

UNRAVELLING THE PERSONALITY GAP IN MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAMS

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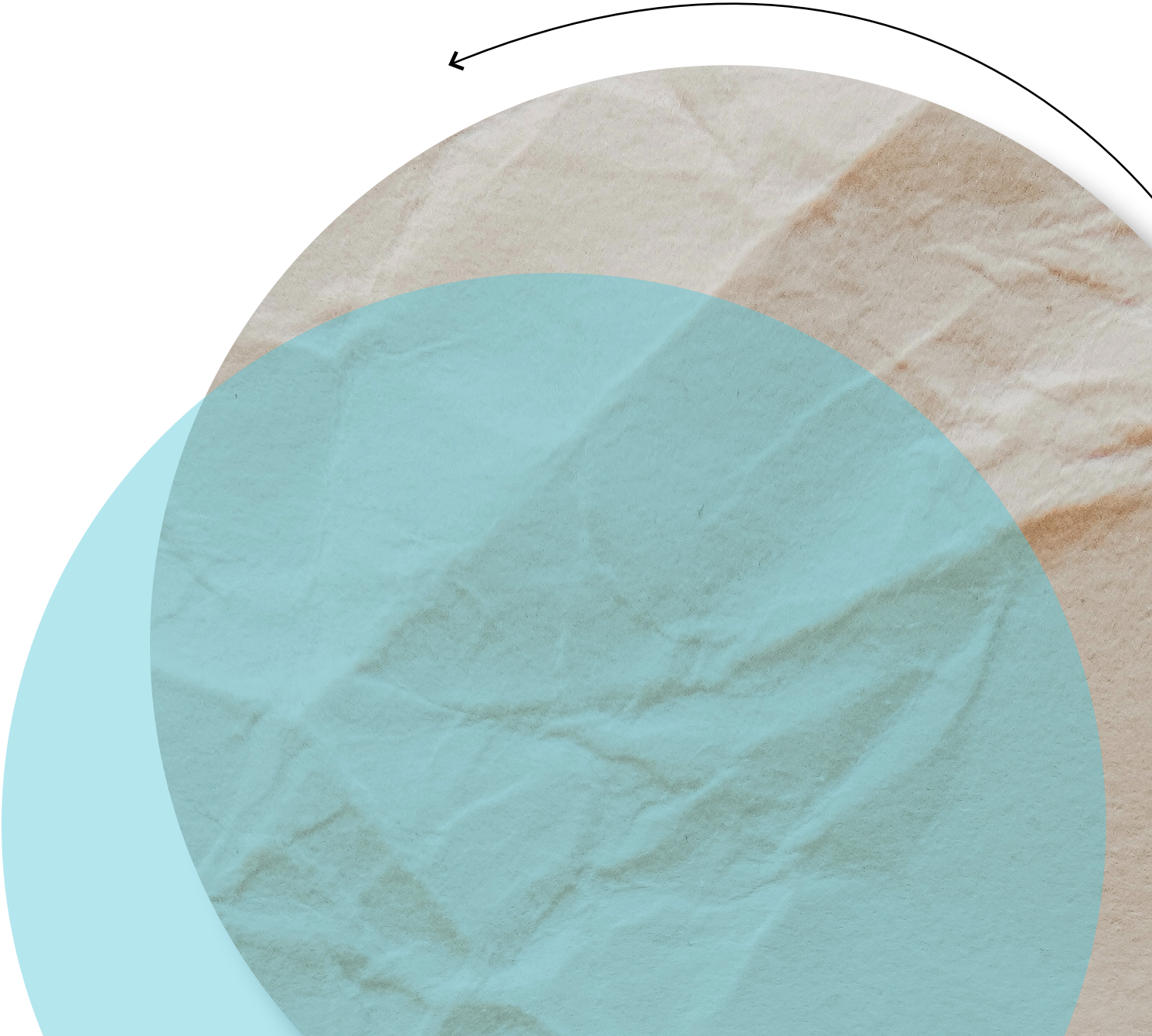
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Abstract

This major research project aimed to explore how personality can be considered a dimension of diversity in improving the effectiveness of multidisciplinary teams in organizations. This exploration involved the review of existing literature and a mixed-method approach to gain insight on how organizations consider and apply personality and diversity in a multidisciplinary team context. The mixed-method approach included anonymous surveys and confidential interviews of participants from small to medium enterprises (SMEs) and large organizations.

The overall findings of the survey and interview data reveal that many value diverse personality types in the workplace and believe it could enhance team effectiveness. However, there is a gap in how organizations can maximize the personality differences of their team members to achieve better effectiveness. The findings also indicate that this gap can be closed by integrating personality as a dimension of diversity in the workplace, which will lead to a better understanding of the personality types in multidisciplinary teams.

This report recommends that organizations integrate personality as a dimension of diversity using a framework that allows employees' personalities to be continuously considered from the hiring process, performance evaluation, and throughout the team lifecycle stages. The creation of this recommended framework requires further research on various areas identified in this report's discussion and recommendation section.



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1.0

INTRODUCTION



Introduction

1.1 Why Now?

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in many organizations switching to the work-from-home model. As individuals started working from home, the virtual work environment changed how they interacted with their colleagues and teams. Between zoom meetings, chat channels, emails, and breakout rooms, the way colleagues engaged varied drastically compared to being able to instantly speak with one another in person when at the office. According to Yang et al. (2022), employee loneliness, ineffective communication between colleagues, and cyber ostracism resulted from many organizations' rise in virtual work environments. The tendency to feel lonely and isolated from colleagues and the work environment is higher in a virtual setting than in an in-person setting, especially when one cannot easily walk up to their manager or colleague and discuss directly. It also enables a siloed work environment, detrimental to workplace collaboration (Yang et al., 2022).

This assertion does not mean that employee interaction and ineffective communication did not exist in the traditional workplace setting before the COVID-19 pandemic. Hirsch et al. (2020) posit that these challenges existed and often resulted in team conflicts. In addition to ineffective communication, these team conflicts were due to differing opinions, academic and cultural backgrounds, and personalities.

Differences in employee personalities, in particular, have been one issue that workplaces have been trying to navigate, especially in a multidisciplinary team setting (Guillaume et al., 2017). The COVID-19 pandemic made it more evident that there are distinct types of personalities in workplace teams. A good example is how extroverted and introverted employees took to working from home. While extroverted employees missed the in-person interaction and craved the office, introverted employees preferred the remote work environment with fewer in-person interactions. (Evans et al., 2021).

As the pandemic goes through its ebb and flow, many workplaces want to balance the needs of these personality types by implementing a hybrid model of in-person and remote work (Yang et al., 2021). Considering this change, it is crucial now more than ever to fully understand the different personality traits of employees, especially in multidisciplinary teams consisting of employees from diverse professional backgrounds and personalities.

1.2 Defining the Problem

What started as an exploration for understanding employees' personalities in workplace team settings led to the question of how one can incorporate the understanding of team members' personalities in workplaces. What if personality was considered a dimension of diversity to understand the different employee personalities better?

Many workplaces have diversity mandates and try to be inclusive when it comes to their employees and hiring new employees; however, personality is not usually among the dimensions of diversity considered (Hirsch et al., 2020). The absence of personality as a dimension of diversity presents a problem as an individual's personality is a part of them, just like the person's race, ethnicity, gender, and age, which are critical dimensions of socio-cultural diversity.

Organizations currently consider the educational background, professional expertise, and cognitive traits as dimensions of diversity that enhance and support a team's success (Guillaume et al., 2017). However, including personality as a dimension of diversity in a multidisciplinary team may further enhance the team's success.

1.3 Research Question

Considering that multidisciplinary teams experience conflict due to differing perspectives and personalities (Hirsch et al., 2020), the initial research topic evolved and eventually led to the following research question:

How might we consider personality as a dimension of diversity in improving the effectiveness of multidisciplinary teams in organizations?

A set of secondary research questions was created to help answer the main research question of the project.

1. What dimensions of diversity are explored in workplaces?
2. How is personality addressed in the workplace?
 - What dimensions of an employee do organizations consider during their performance or hiring assessment?
3. What are the views on personality in the workplace?
4. How do workplaces define teams, and what are their characteristics?
5. Are teams assessed on their effectiveness?
 - How can personality be used to improve team effectiveness?
 - How can teams utilize the conflict arising from personality differences to their advantage?

2.0

METHODOLOGY

Methodology

2.1 Literature Review

The literature review involved a thorough analysis of existing literature to determine how personality is considered in workplaces and to what degree personality is viewed as a dimension of diversity.

2.2 Primary Research

Primary research was conducted to gain new qualitative information on how organizations consider and apply personality and diversity in the overall workplace, specifically in a multidisciplinary team context. The primary research focused on multidisciplinary teams in small to medium enterprises (SMEs) and large organizations and involved semi-structured interviews and anonymous online surveys.

2.2.1 Surveys

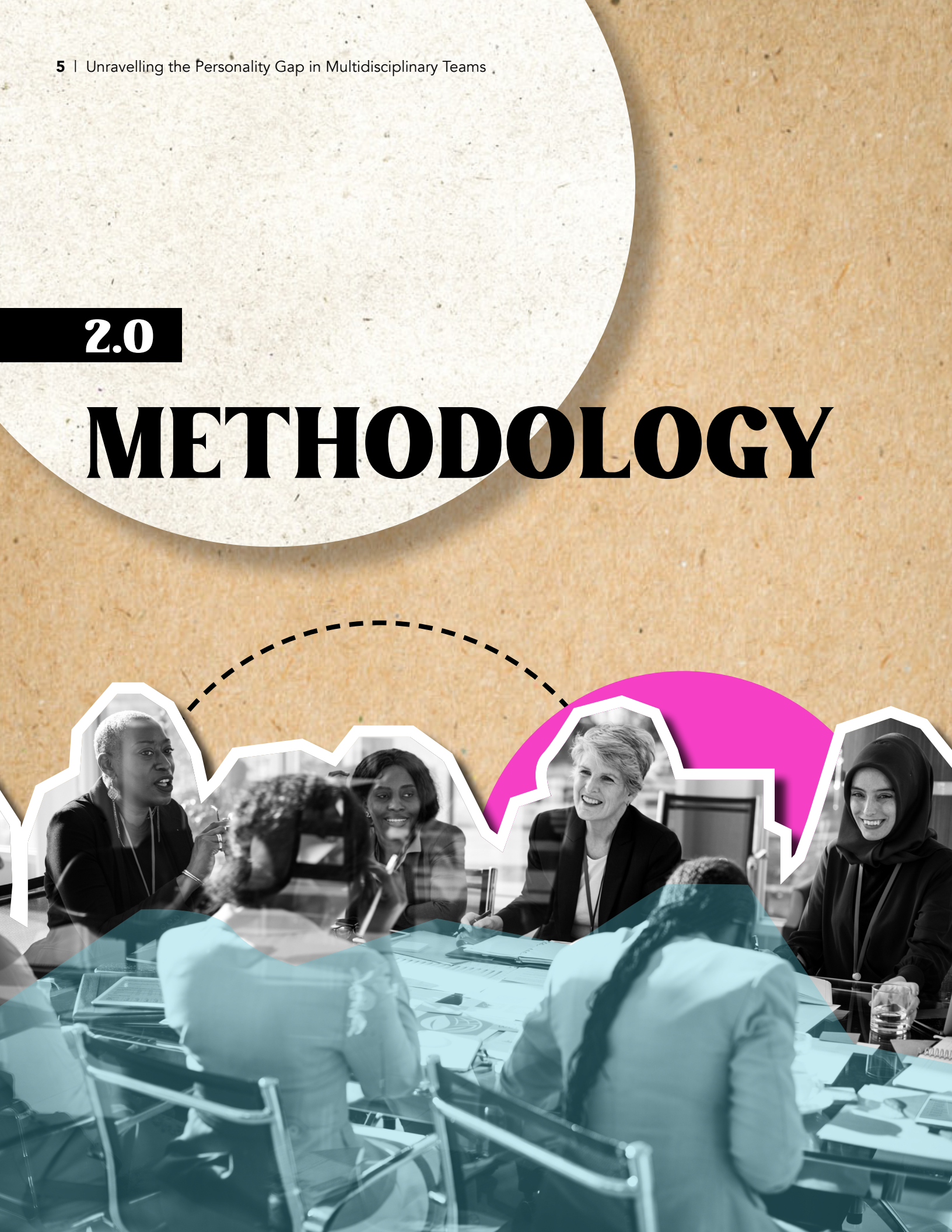
The anonymous online surveys aimed to gain employees' perspectives on personality and diversity in small and large organizations in a multidisciplinary team setting. In addition, the surveys intended to gain information about employees' views and opinions regarding their teams' effectiveness, team conflict and the differences in personalities. Furthermore, the survey allowed employees to explain their views on whether their multidisciplinary teams consider personality differences and how these differences are applied to enhance team effectiveness, if at all.

