Does National Diversity Impact Conflict in Global Virtual Teams? The Role of Language Factors

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Abstract

This study looks at the impact of national diversity on task and relationship conflict in the context of global virtual teams (GVTs). We investigate the interaction effects of both English skills and openness to linguistic diversity on these relationships. We administered a questionnaire to 283 GVTs working on a collaborative experiential learning project to develop an international business plan. Our results show that, for teams exhibiting high levels of openness to linguistic diversity and high levels of English skills, increased levels of national diversity on the team are associated with lower levels of task and relationship conflict. The relationship is reversed, however, in teams where openness to linguistic diversity and team English skills are low. These findings shed light on the relationship between national diversity and conflict by suggesting that both English skills and team attitudes toward language diversity are important in reducing conflict. Moreover, openness to linguistic diversity may be more important in reducing conflict than the level of team members' language proficiency.

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