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EFFECTIVENESS OF INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS IN MULTICULTURAL MANAGEMENT BASED ON A BIG PHARMA COMPANY CASE STUDY

The globalization process, IT revolution, and technological progress in most industrial branches (e.g., pharmacy) have compelled businesses all over the world to adapt to survive. The role of human resources management has changed completely after the new needs of development induced by bringing in foreign labor employees. This paper presents the results of a study conducted in 2022 on employees of an international company. The study looks at how employees, with primarily technical backgrounds, from different countries and cultural backgrounds, develop specific social skills that allow them to efficiently communicate and perform with one another towards a common goal. For this reason, the study aimed to identify the opinions of employees and managers regarding the multicultural influence on outcomes in researched companies. The literature study, bibliometric analysis, a survey questionnaire, and structured interviews were used during the study. The employees pointed out that multicultural teams are more innovative and efficient, and they believe cultural diversity encourages growth and creativity but only if managed well. If not, it can lead to conflicts and a toxic work environment.

Keywords: Multicultural Management, Cultural Diversity, Multicultural Teams, Bibliometric analysis, Systematic Literature Review.

1. INTRODUCTION

Globalization has accelerated the process of becoming connected across time zones and geographic boundaries. Global migration as well as modern technology of the Fourth Industrial Revolution have brought many different cultures closer together in the modern workplace. At the managerial level, the landscape is changing at an impressive speed, which presents real opportunities for growth but also new challenges for leaders and employees. All these factors, render the comprehension of multicultural teams and finding strategies to optimize their effectiveness crucial to researchers.

In this article culture means the acquired information that people use to predict events and interpret experiences to generate social and professional behaviors that are acceptable. This information influences behavior through forming values, attitudes, and behaviors. Culture is passed down the generations through personal experiences and is shared by a vast number of individuals (Mohammadian, 2017). The term "multiculturalism" refers

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to the diversity of cultures. When it is talked about a multicultural team in project management, it means, a collection of people from diverse cultures that work together and apply their expertise and vision to the service of their firm (Lu, Swaab, Galinsky, 2022).

What is currently referred to as corporate culture began to take shape in the management area in the 1980s (Schein, 1985). Corporate culture is a framework of ideas and a loosely structured set of standards and values that all parties involved in the business adhere to. It includes the norms, attitudes, presumptions, values, and behaviors that members of the same organization share (Bournois, 1996).

In today's dynamic and interconnected business environment, organizations must deal with a workforce comprised of people from various cultural backgrounds. This cultural diversity presents both opportunities and challenges for managers and team leaders. On the one hand, managing cultural differences can be challenging as it necessitates an understanding of cultural quirks as well as the ability to modify leadership strategies as needed. Diverse teams, on the other hand, can bring a wide range of perspectives, abilities, skills and information to the table, allowing them to solve complex problems in novel ways that more homogeneous groups might not have been able to (Hienz, Engelhart, 2018).

The term "multicultural management" refers to the methods and techniques used to successfully lead and supervise a workforce made up of people from various cultural backgrounds. Understanding the various points of view, values, beliefs, and customs that each team member brings to the table is essential. Organizations can greatly benefit from a multicultural workforce by cultivating an inclusive and respectful culture. These benefits include enhanced creativity, innovation, and problem-solving abilities (Canen, A.G., Canen, A., 2012). Communication gaps are the primary barrier to managing a culturally diverse workforce; however, closing these gaps can be difficult when team members come from different cultural backgrounds. Differences in communication styles, preferences, and nonverbal cues can lead to miscommunications, misinterpretations, and potential conflicts (Sonal, 2011). Cultural differences matter because deeply ingrained cultural norms, values, and beliefs have the power to shape people's attitudes, actions, and work ethics. Navigating these differences effectively necessitates a thorough understanding of cultural quirks as well as the ability to adapt leadership styles accordingly (Misoc, 2017). Also, a lot of multicultural teams are currently operating virtually. It can be challenging to plan meetings, assign tasks, and maintain real-time collaboration when managing a team that is spread across several time zones. A seamless workflow now depends on leveraging technology wisely and adjusting to asynchronous work practices (Cagiltay, Bichelmeyer, Kaplan Akilli, 2015).

