MK7227 Postgraduate Dissertation

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Title:

Effects of cultural differences on the working of a virtual team: Indian and British members

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Royal Docks Business School, University of East London for the degree of

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Abstract

Organisations are now expanding their reach by employing people from different geographical locations in order to utilise the skills the world has to offer. Moreover, the advancement of technology has made it possible to establish links with the global workforce. This has resulted in increase of use of global virtual teams. Global virtual teams are effective as they are not bound by space, time and cost. However, there are a range of issues surrounding them. One of the issues that is not explicitly visible is the issue of cultural differences that can create problems between the team members of a virtual team. Past studies have found conflicting results on the effects of cultural differences on a virtual team's effectiveness. This exploratory research is carried out to create an in depth understanding of the effects of cultural differences between the Indian and British team members.

The effects of culture were investigated on different aspects of a virtual team using Hofstede's and Hall's cultural dimensions. Diverse relevant literature has been studied in order to find out the variety of problems a virtual team can face. Qualitative research method was used in order to complete the data analysis. The data was collected through secondary collection method. The research illuminated the fact that the cultural factors do affect the attitudes of members in a virtual team. These attitudes of members towards conflict management, time perception, trust, leadership and communication affect how they work in a team. Therefore, it was recommended that there is a need to create a hybrid culture in order to establish a high performance virtual team.

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I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who provided insight and expertise that greatly assisted this dissertation.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Rationale Background

Businesses are expanding and multinationals are becoming global. This unending phenomenon of globalisation has been further aided by the technological advancement (Harzing and Pinnington, 2011). In order to meet this infinite challenge of globalisation, organisations need to coordinate work through geographical and organisational boundaries (Lipnack and Stamps, 1997, cited in Furst et.al., 1999). Frances Cairncross, has written a book on how the technological advancements have changed the way businesses are conducted around the globe and according to her this has brought about "death of distance" (Cited in Prasad and Akhilesh, 2002). The new world economy has developed into a knowledge based one and has given rise to service related business. In addition to that, the technological advancement has paved the way for knowledge based workers who are not restricted by geographical boundaries (Cascio 2000, cited in Mukherjee et.al., 2012). The ways that organisations work have changed and now the use of virtual assignments has become more common than before (Briscoe et. al., 2009). Companies like Microsoft, Motorola and Hewlett Packard etc., do not have to co-locate team members in order to work on a project (Prasad and Akhilesh, 2002). The need for decentralised teams has increased and so global virtual teams have now become the norm in every other organisation (Sembdner, 2011).

A team is a collection of people brought together to work on some project (Berry, 2011) . Scholars have argued that teams enhance capability, responsiveness and flexibility in the organisations (Grifith et.al., 2003).This is due to the fact that cooperation is needed between members who possess different knowledge, experience and specialization (Berry, 2011). As the way teams communicate with each other is changing drastically over the years with the increase of computers as the medium to transfer knowledge and data, it has brought about another challenge of managing global virtual teams. Jarvenpaa and Leidner (1999, p. 792) defined a global virtual team as a "temporary, culturally diverse, geographically dispersed, electronically communicating work-group of members who think and act in concert within

the diversity of the global environment." These team members have different cultural backgrounds, values and mindsets.

Multicultural teams are wealthy in the context of knowledge, views and values in comparison to the teams that have same ethnicity (Berg, 2012). A lot of this knowledge, no doubt fruitful, is difficult to manage (Adler, 2008, Cited in Berg, 2012). Multicultural teams are more advantageous than national teams because they have better access to local details that are important for the organisation's better understanding of the local market (Winkler and Bouncken, 2011). Since inception of the multicultural teams it is believed that they will perform better because of their diversity but it can also be costly to the team performance (Jäger and Raich, 2011). The basic challenges faced in multicultural teams are communication, conflicts, cultural differences, attitude to decision making and knowledge transfer. (Binsiddiq and Alzahmi, 2013). However, in global virtual teams these problems are more prominent (Hardin et.al., 2007, cited in Mockaitis et.al., 2009). To share knowledge in a multicultural work environment, it is highly important to have a high degree of cross-cultural communication competence which not only includes knowledge of language of that culture but also of behaviour like empathy, uncertainty avoidance etc. (Gudykunst, 1998, cited in Congden et. al.2009). Project leaders of multinational organisation sometimes choose to ignore cultural differences, however, Hofstede's (1980) research suggests that 80% of the difference in attitude and behaviour is due to culture (Ochieng and Price, 2009). Many managers chose to ignore these differences while working in teams and faced failure (Holtbrügge et.al., 2011). They tend to ignore the cultural differences because cultural diversity is not visible (Mockaitis et.al., 2009). But cultural values are more deeply rooted than attitudes, according to Adler (2002)(Cited in Kirkman and Shapiro, 2005). A study by Harrison et. al., (1998) has claimed that team member's deeper level characteristics have more influence on team performance in a multicultural team (Cited in Kirkman and Shapiro, 2005).

1.2 Research question

Global virtual teams have increased in the last decade (Agarwal and Carmel, 2001, cited in Ramesh and Dennis, 2002). About 60% of employees in companies have more than 500 employees working virtually (Zhang and Fjermestad, 2006, cited in Jenster and Steiler, 2011). However, there are many challenges confronted by the organisation in managing a virtual team (Mukherjee et.al., 2012). Even though some of the characteristics of a virtual team are similar to the traditional team, the same techniques are not applicable (Balthazard et. al., 2004, Cited in Gallenkamp et. al., 2011).

It has been proved that cultural diversity is an asset in a global virtual team because it brings creativity in the team but it can also become a liability if not handled properly (Brake, 2005). Culture has a strong hold on behaviour of a person, which can affect the working of a virtual team (Puck et. al., 2006). In a report by The Economist Intelligence unit, one in three executives said that virtual teams are badly managed and they attributed the failure to the cultural differences between team members (The Economist Intelligence unit, 2009). However, many different studies have found conflicting results regarding the positive or negative impact of cultural diversity on team performance (Berg and Holtbrügge, 2010).

Culture, as described by Hofstede, is the collective programming of people in an environment (Hofstede, 1980). India, situated in southern Asia, has a unique culture of its own which is different from the western countries. It is increasingly becoming a global player in economic front. The World Bank has declared that it will become the world's fourth largest economy by 2020 (Budhwar and Varma, 2010). Best picturised as a mosaic of diverse culture, languages, regions and origins, its cultural values affect the style of living, occupation, working ethics and systems of the organisations (Sharma, 1984, cited in Woldu et.al., 2007). The western style of management though successful in the Western countries may not be suitable in the Indian scenario and will result in chaos and inefficiency as such management practices are not according to the social norms prevalent in the country (Sinha, 1992, cited in Gopalan and Rivera, 1997).

According to Hofstede's cultural dimensions, India has a collectivist way of thinking with score being 48 whereas U.K., is high on individualism scoring 89 (The Hofstede Centre, 2015). In an individualist culture the society is very loosely knit and everyone is expected to take care of themselves and their immediate family whereas, collectivist culture prefers to have a close knit society where individuals expect relatives and a particular in-group to look after them (Hofstede, 1980). The other aspect of this dimension relates to how work is done in different cultures, collectivists are more concerned about building relationships whereas individualist give priority to their own goals (Triandis, 2001, cited in Sarkar, 2009). In addition to that Indians, being collectivists, can work well in groups whereas individualists like UK have to be trained in order to perform (Wagner et.al., 2012). These cultural differences, not visible from the outside, may have their effects on the working of a virtual team. Therefore, this research addresses the issue of "How cultural factors affect the working of a virtual team: British and Indian members?". In order to evaluate this articles on virtual teams and Indian and British culture have been referred to.

1.3 Research objectives

The main goal of this research is to 1) investigate the problems that persist in a global virtual team consisting of Indian and British members. Working in teams always requires coordination and when there are people from different cultures in one team there is bound to be some clashes, the author wants to look at these issues 2) critically examine the role of cultural differences in the working of a multicultural virtual team. In this research the author will identify whether cultural values have negative or positive effect on global virtual team. Apart from these agendas this dissertation will also look into:
1) Identification of the cultural values of Indian society that has an impact on the attitudes of Indian employees.
2) Critical evaluation of the problems caused due to accents of Indian employees. In order to do that the academic articles and news reports about the call centre industry have been used.

3) Acknowledgement of the differences between the Indian and British culture.

1.4 Dissertation outline

This dissertation is arranged in the following manner: The first chapter i.e. the Introduction sets the scene for the dissertation. This section introduces the idea on which the research is based. It also includes the research question and objectives. Literature on virtual teams and related topics will form the second chapter i.e. critical literature review. The third chapter, research methodology explains the methodology that is used in order to fulfil the aim of this research. The next chapter is the data analysis that critically evaluates the findings on the relevant topic. The penultimate chapter, conclusion discusses and reports the findings of the research. Recommendations constitute the last chapter where the author hopes to be in the position to provide an understanding of the problems that the organisations will face due to different cultural issues.

Chapter 2 Critical literature review

2.1 Introduction: An overview

India, an emerging economy, leading as a BPO service provider, has become one of the favourite destinations for foreign direct investment (Pillai and Rao, 2013). The National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM) in India has claimed that its revenue in 2010–2011 was US$88 billion, provided employment to 2.5 million people and amounted to 26% of the total export (Thite, 2012).Many of the Indian software companies like Tata consultancy services (TCS) have become known in the international market (Krishnan, 2012). Most of the Fortune 500 companies have penetrated the Indian market either by outsourcing development to India or have centres in India (Moitra 2001, cited in Ganesh and Gupta, 2010). But to succeed in projects with the Indian counterparts it is important to keep some issues in mind and resolve them from the very beginning of the collaboration. Mainly the cultural diversity in the project teams has to be addressed as differences between western countries and India cannot be taken for granted (Holtbrügge et.al., 2011).