2.2.2 Interviews

The intention behind the semi-structured interviews was for Human Resource (HR) personnel and hiring managers from SMEs and large organizations to share their experience in dealing with personality and diversity in their workplaces.

For this research, HR personnel are individuals who work in the HR department and are responsible for organizing the recruitment and onboarding process of new employees and all other HR processes in an organization. On the other hand, hiring managers are directors, managers, supervisors, and team leaders who decide whom to hire and are responsible for a team. Therefore, interviewing HR personnel and managers provides insight into whether personality and diversity are considered in their workplaces and applied in any organizational processes, including hiring and performance evaluation. In addition, these interview participants provide insight into how their teams address the personality of team members.

The planned number of interviews ranged from ten to fifteen, which allowed for capturing the perspective of HR departments and managers. In addition, this allows the comparison of HR/management views with those of team members. The interviews were conducted via virtual meetings.



2.3 Research Analysis

The analysis of the surveys and interviews began by first thoroughly reading the raw data. Then, a second read of the data was completed while also coding remarkable themes, keywords, and findings. Next, in a third pass, the coding was done again through the lens of the secondary research questions and looking out for data that specifically answered those questions. After that, the coding results were grouped into common themes and sections to understand patterns better. Finally, the data were reviewed to understand and reflect on the information in consideration of the leading research question of this project.

2.4 Limitations

2.4.2 COVID-19 Constraints

The COVID-19 pandemic caused limitations during the research process, particularly with the HR personnel and hiring manager interviews. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, these interviews were done virtually, making it difficult to gauge the participants' body language. It was even more difficult when some participants decided against turning on their cameras. This limitation resulted in a less engaging interview process and may have impacted the qualitative nature of the research.

2.4.1 Sample Size

Before conducting the study, the goal was to gather data from at least twenty survey participants and ten to fifteen interview participants. However, many people were saturated with virtual meetings due to COVID-19, which resulted in fewer interview participants, from an ideal number of fifteen to eight participants.

3.0

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Research Findings

3.1 Literature Review

3.1.1 Personality in Workplaces

An individual's personality is defined in different ways across the field of psychology through various theories and models. In consideration of the workplace context, Chauhan and Chauhan (2006) define personality as a "transformative process" whereby individuals' traits constantly evolve due to their environment while also holding onto concrete innate qualities. This definition of personality considers the nature and nurture perspectives of personality. Research studies show that an individual's personality can provide insight into how they prefer to communicate with others, the types of environments they feel comfortable in, and how they react to different situations (Rai & Agarwal, 2019). In the workplace context, personality is assessed by many organizations when the hiring process looks at potential candidates for a job position (Gardner et al., 2012). Specific interpersonal skills and traits are preferred and sought out in candidates for certain workplace job positions, such as customer-facing roles (Kinnunen & Parviainen, 2016).

Moreover, organizations consider and assess the Big Five Personality traits in their hiring processes (Evans et al., 2021; Suman, 2009). Furthermore, the consideration of personality in the workplace commonly occurs through Human Resources' employee personality assessments. Research points out that "... personality assessments contribute unique knowledge about the individual to make accurate predictions of job performance" (Chauhan & Chauhan, 2006, p. 359). This finding suggested a perceived correlation between an employee's personality and expected performance.

3.1.2 Diversity in Workplace Teams

When it comes to workplace diversity, most organizations do not consider personality a dimension of diversity (Hirsch et al., 2020). Instead, organizations today place a higher value on gender, race, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and age during the hiring process, performance evaluation, and overall organizational values from a diversity perspective (Guillaume et al., 2017). However, personality and these other aspects of diversity are essential socio-cultural dimensions essential for many organizations to thrive in the modern world (Guillaume et al., 2017).

Some organizations consider individual differences in innovation and creativity, such as specialized disciplines, cognitive traits, educational background, and professional experience, as dimensions of professional diversity in the workplace (Mitchell & Boyle, 2015). Figure 1 below displays the two groups of diversity - socio-cultural and professional. Furthermore, Figure 1 also shows that personality is separate from these groups since organizations do not currently consider it a dimension of diversity. According to Guillaume et al. (2017), socio-cultural diversity in teams eliminates biases team members may have for one another, such as stereotypes and attitudes. Furthermore, research findings suggest that professional diversity among team members enhances team performance (Guillaume et al., 2017). However, although professional diversity enhances team performance and innovation, it can also cause conflict in teams due to differing perspectives and personalities (Mitchell & Boyle, 2015).

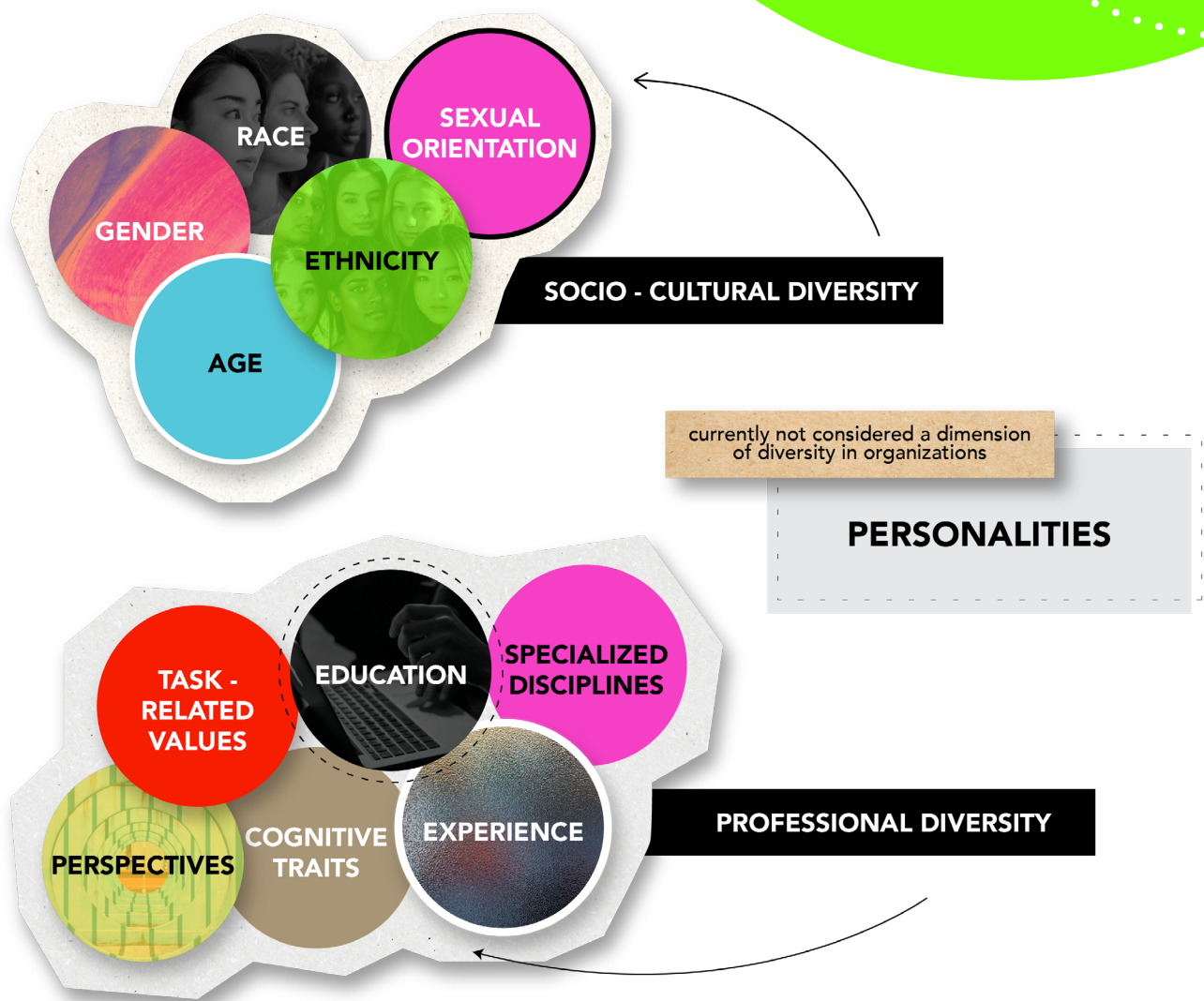


Figure 1. Dimensions of Diversity Currently Considered at Workplaces

3.1.3 Conflict in Workplace Teams

As established in previous sections of this report, individual differences and different personalities can cause conflict in workplace teams (Guillaume et al., 2017; Mitchell & Boyle, 2015). Research explains how certain personalities perform or behave in teams and how some organizations value this as either beneficial or adverse for team success. For instance, individuals with agreeable personalities tend to withhold knowledge. To avoid conflict, they agree to solutions presented in a team context, even though they do not agree with such solutions (Youshan & Hassan, 2015). This same research asserts that many organizations appreciate agreeable employees. However, this indicates that not addressing the differences in personalities can lead to employees withholding innovative ideas and result in team ineffectiveness.

Other studies show that multidisciplinary teams experience conflict and communication issues due to different personalities, disciplines, and perspectives (Hirsch et al., 2020). In some organizations, the teams value diversity because it promotes social integration and results in high-performance teams (Guillaume et al., 2017).

"Openness, need for cognition, learning goal orientation, and diversity beliefs were found to promote social integration via positive intergroup contact and enhance performance through information-elaboration in demographically diverse teams performing tasks with a strong informational and decision-making component in particular" (Guillaume et al., 2017, p. 292).

This study shows how personality differences in diverse teams can benefit a team's performance. However, the research does not consider personality types a dimension of diversity for improving workplace multidisciplinary team effectiveness.

The literature review indicates that there are teams that embrace personality differences and succeed in performance. However, the strategies on how these teams utilized the diverse personalities of team members for improved effectiveness were not clear.

3.2 Survey Results

The surveys aimed to gain employees' perspectives on personality and diversity and their views on personality implications on team conflicts and effectiveness in multidisciplinary teams.

Figure 2 shows the type of participants' organizations. Seventeen employees from small to large organizations in Canada participated in the survey. Fifty-nine percent of the participants worked in SMEs, while forty-one percent worked in large organizations.