The research is organized as follows in order to better understand effective management methods for multicultural teams. An overview of the main topics in question is given in this first section of this paper, which serves as the conceptual foundation for the study. Subsequently, the researcher performs a systematic literature review, succeeded by segments that arrange the chosen literature concerning multicultural teams and multicultural management. The researcher then presents a case study of a large pharmaceutical company. The researcher concludes by summarizing, discussing, and suggesting potential directions for future research that could deepen our understanding of multicultural management.

Research questions:
    RQ1. What are the determinants of effectiveness in multicultural work teams?
    RQ2. What improves innovation in multicultural teams?
    RQ3. What are the factors which the performance of multicultural teams?
    RQ4. Which are the areas that could be the focus of upcoming research?
Tools such as: VOSviewer, author's' questionnaire, in depth's interviews were used.

2. SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

The researcher decided to follow the systematic literature review method which was proposed by (Kitchenham, 2004). This method can be covered in 3 main phases: Planning, conducting, and reporting the review. The planning stage entails formulating the inclusion/exclusion criteria, search strategy, and research questions. Researchers conduct a literature search, choose studies according to the criteria, and evaluate the quality of the included studies during the conducting phase. Ultimately, the results are compiled and organized in a systematic way during the reporting stage.

2.1. Data bases used

Based on the research questions, several term-based searches were carried out in an effort to find and exhaust potentially relevant publications. The Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus databases were searched for published articles on multicultural management using keywords such as "multicultural management" OR "cross-cultural teams" alone and in combinations. WoS and Scopus are considered the most respected and extensive databases for examining peer-reviewed literature, they were taken into consideration for the synthesis of the literature on multicultural management. Both databases are commonly recognized as the vastest sources of data for systematic literature reviews, serving as the main bibliographic databases (Zhu, Liu, 2020).

2.3. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The following inclusion and exclusion criteria were used to download all papers with the keywords listed earlier:

- Only publications in the last 20 years (between 2003 & 2023) are included.
- Publications in English & French were included.
- Subject areas which are not related to Management, Business, & Engineering Multidisciplinary were excluded.
- Grey literature in the form of conference proceeding were included.

Based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria above, 288 publications were found. They were sorted to exclude duplicated papers since articles were downloaded from two databases. As a result, 50 duplicate publications were deleted. After reading the abstracts of the remaining 238, the list of articles was narrowed further by removing those which didn't have "multicultural management" or "multicultural teams", resulting in 163 articles to be synthesized and analyzed (Figure 1).
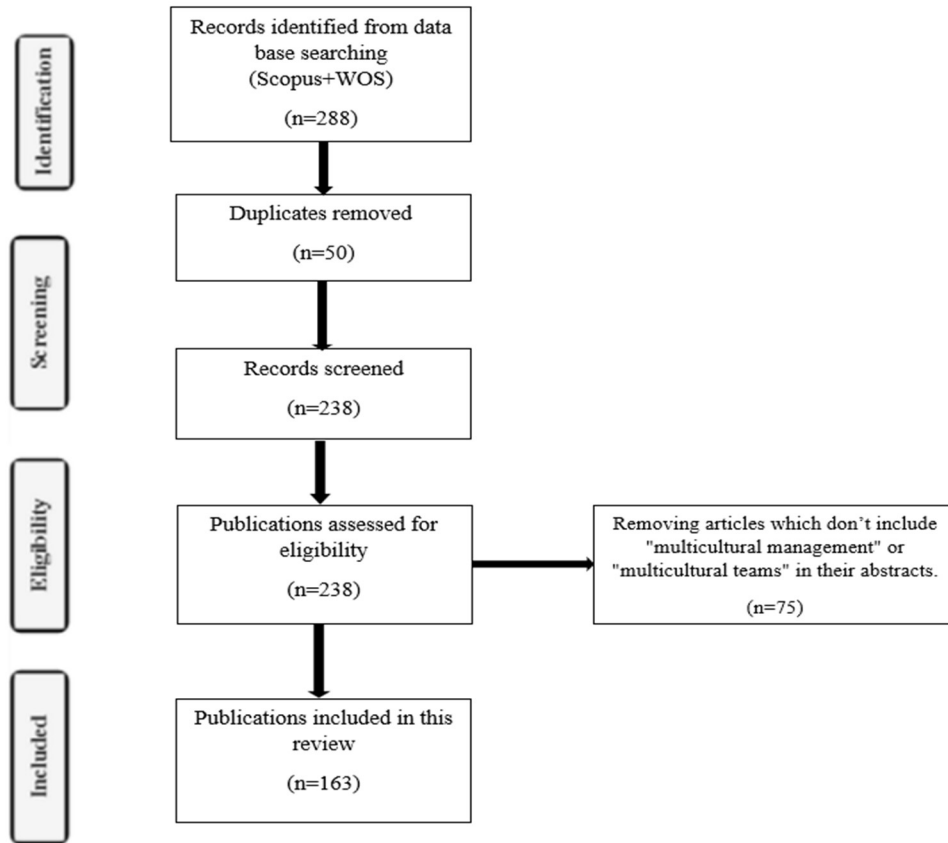
Figure 1. Criteria for selecting the articles for this review.