2.2 Virtual Teams: Literature Review

There is a surfeit of literature on the definition of virtual teams (Kirkman and Mathieu, 2005) as it is a very important phenomenon for the organisations (Zimmerman, 2011). Martins et.al., (2004) have found that the researchers are moving away from defining virtual teams as a form of team, that is different from the traditional team, to "virtualness" as the distinct characteristics of all teams (For eg. Grifith et.al., 2003). However, the most relevant question asked in the literature of a virtual team is that how does it differ from the traditional team (for eg. Driskell et.al., 2003, Leidner and Kayworth, 2002). Some authors argue that virtual teams cannot be combined with the typologies of the existing collocated teams (Bell and Kozlowski, 2002), whereas, according to some there is no apparent difference between both (Grifith et.al., 2003). Hidden assumptions in all the definitions have been that the face–to–face team does not depend on virtual means to communicate; however, it may happen that a collocated team may decide to use a virtual medium (Kirkman and Mathieu, 2005). One of the aspect that

has not been clear in all the definitions of virtual team is how much degree of virtuality is needed for a team to be called a virtual team (Martins et.al., 2004). Some researchers state that virtual teams exclusively interact through electronic media (Bous and Arrow, 1996, cited in Martins et.al., 2004), whereas, some allow little face-to-face interaction as long as most of the communication is through electronic media (for eg. Jarvenpaa and Leidner, 1999)

A common feature in all the definitions of virtual teams is that it goes beyond geographic boundaries, for example Townsend and colleagues (1998) define virtual teams as "groups of geographically and/or organisationally dispersed co-workers that are assembled using a combination of telecommunications and information technologies to accomplish an organizational task" (p18). Martins et.al. 2004, noted "teams whose members use technology to varying degrees in working across locational, temporal and relational boundaries to accomplish an interdependent task". Hence, it is safe to conclude that the distinct features of a virtual team is that 1) It has members that are geographically dispersed 2) communication is mostly electronically 3) they don't meet face-to-face often (Mukherjee et.al., 2012). All these aspects play a major role in the challenges that these teams face (Zander et.al., 2013).

A virtual team does not have the privilege of face-to-face interaction, however; some may argue that the option of video conferencing can substitute the communication richness available to the collocated team (Kirkman and Mathieu, 2005). But as Symantec's chief human-resources officer Rebecca Ranninger states that video conferencing is nowhere close to physically being with the team (Zander et.al., 2013). As a result verbal and non verbal cues are sometimes missed during the process. Therefore, a lot of scholars have stated that a rich media is important for a better working of a virtual team. Research based on all these aspects have given an insight about the working of a virtual team, however, cultural aspect has been neglected to a certain extent (Klitmoller and lauring, 2013). Nonetheless, cultural diversity influences communication between virtual team members

which can affect the performance of the team (Hardin et.al., 2007, cited in Dekker et.al., 2008). The complications regarding cultural diversity are difficult to solve as they often go unnoticed by the team members themselves (Adler, 1983). Culture differences on the exterior cause difficulties in many different stages of a virtual team, but it is the deep routed cultural differences that cause more complicated problems (Zander et.al., 2013).

Although cultural diversity has been claimed to be in the favour of team effectiveness, as it brings creativity in the team (Brake, 2006), there are less empirical findings supporting this claim (Shachaf, 2008). Moreover, the studies on effects of cultural heterogeneity on teams have given conflicting results, for example, Ely and Thomas (2001) found that cultural diversity is negatively related to the performance of the team, Cox and colleagues (1991) declared that it has a positive impact whereas, Kilduff et.al., (2000) found no effect at all. Therefore, several scholars have voiced their concern regarding need for more studies on virtual communication in an intercultural setting (Klitmoller and lauring, 2013).

2.3 Culture

Culture can be defined as a multidimensional construct which can be researched on different levels: national, international, organisational and regional (Shachaf, 2008). The most early definition of culture, provided by Sir Edward Burnett Tylor (1871) defines culture as "the complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, custom and any other capabilities and habit acquired by man as a member of society" (McCort and Malhotra, 1993, cited in Soares et.al., 2007, p277).

The notion of culture has been related to behaviour by many scholars for example Kroeber and Kluckholn (1952), defined national culture as work related values and behaviours (Anawati and Craig, 2006). According to Kreitner et.al., 1999, culture is "socially derived, taken for granted assumptions about how to act and think" (Casey, 2009, p10). However, most important work in the discipline of culture is of Hofstede (1984) who defines

culture as "the collective programming of the human mind that distinguishes the members of one human group from another". Hofstede did a research on employees, of an MNC, from 40 different countries, he identified certain cultural dimensions: power distance (attitude to hierarchy), individualism/collectivism (close or lose knit society), uncertainty avoidance (degree of tolerance to uncertainty), masculinity/ femininity (attitude to achievement). After sometime, he also added the fifth dimension that is long term vs short term orientation (related to virtue) (Anawati and Craig, 2006).

Hofstede's Dimensions
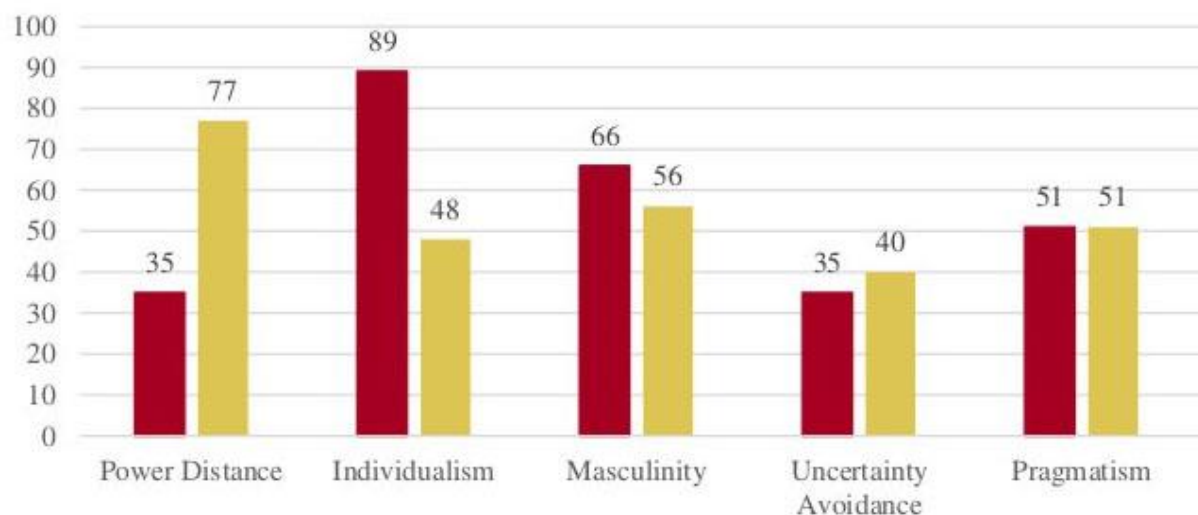
India ■ U.K. (The Hofstede centre, 2015) Fig. 1

In Fig 1 India and U.K. both show a very different picture in the cultural dimension. India, according to Hofstede, is a high power distance culture, collectivist in terms of society whereas, U.K. is a low power distance, individualist culture. Both India and U.K. are high on masculinity and are on the lower side of the uncertainty avoidance dimension. India scores 51 on pragmatism which according to Hofstede, is an inclination towards long-term orientation. However, the same cannot be said for U.K. as according to Hofstede, the same score means that dominant preference cannot be determined (The Hofstede centre, 2015).

These dimensions have been used by many scholars in order to research on cross cultural studies (for eg, Hwang and Lee, 2012; Kapoor et.al., 2003),

however it has always been questioned whether there is any credibility in Hofstede's claims (for eg. McSweeney, 2002; Baskerville, 2003; Schwartz 1999). Especially McSweeney had raised a series of questions on Hofstede's research. McSweeney questioned that Hofstede's claims are based on some assumptions that are not feasible. First, Hofstede has assumed that all the individuals of a culture have the same cultural values imbibed in them. Second, he also assumed that the behaviours of all the respondents can only be attributed to national culture. Third, the dimensions identified by Hofstede are not dominant dimensions but only approximate measures.

In spite of all the criticism, the credibility of Hofstede's cultural dimensions has been proven by many authors from time to time (for eg, Sondergaard, 1994, Williamson, 2002, Van Oudenhoven, 2001). Moreover, his work provides a good step hold in beginning to understand intercultural issues (MacGregor et.al., 2005).

2.4 Management of a virtual team

Given the popularity of virtual team, researchers have been interested in its working and the factors affecting it. One of the most famous work on team role in team development and management was of Meredith Belbin (Cited in Briscoe et. al., 2009). Team role, as described by him, is the characteristics of a team member to behave contribute and interrelate with other members. He identified eight team roles: Implementer (The effective organiser of the team), Coordinator (The team controller), Shaper (The slave driver), Plant (The source of original solutions), Resource investigator (The creative negotiator), Monitor evaluator (The analyzer of problems), Team worker (The internal facilitator), Finisher (The one who guarantees delivery), Specialist (The one who provide in depth expertise). According to him, it is the behaviour of the team members that makes a team successful or unsuccessful not the knowledge and experience of the team members. Therefore, he stated that the composition of a team influences the outcome (Belbin, 2010). However, the research on the relation between composition and effectiveness of team performance are conflicting as some studies have shown positive results (for eg. Prichard and Stanton, 1999) and some

negative results (for eg. Partington and Harris, 1999; Van Der Water et.al., 2008). Moreover, his research fails to take into account the cultural and global effect on the team, let alone a multicultural virtual one (Cited in Briscoe et. al., 2009).

According to Cascio (2000), the problems in a multicultural virtual team stems from physical separation as well as the computer mediated communication. The most relevant question that the managers of a virtual team ask is "How can I manage them when I cant see them?" (Cascio, 2000, p81). As the process of communication is affected by the prevalence of multiple boundaries, like cultural, geographical, there are certain norms or stages defined to resolve the issues generated (Berry, 2011).

The literature on the development stages in a virtual team management is in abundance, although the authors named the stages differently but with only minor differences in the description (for eg, Tuckman, 1965; Greenburg et.al., 2007; Hertal et.al., 2005). Tuckman is the most cited work (for eg. Berry, 2011; Corbitt et.al, 2004). Tuckman, (1965) described the development of a virtual team in five stages: forming, storming, norming, performing and adjourning. Forming is the one in which the group defines task of each member and sets the rule to be followed. The second stage, storming, is where conflicts occur between the team members because of interpersonal issues. In norming stage, the team gains cohesiveness and finds out new ways to work with each other. After going through the first three stages the team is in a state of delivering the task for, this stage is the performing stage. The last stage, is called the adjourning stage (Tuckman and Jensen, 1977). In this stage, the termination of the group takes place after the completion of the task. Though it is implied that virtual teams pass through these stages in the same way as collocated teams, it is noted that the storming stage is generally ignored or combined with other stages in a virtual team development (Johnson et.al., 2002). It is also not accurate in forecasting whether every team can pass through all the stages defined, in addition to that, the primary use of that model was for collocated teams (Kelley et.al., 2004). Nonetheless, according to Joy–Matthews and Gladstone,

(2000), forming and storming are the most difficult stages for a virtual team. Moreover, it has been researched that the communication system hinders the development of all the stages (Hertel et.al., 2005).