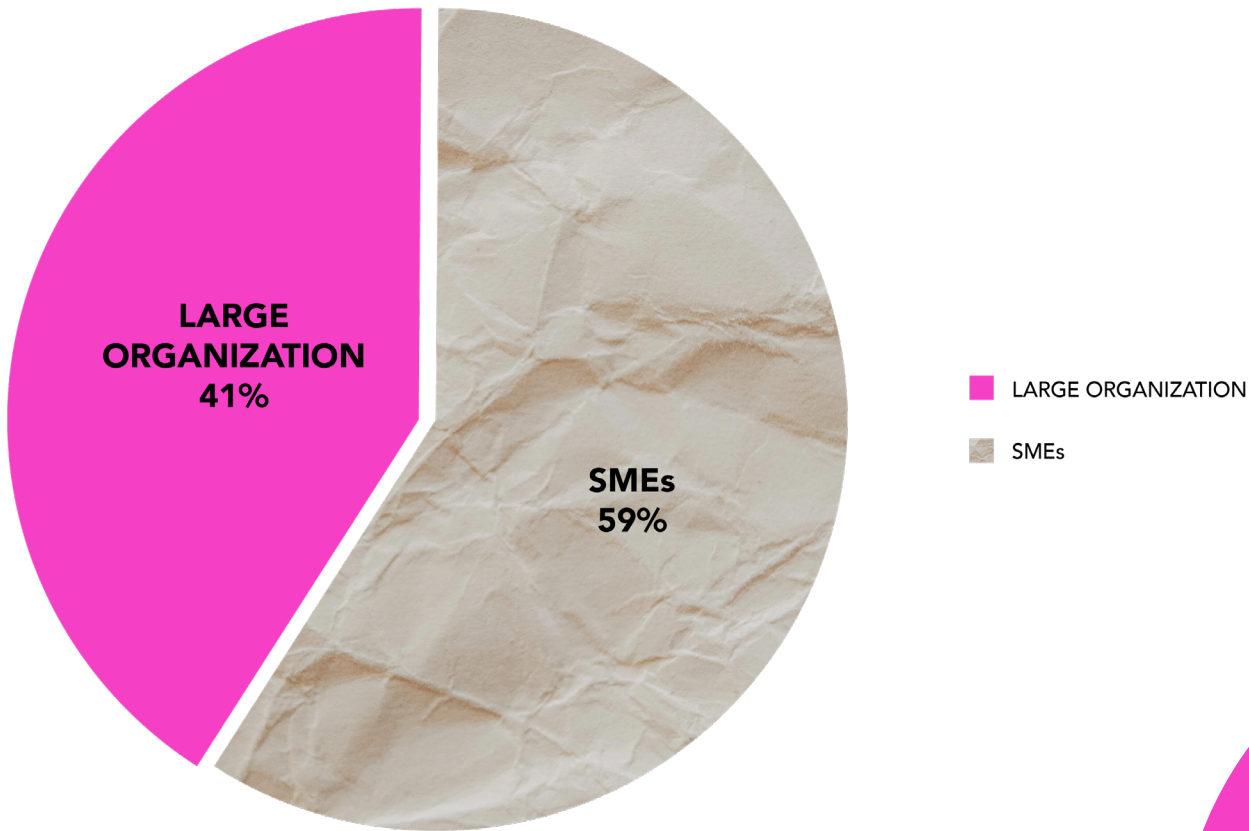


Figure 2. Organization Type of Survey Participants

Figure 3 shows the roles of participating individuals. Eighteen percent of the participants self-identified as individual contributors, while eighty-two percent self-identified as team leaders.

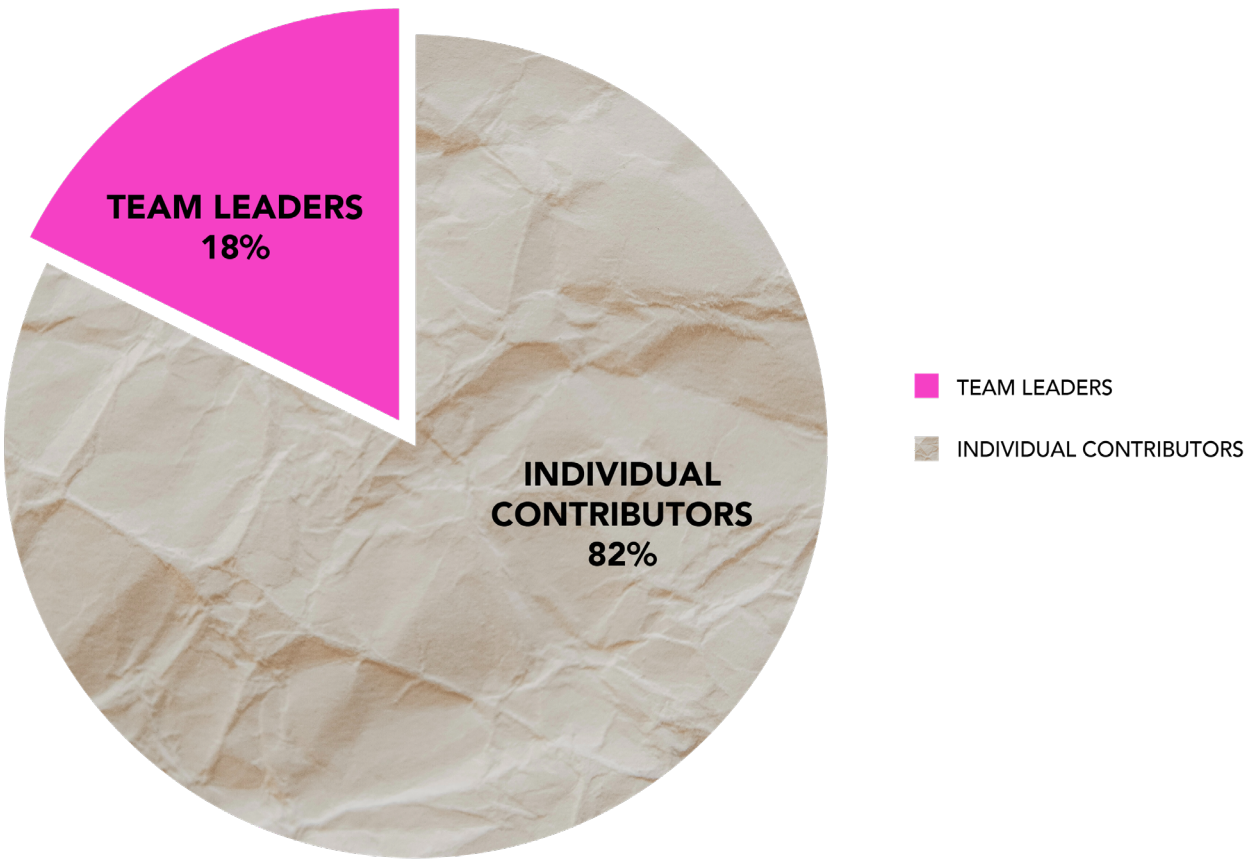


Figure 3. Role of Survey Participants in Teams

3.2.1 Team Effectiveness

The survey indicated that professional experience and the personality of team members are considered the most crucial factors for team effectiveness. Figure 4 below shows the top factors that influence team effectiveness based on the survey results. In addition, Figure 4 shows that close to sixty percent of the respondents place professional experience as the highest priority for improving team effectiveness, followed by thirty-five percent of respondents who believe that the personality of team members is essential for team effectiveness. Only five percent of respondents believe that educational background is the highest factor. These numbers suggest that most workplace teams value their team members' professional experience more than their personalities.

However, eighty-two percent of respondents are open to using tools to help understand their team members' personalities. The findings indicate that *"resources and support through various programs are extremely beneficial for the growth and effectiveness in our team because it allows for social interactivity through bonding with personalities."*

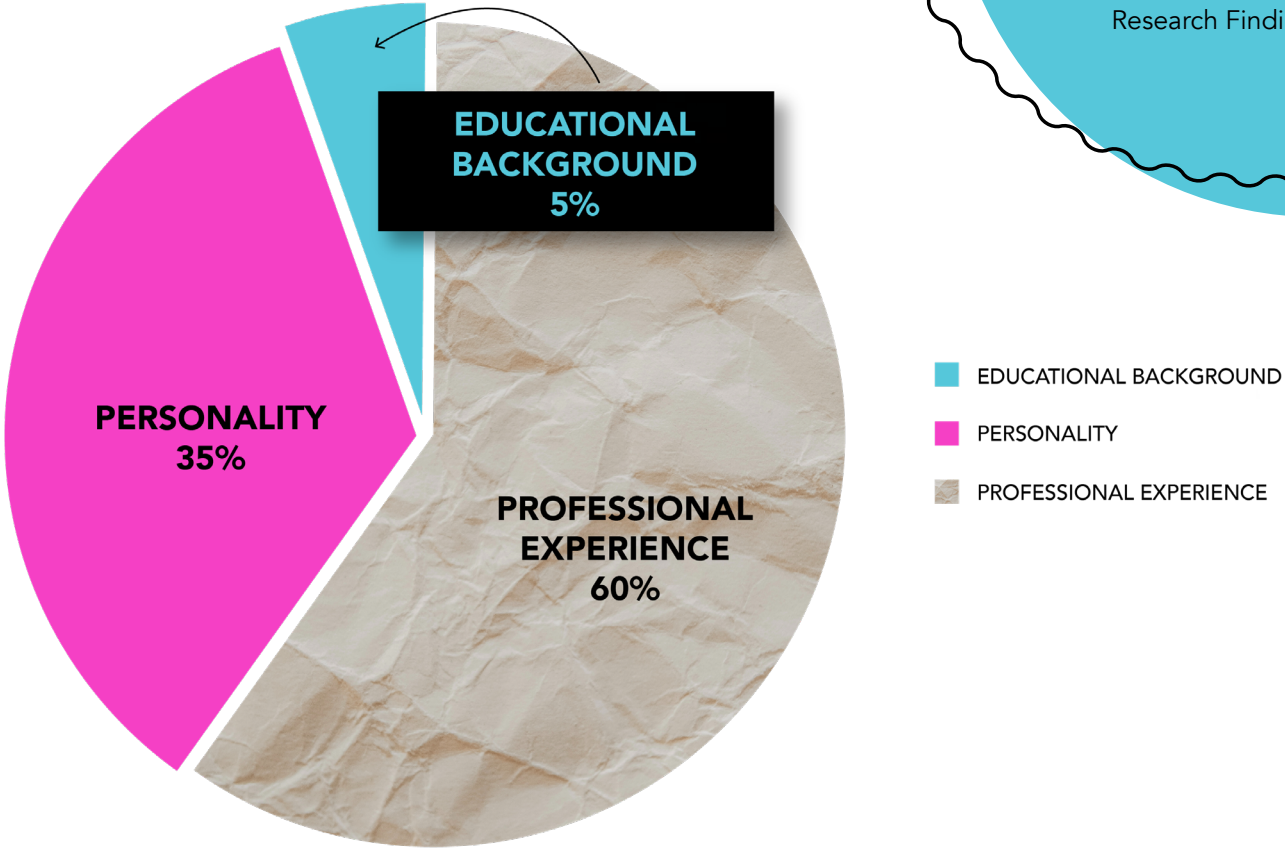


Figure 4. Top Factors that Influence Team Effectiveness

3.2.2 Diversity

The survey results confirm the categories of diversity identified in the literature review. The respondents recognize culture, race, and ethnicity as forms of diversity within their teams. In addition, the length and variety of professional experience were considered a form of diversity and valued to bring a diversity of ideas and creativity to the team. As one respondent put it, *"having longer professional experience or more diverse experiences helps the team members learn from one another and gives us more flexibility/creativity/inspiration."*

3.2.3 Personality

Personality is not addressed in the workplace because teams tend to focus more on the objective of the product, project, or service they deliver. The survey indicates that this view is reflected in the mindset of team members as they believe they *"aren't trying to be friends."* This mindset is contrary to workplace orientation, as Berman et al. (2002) suggest that organizations encourage workplace friendships.

The survey also indicates that team members agree that understanding personality is essential. Seventy percent of respondents believe that understanding team members' personalities improves communication and interaction. However, there is a disconnect in team members' minds as they misconstrue understanding one's personality as wanting to be friends with that person.

The survey also indicates that self-reflection and understanding one's personality are essential because *"part of knowing about team members' personalities includes knowing about yourself and your personality."* However, as mentioned before, a team member's view on friendship significantly affects their willingness to engage in such practice.

When it comes to understanding personalities to enhance team effectiveness, there are currently no systems in place for teams except training on communication skills, which is different from understanding personality types. As one respondent mentioned, *"there are systems to resolve conflicts when they arise, but not a system to prevent conflict due to personality differences."* This point begs the question of whether there can be a system to prevent conflict due to personality differences. Or is that impossible as conflict is bound to occur due to personality differences?