Source: Author's own contribution.

2.4. Data Synthesis and Analysis

The current review starts with a general overview of studies on multicultural management, including co-occurrence (co-word) analysis and a co-citation analysis, using the previously stated research questions as a guide. Consequently, research gaps became apparent and future research agendas were suggested.

2.4.1. Co-occurrence (co-word) Analysis

Examining associations between significant keywords reveals the relevance of researching the topic of multicultural management. The network of interactions between keywords is described using a co-occurrence (co-word) analysis. Researchers can use this analysis to examine the research path for a specific research theme based on keyword associations (Ding, Yang, 2020). The main keyword system analyzed 884 keywords, However, the analysis only included 68 significant keywords that "co-appeared" at least three times. Moreover, the VOSviewer analysis revealed five clusters (Figure 2). Cluster one (red nodes) is about project management, global projects and competences. Cluster two's (green nodes) main words are education, engineering multicultural teams and

competitive advantage. Cluster three (blue nodes) is ruled by communication, leadership and organizational culture. Cluster four (yellow nodes) covers the topics of technological development, virtual teams and cultural diversity. Lastly, cluster five (black nodes) covered cultural intelligence, global integration and engineers.
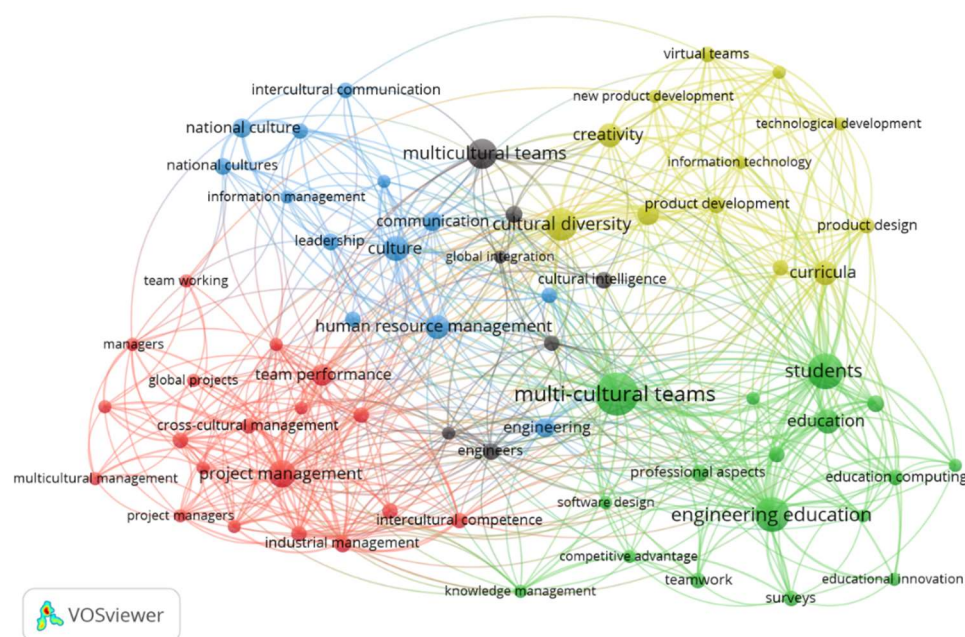