The challenge for the leader of a virtual team is to establish trust in the nascent stages and sustain that trust throughout the cycle (Greenberg et.al., 2007). Cultural differences are a serious hurdle (Ebrahim et.al., 2009) as a society's culture has a very strong hold on the way people interact with each other (Kale and McIntyre,1991). The advancement of technology has created commonality around the world, but still cultural values take centuries to change (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005, cited in Hofstede et. al., 2010).

2.5 Trust

In all the studies researching the reasons for success of virtual teams, it has been found that trust between team members is the contributing factor towards effectiveness (Andres, 2002, Cited in Clayden, 2007). It is highly difficult to build trust in a virtual team as the team members do not have a common past and not necessarily will have a future together (Brandt et.al, 2011). Moreover, building trust is complicated because there is no face to face interaction (Harell and Daim, 2009). However, remarkable level of trust have been found by many scholars in the early stages of a virtual team (for eg, Jarvenpaa et.al., 1998, Jarvenpaa and leidner, 1999). Mcdonough (2001), has stated that it is hard to build trust in a new working relationship and assessing the trustworthiness of others without having actually met the person (Sridhar et.al, 2007) but still evidence of swift trust does exist. Although many authors consider this trust to be vulnerable (Pinjani and Palvia, 2013, Greenberg et.al., 2007). Moreover, trust is culturally sensitive and if cultural differences are neglected then it can have adverse effects (Knight et.al., 2007, cited in Hofstede et.al.,2010).

In Indian culture, there is a need to form a relationship of trust before performing any task (Davis et.al, 2008). Virtual teams hardly meet face to face so there is no way to make social relationships (Benetytė, & Jatuliavičienė, 2013). Moreover, it is a fact that likeminded people attract

each other whereas less degree of similarity creates negative impact on the mutual trust (Holtbrügge et.al., 2011). According to Storti (2007), British people, trust easily without requiring much interaction. Davis et.al. (2008) have noted that Asians might show that they have a trusting relationship but it can only be a tactic to imply that trust is there.

2.6 Perception of time

Perception of time can also affect the working of a team because in order to accomplish a goal, time is of essence (Saunders et.al., 2004). Hall (1981), distinguished time as monochronic and polychronic He examined the conscious and unconscious behaviours of people that affects their perception of time. In a monochronic culture, as that of Britain, a task signifies a fixed moment which is not subject to alteration whereas people in polychronic culture, that of India, do not stick to the schedule strictly (Holtbrügge et. al., 2011). According to Hall (1987), polychronic cultures are characterised by involvement with people, on the other hand the monochronic cultures prefer not to be disturbed and as a result shut themselves off from others. For monochronic people time is linear and a perishable commodity whereas, polychronic seldom consider time as wasted and often think of time as a point rather than a road that has an end. Hall's dimensions have been criticized for being outdated and for defining borders as boundaries for cultures (Wurtz, 2006). However, unlike Hofstede's dimensions, it has escaped much criticism because, as Hermeking (2006) noted, Hall was ambiguous about the presentation of his model and used term cultural groups rather than national culture (Cardon, 2008).

2.7 Conflict Management

Conflict is generally considered detrimental to team work but it can be an advantage if managed properly (Mohammed et.al., 2008). Conflict can, in fact, be important in the working of a multicultural team as more ideas are generated that can help in better decision making (Pazos, 2012). According to Boonsathorn (2007), effective working of a team is not hindered by the conflict itself, but it is the different styles of conflict management of the members of the team that creates tension.

Conflict management styles are defined as "patterned responses or cluster of behaviours the people use in conflict" (Hocker and Wilmot , 2010, cited in Riaz et.al., 2012). The most famous work on the types of conflict management styles was by Blake and Mouton (1964), based on concern for production and concern for people (Riaz et.al., 2012). However, the model has been criticised for being only scientific theory by Van De Vliert and Kabanoff (1990) but it has been the basic assumption of a lot of research in this area (Vijayakumar and Christy, 2014). For the purpose of this research the author has chosen Rahim's (1983) model of conflict management styles that is based on concern for self and concern for others. His five typologies for conflict handling are integrating or problem solving (high concern for self and others), accommodating or obliging (high concern for others and low for self), compromising (moderate concern for self and others), dominating or forcing (high concern for self and low for others) and avoiding (low concern for self and others) (Ndubisi, 2010). Research has found styles of conflict management are affected by national culture (Ma, 2007). People from different culture not only have different beliefs and values but also have different inclinations towards different styles of conflict management (Boonsathorn, 2007).

Westerners prefer assertive approach to conflict (Brew and Cairns, 2004), whereas, Indians see conflict as hindrance to performance and therefore have an inclination to use avoiding style of conflict management (Morris et.al., 1998). However, people have argued that the Indian conflict resolution style consists of Hindu norms as well as British style of problem solving (Lather et.al., 2010).

2.8 Communication

Communication is very important in a global virtual team as it is central to knowledge transfer and getting work done. (Sarker et. al., 2011). Team members in virtual teams use electronic media such as emails, chat, audio and video conferencing for communication without meeting face-to-face (Dekker et.al., 2008). In computer mediated communication certain non verbal cues like intonations, facial expressions and gestures can be misread

(Holtbrügge et. al., 2011). Moreover, cultural factors affect the way team members interact with each other (Dekker et.al., 2008) as language, an important medium for communication, is culture bound (Armstrong and Yee, 2001). In addition to that, it has been stated by many scholars that speech variations (Mai and Hoffman, 2014, Gluszek and Dovidio, 2010) are a barrier to communication. However, the study of speech variation is conflicting as some authors found positive impact of accents (Armstrong and Yee, 2001).

When people from other culture visit India they get confused by some gestures mainly between the left right movement which means 'no' and an arch swing which stands for 'yes' (Yammiyavar et. al., 2008). These gestures can be missed by British people as they speak out the responses rather than nod their heads. Apart from gestures, the style of communication is also an issue in virtual team. Hall (1981) differentiated between high context and low context communication (Müller et. al., 2008). In high context culture, information is implicit and conveyed through verbal and non verbal codes whereas low context is the opposite where everything has to be expressed explicitly (Tayeb, 1996). Indians belong to a high context culture which means that most of the message is supposed to be understood. On the contrary, UK is low context culture where thoughts are expressed aloud. However, Hall's distinction has been criticised for not being clear in the methodology used in the research. Nonetheless, according to Web of Science Social Sciences Cited Reference Index (2007) Hall has been cited about 3,300 times for his work (Cardon, 2008).

2.9 Leadership

Virtual leadership, defined as ""'a social influence process mediated by advanced information technologies to produce changes in attitudes, feelings, thinking, behaviour, and/or performance of individuals, groups, and/or organizations'' (Avolio et.al., 2001) demands different kind of approach from traditional leadership (Haung et. al., 2010). Little has been known about leadership in virtual teams (Zigurs, 2003). A lot of research on traditional team leadership has revealed that it has an effective impact on the working of a team, the same is applied for virtual team also (Cascio and Shurygailo,

2003). Some authors have argued that the role of a virtual leader is more complicated (Haung et. al., 2010). However, it is also believed that virtual team members work on their own, so there is no need for a leader. Moreover, it is not possible to manage from distance so there should be no impact of leadership (Nydegger and Nydegger, 2010). Moreover, it is possible that a team may or may not have a leader but during the course of time, a leader does emerge (Zigurs, 2003). In addition to that, virtual leadership becomes more complicated if the members are from different cultures (Zigurs, 2003). In a virtual team organisational culture is above national culture, however, a leader has to be sensitive to national cultures (Pinar et.al., 2003). Therefore, there can't be a single style of leadership that a virtual leader can apply (Cascio and Shurygailo, 2003).

In the Indian culture, hierarchy is accepted and subordinates are dependent (Varma et.al., 2005), Whereas, Western countries see dependency as a sign of weakness (Gopalan and Rivera, 1997). In India, there is an inclination towards using the power superiors possess in a directive way (Dash et.al., 2006) in contrast to participative manner as of U.K. (King and Wei, 2014). However, Sinha, 1984 has noted that nurturant kind of leadership will be more suitable in India (Swierczek, 1991).

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology adopted by the author for this research. It explains about the research design chosen for this research. Furthermore, it also clarifies why this method was sought out to answer the research question and the basic philosophy behind the research methodology. The basic aim of this chapter is to make the reader understand how the data analysis of the collected data has been done in order to examine the objectives stated in the introduction.
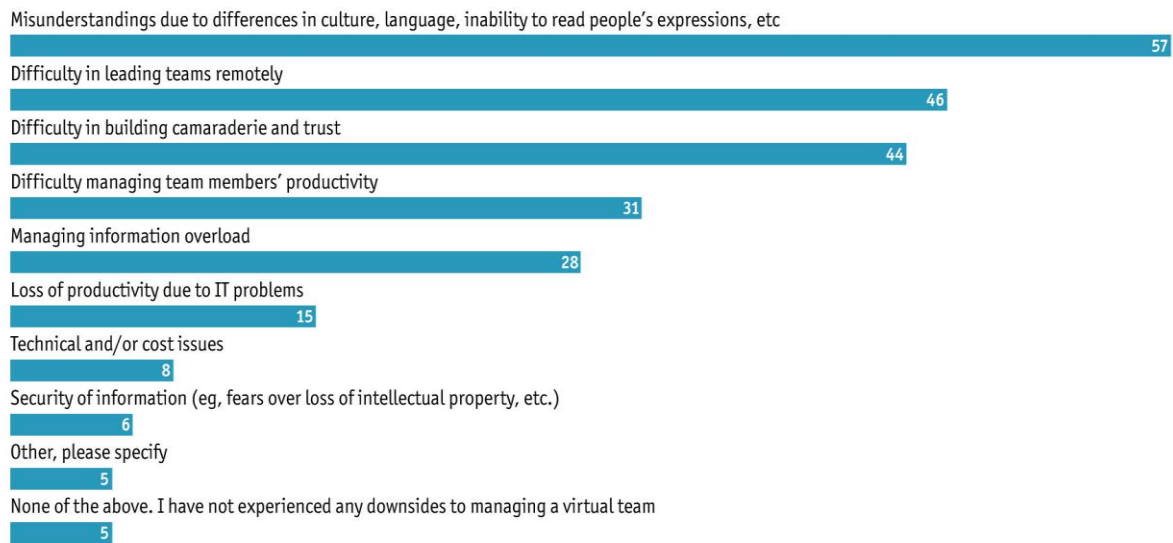
3.2 Research question

Research word, originated from the French word 'research' which means to seek again, can be understood as a task performed in order to raise the knowledge bar and abilities (Phopahlia, 2010). In layman terms research is defined as quest for knowledge. Research methodology is connected with evaluation of reality, understanding the problem, a systematic approach in order to analyse a research problem, elucidation of facts and drawing conclusions. (Kothari,2004).

