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# **Benefits of Multicultural Project Team Setting: Views of Professionals in the Ghanaian Construction Industry**

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The management of culturally diversified team can most often create exasperating management quandaries. However, studies indicate that multicultural project team settings have the potential to achieve higher productivity than homogenous team. Hence, this study is conducted to explore the benefits of multicultural project team settings using the views of professionals in the Ghanaian Construction industry. The study adopted a data reduction technique to examine the benefits of multicultural project team setting. The data was subjected to principal component analysis after passing all of the requisite tests of survey instrument reliability, sample size adequacy, and population matrix, resulting in the identification of three thematic multicultural project team setting benefits. The findings of the study reveal that the three key benefits of multicultural project team setting are promotion of personal and professional growth, provides a strong competitive advantage and an avenue for effective decision-making. The findings of this study are intended to help organisations in managing multicultural team settings in bringing out the best in terms of increased organisational performance. The findings of this study will serve as an important document for the management of multicultural project teams.

**Key words:** Multicultural, Project Team, Identity

## **Introduction**

Cultural diversity in recent years has the tendency of outperforming homogeneous groups on tasks which involves a variety of viewpoints especially in the construction industry (Tung, 2008). In recent years, there has been a realization that multicultural team setting is very significant in construction project management. Nam et al. (2009) described a multicultural team as a group inhabited by people from diverse cultures working together on activities or projects. Many benefits of cultural diversity in

a team have gone unnoticed, such as the breadth of backgrounds, talents, and personal qualities that multicultural team members bring to an organisation (Alemu, 2016). In brainstorming exercises, ethnically diverse participants produce more high-quality ideas (Zander & Butler, 2010). The merits of such multicultural engagements are numerous, and the industry must possess the capabilities to acquire and maintain them to promote organisational benefits (Gibbs & Boyraz, 2015). Mockaitis et al. (2018) further backed this study by stipulating that the many strengths of multicultural teams integrate specialized competence in understanding the local needs and demands and again serve as a grip among team members. Studies by Gilson et al. (2015) also stated that the use of multicultural groups will promote more flexible and innovation-oriented organisations. For any organisation in every field, culture and cultural differences are critical issues. Previous research from (Di Marco & Taylor, 2011) suggest that cultural boundary-spanned networks might initially outperform multicultural project networks due to improvements in effective collaboration. A multicultural team creates a mental view which in turn addresses the ways that people are unique to each other and the ways they share identity with others. Green & Mathieson (2016) indicate that due to the different cultures in organisational workforce, there is the need for researchers to direct their attention to examining multicultural team setting and its benefits. Previous studies focused mainly on effective leadership styles required to manage multicultural teams and how to overcome problems related to multicultural teams including misunderstandings and miscommunications (Lisak & Erez, 2015). Ochieng & Price (2010) stated that there is more significance on the engagement of multicultural teams and as such the benefits of multicultural team setting need to be explored to encourage the use of multicultural project team settings. Limited research works have been conducted on the benefits of multicultural project team setting in the construction industry, most especially in developing world, such as Ghana. However, much of the extant literature on cross-cultural collaborations suggests that researchers focus on the barriers and conflicts associated with cultural differences as opposed to the business opportunities (Mahalingam & Levitt, 2007). Therefore, this study explores the benefits of multicultural project team settings.

### **Overview of Multiculturalism**

Since the issue of how people build a sense of belonging to a national, cultural, ethnic, or racial group becomes particularly important in situations of cultural clashing, mixing, and integration, the study of multiculturalism has exciting and transformative implications for social and personality psychology (Deaux et al., 2006). Furthermore, personality psychologists may research individual differences in identity and self-concept through the individual and contextual factors that affect how an individual makes sense of his or her multicultural experiences. Multicultural individuals provide researchers with a quasi-experimental design suitable for studying how culture influences behavior since they have two or more cultures that can be independently manipulated (Ochieng & Price, 2009). The degree to which a workgroup or organisation is heterogeneous in terms of personal and functional characteristics is a common concept of diversity. Extant literature on organisational diversity has produced inconsistent results on effects of diversity, with some researchers finding beneficial effects, such as increased creativity, productivity, and quality (Signorini *et al.*, 2009). Previous research has focused on how people use social categorizations based on ethnic differences to make sense of their disparate worlds, putting social stability and integration at risk. It is true that creating a positive diverse work climate is difficult, but businesses should not have to be at the mercy of shifts in the workforce's demographic