Most survey respondents agreed that conflicts are bound to occur; seventy-six percent concur that conflict would help build a stronger team. One explained that conflict helps bring awareness to weak areas of collaboration. One respondent mentioned understanding individual conflict styles could help resolve future disputes. For example, it helps everyone identify if team members are more vocal or less vocal in group settings. It also helps understand if some team members prefer to communicate things in private or later, after having time to reflect on their thoughts. A conflict that is appropriately resolved can provide systems for better team effectiveness. As noted in the Findings section, such systems can include communication pathways, internal review structures, and understanding of different experiences and perspectives.

An important point raised by survey participants was that some team members might feel like they do not require support to understand their team members' personalities. Others may not have the skill to work with colleagues, especially in a virtual setting. Working in a virtual environment may pose additional challenges for understanding team members' personalities. One respondent mentioned that it took a while to see everyone's personality due to a virtual working environment. They further noted that it might have been easier if they had worked in the office. In situations like this, having resources and support systems to understand personality in a virtual working environment would give team members a running start in understanding each other.

3.3 Interviews

The interviews with HR personnel and hiring managers revealed a deeper understanding of how personality is considered at the workplace, what diversity looks like in that context, and personality effects in multidisciplinary teams. Various themes were identified during the interviews. However, the three primary areas where personality intersects in workplaces are the hiring process, performance evaluation, and multidisciplinary teams.

Figure 5 shows the various roles of interview participants. Twenty-five percent of these participants were HR personnel, while seventy-five percent were hiring managers. The hiring managers consisted of directors and managers. Figure 6 shows the organization type of interview participants. There were an equal number of participants from SMEs and large organizations, as shown in Figure 6.

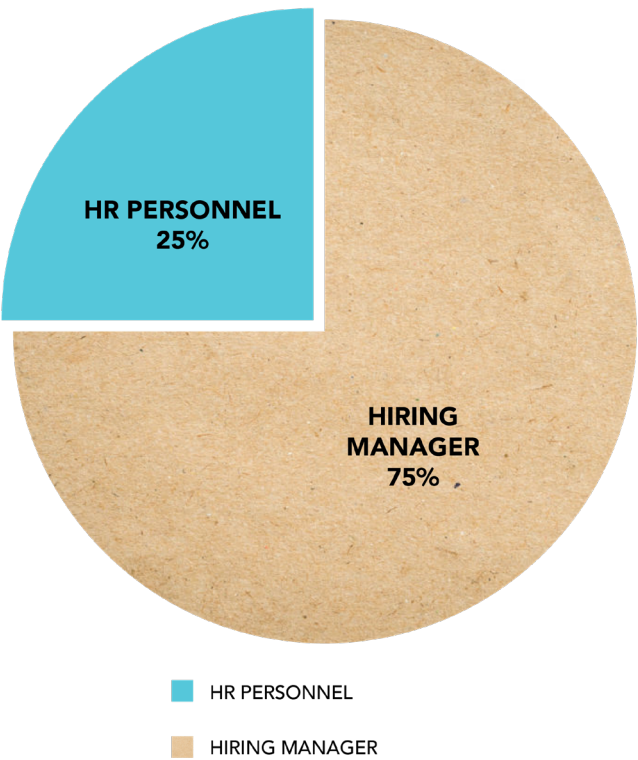


Figure 5. Role of Interview Participants

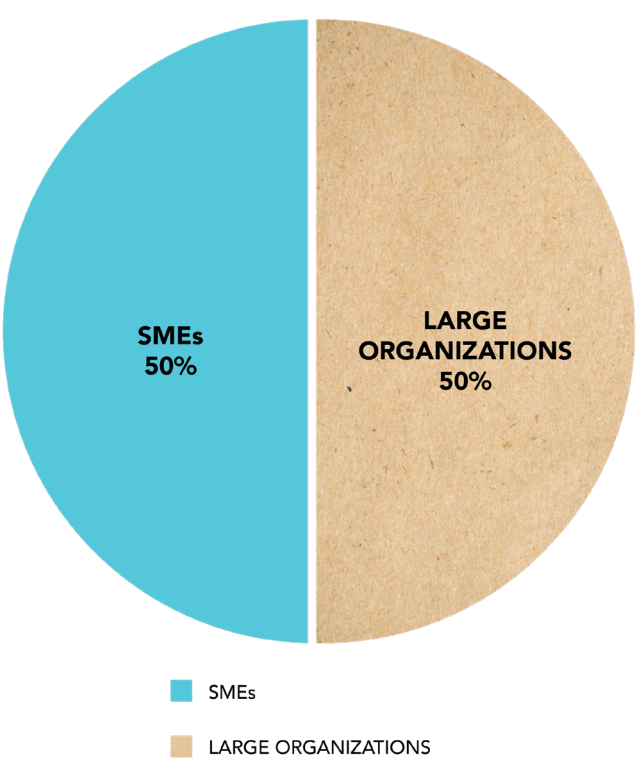


Figure 6. Organization Type of Interview Participants

3.3.1 Diversity

There is a significant interest in diversity among all organizations of the interview participants. Some companies are just getting started in the journey of diversity and looking to implement dimensions of diversity. Other companies have created diversity mandates and equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) committees. These diversity committees help reduce biases and improve internal processes to be inclusive and consider diversity. While there are no formal written agreements or definitions in organizations with a mandate, organizations passed down the overall mandate for diversity from top to bottom. For example, one company has a voluntary diversity and inclusion committee, whereby the committee brings current ideas for incorporating diversity at town hall meetings.

On a team level, the participants from the hiring managers group believed that it is the manager's responsibility to create a diverse and inclusive team. However, this might not be easy to achieve. As one manager pointed out, some workplaces do not have a metric for diversity, but diversity is seen at a broader (organizational) level instead of a team level.

Throughout all interviews, it was identified that organizations consider diversity during their hiring processes. Based on the data, workplaces break down diversity into two separate categories: professional diversity and socio-cultural diversity.

The sections below describe the dimensions of diversity under each category identified during the interview.



Dimensions of Professional Diversity Currently Considered

Figure 7 shows the dimensions of the professional diversity category:

- 1. **Perspectives and Opinions:** The variety in employees' opinions and views matters, and organizations try to be inclusive of a broader range of these.
- 2. **Experience:** Professional experience demonstrates that essential skills are available. However, if a candidate does not have the desired experience, some companies are open to providing the opportunity of gaining that experience. Transferable skills from a candidate's experience are also valued.
- 3. **Education:** This is an essential dimension for all the interviewed organizations, especially at the hiring stage. The companies of the interview participants required an undergraduate degree from a university as the minimum level of education for any position. For specialized roles, one interview participant's company requires candidates to have a Ph.D. Therefore, education usually provides an upper hand for candidates undergoing the recruitment process in many organizations.
- 4. **Professional Certifications:** This is considered an asset; professional certifications are essential for specific roles in some organizations. Specific roles require professional qualifications such as the Professional Engineering License (P.Eng) for a professional engineer role.
- 5. **Language:** Candidates' ability to speak a different language or two is considered an asset.

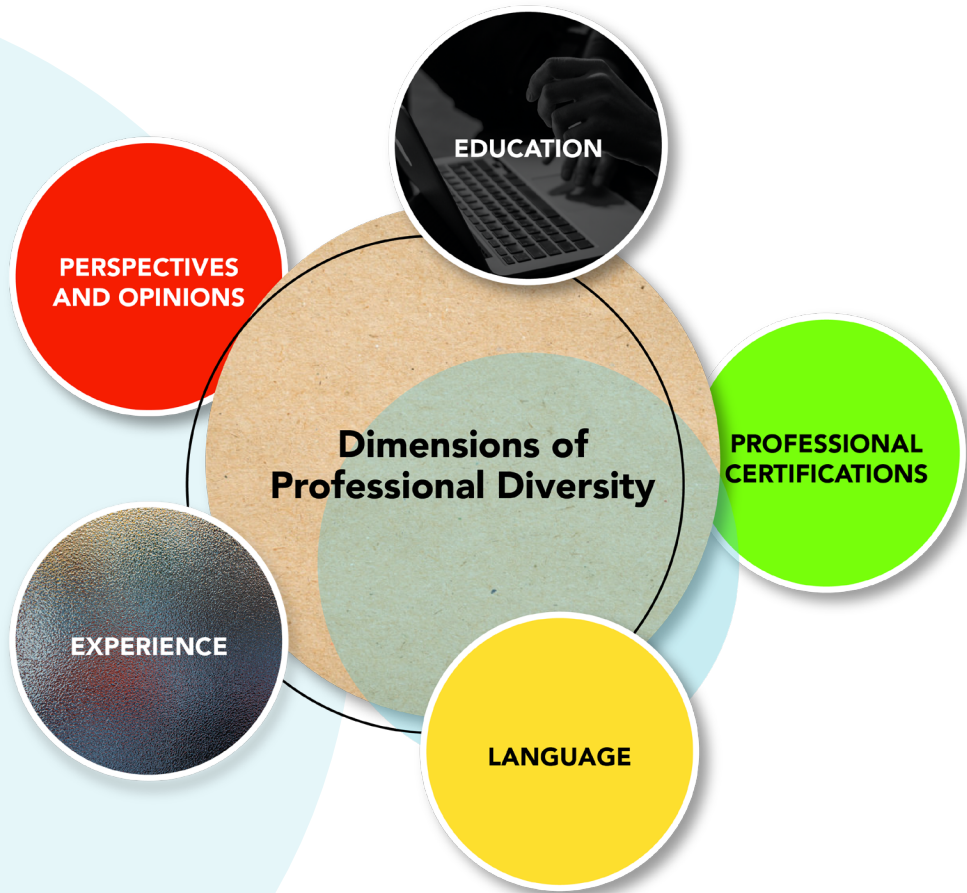


Figure 7. Dimensions of Professional Diversity Currently Considered

Dimensions of Socio-Cultural Diversity Currently Considered

Figure 8 shows the dimensions of the socio-cultural diversity category:

- 1. **Gender Balance:** A good balance of gender in many organizations is essential, as specific industries are predominantly male while other sectors are female-dominated.
- 2. **Race:** Being inclusive of individuals from different racial backgrounds.
- 3. **Disabilities:** This includes mental and physical disabilities. It is vital to consider disabilities when creating learning content for employees and ensuring that organizations follow disability standards. This dimension is a requirement for many organizations in Ontario covered under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).
- 4. **Age:** Having a diverse group of different ages for a technology company is important
- 5. **Cultural Backgrounds and Ethnicities:** This includes individuals from various backgrounds worldwide and Indigenous Peoples of Canada.
- 6. **Sexual Orientation**

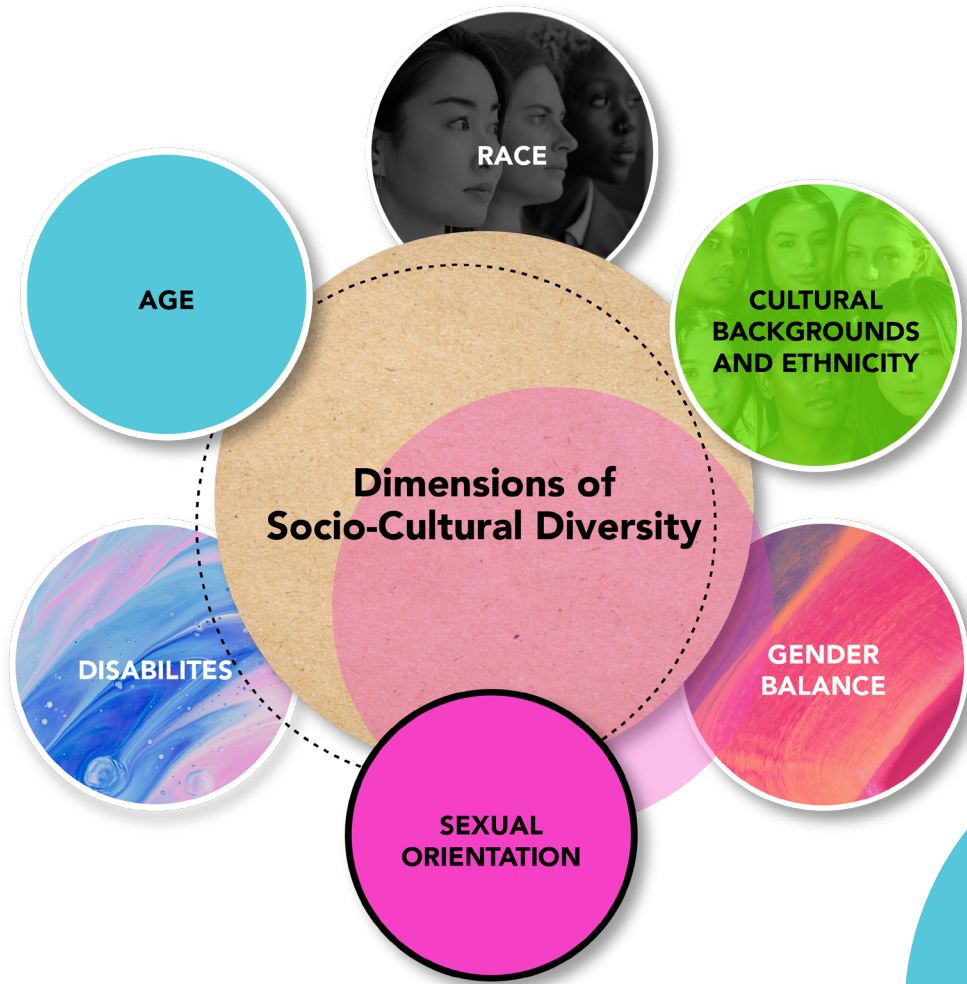


Figure 8. Dimensions of Socio-Cultural Diversity Currently Considered

None of the interview participants stated that personality is considered a dimension of diversity in their workplace. However, a few participants signalled their interest in considering and including personality as a dimension of professional diversity.