In a research the most important thing is to define the research question. A research question is formulated in the context when a researcher experiences some difficulty in a theoretical or a practical situation. It is a well known phrase that a problem accurately stated is a problem half solved (Kothari, 2004). Before defining a research question the researcher should keep in mind that the topic should be suitable, interesting to the researcher and should not be chosen on compulsion (Rajasekar et.al., 2013). During the course of the researcher's postgraduate course differences in culture were the buzz words which fascinated the author. Therefore, for this research the author has chosen the topic of the cultural differences that affect the working of a virtual team consisting of Indian and British members.

The rise of software industries in India is synonymous with the shift of economy for the developed countries to the developing economies. The outsourcing of IT services and the establishment of global software project teams have raised the question of culture and cultural differences in the corporate world (Upadhya, 2008). In a research by Economic Intelligence Unit in 2009, as mentioned in the fig.2 has, found that misunderstandings due to cultural differences are the biggest hurdle in the success of a virtual team.

Please select which of the following are the primary challenges of managing a virtual team? Select up to three.
(% respondents)

Misunderstandings due to differences in culture, language, inability to read people's expressions, etc
57

Difficulty in leading teams remotely
46

Difficulty in building camaraderie and trust
44

Difficulty managing team members' productivity
31

Managing information overload
28

Loss of productivity due to IT problems
15

Technical and/or cost issues
8

Security of information (eg, fears over loss of intellectual property, etc.)
6

Other, please specify
5

None of the above. I have not experienced any downsides to managing a virtual team
5

Source: Economist Intelligence Unit survey, October-November 2009.

Fig.2

Therefore, the aim of this research is to examine how the cultural differences affect the working of a virtual team consisting of British and Indian members. The research methodology has been selected keeping in mind the relationship between cultural differences and the effect of these on the efficient working of the virtual team working.

For the reasons stated above the researcher has formulated the research question as "How cultural factors affect the working of a virtual team: British and Indian members?"

3.3 Research Objectives

A research is carried out with the purpose of gaining an insight about a topic. The main aim of a research is to identify new facts, evaluate stated facts, develop new ideas, testing the old ones (Rajasekar et.al., 2013). Objectives of a research allow the researcher to find out the truth that has been hidden as yet. Through proper procedures these research objectives can be fulfilled (Shukla, 2014).

The research objectives formed during the course of the study were to investigate the problems that persist in a global virtual team consisting of Indian and British members. Secondly, to critically examine the role of cultural differences in the working of a multicultural virtual team. Also some concomitant objectives were fulfilled during searching for the answers of the research question stated above. This study also addressed the attitudes of the Indian employees due to the cultural value imbibed in them. Also, the problem faced due to different accent of the Indian and British employees was studied through collecting reports of Indian call centres. Lastly, this research also identified the cultural differences between the British and Indian society.

3.4 Research Design

In the 1990's the new ways for carrying out research in educational purposes were developed by the name of research design. Research design develops a pathway for the researcher to assimilate and evaluate data for a better analysis (Collins et.al., 2004). Therefore, a research design constitutes of what a researcher will do after defining the research question to the analysis of the data gathered for the analysis (Kothari, 2004). As research is considered to be a systematic approach towards understanding a question, it is implied that the best way to make a research project successful, is to be systematic in the research process (Wiersma & Jurs, 2004, cited in Ha, 2011). Therefore, to ensure the smooth process of this research the author did a systematic thorough research in order to understand the different aspects of a virtual team.

This research study will add to the literature of the cultural differences that affect a virtual team. It will help in answering the questions regarding the relevant topic and fulfilling the objectives stated. Research designs are broadly classified into 1) exploratory study, 2) descriptive and diagnostic studies 3) hypothesis testing research study. Based on the understanding of the current research study the best option is exploratory research design. The main aim of an exploratory studies is to develop a deep insight about the relevant topic therefore the research design in these kinds of studies

should be flexible enough to include different aspects of the topic in question (Kothari, 2004). During the research the author encountered lot of concomitant aspects that were not initially thought of as influencing a virtual team but are included in the data analysis later due to their relevance. This was only possible through choosing an exploratory research design as flexibility was needed during the course of study.

This is an exploratory study as the different aspect of culture and virtual team are going to be explored. There has been research on virtual teams but the cultural differences have been neglected to a certain extent therefore this study will focus on the cultural differences that affect a virtual team. Research question has been established and objectives have been stated but in order to fully understand the concept we need to explore the literature on the virtual team. This makes it an exploratory study.

The secondary data on virtual teams consisting of Indian and U.K members was collected. In addition to that the views of different authors on the British and Indian culture was also evaluated. The source of the collection of data was the online library at UEL and Google scholar as well as the information accumulated through the books available in the library. In order to understand the communication problems the Indian call centre reports was looked into. Objectives of this study were covered by a thorough research on the relevant topics. Data interpretation was done by going through the articles systematically thus forming patterns of data collected. Categories were made of the data and similar facts were labelled systematically. The interpretation of the data thus gathered was done by applying critical thinking.

3.5 Research Paradigm

According to many scholars the first step in the process of research is identifying a paradigm which is the researcher's own world view of the study (Saunders, 2012). A research paradigm is defined as a structure to understand a research, research question, process and data analysis (Kuhn, 1962, cited in Ha, 2011). There are a number of paradigms defined by

scholars and researchers use different kinds of paradigms pertaining to the nature of the research (Ponterotto, 2005). Different research paradigms defined by different authors are positivist (and postpositivist), constructivist, interpretivist, transformative, emancipatory, critical, pragmatism and deconstructivist (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006). The author has identified that the research paradigm that this research is located in is the interpretivist paradigm.

The study is identified as an interpretive research as it is based on the behaviour of the virtual team members. Interpretivist philosophy is based on the belief that the true meanings are hidden and can be revealed by proper reflection of a research topic (Ponterotto, 2005). In order to fulfil the aim of this project the author has to study the behaviour of the Indian and British employees to find out the implicit differences in the working attitudes and relate them to the cultural differences. Interpretivist paradigm will aid in finding out the relation between the attitude and the culture differences. Moreover, the interpretivist paradigm will help in understanding not only the explanation for the data but also develop a concept about the findings (Bryman and Bell, 2007). Therefore, the interpretivist paradigm will help in fulfilling the aim of the research.

3.6 Research Method

Selecting a research paradigm will configure the research strategy and the methods chosen for the collection of data (Saunders et.al., 2012). Interpretivism is related to qualitative research method. Qualitative research uses a non quantitative approach for data collection and focuses on social relations. It is a method long used by researchers in order to study behaviour of people in different culture (Adams et.al., 2007). In qualitative research method the purpose of collecting data is to give proof of the experience being investigated. Moreover, in qualitative research the data is analysed to provide an explanation of the evidence gathered (Polkinghorne, 2005). As this study is about the cultural differences in relation to the virtual teams the qualitative research method will be helpful in understanding the reasons behind the findings.

In this study the author has gathered data through data triangulation. Data triangulation is a process of capturing data through various sources and data from different times (Jick, 1979). This helps in gaining different perspectives towards a research topic (Adams et.al., 2007). It also reduces the chances of biased views and can be reliable as the sources will be numerous and the validity can be cross checked (Jick, 1979). Data triangulation provides a deep insight about a social phenomenon by giving evidence that is converging, contradicting and inconsistent. However, this helps in making better sense of the social situation (Mathison, 1988). In this research it is important to gather different viewpoints in order to understand the reason behind the problems in a virtual team due to cultural differences; therefore the author found the data triangulation method as the best to give an insight into the research problem aiming to construct a meaningful proposition.

The success of any research project depends on the effective data collection technique (Adams et.al., 2007). Secondary data is a good source of information in a qualitative research (Decrop, 1999). It is the data that has not been gathered specifically for the purpose for that research but is related to the research and can help in identifying the research topic (Harris, 2001). The author has decided to use secondary data collection method as opposed to the primary collection method as according to the author the sensitivity of the topic might not give a valid result in case of primary source. As with the interviews the respondents will not be comfortable in revealing that their response towards their colleagues are biased due to the culture differences. Moreover, the members would not be able to give an answer that would imply that they face such problems as that would also reflect on the organisation. Employees in organisations also have confidentiality agreement in which they cannot reveal certain facts about the organisation and therefore they would not open up to the examiner. A research based on such data would not be considered valid as it would not give an actual scenario of the situation. Moreover, secondary data could also be higher quality data than the one that is self collected (Saunders et. al., 2009).

Validity of a primary data has long been questioned in the area of research studies. The issues regarding the respondents' biases are related to the reliance on the responses of interviews and questionnaires. The dependency on the information given by others has limited validity as the respondents can guess what the researcher wants to hear and in some cases reports the same and not his viewpoint (Plato, 1970, cited in Harris, 2001). Moreover, there is a chance of the respondents twisting the truth while reporting their unethical behaviour (Harris, 2001). Therefore, evaluating from this perspective the author realized that collecting data through secondary resource is the best pathway to reach the goal of completing this research and assess the real situation in a virtual team environment.