Figure 2. Co-occurrence analysis on VOSviewer

Source: Author's own contribution.

2.5. RESULTS

From the co-occurrence analysis, it can be concluded that the most researched areas when it comes to multicultural management are:

Cultural intelligence in project management:

The interaction of cultural intelligence and project management, particularly in the context of multicultural teams working on common projects (Kilduff, Cormican, 2022). To improve project manager competencies, organizations should develop cultural intelligence-focused training and leadership competency development. In this regard, cultural intelligence is crucial in project management because it enables team members to navigate and leverage cultural diversity for successful project outcomes (Bergh, Du Plessis, 2016).

Multicultural Management & Education:

Multicultural education is a continuous process of assisting students in achieving academic and personal success by providing equitable educational opportunities to all students (Biggs, Tang, 2011). By selecting and managing policies, curricula, and teaching styles, teachers, administrators, and school leaders play an important role in ensuring the incorporation of multicultural education which acknowledges and prepares students to

thrive in a diverse world by acquiring all the necessary skills in their education (Kelly, 2009).

Communication & leadership in multi-cultural teams:

Effective multicultural team management entails being forthcoming about cultural differences, accommodating them, and stepping in early to establish expectations or, if needed, bringing in more senior managers (Lisak, Erez, 2009). Through the implementation of these strategies, leaders can proficiently oversee multicultural teams and capitalize on the distinct strengths and viewpoints of every team member to accomplish their objectives. In conclusion, cultural intelligence, the capacity to promote teamwork, and knowledge of cultural variances are necessary for effective leadership and communication in multicultural teams. Through fostering an atmosphere that is both courteous and inclusive, leaders can leverage the diversity present in their teams to achieve success (Gudykunst, 2003).

Cultural diversity as a driver for technological & economic development:

Technological and economic development is propelled forward by cultural diversity, especially in large technology companies. These businesses are realizing the value of diversity and inclusion (D&I) more and more. Accepting & managing cultural diversity helps to increase workplace productivity, global market expansion, creativity, and customer understanding. Large technology companies that actively address diversity and inclusion are advancing both the wider technological and economic development as well as their own growth and success (Nathan, Lee, 2013).

Global integration & cultural diversity:

The relation between cultural diversity and global integration has broad implications. Societies are exposed to a wide variety of cultures, customs, and viewpoints as they grow more globally integrated. Through the exchange of concepts, norms, and behaviors, this exposure may contribute to the enrichment of societies. Furthermore, cultural diversity can promote creativity and innovation by making societies more resilient and adaptable to external challenges (Matei, 2020). Understanding and appreciating cultural diversity is essential for global integration within organizations. Businesses that operate in a globalized setting frequently employ a diverse workforce to serve clients from various cultural backgrounds. Accepting cultural diversity in the workplace can help businesses become more creative, make better decisions, and comprehend a wider range of consumer markets (Gurrey, 2016).

2.6. CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review took into account 163 publications from Wos & Scopus on the topics of multicultural management & cross-cultural teams in order to respond to the previously mentioned research questions. The publications were interesting but there is a clear lack of current case studies dealing with the topic especially the current 'new normal' era. By searching the terms "Multicultural Management" & "Case study" on Scopus, only 4 results turn up, all of them published before 2010. Case studies are crucial to management science because they offer a thorough analysis of real-world management problems and shed light on the difficulties and complexities that businesses and organizations face (Lapoule, Lamy, 2012). In order to address the research questions, the researcher reasoned that disseminating the results of a case study she completed on a large

pharmaceutical company would offer a deeper analysis and a more thorough grasp of the subject, building on the findings of the systematic literature review.