makeup or the tension that often follows these shifts. Organisations should take the lead by developing an atmosphere conducive to accepting and cultivating the advantages of such diversity, beginning with the introduction and eventual institutionalization of best practices that focus on the self-affirmation and inclusion of all individuals, in accordance with a strength-based approach. An all-inclusive work environment promotes individual thriving as a sense of progress in one's self development and personal growth (Spreitzer *et al.*, 2005).

### **Benefits of Multicultural Team Setting**

A number of studies have been published that highlight the benefits and drawbacks of multicultural teams. Studies on the construction industry's culture, the connection between culture and project performance, and the impact of culture and national cultural differences on construction are becoming increasingly popular (Kivrak *et al.*, 2009). Previous research and experience in the construction industry have shown that cultural differences have a negative or positive impact on the daily operations of construction firms operating nationally or internationally (Misoc, 2017). Stahl *et al.* (2010) looked at how cultural differences affect project performance. According to the findings, cultural differences between partner organisations had a significant impact on project performance. Multiple viewpoints, diverse backgrounds, various problem-solving and decision-making styles, and smart ideas prevail in multicultural teams, according to Kirkman and Shapiro (2005). Rahman (2008) indicates that multicultural teams do better than homogeneous teams in finding out problems and solving them. Similarly, Nam *et al.* (2009) indicate that multicultural teams create the avenue for firms to make necessary gains in productivity. Misoc (2017) indicates an instance where, a multicultural financial firm reports higher levels of financial profitability than their culturally homogeneous counterparts. A multicultural team exhibits various benefits such as: skills and personal attributes and different perspectives. Multicultural teams are characterized with more ideas of higher quality in brainstorming work (Stephens *et al.*, 2008). Trust among team members in a multicultural team setting generates understanding in the group and the result improves and facilitates team efficiency (Stahl *et al.*, 2010). Matheson & Petersen (2020) indicate that differences in ethics of diverse cultural team members give lesser dangers in decisions.

The global market climate necessitates a high level of technical experience as well as cultural diversity awareness. Organisational scholars who understand the diversity of the workforce are continually examining multicultural work teams (Misoc, 2017). Stahl *et al.* (2010) stated that workforce diversity can improve team performance, and hence advance organisational efficiency and effectiveness. The breadth of experiences, talents, and personal qualities that multicultural team members bring to an organisation are only a few of the advantages of cultural diversity in a team. In brainstorming tasks, Ochieng & Price (2010) found that culturally diverse groups produce more high-quality ideas. According to Signorini *et al.* (2009) culturally diverse teams outperform homogeneous teams at identifying problems and generating solutions. The creation of an emergent team culture is aided by interaction among multicultural team members. As mutual member values foster collaboration and team success, a successful multicultural team has a strong emergent culture. According to Matheson & Petersen (2020) the positive effect and trust generated by the perceived shared understanding brings about performance improvement and boosts team efficacy.

### **Research Methodology**

An extensive literature review was conducted to first identify the relevant benefits of multicultural project team setting. Afterwards, the variables were subjected to pre-assessment and pre-testing processes. The pre-assessment was used as a preliminary content validation where professionals who have involved in multicultural project teams assessed the various benefits of multicultural project team setting and determined whether the variables represent what the study set out to measure. Five Project Managers in the construction industry with considerable experience in multicultural project teams were involved in the pre-assessment of the questionnaire. The respondents were asked to comment on the variables, add more variables that seemed appropriate and rate their potential for inclusion in the study. The benefits of multicultural project team setting were considered for inclusion in the study if at least three of the experts agreed. After conferring with these experts, fifteen benefits of multicultural project team setting (see Table 1) were proposed. A structured questionnaire was then developed based on the proposed benefits of multicultural project team setting and distributed to the experts. Each variable was scored based on a five-point Likert scale from 1 for strongly disagree to 5 for strongly agree.