Furthermore, an HR personnel mentioned that their organization should add introversion and extroversion as dimensions of diversity. Interestingly, a director suggested considering an employee's lifestyle as a dimension of diversity. For example, employees' commitments outside of work may impact the team's effectiveness. In addition, some employees may be parents, while others may be caretakers of elderly family members. Understanding these as a dimension of team diversity can help balance workloads and enhance team effectiveness.

3.3.2 Personality

Cultural Fit

Half of the interview participants explained the importance of cultural fit in their organizations. Cultural fit is assessed during the hiring process, individual performance evaluation, and interactions with team members. Organizations define their cultural fit around their values and mission.

One participant believed that the hiring process is the best place to start applying cultural fit by ensuring that the right candidate joins the company. This approach includes examining the personality of candidates. However, this is done at the organizational level, not at the team formation level. Another participant discussed creating a framework for cultural fit in their organization. The motivation for the cultural fit framework is that while culture involves socializing after work, it also means interactions with leaders, performance evaluations and the ability to give and receive feedback. In these interactions, personality intersects with the cultural fit of an organization. Therefore, the personalities of employees create the culture of the overall organization.

One of the participants mentioned that while there are no specific views on personality, their company abides by a set of values and ensures that employees apply them in their daily work. For this participant's company, the employee should be caring, genuine, empowered to make a difference, and have respect for others. Another participant's company tries to create the culture they want by looking for specific traits such as being easy-going and relaxed. Their goal is to develop a culture of humility where everyone's work is valued equally, regardless of titles and positions. Egoism is not a favoured personality trait in this organization.

Formal Assessment of Personality

While half of the interview participants stated that their organizations did not assess personality formally, the other half did have formal assessments of personality, specifically during the hiring stage of their organizations.

Another participant explained that the company's formal personality assessment involves a multi-tiered approach in the hiring process. The primary purpose of the evaluation is to see how well the candidate fits in with the team that they will be joining. The company goes through multiple interviews, beginning with the recruiter. Secondly, the team members will interview the candidate to see if the candidate can fit well into the team. Finally, the candidate will meet with the team manager for an interview. The participant said that if the candidate meets with the manager, the team members consider the individual a good fit. Scenario-based behavioural questions are asked during the interviews, including questions about the candidate's values. This formal approach to assessing personality is thorough and could effectively create a team with individuals with similar personalities. However, this approach could be detrimental to enhancing the diversity of personalities within the team if the team members' biases are not addressed adequately.

DISC Personality Assessment

Two participants stated that their companies use the formal personality assessment tool, DISC. It is a tool to gain insight into four main personality traits: dominance, influence, steadiness, and compliance. For one participant, the tool helps the hiring managers decide on the best candidate to hire when considering building a stronger team. The DISC results come in handy when a hiring manager must choose between two of the top candidates left in the recruitment process. The DISC assessment results provide the hiring team with a preview of the candidate's personality before interviewing them.

The other participant uses the DISC tool to assess and improve communication and interactions between colleagues based on each colleague's DISC profile. It helps understand how each employee interacts with others in their team. Since organizations can use the DISC tool to improve communication and interactions between colleagues, then organizations may use the tool to help team members understand each other's personalities.

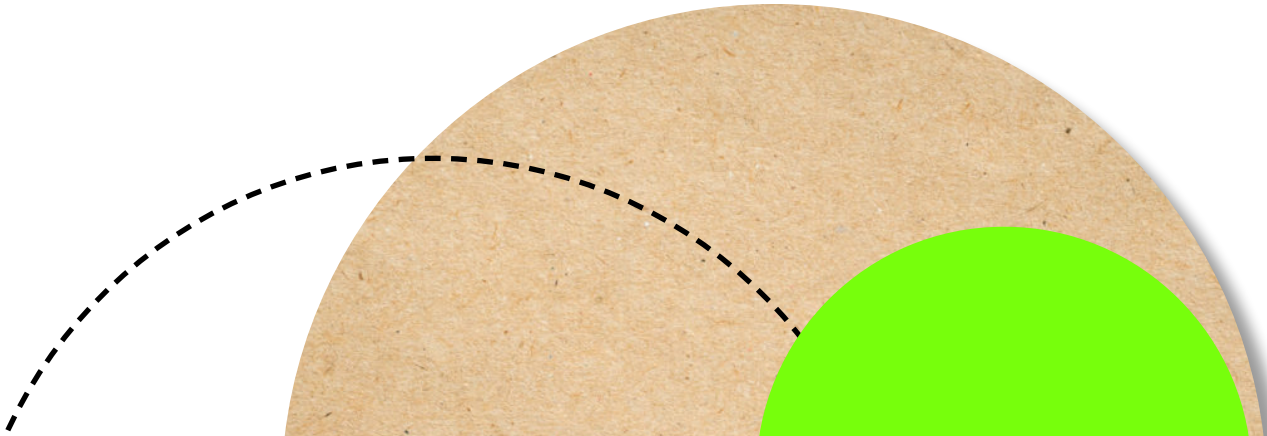
Gallup's Strength Finder

The Gallup's strength finder is a tool used in one participant's organization during the hiring process. It is a 30-minute questionnaire with 100 questions on a sliding scale that ranks candidates' strengths. The tool helps identify an individual's five strengths and weaknesses. The organization uses the tool to see the strengths a candidate brings to the table; however, the organization does not use it after hiring. It is considered an additional asset and not used as a deciding factor for hiring someone. Instead, it allows the hiring board to identify the most suitable role for a candidate. The participant explained that organizations could also use this tool to understand how people value work and balance life with work. In addition, organizations can incorporate this tool into performance management software, whereby managers can also understand employees' personality types. The organizations incorporating this tool into their performance management software provide a breakdown of skills that play into personality.

Informal/Unconscious Assessment of Personality

Most interview participants stated that their companies informally assess personality at the hiring level. However, through the informal assessment of personality, many participants raised the concern of hiring biases by hiring managers, who tend to be biased toward specific personality traits. For example, when it comes down to selecting between an extroverted candidate versus an introverted one, many hiring managers prefer the more outgoing candidate.

In selecting a candidate, organizations informally assess personality through several methods. For example, some organizations use scenario-based questions during the interview process, while others observe body language and how the candidate behaves during the interview. Figure 9 shows a breakdown of the two main methods organizations use to informally assess a candidate's personality.



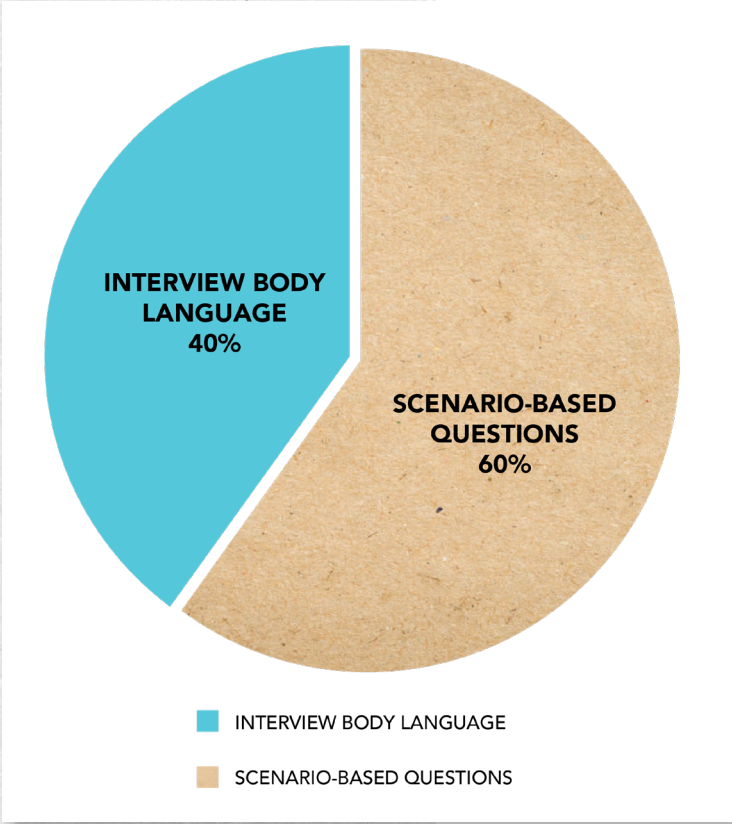


Figure 9. Informal Personality Assessment

Views of Personality at the Workplace

For one company, there was more of an unspoken view of personality. Employees who are quiet and prefer to work alone have roles that allow them to be that version of themselves. Those who are outgoing possess the front-facing roles, and they require people skills. Taking direction from senior staff and efficiently learning are two essential personality characteristics for the front-facing roles. The company has a preference for personalities for specific roles. However, regardless of one's position in the workplace, the participant mentioned that everyone must respect each other, which is very important to the company. As this company assigns roles based on an employee's personality preferences, this may help enhance team effectiveness if the teams are comprised of individuals who enjoy their assigned roles.

Figure 10 shows personality assessment methods. It shows that thirty-eight percent of the participants conducted an informal personality assessment during the hiring process, while sixty-two percent conducted a formal assessment. Again, it is essential to note that these assessments are done during the hiring process and not during team formation.

Personality in Performance Evaluation

All interview participants mentioned that personality in employees' performance evaluation is generally valued in the workplace. For example, one participant noted that the conversation about personality arises during performance evaluation between manager and employee. It may not be directly about the employee's personality, but if the employee's position requires them to be more outgoing, then the manager will bring up suggestions on how they can improve that specific interpersonal skill.