3. CASE STUDY ON A BIG PHARMA COMPANY

The company which was included as a case study to analyze the determinants of cultural diversity in terms of effectiveness of team management was Merck. It is large company represented worldwide. Over 69,000 people work for Merck across sixty-six countries. The company's mission is to use science and technology to solve some of the most challenging problems facing humanity today and to build more sustainable lifestyles. Helping to create, enhance, and prolong life; offering specialized treatment for severe disorders; and providing the scientific community with more powerful instruments, services, and digital platforms that facilitate more accurate and easier research and accelerate scientific advancements (Source: company website). The case study presented in the thesis was based on Merck's Polish subsidiary MBSE: Merck Business Solutions Europe situated in Wroclaw.

The research process consisted out of three stages (Figure 3). The first stage was presented in section 2 (The study's objective was identification of influence of cultural diversity on effectiveness of management & performance of multicultural team. The researcher intended to investigate how the company's diverse staff is managed from an employee's perspective, as well as from the managers' perspective. Also, if policies and practices are followed. The research goal is to determine and identify the necessity of implementing a multicultural management style to increase effectiveness at corporations with a focus on MBSE as a case study.

1
- **Systematic literature review**
- Planning
- Conducting
- Reporting

2
- **Quantitative research**
- CAWI with 60 MERCK employees

3
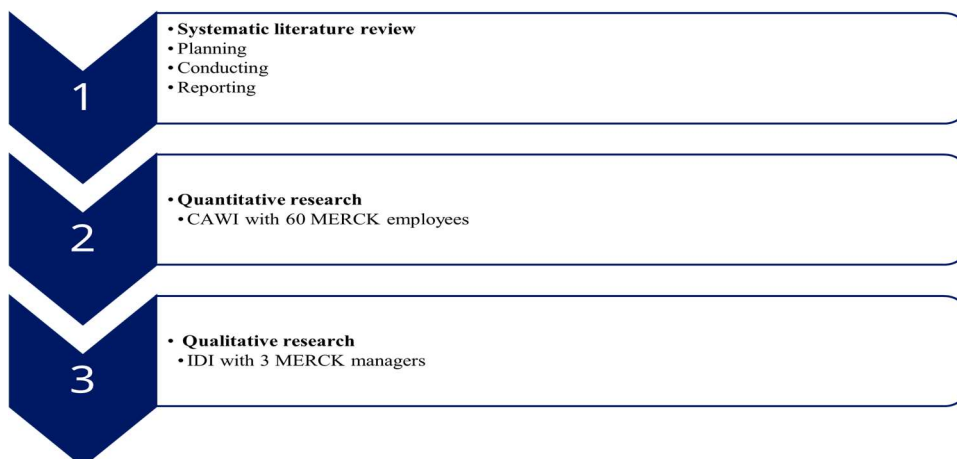- **Qualitative research**
- IDI with 3 MERCK managers

Figure 3. Research methodology

Source: Author's own contribution.

The main objective responses were gathered via a survey (quantitative data), and the subjective, more personalized data were gathered via interviews (qualitative data). Based on the research questions and hypotheses, survey and interview questions were developed.

The two approaches to data collection complement each other and improve the data's validity and reliability (Harris, Lois, Brown, Gavin, 2019).