3.7 Reliability

As stated above that there are many advantages of using secondary data however, the reliability of secondary data cannot be assumed. In case of secondary data one has to be very careful while collecting the data that the source of information is not any site that has not done a rigorous research on the topic. The preferred way to make sure of the secondary data is to establish the credibility of the source of the data collected (Brodeur et.al., 2014). To make sure that the data is reliable the author has kept that in mind that while collecting the data the source of the data is credible. Data is mostly collected in the form of academic articles through the University's Athens login. The use of Wikipedia and other internet sites have been avoided to sustain the credibility of this research.

3.8 Limitations and challenges faced

The research included a rigorous research on the topic of virtual teams. Collection of secondary data in the form of academic articles was one of the challenges faced by the author. As virtual teams are a recent phenomenon it was fairly difficult to find relevant articles in the database of the University website as well as on Google scholar. Moreover, literature on the virtual teams consisting specifically of Indian and British members was not available. Therefore, it took a lot of effort form the author to find the articles that fulfil the criteria. The solution for this challenge was that the author

tried different keywords in order to strike the best combination to find the proper articles. As this research is based on secondary source it does not include data that are specifically collected for the purpose of answering the research question, therefore, it may face limitation to generalise it. Moreover, during researching the literature for different aspects of the virtual team the author came across different dimensions but has not been able to include those due to the word limit constraint.

Chapter 4 Data Analysis

4.1 Introduction

The main aim of this chapter is to report the findings of the research and interpret the analysed data in alignment with the literature review. The study examines the cultural factors of a society that affect the working of a virtual team consisting of Indian and British members. This study emphasises on the influence of the cultural values on the attitudes of team members. Through reflection on the literature review it is found that conflict management, communication, trust, perception of time and leadership are the main aspects that affect the working of a virtual team and the following sections analyse the data gathered on these aspects.

4.2 Conflict management

There have been many studies on the conflict management styles of the Indian managers. A study by Majumdar (2010) on conflict styles of Indian managers in different sectors i.e. government, private and unorganised sectors, concluded that Indians generally prefer avoidance style, followed by accommodation and compromise (Lather et.al., 2010). In another research by Mohammed, et al.(2008) on Indian, French and British managers, the result showed that Indian managers have an inclination towards using avoiding style whereas the French and the British have a tendency to use competing style. The British managers in this research turned out to be less inclined to be using avoiding styles of conflict management. Lather et.al. (2009) did a research on conflict styles of Delhi Jal Board managers which concluded that the Indian managers use accommodating style for conflict management. Mckenna and Richardson (1995), studied the conflict styles of Chinese, Indians and Malays in Singapore which showed that Indians preferred compromising style of conflict management (Onishi and Bliss, 2006).

However, a research on leadership and conflict styles of Indian managers by Sehrawat and Sharma (2014) showed that Indian managers generally applied problem solving style of conflict management. This type of style is consistent with the thinking that Indian conflict resolution style consists of Hindu norms as well as British style of problem solving (Lather et.al., 2010).

Van Muers study (2003), on Dutch and British managers found that British managers were more tempted to use problem solving or integrating style of conflict management than dominating or avoiding. A similar research by Tang and Kirkbride, 1986 has found that British managers favour integrating and competing style of conflict management. Another study by Mohammed et.al., 2008 concluded that British managers prefer to use competitive style of management while there is less inclination to use of avoider style of management.

4.2.1 Individualism/collectivism

All the results prove one thing that the Indians do have a preference to manage conflict through non confrontational style as far as possible whereas British definitely have an inclination towards using the assertive styles of conflict management. The most influential factor that can explain the preferences of conflict styles is Hofstede's dimension of individualism and collectivism (Boonsathorn, 2007). The culture of India is expressive as well as emotionally reserved, however more tendency is towards being emotionally introvert with stress on masking any negative feeling that can destroy relationships (Clem and Mujtaba, 2011). Collectivist cultures favor saving face therefore; much stress is towards avoiding conflict. Individualist, are more inclined towards getting a fair solution for the conflict and hence use assertive or dominating kind of style (Komarraju et.al., 2008). For Individualist, conflict is natural whereas collectivists dislike disagreement and therefore, are in the favour of avoiding conflict (Ma, 2007).

4.2.2 Power Distance

Power distance can also be a reason for the preference for conflict styles. In high power distance countries like India, employees are highly unlikely to openly challenge or disagree to their superiors (Kumar and Sankaran, 2007) therefore they are bound to use avoiding style of conflict. In low power distance countries like U.K there is a norm of participative and collaborative decision making (Dash et.al., 2006).

4.2.3 Task related/relationship related conflict

Generally conflict is classified into two categories task (disagreement related to different task) and relationship conflict (differences between members that is unrelated to business)(Sanchez–Burks et.al., 2008). Team member's cultural preferences will influence the tendencies to express emotions towards different types of conflicts (Goh, 2004). A research by Sanchez–Burks et.al. (2008), showed that Americans believe that they can overcome relationship conflict whereas Asians perceive both relationship and task conflict simultaneously. This outlook of the Americans can be attributed to

the professionalism of the Anglo-Saxon culture (British) that keeps professional attributes separate from the personal ones (Yu, 2007).

4.2.4 The value of silence

Silence during conflict is also viewed differently in both eastern and the western culture, as most of the Asians use silence as a way of avoiding conflict (Samovar et.al., 2013). Westerners find silence as very uncomfortable and therefore feel the urge to fill the void with conversation (Doucet, 2008). A research by Ling (2003) showed that most of the British managers believed in the phrase 'Speech is golden'. Paul Davies, managing director of Onshore Offshore, a UK-based consultancy, revealed that the best response an Indian can give for anger is to fall silent, which does not help to curb the anger of a Western customer (Luce, 2004).

4.2.5 Implications of different styles of conflict management

This tendency of people from different background to view conflicts in different perspective and react to it in different ways can cause difficulties for virtual teams as they have to work in cross cultural settings. The British members may take the silence of Indian members as a sign of consent or as a sign of avoiding responsibility which may result in distrust in the actions of the Indian team members. Moreover, the assertive style of the British managers may put off the Indian team members as Indians consider direct style of conflict management as blunt and impolite (Marrewijk, 2011). Indians in Marrewijk's, 2011 study found their Western counterparts to be insulting, confronting and disturbing for the relationship. This would indirectly affect the performing stage as Indians perceive task and relationship conflict simultaneously. Moreover, due to the cultural differences, Indians would work towards preserving harmony which will result in procrastination of conflict. As a result, the team may not be able to function properly because solution will not be achieved. As overcoming conflict helps in establishing the storming stage (Matthews and Gladstone, 2000), the absence of conflict or no solution will result in the team being stuck in this stage and not been able to move towards the norming stage that defines the cohesion and bond between the team members. This can

hinder the development of the virtual team and result in low productivity or failure of the virtual assignment.

4.3 Communication

A lot of studies on intercultural communication on the Indian ways of communication have revealed the fact that Indians are indirect in their conversation. A study by kapoor and colleagues 2003, on European American students in the United States and Indian students in India, found that Indians are particularly indirect in their communication and have a positive perspective of silence. In another research by Raina 2013, in which she has interviewed some European expatriates, majority of the expatriates found that Indians were not explicit in their conversation and do not actually mean what they say. Marrewijk 2011, did a study on Dutch and Indian project teams, in which he found that the Dutch found Indians to be indirect communicators, especially when it came to saying 'no'. In a research by Crampton and Hinds, 2007 other country managers found that in Indian culture saying no to a colleague was perceived to be rude.

4.3.1 High context/low context

This indirect communication of Indians can be attributed to them being a high context culture (Holtbrugge, 2011). Western cultures are mostly inclined towards using direct style of interaction due to low context culture. In low context cultures most of the meaning is in the verbally expressed dialogue as they rely on the information expressed whereas in high context culture meanings are hidden in face–to–face interaction (Clem and Mujtaba, 2011). Indian culture stresses on non verbal communication as all the gestures have some meaning (Banerjee, 2008). In an experiment by Massey et.al., 2001, in which they studied global virtual teams from Asian and Western origins, the participants of Asian origins found it difficult to express themselves through computer mediated communication as they need to know that they are understood by the person. According to Lewis 1999, the main aim of communication for Indians is to maintain relationships (Nishimura et.al., 2008) and not just transfer information. The style of communication of Indians often causes problems with the western managers

as they are used to constructing long sentences and ambiguous expressions (Zaidman, 2001).
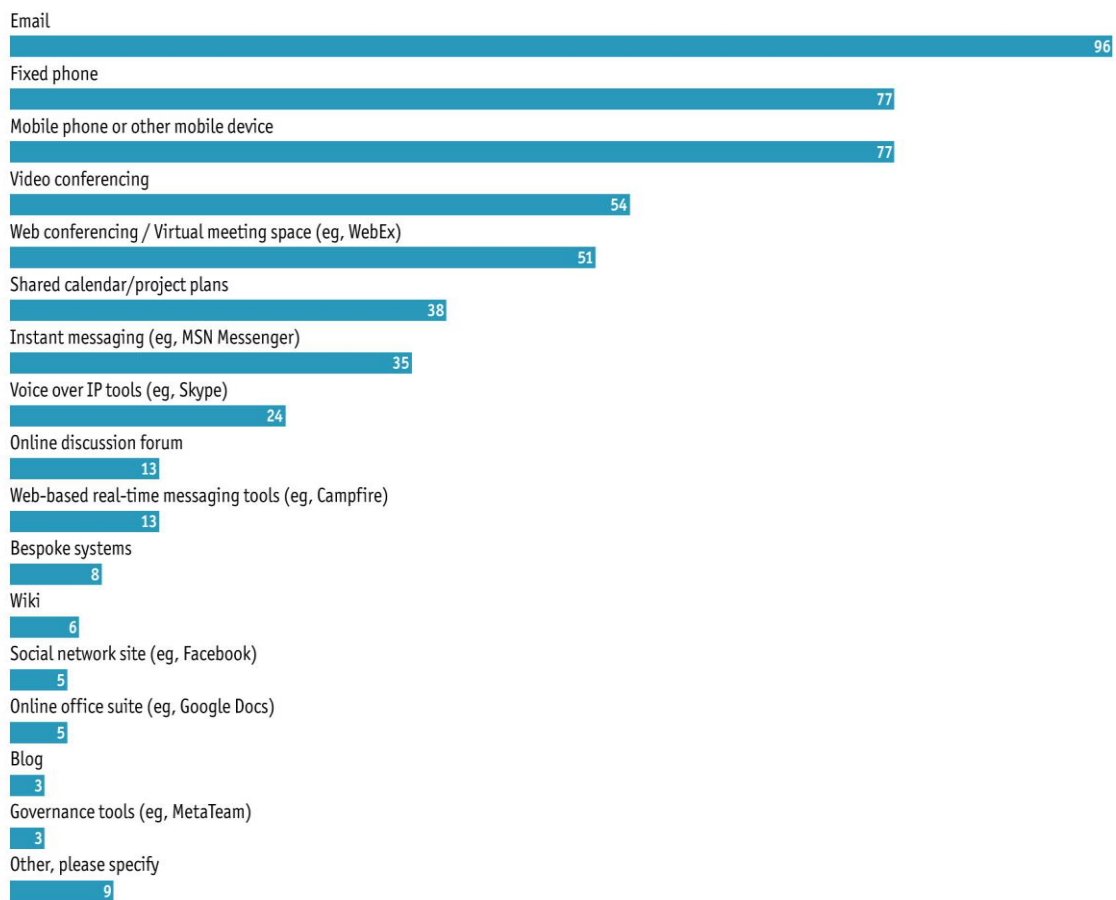
Collectivists culture tend towards high context culture whereas individualist are more inclined towards low context culture (Massey et.al., 2001). The advancement in the recent communication systems does help the knowledge transfer in the virtual team but it cannot convey the non verbal expressions of a high context culture (Asherman et.al., 2001). In the study by Raina 2013, it was found that those Indian executives who were not comfortable with their English used a lot of gestures in order to make their conversation understood. These gestures can be missed in a telephonic conversation or an email. Moreover, Leidner and Kayworth, 2006 in their study of effects of culture on IT found that collectivist culture have a strong need to interact face to face. Richardson and Smith, 2007 did a research on media choice which found that strong power distance culture prefer face-to-face interaction rather communicating through emails or chat with their superiors as it might not be an appropriate medium to cover the power distance gap.

