



Stepping up the game—meeting the needs of global business through virtual team projects

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Abstract



References



Citations



Supplementary Data

Virtual collaboration provides students with an opportunity to develop cultural intelligence while fitting into the team where the members are from diverse cultures. The purpose of this study is to explore whether global virtual team (GVT) projects raise students' understanding of cultural differences. In addition, it is interesting to know how internationally disruptive events such as the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic influence GVT projects.

The research involved two parts: In the first part, a two-wave longitudinal study was conducted to investigate how intercultural sensitivity and intercultural communication competence coevolve within a group of international students enrolled in a virtual business professional project. In the second part, using word clouds and topic modelling on the participants' perceptions, the study investigated whether the sudden disruption caused by the pandemic show similar results in performance, focussing primarily on the resilience of virtual teams. Further, the study explored participants' perceptions towards online learning in higher education institutions as well as the attitude of corporate organizations towards remote working in the post-pandemic years.

The results confirmed that GVT projects, in fact, do raise students' understanding of cultural differences and the need to adjust their behaviour accordingly in order to engage with their culturally different counterparts effectively. Participants reported an increase in their cognitive, behavioural and affective attributes.

Among the limitations of this study is the relatively small number of student participants. Furthermore, the number of respondents from India dominated the sample. Since the Indian students were disproportionately affected by the shutdown, causing them to return often to rural areas with poor Internet connectivity, responses concerning the disruption caused by the pandemic may be overriding negative. The same could be said of responses from US-American students, who often rely heavily on-campus employment or whose parents became unemployed during the pandemic, and thus were faced with disproportionate economic insecurity.

This paper provides insights to the educators and international organizations on how such projects provide the skills essential for reducing costs, accessing knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) across borders, maintaining flexible work schedules and arrangements, and taking advantage of multiple time zones to increase productivity.

While highlighting the significance of cultural intelligence, this paper investigated how the sudden disruption caused by a crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic impacts performance, focussing primarily on the resilience of virtual teams.

Keywords: COVID-19; Collaborative online international learning; Cross-culture; Global virtual teams; Intercultural competence; Online learning; Resilience

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