3.1. Quantitative approach

Section 1: general information

60 employees from MBSE have responded to this survey. The below section contains all general information. Like all corporates, there are different functional services in the company, respondents work in HR service, finance service, IT, marketing, research and development, procurement, and management (Figure 4). Merck company has employees with different nationalities. Many of them are from Poland, obviously as this study took place in the Polish division of the company. Polish is the most present language in the company, the majority of respondent are female 53.3% and the rest 46.7% are male. The most dominant age ranges from 18–30 with 61.7% then came the rest of with less numbers which mean that MBSE company has young competence from difference countries which proves the diverse spirit in the company, the frequent period of experience within the company is from 1-5 years which makes sense as the Polish affiliate has only been operating since 2016.
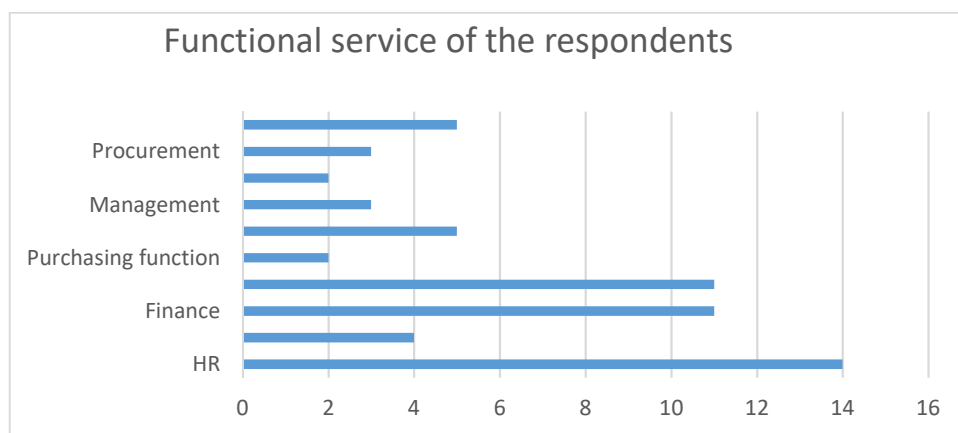

Figure 4. Functional service of the employees

Source: Author's own contribution.

The respondents' opinions about key aspects of working in multicultural team are presented in Table 1. The 5-level Likert's scale was used to measure to measure the extent to which the respondent agrees with a given opinion. In each case, the number of respondents who selected a specific scale is shown in Table 1. 1 being I don't agree at all and 5 being I completely agree.

Based on the respondents' answers, some hypothesis can be formulated: the overall perception of Merck's approach to diversity management in general, and particularly to cultural diversity, is positive. Employees want and accept diversity, they believe that cultural heterogeneity, would benefit the overall organization when it comes to effectiveness, performance, and innovation. More precisely, an enhanced emphasis on multicultural management is thought to potentially boost Merck's available workforce in

the long run. Employees who took part in this survey, have embraced, and appreciated the strategies guiding the greater emphasis on diversity management.

Table 1. Opinions of respondents

Questions asked	1	2	3	4	5
1. Are you opened to other cultures & customs?	1	2	2	20	32
2. How big is the effect on cultural differences on you daily work?	-	6	14	22	18
3. Can in-workplace training help with cultural diversity?	-	-	10	18	32
4. To what extent your employer supports you in language/cultural skills?	-	2	16	23	19
5. Do you find challenges in attending meetings with multicultural teams?	13	21	12	11	3
6. How willing are you to learn how to orient yourself in your colleagues/manager's culture?	1	3	11	20	25
7. How do you rate the satisfaction level of working in a multicultural environment?	-	1	10	20	29
8. How frequently to you take part in company events about D&I?	1	8	17	15	19
9. What is the frequency of conflicts in your team that were caused due to cultural differences?	15	18	13	11	3
10. How would you rate the efficiency of your team?	-	-	9	30	21
11. Do you think that multicultural teams provide a competitive advantage to the company?	2	1	7	21	29
12. Is it rewarding to work with people with different cultural backgrounds from you?	-	-	16	14	30
13. Do you think that multicultural teams are more innovative than culturally homoge-neous teams?	1	2	17	11	29
14. How essential is trust for the development of your team?	-	1	11	13	35
15. How important it is for the team to have shared vision of the company's goal & objectives?		1	6	15	38

Source: Author's own contribution.

3.2. Qualitative approach

Virtual & face-to-face interviews were used to gather the data for this study. All the interviews were conducted after previous discussion with the managers about the topic. The questions and the topic were included in the interview invitation as giving the questions beforehand will help provide more thoughtful responses. These will be structured individual interviews with each manager separately. The 3 managers have team members

from/located in: Poland, Germany, Philippines, Us, Italy, Spain, Morocco, Austria & France.