4.3.2 Implications of styles of communication on virtual teams

It is clear that there will be a lot of problems because of the different styles of communication in the working of a virtual team. The indirect style of communication will confuse the British members as they are used to explicit interaction and may not be able to understand the indirect objections of the Asian colleagues. Time will be wasted in understanding the content of the speech resulting in delay of the performing stage which will affect the deadline of the project. Moreover, in a report by The Economic Intelligence unit, 2009, the most preferred way of communicating in a virtual team was

through email as illustrated in Fig. 3.

Which of the following tools do you regularly use to communicate and collaborate with your virtual team? Select all that apply.

Tool	Value
Email	96
Fixed phone	77
Mobile phone or other mobile device	77
Video conferencing	54
Web conferencing / Virtual meeting space (eg, WebEx)	51
Shared calendar/project plans	38
Instant messaging (eg, MSN Messenger)	35
Voice over IP tools (eg, Skype)	24
Online discussion forum	13
Web-based real-time messaging tools (eg, Campfire)	13
Bespoke systems	8
Wiki	6
Social network site (eg, Facebook)	5
Online office suite (eg, Google Docs)	5
Blog	3
Governance tools (eg, MetaTeam)	3
Other, please specify	9

Source: Economist Intelligence Unit survey, October-November 2009.

This would create a lot of problems as Indians are not comfortable in using emails and chats as mentioned earlier. This would hinder the information transfer in the virtual team.

4.3.3 The effects of language on communication

Language can be an issue in working of a virtual team as culture not only has an effect on the language but also on the ways the same language can be used (Duan et.al., 2010). Accents pose a significant hindrance to communication (Mai and Hoffman, 2014). A lot of research has been done on the language usage of Indians as the Indian call centre industry has received a lot attention (Little et.al., 2011).

In a research by Bharadwaj and Roggeveen 2008, it was found that call centre customers associate poor language skills with the call centre agent

when the service is outsourced. A study by Compass Management Consulting, 2007 a UK management consulting firm, found that financial services across UK are bringing back their off shored services from countries like India because they were not benefitting from it due to the language problem (cited in Sharma et.al., 2009). In another case of problem due to language of Dell, the computer company had to call back its services from India due to the customer's dissatisfaction as the Indian accents were blurring communication (Merchant, 2003). Indian call centre agents are known to consume twice the time than the British one to handle a customer query (Sharma et.al., 2009). Moreover, the fake accent adopted by the call centre agents, causes irritation to the Western customer (Merchant, 2003). Owing to these problems more complex problems are being solved in U.K itself and less complex exported to outsourcing centres like India (Sharma, 2012). The implication would be that it will not be cost effective for the organisation to outsource their services to India as they would have to maintain two call centres which will result in loss of profit.

In a research by Levina and Vaast, 2008, in which they studied the salient differences in National context on Global Banks project, it was found that the Indian managers have proficiency in English but there were issues regarding accents. Speech in the absence of visual interaction gives two information about the speaker 1) content of the speech 2) perception about the speaker (Levi, & Pisoni, 2007, Cited in Wang et.al., 2013). Hosoda and Stone-Romero 2010, did a study on the effects of accent on employment decisions which revealed that accents influences a listeners perception even if the content is understood. Cargile and Giles 1997, found that non standard accents can have disadvantages. Listeners form biases on the basis of the accents (Hosoda and Stone-Romero 2010). All the accents are not perceived equal while people speaking British English are considered to be educated and sophisticated, individual speaking Asian accented English are perceived to be ineffective (Wang et.al., 2013). Although people make inferences about the speaker on the other side unconsciously research has suggested that this judgement is not acted upon at the very first instance (Lowery et.al., 2001). However, if any new incident comes into light that supports the earlier

judgement, then the listener tries to justify the negative bias (Wang et.al., 2013).

Apart from the problem of accent, the use of English language is can also create a problem in virtual teams. The Indian English is derived from British English but it is known to be stylistically different. Most of the influence on the Indian English is of the American English as most of the English movies are American (Sailaja, 2009). It should be noted here that British and American English is different for example, saying that a project was a "bomb" means successful in U.K whereas the same means a failure in US (Asherman et.al., 2000). Moreover, a lot of Indians cannot speak the Standard English (Sailaja, 2009). In the study by Raina, 2013 it was found that 61% of the European respondents said the Indian resorted to their native language. In another research on Asian counterparts of the European Commission's (EC) Europe Aid Asia Programme (EAAP) by Duan et.al., 2010 it was found that many of the Asian participants were not proficient in English. Daine Christian, head of Human Resources at Infowavz, a call centre at Mumbai, states that the problem of language is because Indians think in mother tongue (Hindi) and translate it in English which accounts for a poor sentence construction (Merchant, 2003).

On the other hand there have been reports of the British not been able to tolerate the Indian call centre agent even when the accent was British (Foster, 2005). In a study by Mehrotra, 2003 some Britishers expressed disgust on the terms used in Indian English. Moreover, one expert in the research of Duan et.al., noted that there is a lot of difference in the meaning of certain terms used by European and Asian organisations that impede collaboration. However, Amar Nath Jha, 1940, questioned whether there is any rationality in conforming to British English when the Indian English is intelligible (Mehrotra, 2003).

4.3.4 Implication of language problem in communication

It can be inferred from the above data that different accents will impede the understanding of the content and the inferences related to the accents will trigger biases. Because of different accents the team will resort to emails and

chats to transfer information as the Dutch and Indian team members did in the study of Marrewijk, 2011. However, this will also not solve the problem as earlier stated that Indians being high power distance culture are not comfortable in using emails to contact their superiors. These problems if not solved properly will impede the development of the team process and become a hindrance in the knowledge sharing. Moreover, these problems may have an adverse effect on the formation of trust and establishment of a shared culture between the team members.

4.4 Trust

There are evidences that trust, the meaning and context differs across different cultures (Lane 1997, cited in Zaheer and Zaheer, 2006). Dirks, Lewicki, & Zaheer, 2009 have stated that in interpersonal interactions westerners (Western Europe) have been found to be trusting, as according to them others can be trusted unless proven otherwise. Whereas Yamagishi and Yamagishi, 1994 have asserted that Asians (East and South Asians) trust less than Westerners. Moreover, Branzei et.al., 2007 found that also the willingness to trust of Asians depends on the situation in hand. Gunia et.al., 2011 claimed in their study of Indian and American negotiators that the propensity to trust is less in Indians. For Asians, building trust takes time; one has to prove their loyalty from time to time (Doucet, 2008). Davies et.al. 2008, stated that the stress on the building of trust makes Asians only hire their family members in businesses. Furthermore, he also states that Asians generally do not trust Westerners and therefore deliberately personalise conversations in order to fake trust.

4.4.1 Tight culture/loose culture

Takahashi et.al., 2008 have suggested a reason that low and high trust culture depends on the prevalent control in the society. Gelfand et.al., 2011 asserted that loose culture is the one where there are weak norms and high acceptance of diverse behaviour like that of West (for example Britain) whereas tight culture is the one that have no room for improvisation and has strong values imbibed. In tight cultures individuals do not rely on interpersonal trust as there is institutional trust to control actions in the

society in fact, in case of interpersonal they do not need to think about trust as according to them trust is not needed (Yamagishi, 2009, Cited in Gunia and Brett, 2011). Hence, in the absence of relevant institution, as in the internet environment there are no strong legal structures (Cyr et.al., 2005), these cultures exhibit low trust. Therefore, members belonging to Indian culture will display low trust behaviour as compared to British members.

4.4.2 Individualism/collectivism

Hofstede's two dimension individualism and collectivism also play a role in the trust environment. Societies with tight culture tend to be collectivists in nature and loose culture societies are individualists (Spielberger, 2004). Collectivist tend to trust more in the in-group as they hardly move out of the group, however, between cultures the trust radius is a complete opposite as individualist trust outsiders more than collecitivists (Yamagishi and Yamagishi, 1994)

4.4.3 Poverty

The other important dimension of India that can explain the low radius of trust is the low poverty index (World Bank, 2011). The World Bank, 2011's Perspective on poverty report on India, states that India's middle class survive in not far above the Indian poverty line and less than the international poverty line. Delhey at.al, 2011 stated that poverty makes people avoid risk and therefore they only trust those they know whereas security makes people more trusting which is true in most of the western countries for example Britain. Wealthier societies are well equipped with all the luxuries of life and so for them acting in a less trustworthy manner do not make any sense.