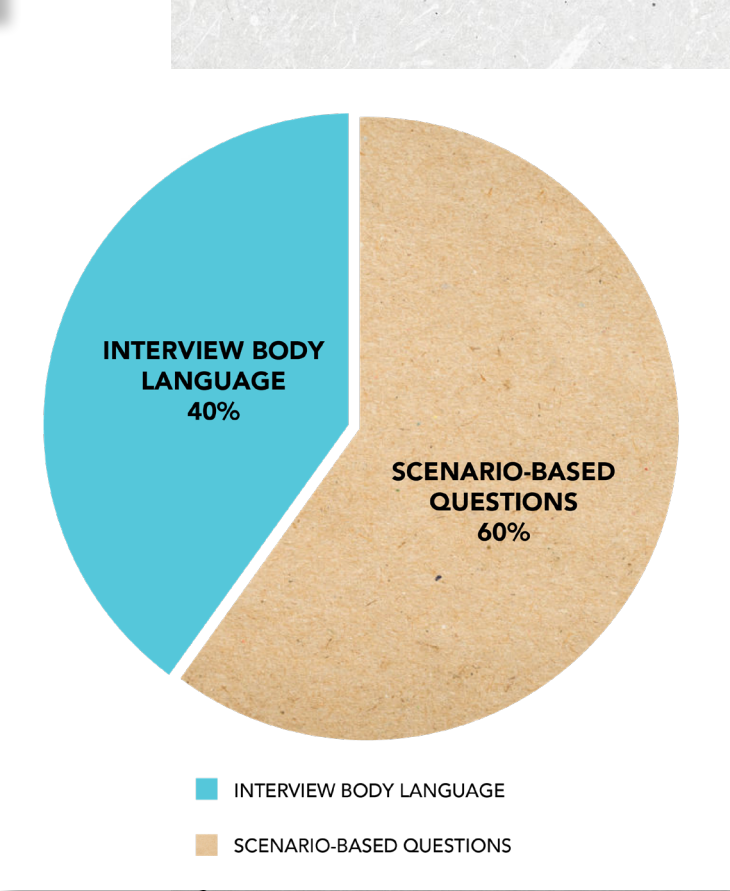


Figure 10. Personality Assessment Methods

In an organization where interpersonal skills are not explicitly judged or critiqued, it is only brought up if it needs to be discussed positively or negatively. For example, if an employee's interpersonal skills assisted them in the success of their goals, then it will be discussed. On the other hand, team leaders will discuss their interpersonal skills if they impacted the employee's goals or if they resulted in conflict with another colleague.

From the study, it is evident that organizations and managers value an understanding of the personalities of their employees as this could impact the team's effectiveness. However, are performance evaluation the most efficient way for multidisciplinary teams to ensure the continued understanding and consideration of team members' personalities and enhance team effectiveness? For teams specifically, the answer to this question is no. Organizations address an individual's personality when there is an issue with that individual or when it leads to a team's success. However, performance evaluations do not improve team members' understanding of each other's personalities.

3.3.3 Team Effectiveness

All participants indicated that operations and projects define workplace teams and other teams at the workplace. Furthermore, all participants have multidisciplinary teams or are part of one at their workplace.

Team Building Exercises

Only one of the participants mentioned that their team has a formal team-building exercise. This team-building exercise is a template containing eight questions that ask for employees' preferences for communication and getting work done, which are then exchanged with one another. The tool considers the best method and time to communicate with employees and their preferences on interaction and collaboration. The participant said that the team takes time to go over each employee's preferences and discuss them. While it helps to get to know one another, they mentioned that it also helps to see everyone's preferences in communication and accommodate that.

Personality in Teams

One participant mentioned that the virtual work environment helped bring out team members' personalities that one would not typically see in the in-person work setting. For example, the chat feature in virtual meeting portals allows the team members to share their personalities by sharing funny comments or emojis. The participant further said that the chat option allows the team meetings to be more fun while being professional at the same time.

Teams consisting of opposite personalities exist in one participant's organization. For example, where one employee is quiet, hands-on, and likes to focus on their work, the other enjoys interacting with clients and presenting the material. Although the employees have two different personalities, they interact very well and complement each other's personalities. The participant stated that regardless of perspectives, race, or personality, the most crucial aspect of team interaction is understanding one another and communicating efficiently. Personality only really gets in the way when decision-making is needed, and those that are indecisive may find it difficult. The participant also mentioned that team members have different perspectives, making them unique, but they can put their different perspectives together and develop a great solution.

Other organizations look at the personality in teams only if there are issues raised or if the team members' personalities contributed to the success of the team's goals. For example, if a team member worked well with another team member in one of the participant's organizations, the manager may put them together for another project team. Most organizations assess the alignment of team members' personalities that worked well together when considering creating another project team.

Leadership and Management

Many participants brought up the manager's role in a team's success and in team members' interactions. Here are some of the main points raised by the different participants on leadership and management:

- A different way to view leadership is that managers work for their employees. By creating this environment that allows employees to be great, the manager can be seen as someone who generates revenue. Therefore, this participant's company highly emphasizes leadership and resilience and sees a need for interpersonal skills that encompass leadership.
- As a manager, one has to deal with various personality types in the team.
- Managers need to be empathetic to help employees bolster their ability to deal with adversity. A manager should recognize the human side of their employees by listening to them, being open to perspective and not jumping to conclusions.
- While it is enjoyable getting to know the personality traits of one's team members, it would be beneficial if there was a tool to understand team members' personalities before a project starts.
- Managers must provide the necessary tools for employees to contribute to team meetings. These tools include encouraging employees to speak their minds and share their ideas at team meetings.
- Managers examine the dynamics between team members and how well they work together, while also identifying ways personalities can come together and support each other.

Conflict in Teams

From disagreements to miscommunication and arguments, all participants mentioned some conflicts in workplace teams. It is important to note that many participants clearly stated no conflict but disagreements and miscommunication. One participant said that while no team members have expressed experiencing conflict, it does not mean that it does not happen. However, the participant has seen colleagues handle difficult conversations well by not taking things personally and solving the problem. Overall, the general nature of the conflict is interpersonal conflict. Below are the various reasons for interpersonal conflict identified from the interviews.

Reasons for Team Interpersonal Conflict

- The gap in communication during the project's life cycle, where some members are working on things that the others may not be aware of
- Knowledge sharing disagreements, such as two team members presenting their solutions to a problem based on their expertise
- Arguments due to differing opinions
- Attitude towards another colleague
- Disagreements due to differing personalities and perspectives
- Conflict due to unclear expectations of the job
- Miscommunication due to working in silos
- Technical level of conflict between professionals. For example, an architect does their part of the project, but for the engineer in the team, the architect's work may not be sufficient due to engineering standards.
- Disagreements when brainstorming, building something together as a team or finding solutions
- Conflict is driven by what people are working on, where one employee steps on another employee's territory without knowledge or approval



Addressing and Resolving the Conflict in Teams

Many respondents reported that it is normal for conflict to arise from differing professional backgrounds, personalities, and perspectives in a multidisciplinary team setting. While people from a particular discipline may have a specific set of interpersonal skills, other team members may have different ones. One of the participants stated that having disagreements is the nature of being unique human beings, as we all come from different backgrounds and perspectives. Moreover, many participants also mentioned that disagreements arising from differing personalities do not have to be viewed as contentious. It is normal to have disagreements when working in a team setting. What is important is that team members give each other the benefit of the doubt and recognize the human side of their team members. In some organizations, disagreements are sorted out respectfully between team members. Below are the significant points raised as ways to address and resolve conflict:

- Assessing an individual's cooperation with the team
- Sometimes the conflict is brought up in performance evaluation, where the manager will discuss it with the employees
- HR may handle and address the conflict
- A team has the mindset of agreeing to disagree, but regardless of disagreements, they are still a team
- Compromising with team members and having a mindset that all team members are working towards improving the company
- Push for reflecting on team problems and improving communication styles
- Team members hash out team conflicts themselves through effective communication. They consider their fellow team member's perspectives and work, and appreciating their efforts is utilized to resolve the conflict.
- Using empathy in the way team members communicate and resolve conflict with each other. Team members approach the conversation in the way the other person speaks and consider the words used by the team members.
- Having a mindset of finding a solution rather than making it worse

Assessment of Teams' Effectiveness

All interview participants revealed that their organizations assess the team's overall success, including goals, objectives, targets, and quotas. Managers do not evaluate their teams on factors other than the team's success from those perspectives. The companies also look at how much revenue the teams bring to the company.

Overall, all organizations do not assess the differences in personalities concerning team effectiveness. Instead, an organization might evaluate whether a team achieved its goals by assessing each team member's role and how well they work with other team members. One participant mentioned that personalities are only addressed in the assessment of teams if personality caused the collapse of a project team or did not lead to success.

In conclusion, the study indicates that organizations assess team effectiveness, but not always from the perspective of the team members' personalities. Although this may be beneficial for the team's growth, the full integration of personality into the assessment process will further enhance the team's effectiveness. As a result, it may lead to a higher-performing team.



4.0

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS



Discussion and Recommendations

The mixed-method approach (conducting surveys and interviews) provided valuable insights and information on personality in workplace teams from the employee's point of view and an HR and managerial perspective. In consideration of this applied approach, do the results answer the question:

How might we consider personality as a dimension of diversity in improving the effectiveness of multidisciplinary teams in organizations?

The results have revealed many layers and unique perspectives on the question. The research findings indicate that personality plays a significant role in many organizations, from hiring to employee performance evaluation. When it comes to the hiring process, many organizations have a personality preference or look for a specific set of interpersonal skills, whether formally or informally, or even unconsciously. Furthermore, a few participants indicated that their organizations value cultural fit and ensure that it is assessed during the hiring process. When asked to elaborate on the cultural fit of the organization, the participants listed specific interpersonal traits and skills valued at the organization. This preference translates into the organization informally by preferring certain personalities in their workplace, which is incorporated into their cultural fit definition. While some of these companies seem to continue assessing their employees' cultural fit and values after the hiring stage and into an employee's performance evaluation, other companies do not.

The results also indicate that the conversation about personality does arise during performance evaluation between managers and employees, mainly when the employees' roles require them to improve on their personality or when their personality has aided in the success of the employee's work. Figure 11 shows where personality is currently considered in organizations based on the research findings. This figure indicates that companies apply personality consideration to hiring and performance evaluation processes but not in the multidisciplinary teams, as shown in black. As the findings revealed that personality consideration does not apply to multidisciplinary teams, diversity is considered in all three phases: hiring, performance evaluation, and multidisciplinary teams.

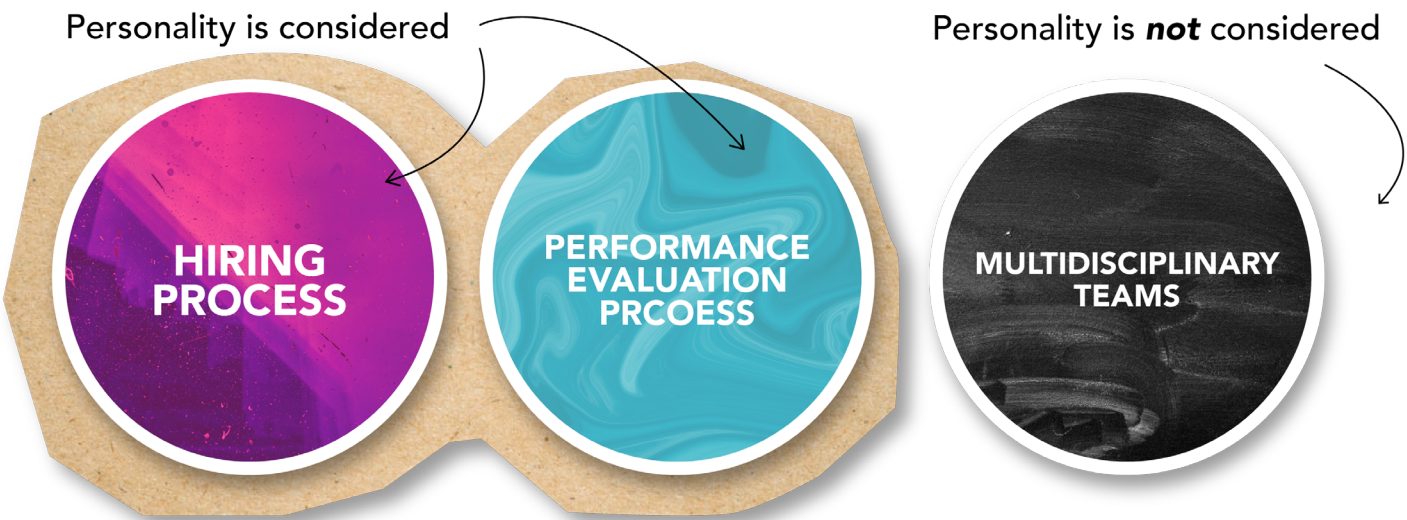


Figure 11. Where Organizations Consider Personalities

Socio-cultural and professional diversity dimensions are also valued and considered from hiring and performance evaluation to multidisciplinary teams. For example, managers consider the team members' diversity when forming a team at a team level. Figure 12 shows where organizations currently consider professional and socio-cultural diversity based on the research findings. Furthermore, it shows that organizations consider diversity in all three phases: the hiring process, performance evaluation and multidisciplinary teams phase; it is evident that personality does not extend to the third phase, multidisciplinary teams, as shown in Figure 11 above. The research findings also indicate that teams have few to no strategies available to understand and manage the personality aspects within the team.