Due to the difficulty in accessing a sampling frame and also obtaining responses from various construction professionals who have involved in multicultural project teams, the study adopted a snowballing non-probability sampling technique. Initially, respondents were selected based on their involvement in multicultural project teams, subsequently, referrals to other interested (and similarly knowledgeable) professionals from these initial respondents was adopted to subsequently grow the sample frame. The sample size for the study was 200 construction professionals who have involved in multicultural project teams and data was gathered in person over the course of three months through a face-to-face survey. The 200 survey questionnaires distributed resulted in a 75% response rate, which was considered acceptable for the study.

There was a diverse group of people who took part in the survey, including 72 Project Managers representing 48%, 48 Quantity Surveyors representing 32%, 12 Structural Engineers representing 8%, and 18 Architects representing 12% of the respondents. Majority of the respondents worked in consulting firms (64%), while (36%) worked in construction firms.

The Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient test was conducted to check the reliability of the scale and internal consistency of the variables. Preliminary tests were performed to ascertain the suitability of the data for the factor analysis process. These included Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's test of sphericity.

### **Results and Discussions**

The benefits of multicultural project team setting were analyzed using relative importance index to find the contribution a particular variable makes to the prediction of a criterion variable both by itself and in combination with other predictor variables and exploratory factor analysis to simplify complex and diverse relationships that exist among a set of observed variables by discovering the common factors that link that seemingly unrelated variables and providing an understanding of the underlying factors of the dataset.

Table 1 RII ranking of the benefits of multicultural project team setting				
Code	Benefits	RII	Standard Deviation	Rank
B1	Different decision-making styles and smart ideas prevail in multicultural teams	0.967	.455	1st
B2	Different problem-solving approaches exist in multicultural teams	0.933	.702	2nd
B3	It gives learning opportunity and knowledge sharing	0.913	.763	3rd
B4	Work force diversity advances organisational efficiency and effectiveness	0.867	.872	4th
B5	Formation of an emergent team culture	0.847	.886	5th
B6	Culturally diverse project team give an organisation a strong competitive advantage	0.827	.887	6th
B7	Employing multicultural teams, companies make significant gains in productivity	0.819	.893	7th
B8	Financial profitability is higher in multicultural team settings	0.813	.895	8th
B9	Ethnically diverse participants produce more high-quality ideas	0.804	.908	9th
B10	Multicultural team members have better capabilities	0.793	.915	10th
B11	Potential for promoting social and psychological well-being	0.773	.887	11th
B12	Fosters organisational commitment and trust	0.768	.883	12th
B13	Greater opportunity for development	0.764	.852	13th
B14	Fosters positive intergroup relations that result in organisational performance	0.737	.868	14th
B15	Allows firm to attract and retain the best talent	0.707	.808	15th

Table 1 shows that the respondents agreed to the existence of different decision-making styles and smart ideas in multicultural teams as the most perceived benefit with an RII value of 0.967. It was ranked first and hence deemed the most important benefit of multicultural project team setting. This finding is consistent with the study of Kirkman & Shapiro (2005) who states that multiple perspectives, varied experiences, and decision-making styles prevail in multicultural teams. In addition, the respondents also agreed that the existence of different problem-solving approaches in multicultural teams as a benefit of multicultural project team setting with an RII value of 0.933 ranked as the second most important benefit of multicultural project team setting. This finding is consistent with the study of Rahman (2008), who indicates that multi-cultural teams do better than homogeneous teams in finding out problems and solving them. Nonetheless, the attraction and retainship of the best talent with RII value of 0.707 was ranked as the fifteenth and the least important benefit of multicultural project team setting. These findings are consistent with previous studies that also emphasized that organisational diversity has produced inconsistent results on effects of diversity, with some researchers