4.4.4 Religion

Bjørnskov, C. 2008 found that presence of a protestant religion shows higher trust as the protestant countries are more homogenous than others (Tsai et.al., 2011). Moreover, Wolfe 1998 suggested that according to the protestant religion the idea is to treat everyone equally therefore their trust

radius is high and they trust without requiring a relationship to build trust. In India a lot of importance is placed on religion (Kumar and Sankaran, 2007). Gopalan and Rivera, 1997 asserted that according to the Hindu religion, the time is divided in to four stages, sequenced in order of decline. The present one, Kalyug, is the last and the worst of all. He asserts that this gives Indians a reason to be cynical of the human nature giving rise to untrusting behaviour.

4.4.5 Country of origin effects

Ertug et.al., 2013 have suggested that trustworthiness of a person can also be perceived on the basis of home country which can be a cause of social categorisation where individuals are considered as a member of a group. Indians have been ruled by many European countries so they are generally suspicious of foreign nationals (Grosse, 2007). Moreover, the feeling of Swadeshi (one's own country), makes Indians not to subscribe to the foreign ideas (Joshi, 2001). Therefore, there is a low level of trust for outsiders. In other study by Latif et.al., of International students and local students the participants expressed fear of Asians due to negative depictions of Asians in movies and news reports.

4.4.6 Implications of low/high trust

The implications for this combination of low level and high level of trust will be that the low level trust individual would like to invest in building a relationship of trust before working and high level would deem this as unnecessary and this will lead to friction resulting in lower performance (Zaheer and Zaheer, 2006). Moreover, because of lack of trust the Indian members will not be willing to share their knowledge as they would perceive it to be risky as they would be uncertain about the appropriateness of the British member's actions as Gibson and Manuel, 2003 stated that trust makes one person believe that the others would not take advantage of the other person. Moreover, formation of trust is important for every stage of a virtual team therefore, this problem of development of trust between the Indian and British team members will result in failure of the team. Greenberg et.al., 2007 revealed that trust, in a virtual team, depends on different

evaluations on different stages. Moreover, without the privilege of face to face interaction and common past trust will decline gradually if not steadily established (Nandhakumar and Baskerville, 2006). This would result in the obstruction of information exchange by the Indian member due to less trust in their British colleague which will hinder the development of the performing stage of the virtual team. In addition to that the leadership of British manager will also be affected as he/she would have inadequate information about the task.

4.5 Perceptions of Time

Different perception of time in different culture can affect the working of a virtual team (Holtbergge, 2011). In a study of psychic distance between British and Indian SME's by Puthusserry et.al.,2014 the British respondents claimed the perception of time as the major hindrance in the business as they found Indians to be never on time with everything running at a very slow pace. Chatterjee and Pearson 2000, have claimed that time is not considered as urgent in Indian organisations as in Western organisations. Anisya and Annamma, 1994 stated that Indians consider time as an abstract phenomenon and schedule to be subject to change and therefore not strictly followed. In a research by Marrewijk, 2011, it was found that the Dutch found Indians to be less structured in time management as they never used to inform the Dutch members if they were not able to finish a given task in allotted time. Moreover, the interviewed Dutch members stated that Indians perceive details or deadlines to be something that they have no control over.

4.5.1 Monochronic/Polychronic

One reason for Indian perception of time is their being a polychronic culture, according to Clem and Mujtaba, 2011. Bluedorn et.al., 1992 has stated that for virtual delegates that belong to a monochromic culture, like British, an appointment means an activity that is scheduled and is supposed to be followed. Any changes in the schedule should therefore be informed in order to replan the schedule. However, Indians belong to a polychronic culture so they do not strictly stick to the schedule and this is also applicable to their task deadlines. The concept of time in India is very fluid and subject to

change. Schedules can change as it is dependent on the people and events involved (Globaledge, 2010, India, cited in Clem and Mujtaba, 2011).

4.5.2 Linear/circular time perception

The other reason that could explain the time management system of Indians is that Indians do not view time as something perishable. Gopalan and Rivera 1997, explained that the time orientation of Indians is towards the past. They also stressed that they consider time as infinite entity that is part of the cosmic cycle. Indian time orientation, according to them, is influenced by the theory of karma in which the incomplete transactions of this life are carried forward to the next life. Gopalan and Stahl 1998, claimed that there is a belief that the current life is a result of early birth or births. They further stated that in India time is viewed not in a linear fashion but as an infinite loop that has been there and will always be. As a result of this belief the Indians have a relaxed approach towards time. Gorill 2007 claimed that this notion of time affects the business negotiations as it takes longer and is never done in a hassle (Ndubisi, 2010). On the other hand, Graham 1981, suggested that the Anglo perception of time is considered to be equivalent of money and thus a specific time is allotted to every task. He further stated that Anglo perception of time is linear and they think of time as road that goes from past to future and the time spent in the past that does not contribute anything to the present, is considered as wasted.

4.5.3 Implications of different time perceptions

The different perception of time can cost a virtual team as they would fail in their goal as in the initial stages of the virtual team the British members will judge the Indian members on the basis of their completion of the task. As claimed by Jarvenpaa et.al., 1998 in order to trust, members make decision on the track records and the meeting of expectations of the others. If the Indian team members would not complete task as per the deadlines, which is due to the relaxed attitude of the Indian tradition towards time, the British members will perceive them as ineffective and unreliable in case of handling responsibility which will then result in deterioration of the bond and cohesion between the team members. The different time visions may also

affect the collaboration between the team members as in a virtual team the tasks are interconnected (Saunders et.al., 2004). This is in turn will affect the bonding between the team members which is the main aim of the norming stage according to the Tuckman's model.

Moreover, Holtbrugge, 2011 monochronic cultures, like British, do not grasp the understanding of the polychronic culture and therefore cannot make the switch when needed. Hall, 1987 mentioned that people from monochronic cultures do not like to be disturbed while doing something. Therefore, the British members would not like to be bothered when they are working which would result in the Indian members' hesitation to approach them for any query about the task in hand which can then affect their performance. Moreover, Cramton and Hinds, 2007 emphasised that in Indian culture it is considered rude to refuse when someone approaches. They also found that the Indian members were shocked to observe that their Western counterparts (German and US) first completed the task they were performing, when interrupted.

4.6 Leadership

According to Swierczek, 1991 cultural factors play a key role in determining the success of leadership. There are many studies related to the leader member exchange in the context of Indian organisation. Meade, 1967, did a study on the Indian employees; he found that autocratic style of leadership was critical to performance. In a study of US salesperson and Indian sales person, Agrawal et.al., 1999, found that the Indian salesperson look for their leaders to give them instructions and follow authority. In another study by Agrawal 1993, revealed that Indian salesperson display favourable attitude towards control. However, other research on Indian managers has shown that effective style displays both consideration and initiation (Swierczek, 1991). Sinha 1984, stated that Indians are inclined towards dependent, nurturant kind of leadership in which the leader has a personal relationship with the subordinate (Pillai et.al., 1999). Sharma 1984 and Sinha 1990 defined Indian employees to be obedient, submissive and having respect for power (Varma et.al., 2005)

4.6.1 Effects of cultural dimensions on preferred style of leadership

Hofstede's cultural dimensions can explain the preferences of Indians towards the autocratic leadership. Swierczek, 1991 proposed that high power distance culture, like India, employees expect to be instructed authoritatively. He asserted that subordinates in such kind of society do not appreciate a participative kind of leadership. However, Peterson et.al., 1995 claimed that superiority can be sidestepped even in a high power distance if faced with difficulty. Swierczek, 1991 also mentioned that directive style of leadership is best suited for collectivist cultures like India. On the other hand Varma et.al., 2005 put forth the point that India's collectivist culture influences the leader member exchange. They further stressed that the moral component in the relationship between the leader and the follower makes it resemble a relationship of a parent and a child. This could be the reason for the inclination towards the nurturant kind of leadership. In high power distance culture as that of India bosses have to foresee and influence the stresses of the employees. However, Storti 2007 mentioned that Western managers empower their employees and impart responsibilities. He elaborated that they do not prefer their subordinates to come to them with matters that have been already given to the subordinates. The British managers come from a low power distance culture and according to Dash et.al., 2006, low power distance appreciate participative decision making.

4.6.2 Effects of the caste system on preferred style of leadership

This acceptance of directive leadership in India can also be attributed to the prevalent caste system in the Indian society. Varma et.al., 2005 emphasised that the Indian organisations have high power distance which is related to the caste system resulting in a paternalistic style of management. Ganon and Pillai, 2010 stated that the concept of high power distance and inequality in India developed in early years of Indian social system which was further strengthened by the British rule (Rao, 2011). The Indian caste system was divided into four categories the highest, the Brahmins (intellectual leaders), Kshatriyas (soldiers of war), Vaishyas (business traders), and Shudras (unskilled laborers). The Shudras are considered the lowest. Gopalan and

Rivera 1997 stressed that the Britishers used to promote the upper caste to work in official positions. They further asserted that Indian employees are greatly aware of their lower status compared to the management. In a study by Marrewijk, 2011 one Indian employee noticed that their Western counterpart (Dutch) can tell their boss anything. He was also surprised to observe that the Dutch employees even say no to some task given by their superiors.

4.6.3 Implications of preferred style of leadership

Firstly, the implication of the preferred style of leadership in both the cultures will make the task of the leader very difficult as the leader will have to manage members from very diverse backgrounds. If a British member is the leader, he will try to lead through participative leadership as that is the norm in the Western culture whereas the Indian subordinates will not appreciate that as according to Swierczek, 1991, Indian subordinates make it tough for leaders to lead in any other way than autocratically. Moreover, Gopalan and Rivera, 1997 suggested that the democratic type of leadership may make the Indian members perceive their team leader as incompetent. This would in turn be a problem for the development of the norming stage as according to Furst et.al., 1999 leaders have to play an active role in this stage in order to strengthen group norms. Moreover, the Western managers will perceive the Indian members as lacking confidence as Storti, 2007 stated that the dependency of the subordinates surprises the Western managers as they do not take initiatives themselves and expect to be directed. Moreover, the caste system may also affect the team role of the virtual team as according to Gopalan and Rivera, 1997 the Indian employees collaborate only with those that they perceive to be of their same caste. If a team member has accepted the role of a Shaper but he belongs to a Shudra caste, which is considered the lowest, the other Indian members will not accept him/her as the shaper and that would lead to conflict in the team. As in the case of a study by Marrewijk, 2011 it was found that one Indian customer refused to interact with the boss because he was of lower caste than himself.

