowledge and greet others, invite comments and feedback, and stick to deadlines (Jarvenpaa et al., 1998). While all teamwork involves challenges to be managed, the tools at the disposal of virtual teams limits the options they have for addressing the difficulties of (Maznevski & Chudoba 2000). Cross cultural training, effective leadership, and frequent face-to-face meetings of virtual team members are helpful in minimizing the language barrier, improving their communication and enhancing performance (Galegher & Kraut 1994).
5.0 Conclusions and Implications

With the rapid development of information and communication technology, the virtual team offers opportunities for collaboration across time, space and organizational boundaries and has become an important component of the organizational fabric as it enables companies to adapt to the ever changing environmental forces. The virtual form of organization manifests structure that emanates from communication through information technologies that promotes lateral communication not withstanding traditional hierarchical structures (Ahuja & Carley 1999). The global virtual teams, which were almost unheard of a decade ago; they serve as a crucial mechanism for integrating information, making decisions, and implementing actions around the world (Davison & Ward 1999). Given a global business scenario, virtual teams offer a desirable solution for different reasons. We can conclude that the increased virtuality brought about by the pandemic can be an opportunity to innovate in communication to influence performance.

Virtual teams offer unmatched levels of flexibility and responsiveness and have the likelihood of transforming the workplace; however virtuality is not a cure to all organisational problems (Powell et al., 2004). An integrated model which combines face-to-face and online instruction, can work as a dominant form of instruction at all levels of education (Picciano 2017). In many countries across the world, the internet has helped in shrinking barriers between teams located across diverse locations, and this has all been possible because of virtual teams which are connected with each other in the virtual arena. As correctly pointed out by Johnson & Suskewicz (2020), “Even if remote work turns out to be less productive on some metrics than others, reducing carbon-based emissions or improving the work-life balance could make up for it”.

6.0 Limitations and Directions for Future Work

Despite the existence of many relevant theories related to technology and virtualization, very few have been empirically tested. Most of the papers reviewed were studies from developed countries, where working on virtual teams is an age old phenomenon. Lessons from such studies can provide a framework for the organisations in developing countries like India to look forward to overcoming the obstacles. As the technological infrastructure necessary to support virtual teams is now readily available, further research on the plethora of issues surrounding virtual teams is required if we are to learn how to manage them effectively. The limitations of the study exist with regard to the limit on the number of papers considered for this work.
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