Manager 1:	Manager 2:	Manager 3:
• Ukrainian. • working in Merck since 2009. • **Multicultural Management:** 'Working in multicultural team brings a lot of advantages compared to the one-nation team such as: a lot of ideas are proposed while discussing and brainstorming for solution. Also, the conflicts are solved in many ways due to diversity, the level of inclusion is higher since people are more open to accept a very different person from the point of view of language, culture, habits and so on therefore no newcomer will be rejected'. • **Effective management:** 'The solutions to assure effective motivation of people in the team can be by establishing a teamwork spirit within the team by different initiatives. Motivation is stimulated as soon as posting funny stories in the group chat, someone brings breakfast to the office, team dinners and events outside the workplace. Motivation is often boosted by little things that don't relate to work. Appreciation is always a good motivation'.	• German. • working for the company for 22 years. • **Multicultural Management:** 'The biggest advantage of a multicultural team is that you learn many new aspects (private and business). The team has a very different approach to the daily work and everyone in the team has an open mindset and their own methodology which can be an opportunity to learn from other team members'. • **Effective management:** 'Some nations tend to lead teamwork, while others tend to follow owing it to cultural reserve. A manager must create a safe environment in which everyone feels comfortable and at ease. People who are shy to speak up, for example, may require time to prepare for a meeting, and they may need to be called out to offer their views. Some solutions to assure effective decision-making in the team is to delegate as much as possible, empower, do not predict failure, and do not remind of previous mistakes, try to make fast fact-based decisions, let certain decisions be done by the team after their joint alignment'.	• German. • Working for the company since 2013. • **Multicultural Management:** 'Problems that can be faced in a multicultural team or rather it wouldn't necessarily be a problem, is the hierarchy which can sometimes represent an issue. Example: manager from EMEA and Team lead from APAC. In many cases, the team lead does not have the courage to contradict his/her superior. The manager in EMEA, however, is very positive about an open discussion (with different opinions) and values it very much'. • **Effective management** • The feedback culture at Merck is very much in focus. Recently, I discussed it within a workshop and made everyone understand that the feedback culture is very much appreciated, talked about the different ways of giving feedback and, of course, the possibility for everyone to share their feedback constructively at any time even across teams where an established comfort zone is needed'.

Figure 5. IDI Interviews

Source: Author's own contribution.

The Figure 5 shows structured and grouped findings from the in-depth interviews with 3 Merck Managers. The interviewees were asked to describe their attitudes about cultural diversity in their teams/company and to rate the importance of various management strategies. Interviewees were also urged to contribute other strategies that have proven to be helpful in their experience to the list of already selected practices.

3.3. Results

This case considers the relationship between multicultural management and job performance in multinational organizations with a focus on the organization under study. The researcher organized a survey and interviews as part of the quantitative and qualitative research phases to answer the research questions. We can conclude that:

Elements which influence the performance of multicultural teams are clarity of communication, employee engagement, conflict resolution, technology use, organizational culture, resource allocation, inclusive decision making and psychological safety.

The determinants of effectiveness in multicultural work teams are cultural awareness/intelligence, inclusive leadership, effective communication, clear objectives, feedback, recognition, flexibility & adaptability.

Several factors can improve innovation in multicultural teams such as Leveraging diverse perspectives, addressing cultural barriers, cross-cultural training, delegation and rewards.

4. DISCUSSION

Multicultural management is often an interdisciplinary field that aims to facilitate communication, management, and interaction between different cultures within companies, especially those developing internationally, and employees and actors from different cultures. The context of globalization, characterized by the intensity of world

trade, the mobility of people and goods and the increase in international partnerships and agreements, requires a new HR management capable of creating strong and lasting social bonds by promoting a way of working that favors the diversity of profiles within organizations. Multicultural management, when mastered and relevant, allows companies to make the most of new talent, regardless of its origin, to increase their competitiveness and ensure long-term development (Shan, Konishi, Pullin, lupina-Wegener, 2021).