finding beneficial effects, such as increased creativity, productivity, and quality (Signorini *et al.*, 2009). Spreitzer et al. (2005) indicate that an all-inclusive work environment promotes individual thriving as a sense of progress in one's self development and personal growth. Kirkman & Shapiro (2005) indicate that multiple perspectives, varied experiences, different problem-solving and decision-making styles exist in multicultural teams. Rahman (2008) indicates that multicultural teams do better than homogeneous teams in finding out problems and solving them. Similarly, Nam et al. (2009) indicate that multicultural teams create the avenue for firms to make necessary gains in productivity. A multicultural team exhibits various benefits such as: skills and personal attributes and different perspectives (Stahl et al., 2010). According to Stephens et al. (2008) multicultural teams are characterized with more ideas of higher quality in brainstorming work.

### ***Factor analysis (FA)***

Owusu-Manu et al. (2019) postulated that before analysing data from a survey, one must check the internal consistency of the variables and the reliability of the scale used. Cronbach's Alpha's Coefficient test is widely used in checking the reliability of scales. Cronbach's Alpha Co-efficient of 0.700 or more is mostly considered to be reliable (Owusu-Manu et al., 2019). The Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient value was 0.979 which is above 0.700, which shows a high reliability of the scale. Hence, it can be concluded that there is good internal consistency among the variables used for the study.

Factor analysis according to various researchers categorizes small number of factor groupings that is used in representing sets of many inter-related variables (Kissi et al., 2020). Owing to the large number of variables (15 benefits: see table 1) involved in this research, there was the need to reduce the items to form a smaller coherent number, hence, the use of factor analysis which is a data reduction technique. In measuring the sampling adequacy for appropriateness of the data, the data was subjected to the Kaiser Meyer Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's test of Sphericity with the KMO recording a value of 0.901 which is greater than 0.500 for factor analysis (Kissi et al., 2020).

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Table 2

#### *KMO and Bartlett's test*

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.901
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	5.187E3
	df	105
	Sig.	.000

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The Bartlett's Test indicates relationship among the variables. It also checks whether the correlation matrix is an identity matrix by testing the null hypothesis. The significant level of the test was adequate to reject the null hypothesis suggesting that the variables in the correlation matrix is not an identity matrix (Owusu-Manu et al., 2021). This indicates a strong relationship among the variables making it appropriate in the use of factor analysis.

After this the variables were taken through a varimax rotation converged in 6 iterations as presented in Table 3. Varimax simplifies the interpretation of the factors as compared to other rotation methods. Each of the variables is loaded on a factor with each variable exceeding 0.500.

Rotated component matrix		Component		
		1	2	3
<b>Code</b>	<b>Component</b>			
<b>Component 1: Promotes Personal and Professional growth</b>				
<b>B10</b>	Multicultural team members have better capabilities	<b>.680</b>		
<b>B11</b>	Potential for promoting social and psychological well-being	<b>.797</b>		
<b>B12</b>	Fosters organizational commitment and trust	<b>.813</b>		
<b>B13</b>	Greater opportunity for development	<b>.811</b>		
<b>Component 2: Provides an organisation competitive advantage</b>				
<b>B4</b>	Work force diversity can advance organisational efficiency and effectiveness		<b>.783</b>	
<b>B7</b>	Employing multicultural teams, companies make significant gains in productivity		<b>.760</b>	
<b>B8</b>	Financial profitability is higher in multicultural team settings		<b>.745</b>	
<b>B14</b>	Fosters positive intergroup relations that result in organisational performance		<b>.896</b>	
<b>B15</b>	Allows firm to attract and retain the best talent		<b>.943</b>	
<b>B5</b>	Formation of an emergent team culture		<b>.786</b>	
<b>B6</b>	Culturally diverse project team give an organisation a competitive advantage		<b>.770</b>	
<b>Component 3: Avenue for effective decision-making</b>				