4.7 Changes in the Indian culture

Although, according to Joshi, 2001 Indians cherish their history and take long time to change, the present India is an amalgamation of the eastern and the Western values (Somalingam and Shanthakumari, 2013). Somalingam and Shanthakumari, 2013 assert that the modern India is moving towards the Western style of management. Mukundan et.al., 2013 stated that the generation Y in India does not believe in hierarchical structures and expects to be included in the decision making process. Holtbrugge et.al., emphasised that young Indian professionals are looking to close the gap of power distance between the subordinate and the leader. According to Kwantes, 2009 old Indian style of management is becoming outdated now. Kumar and Sankaran, 2007 stated that although Indians are high on power distance but if provided with opportunity they like to lessen it. The implication of this change in the Indian culture would result in reducing the differences between the attitudes of the Indian and British employees. However, the older employees would not be comfortable in this new style of Indian management but younger generation would probably be more inclined towards working in the Western style of management. Arora, 2013, claimed that large percent of the Indian workforce consists of the generation Y. This would result in an easier management of a virtual team but it might take some time before this difference is reduced as culture is slow to change (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005, cited in Hofstede et. al., 2010).

Chapter 5 Conclusion

The objective of this study was to evaluate how cultural differences between British and Indian members affect the working of a virtual team. During the course of the research different aspects of cultural values of the Indian system were considered and compared with the British culture. Along with that this research also examined how cultural values affect the working of the Indian employees. The role of different accents in the biased perception was also looked into as in virtual teams often communication is through internet calls and telephones.

In writing the literature review the author found that the research on cultural differences on virtual teams has given conflicting results however, this research found that there are different aspects of the cultural factors that affect the working of the virtual teams. The dimensions considered were conflict management, communication, trust, perception of time and leadership. The Indian value system is slow to change (Banerjee, 2008). Therefore it was assumed that the current scenario in the Indian management is inspired from the old thought process of the Indians. All the dimensions of the working of the virtual team mentioned above have been assumed to be affected by the way the cultural values are imbibed in the Indian employees.

Firstly, in critically evaluating the dimension of conflict management, it was found that the Indian managers are inclined towards using non confrontational style of managing conflict while the British managers were found to prefer the asserting style of conflict. This vast difference was considered to be an effect of Hofstede's cultural dimensions of individualism, collectivism and power distance. Moreover, Indians were found to be considering relationship and task conflict simultaneously whereas the Anglo culture was found to be very professional in case of relationship conflict. The difference in attitude towards silence was also considered to get a clear understanding of the issues related to conflict management. It was analysed that the Indians would consider the confronting attitude of the Western managers as insulting which would give rise to relationship conflict which would influence the performing stage of

the team. In further evaluating it was analysed that the non confrontational style of conflict management of Indians will delay the occurrence of conflict. This was further found to result in the delay of overcoming of conflict that is very important for the storming stage.

While working on the communication analysis the author found that the direct and indirect style of Indians and British managers is a result of them being from high and low context cultures respectively. It was also found that cultural dimension of individualism and collectivism has an influence on the communication style. In addition to that, it was also a concern that the Indians are not clear in their objections. Furthermore, it was interesting to note that the different accents trigger biases in absence of face to face conversation. To examine the influence of accents the scenario of the Indian call centre environment was explored. Through evaluating the call centre scenario it came into light that the British do not tolerate Indian call centre agents even if the accent was British. Examination of the communication problem revealed that there will be concerns about the channel of communication. Furthermore, the development of the team would be hindered as the knowledge transfer will be a difficult process because of different communication styles and inferences caused by different accents.

The willingness to trust was found to be less in Indian as compared to the British. This was inferred by the views stated by different authors and their research. By critically analysing the literature on trust in Indian and Western culture it was found loose society (British) tends to trust more whereas tight society (Indian) depends on the system and tends to trust less. It was also evaluated that the trust also depends on the dimensions of collectivism and individualism. Loose societies tend towards individualism and tight societies are collectivist in nature. Furthermore, the prevalence of poverty in India was also considered as one of the factors that influences trust as poverty makes people risk averse and therefore less willing to trust outsiders whereas those who have enough for their life do not have any reason to be untrusting towards others. In addition to that it was also deduced that the religion has a role to play in trust behaviour. Indians were found to be vary of subscribing

to foreign ideas as a result of the British rule for a century. Less trust would obstruct in the information exchange which would result in the transfer inadequate information leading to problems in the performing stage.

Time is considered as the most important entity for a virtual team as virtual teams are often formed for duration of short period. It was investigated that Indians being polychronic are less structured for time and this was considered a problem by the British members as according to Hall, British culture is monochromic. A critical analysis of the religious aspect of the Indian culture found that the perception of time has been deduced from the old thinking of the Indians that time is a loop. This outlook towards different time perceptions was considered to be a problem for the bonding of the team as the British members would consider the Indian members to be unreliable because of their attitude towards time. Moreover, the British (monochronic) culture is unable to adjust to the style of Indian (polychronic) which leads to them being perceived as rude by their Indian counterpart. The monochronic attitude of the British members will make the Indian members hesitate in approaching them which will affect their performance.

In the course of the research the author found that Indians prefer an authoritative style of leadership and do not appreciate a democratic leader. On critical examination the reason for this preference was attributed to them being from high power distance culture. Furthermore, it was also found that the caste system was a factor in them being high power distance culture and the British rule further strengthened the caste system. The implication of this will be that the Western managers would not appreciate their subordinates to ask for instructions. On the other hand the Indian member would interpret the democratic style of leadership as a sign of weakness which will result in hindrance in the norming stage. The effect of the caste system on the team role deduced that the prevalent caste system can also affect the coordination between the team members as individuals from higher caste in India do not want to collaborate with lower caste. That in turn will influence the acceptance of the team roles that are action oriented like the shaper.

To conclude, this research has given an insight into the Indian culture and the British culture which fascinated the author. However, while reading the literature on the Indian management styles the author came across some articles that claimed that the Indian scenario is changing and tending towards the Western style of management which was mentioned in the data analysis. This can trigger a totally different scenario and might reduce the complications the teams have to face due to the culture differences. However, as Indian value system takes long time to change the total transformation may take some time. In addition to that, the change might be gradual so the organisations deploying virtual teams in India have to keep that in mind and work according to the prevalent change in the attitudes of the Indian employees.

Chapter 6 Recommendations

The detailed research on cultural differences concluded that there are certain implications of the differences in cultural aspects of both the British and Indian culture. The Western management practices are not wholly valid in the Indian scenario as mentioned in the Introduction. The employee's attitudes are affected by the different cultural elements and thus gives rise to different complications for a virtual team. Therefore, that would affect the working of a virtual team consisting of Indian and British members. In order to have successful teams there are some recommendations that the author has to make:

1. Both the British and Indian members should be aware of the implications of their actions and also work towards understanding the reasons behind the actions of the other members. A hybrid culture has to be established in order to overcome the problems related to cultural differences. Sensitivity towards one's cultural values will help the virtual team members in doing that. Intercultural training will play a major role in this context as the research has seen that most of the attitudes of the employees were influenced by the cultural norms followed in that society. Therefore, the organisations need to updated and well equipped to provide their virtual assignees with such training packages. Training should not only provide language training but also an in depth knowledge of the differences between the relevant cultures. In order to do that the organisations should have a proper culture coach who has the in depth understanding of the culture values relevant to that culture. However, the training program should be implemented by keeping the time pressure of the virtual assignment.

2. It became clear during the research that not having a common past and lack of face to face interaction increases the complexity, which is already triggered by the cultural differences, between the team members. Therefore, the organisations should make provisions for face to face meeting at least once for the virtual team to meet and socialise so that there is less chances of problems triggered by problems of building of trust. The author does acknowledge that this might be a problem as the teams are assembled for short period of time. Furthermore, investing time and money in giving the

team members that are assembled temporarily might be a factor that would make the organisations unwilling to do it.

3. In the research the author has stated that the scene in the Indian management is changing and has evidenced that with the writings of the different authors however, the organisations have to be updated about these changes. As it was mentioned that these changes in the Indian value system can create a whole new picture for the virtual team, it is necessary that the organisations have the proper sources in place in order to interpret these changes. Furthermore, the virtual assignees should then be trained according to the prevalent changes in the culture.

4. The evidence given by the author regarding the changes in the Indian culture are fascinating to discuss and can be a good area of research. Organisations looking to establish virtual teams in India should be aware of the changes happening in the Indian scenario. Therefore, it is a recommended that this change in Indian culture is in need of further research. Furthermore, there is a call for research in the specific needs of the virtual assignees in order to work with Indians. The highly diversified caste system and the financial condition of the country should also be taken into account.

5. The communication process in a virtual team is going to create a lot of problems as discussed earlier in the data analysis. Indians would prefer face to face interaction whereas the British managers are comfortable with exchanging information through emails and do not need face time to make their conversations understood. Therefore, it is advised that the channel of communication has to be properly discussed and decided. Communication through proper channel will help the virtual team in reducing the problems reported earlier.

6. Leadership for the British managers would be a problem as stated earlier that Indian employees do not prefer a participative leadership. The team leader of the virtual team has to be aware of this attitude of the Indian employee and has to adopt his style according to the situation. Indians

would not prefer a direct negative feedback therefore the leader should be aware of that. Therefore, the organisation has to keep in mind while allotting a leader for the virtual team that the leader is well trained.

7. The prevalent caste system in the Indian society was noted to be a problem for the coordination between the team members if there is higher caste and lower caste both in the virtual team. Therefore, the organisations should take precautions while assembling a team in order to avoid the chances of failure of the team. The staffing of the virtual team should be done such that these complications do not arise later on because it will cost an organisation time and money to assemble a team then disband it due to difficulties in coordination between the team members.

8. As leadership from distance is a problem for the virtual team leader it could be suggested that the leader can use the electronic performance supervising system to guarantee that the Indian team members are working according to the schedule. This can include recording of key strokes and log in details. It should however, be kept in mind that Indian employees do work better under supervision as mentioned in the data analysis but if the Indian scenario is changing the tight supervision might not work that effectively resulting in dissatisfaction of the team member.

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