Professional and Socio-Cultural Diversity

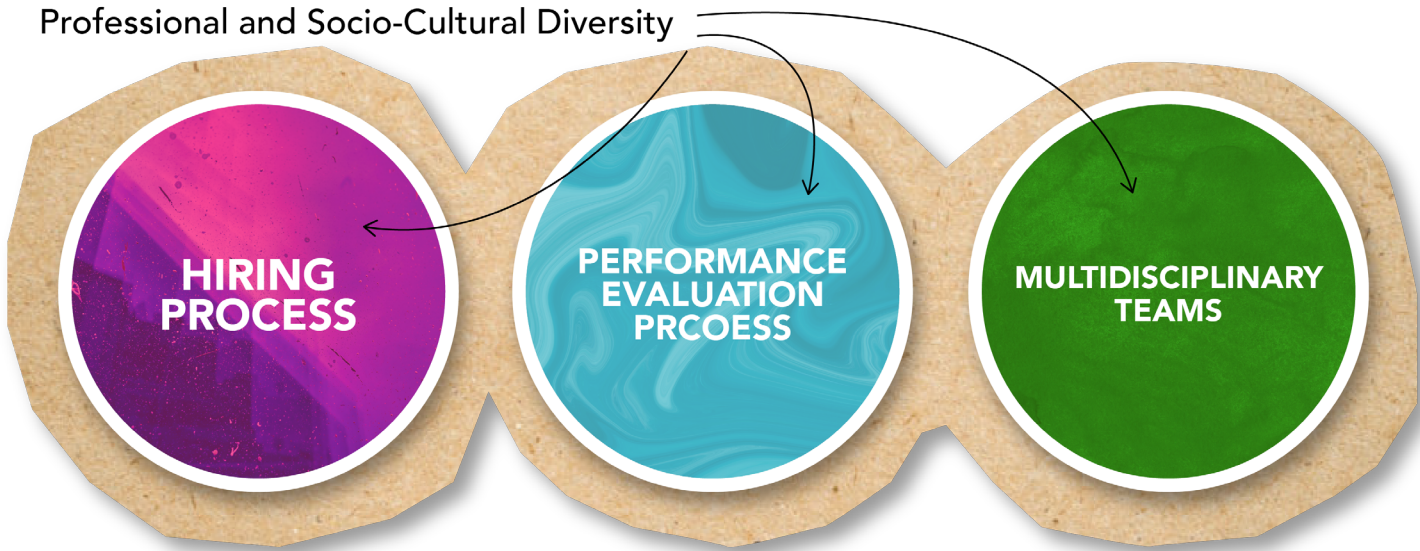


Figure 12. Where Organizations Currently Consider Professional and Socio-Cultural Diversity

Upon reflecting on the findings, the question that comes to mind is how can personality be considered in multidisciplinary teams? As diversity consideration is applied to all three phases: hiring, performance evaluation and multidisciplinary teams, it is evident that organizations can integrate personality as a dimension of diversity for consideration in the multidisciplinary teams' phase. Figure 13 below shows the hiring process, performance evaluation process, and multidisciplinary team phase intersecting to reflect that personality is a dimension of diversity at the centre of these intersecting circles. The insight behind overlapping these three phases highlights that diversity is considered in all three phases, which means that personality should play a central role in grounding all processes.

Personality as a Dimension of Diversity



Figure 13. Personality as a Dimension of Diversity

This insight is good news as most of the managers and employee participants value the importance of understanding personality differences in the team context. Survey respondents and managers share a common view that managers are responsible for team diversity and inclusion. An important takeaway from the study is that managers understand their role in integrating the understanding of team members' personalities in a team setting and are open to exploring these opportunities in virtual, in-person, or hybrid work environments.

The virtual work environment is one way to explore the opportunities to apply personality consideration in a team setting. The findings revealed that although it may take a while for an employee's personality to show in a virtual setting, employees eventually tend to be more expressive of their personalities once they are comfortable in a virtual environment. In addition, employees find comfort in expressing their personalities through the different avenues that the virtual work environment provides for individuals to communicate, such as the chat feature. Therefore, the goal is to find a way to enhance the positives of the virtual environment by encouraging people to show their personalities sooner rather than later.

Another aspect of personality that influences multidisciplinary teams is the organization's culture. The study revealed a disconnect in understanding the impacts of employees' personalities on the organization's culture and vice versa. Usually, team members are selected from a pool of employees in an organization. Thus, teams will usually reflect the organization's culture and the overall personality traits preferred in the organization. This approach poses a problem because if the hiring process does not enable the recruitment of individuals with diverse personalities, then teams will consist of individuals with similar personalities. As identified in the study, teams with different personalities can enhance the team's creativity and innovation.

The study also identified one hiring method for ensuring that selected candidates have personalities compatible with the company's culture but not necessarily fit for a specific team. However, as mentioned earlier in the report, this formal approach to assessing personality could still lead to selecting candidates with similar views and opinions. A way to address this issue is to integrate a framework that enables candidates with different personalities to be considered during the hiring process.

By effectively addressing personality differences in the hiring process, organizations can ensure that they have a diverse pool of employees to choose from during the team formation process. Organizations should employ this same approach in the team formation process to ensure that the team reflects the true diversity of the organization and avoid biases.

Following these observations, the recommendation is for organizations to implement a framework to holistically understand employees' personalities as a dimension of diversity from the hiring stage to the team formation stage. In addition, organizations should apply this throughout all stages of team development. For example, organizations can take an existing team development model and apply the understanding of personalities. A model of team development that is well-known in the workplace and used by many HR and development personnel is Tuckman's team development model (Bonebright, 2010). This model consists of five phases: forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning. Tuckman created this model to highlight the importance of team members' dynamics in workplace teams by explaining how teams evolve through each stage (Bonebright, 2010). In addition, the model describes how team members work together in each stage, helping organizations and team members better understand and improve team dynamics (Bonebright, 2010).

Organizations can use and adapt Tuckman's team development model by incorporating the understanding of team members' personalities and interpersonal skills in the center of all stages and ground the team development process, as the model's stages reflect a team's lifecycle. Figure 12 below shows an adaptation of Tuckman's team development model for this recommendation. As shown in Figure 12 below, understanding a team member's personality is at the center of Tuckman's team development: forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning.

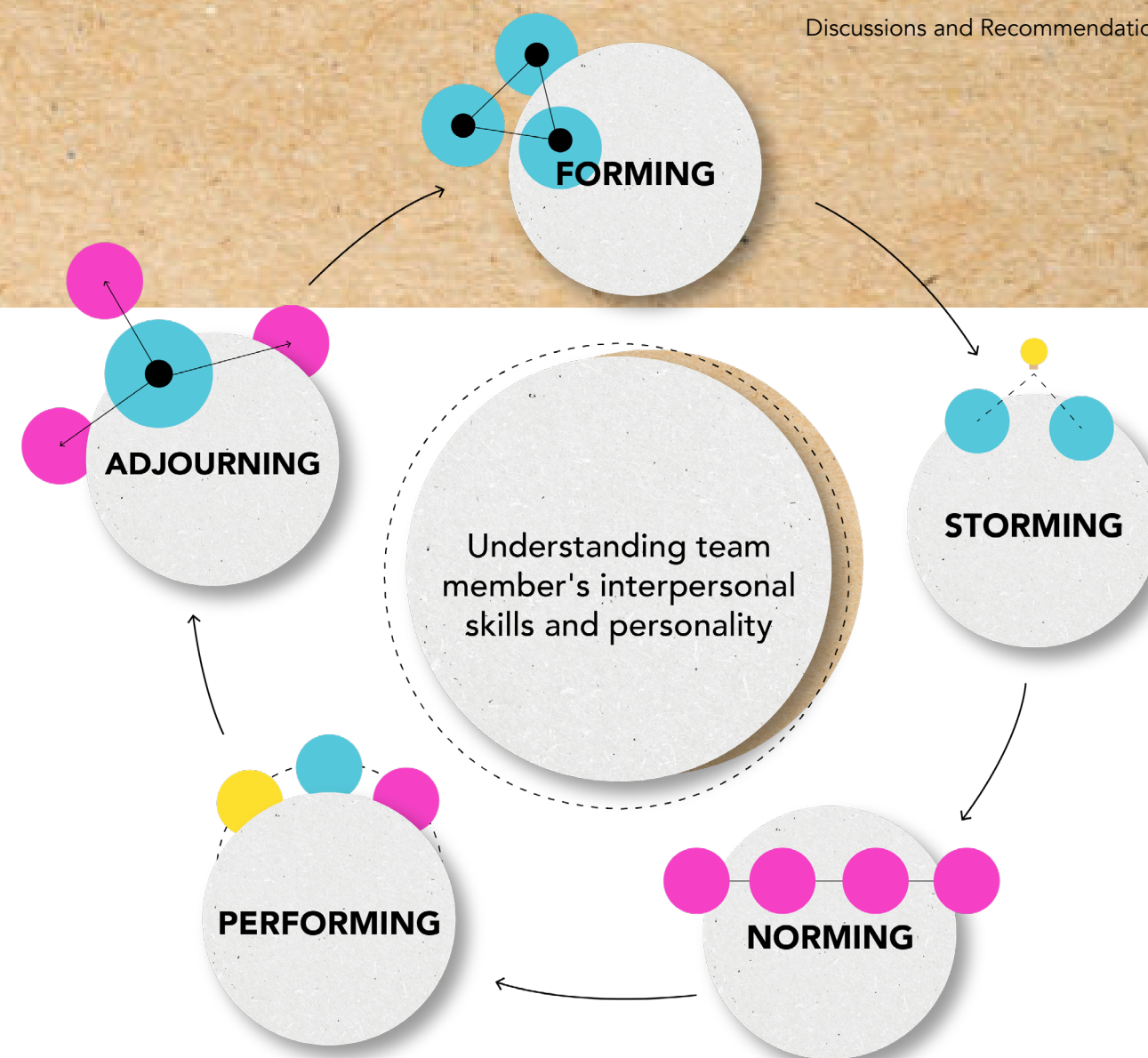


Figure 14. Integrating Personality to Tuckman's Model of Team Development (Adapted from Bonebright's representation of Tuckman's Model of Team Development)

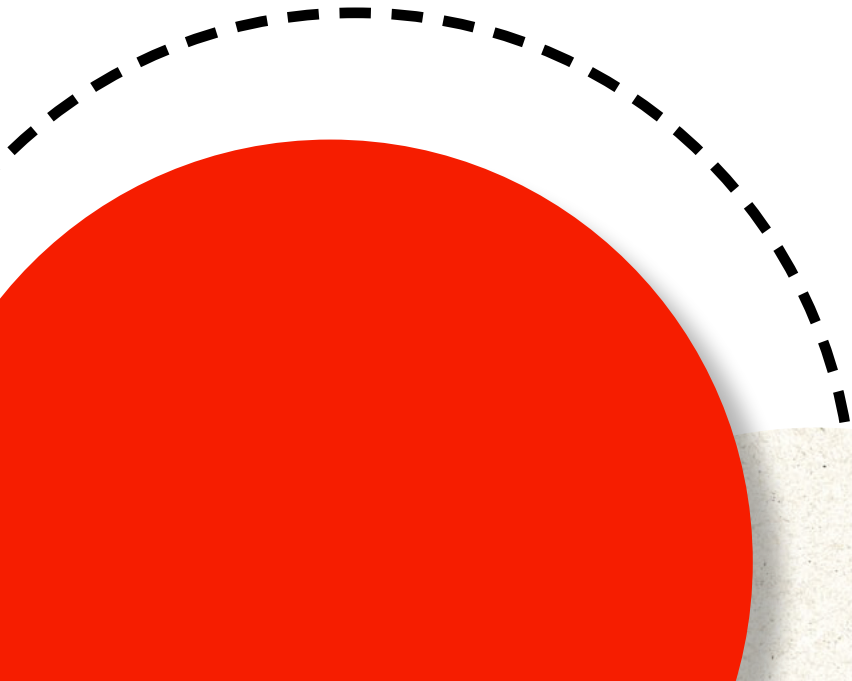
Organizations should also consider adding personality as a factor in measuring the team's effectiveness in the recommended framework mentioned above. By including personality as a factor in measuring team effectiveness, organizations can better understand how the framework works and how to improve the framework.