<b>B2</b>	Different problem-solving approaches exist in multicultural teams	<b>.917</b>
<b>B1</b>	Different decision-making styles and smart ideas prevail in multicultural teams	<b>.938</b>
<b>B9</b>	Ethnically diverse participants produce more high-quality ideas	<b>.718</b>
<b>B3</b>	It gives learning opportunity and knowledge sharing	<b>.794</b>

*Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.*

*a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations*

### **Component 1: Promotes Personal and Professional growth**

This principal component is responsible for 38.111% of the total variances. The variables loaded on this component can be observed to have a direct relationship with the promotion of personal and professional growth among individuals in a multicultural project team setting. The findings under this factor agree with extant literature. The global market climate necessitates a high level of technical experience as well as cultural diversity awareness to aid in individual and organisational development. The breadth of experiences, talents, and personal qualities that multicultural team members bring to an organisation that encourages personal and professional development are just a few of the advantages of cultural diversity on a team (Arslan et al., 2021). A multicultural team, unlike a homogeneous or monocultural team, aids in the growth of individuals because team members cultivate and depend on a team culture based on simple guidelines, success goals, and participant experiences (Misoc, 2017).

### **Component 2: Provides an organisation competitive advantage**

This principal component is responsible for 35.006% of the total variances. The creation of an emergent team culture is aided by interaction among multicultural team members. Workforce diversity can improve team performance, and hence advance organisational efficiency and effectiveness which gives an organisation a competitive advantage. The positive effect and trust generated by perceived shared understanding fuels performance improvement and boosts team efficacy which enables an organisation to perform better than others (Ochieng & Price, 2010). Mobilizing the passion and teamwork of people from different cultures working together will contribute to more innovative solutions, giving multicultural project teams a significant competitive advantage.

### **Component 3: Avenue for effective decision-making**

This principal component is responsible for 21.828% of the total variances. Stephens et al. (2008) indicate that ethnically diverse groups generate more ideas of higher quality in brainstorming tasks. Similarly, Najdowski et al. (2021) indicates that culturally diverse teams outperform homogeneous teams at identifying problems and generating solutions. Multicultural project teams have diverse people from diverse backgrounds, hence, enabling them to make effective decisions.



## Conclusions

This study identified the key benefits of multicultural project team setting. The study succeeded in identifying three major benefits of multicultural project team setting. This research provides a new perspective on the benefits of multicultural project teams. These results have ramifications for managers who lead multicultural teams and are dedicated to increasing team productivity and success. Managers in multicultural organizations must put in place policies that will yield the benefits found in this study in order to operate efficiently and achieve high levels of team success as the workforce's cultural diversity continues to grow. This research findings suggest that, cultural diversity is beneficial for a multicultural project teamwork. The findings reveal that a multicultural project team promotes personal and professional growth, provides an organisation a strong competitive advantage, and an avenue for effective decision-making. Multicultural project team setting has greater access to multicultural resources and consequently a better chance to exploit their potential for the organisation to work efficiently as part of a team and achieve high levels of team success.

The findings of this study will stimulate much needed debate on the adoption of cultural diversity in projects in order to take advantage of its related benefits. This study will also serve as a source of empirical data to motivate others to conduct further studies on the subject to confirm or otherwise, the findings of this study. Outcomes of the findings of the study provide stakeholders in infrastructure development an insight into the benefits of the adoption of cultural diversity in projects. Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made: 1) the use of multicultural project teams by firms/companies plays a critical role in the firm's success; thus, project managers ought to see the need to embrace cultural diversity in projects due to the benefits cultural diversity brings; and 2) public awareness of multicultural project teams is essential because it leads to the high demand and, consequently, the improved delivery of projects. Despite the advances in understanding gained through this research, the study had some limitations. Relatively, the sample size was small. Nonetheless, the level of education and years of experience of the respondents in multicultural projects still validate the study's authenticity for future reference. Further studies can be undertaken on a large set. Future studies can also explore these issues in other African countries to confirm, or otherwise, the study's findings.

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