In this case, it is important to help managers decipher the symbols and rituals of the cultures involved. This is neither superficial nor a waste of time, on the contrary, it gives managers the key to understanding, many tense situations can be avoided through the cultural approach. The application of this type of management facilitates exchanges between employees and allows the company to shine in times of values and corporate culture (Tandé, 2017). A management technique that aims to improve and optimize relations between people from different cultures within the same company allows, among other things, to minimize incidents between employees. One of the biggest changes today is to develop the company in the context of globalization by managing the complexity of organizations and cultural diversity (Suedekum, Wolf, Blien, 2014). Cultural diversity is a central element of management. It is very difficult for companies to deal with this reality. Therefore, it is important to understand its benefits and challenges (Lin, 2020).

Uncertainties about the management's function in multicultural teams and discrepancies in the accepted manager were discovered to be another source of troublesome circumstances. Manager must take steps to ensure that the information is not interpreted incorrectly. Cultural awareness training, communication improvement activities, trust buildings activities, shared vision of goals and objectives practices, creation of clear roles and responsibilities: introductory lecture, task visibility and cultural awareness are all disciplines which must be embraced and reinforced by managers (Barak, 2022). It can also be seen that highly productive and low-productive teams differ in how they manage diversity, not in the presence or absence of diversity, as is often assumed. When diversity is managed, it becomes a productive resource for the team. When ignored, diversity leads to operational difficulties that reduce the team's effectiveness (Loue, 2022).

It is obvious that more case studies must be done to compare the findings in order to come up with best practices to be implemented such as:

- Including courses about multicultural management/ cultural intelligence in curricula at universities.
- Investing in employees by holding training courses that explain the relationship between multicultural management and high performance of human resources and work systems.
- Creating an organizational climate that recognizes the importance of managing cultural diversity and high inclusion that bring about change in work systems with normal performance.

The research to date has successfully captured the importance of multicultural management. But, with the current changing market trends and circumstances, new and up-to-date studies are more needed than ever to truly dive and understand this topic on a deeper level especially that in the 'new normal' era, most of these multicultural teams are also working virtually which adds another layer of complexity to the subject:

The researcher suggests organizing future studies including topics such as:

- The impact of external factors on the behavior and performance of employees in a multinational organization.

- The effectiveness and performance of virtual multicultural teams.
- The current challenges in multicultural virtual teams.

5. CONCLUSION

Companies are discovering that the available workforce is not as homogeneous as it once was, owing to a large influx of professional migrants internationally. As a result, businesses are increasingly concerned about their management style in order to adjust to the current workforce. The research undertaken in the article aims to determine, measure, and identify how implementing a multicultural management style can help improve effectiveness, performance and innovation culturally diverse teams. A case study based on a big pharma company took place since the researcher had direct access to employees and managers.

Through the quantitative research, it was concluded that employees at MBSE value diversity, they are open to their colleagues with different cultures. They believe that implementing more innovative, diverse management techniques is not only beneficial but rather a necessity to the company. Through the qualitative approach, it was discovered that managers highlight the importance of multicultural teams and the competitive advantage they offer to the company importance especially that in a big multinational corporation, effectiveness of the team is connected directly to the management style used. When having team members based/from in different countries, the manager has more responsibility to adapt his/her managing strategy to optimize performance and innovation of the team.

Some gaps in the literature were identified, such as lack of empirical studies about the topic. Also, the dynamic nature of cultures and how they evolve over time, requiring research that considers ongoing cultural shifts and their implications for management practices. In addition to that, with the rise of remote work, there is a need for research examining how multicultural management principles apply in virtual teams and whether traditional models are still relevant in this context.

In summary, multicultural management has the potential to completely transform the workplace by providing the organization with previously unheard-of levels of appeal and flexibility. But improperly managing a multicultural team in an attempt to capitalize on cultural diversity can do more harm than good. While this paper has attempted systematically comprehend what is currently known about this topic, more empirical research is required to advance it.

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