As identified in the study, organization management has a significant role in ensuring that their teams implement this framework. The findings revealed a need for managers to be empathetic towards employees, understand team members' personalities, and provide the necessary tools for team collaboration, as managers are seen as contributors to a team's success. Furthermore, participants expressed their interest in understanding team members' personalities before a project begins. Therefore, for managers to implement the recommended framework in their teams, it would be beneficial for the framework to include managers with the team members as they learn and understand each other's personalities. In addition, organizations may want to consider including a tool in the recommended framework to help managers encourage team members to actively consider each other's personalities during different stages of the team development.

Overall, creating the recommended framework and the tools suggested within such framework requires further research on how this can be done. In addition, further research into how well existing tools could be used for team formation and gauge their effectiveness in integrating an understanding of personality types in multidisciplinary teams would be beneficial. For example, one possible tool is the Basadur Profile team-building tool. This tool helps team members identify their problem-solving style, which is supposed to help improve the team's collaboration, communication, solution finding, and performance (Houtz Edwin Selby et al., 2003). This tool has been used extensively in OCAD University's Strategic Foresight and Innovation (SFI) programme. Project teams have used the tool to help them identify their profiles and work better together. Earlier in the report, the question of whether there can be a system to prevent or reduce conflict due to personality differences were raised. Organizations may use the Basadur Profile tool to avoid or minimize conflict as it addresses how team members can improve their working relationships by utilizing their profiles.

Another tool worth considering is Gallup's Strength Finder, discussed in the study. As organizations already apply this tool from the hiring stage to an employee performance evaluation stage, there is the possibility that organizations can use the tool in a team's setting to help understand team members' personalities.

Finally, as the recommended framework is to help team members better understand each other's personalities for improving the teams' effectiveness, it is essential that the team members themselves are interested in this framework. The research findings revealed a disconnect in some team members' minds as they misconstrue understanding one's personality as wanting to be friends with that person. For this recommended framework to work, it requires a paradigm shift in how team members view their working relationships. Further research in understanding how team members view workplace relationships is needed to create this framework.



5.0

CONCLUSION



CONCLUSION

This research project's purpose was to explore how personality can be considered a dimension of diversity in improving the effectiveness of multidisciplinary teams in organizations.

Primary research was conducted in this project to gain new qualitative information on how organizations consider and apply personality and diversity in the overall workplace, specifically in a multidisciplinary team context. A mixed-method approach of anonymous surveys and confidential interviews were conducted, and the focus was on multidisciplinary teams in small to medium enterprises (SMEs) and large organizations. The survey data revealed employees' perspectives on personality and diversity and their impacts on team conflicts and effectiveness in multidisciplinary teams. In addition, the interviews with HR personnel and hiring managers revealed a deeper understanding of how personality is considered at the workplace, what diversity looks like in that context, and personality effects in multidisciplinary teams.

The overall findings reveal that many organizations have a personality preference or are looking for a specific set of interpersonal skills, whether formally or informally, or even unconsciously. Although employees, HR personnel and hiring managers believe that understanding personality is essential in a multidisciplinary team setting, there is a gap whereby the organizations do not currently consider the understanding of personalities in the team setting. However, diversity is a factor that is considered in all three phases identified: the hiring process, employee performance evaluation and the team setting. Therefore, it is evident that this gap can be addressed by organizations implementing a framework to holistically understand employees' personalities as a dimension of diversity from the hiring process, performance evaluation process and the team formation stage. In addition, to review and improve the framework, it should also include personality as a factor in measuring teams' effectiveness.

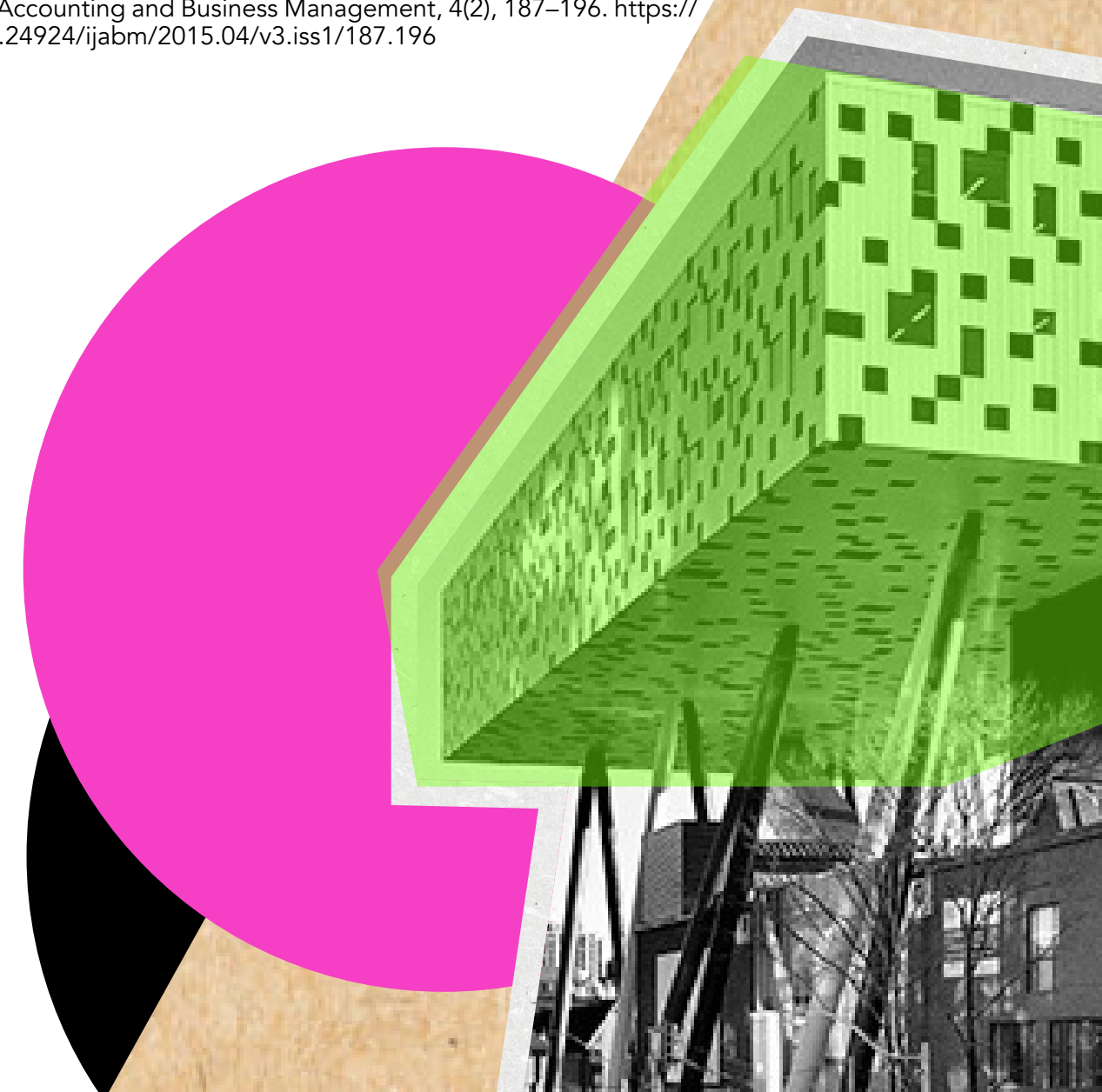
Furthermore, organizations should consider using managers as an integral part of glueing the team together for successful interactions and work delivery. Therefore, more research into how managers can use this framework is required. It is also essential that managers are trained on how to encourage team members to consider each other personalities at each stage is necessary.

Further research into how well existing tools can be used and adapted for team formation should be undertaken to gauge their effectiveness in integrating the understanding of personality types in multidisciplinary teams. When considering further research on this topic, it is also essential to consider the limitations of this project. Addressing the limitations outlined earlier can improve future research. It is intended that this project sheds light on the nuances of team dynamics and how personality can enhance the effectiveness of teams.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Survey Questions

1. In the team that you are in, which of the following do you identify as?
 - a. Team leader
 - b. Individual Contributor – An integral member of the team that contributes their expertise to the objective/goal of the team.
 - c. Other. Explain: -----
2. How many members does your team have (including yourself)?
3. Would you consider your team to be multidisciplinary? Multidisciplinary teams can consist of employees from different professional/education backgrounds or disciplines and have different roles within the team.
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Don't know
4. On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is least and 10 is most effective, how effective do you think your team is?
5. From the options below, please rank the factors you believe play a role in the effectiveness of your team. (You may list them in order of priority, from top to bottom)
 - a. Educational background
 - b. Professional experience
 - c. Specialized disciplines
 - d. Personality of team members
 - e. Age spread
 - f. Gender balance
6. Conflict arises at some point in every team. How often would you say your team experiences conflict? 1 being not at all, 5 being very often.
 - a. 1 to 5
7. Would you say such conflicts helped build a stronger team? Type yes or no below, and feel free to elaborate.
8. Do you think this conflict would have been resolved with a better understanding of your team members' personalities?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
9. Based on your answer to the previous question (8), please elaborate in 1-3 sentences as to why you chose that answer
10. Do you feel that your team is equipped to deal with various personality profiles of your team members?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
11. In 1- 3 sentences, please elaborate as to why you selected yes or no to the previous question.
12. Do you think that resources and support for understanding team members' personalities could improve your team's effectiveness?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
13. In 1- 3 sentences, please elaborate as to why you selected yes or no to the previous question.

Appendix B: Interview Questions

1. Can you please provide a brief description of what you do at work?
2. What dimensions of diversity are currently considered at your SME workplace?
3. What dimensions of an employee do organizations consider during their performance or hiring assessment?
 - a. Is personality formally assessed in any way?
 - b. Is personality assessed unconsciously through assessments? Such as interviews? If so, please explain how.
4. Are there any diversity dimensions assessed during the HR processes? (Diversity related to innovation, creativity, and professional experience rather than the political dimensions)
5. Are there any views of personality at your workplace? If so, please explain.
 - a. How is personality considered at your workplace?
 - b. Is personality considered as a dimension of diversity? If so, how?
 - c. Are there any characteristics of employee personality that are considered/favored at your workplace? And in what context?
 - d. Is personality used to assess an employee's performance? If so, how
6. Do team(s) exist at your workplace?
 - a. If yes, can you explain how team(s) are formed at your workplace?
 - i. What are key characteristics and features of the team(s)?
 - ii. What type of work do these team(s) do?
 - iii. Do the teams consist of employees from different disciplines or professional backgrounds OR mix of employees and partner employees and consultants?
 - iv. Have any of your teams experienced conflict within their team? If so, what were the reasons for conflict?
 1. Differences in personality and/or perspectives?
 2. Lack of conflict resolution capacity within the team?
 3. Did you have to step in to resolve conflict?
 - v. If not, are there any partnerships with other disciplines? If yes, what kind of work is done within such partnerships?
7. Are teams assessed? If so:
 - a. What criteria are used to assess teams?
 - b. Are any dimensions of diversity considered in assessing performance?
 - c. Is alignment/misalignment in personalities of team members considered?
 - d. In what form are assessment results presented?
 - e. What is done with the assessment results?
 - f. If not,
 - i. Why not?
 - ii. Are there any other aspects of the team that are assessed? If so, please explain.
8. Any additional thoughts or observations you would like to add?

