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THE ROLE OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND HOW THEY IMPACT WORK TEAM PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT

Cultural diversity plays a major role in the productivity of a corporation in this thriving business world. The workplace is a platform where individuals from different backgrounds come together to work and share an organization's goals and objectives. This research focuses on the impact of cultural diversity on work team performance in Abu Dhabi University and whether the multicultural environment results in a positive, negative or dual impact.

Quantitative and qualitative approaches were used in order to determine the impact and the research findings showed that a dual impact of culturally diverse teams is present in Abu Dhabi University. The results that were analyzed are specific to Abu Dhabi University and will differ from business to business because of cultural diversity.

Keywords: Motion Control; Modular Design; Real-time Control; Trajectory Planning.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Company

Abu Dhabi University was established in September 2003, after three years of planning by Sheikh Hamdan Bin Zayed Al Nahyan and other residents of UAE, and it welcomed around 1000 students in both of its campuses located in Abu Dhabi and Al Ain. Throughout the years, ADU has gained multiple accreditations and has increased its status as one of the best universities in the gulf countries. Abu Dhabi University is known for having a vibrant faculty and student community, as individuals from over 55 nationalities work and learn together [1].

1.2. Statement of Problem

This research discusses the impact of cultural diversity on work team performance at Abu Dhabi University (ADU). It examines the multicultural environment at ADU and evaluates the effect of such an environment in the performance. Since the work environment of ADU encourages multicultural teams, issues such as favoritism may exist. The research will explore if this diverse culture has a positive, negative, or dual impact on the level of performance at ADU? A qualitative and quantitative approach is used to gain an in-depth understanding of the topic.

1.3. Aims and Objectives

The aim of the study is to evaluate the impact of multicultural work team performance and identify the multiple ways that cultural diversity impacts ADU's productivity levels. Moreover, the terms: Culture, cultural dimensions, and diversity will be defined and conceptualized

The objectives of this research are to assess the various impact of multicultural work team performance at ADU, to evaluate the importance of training employees to adjust to other cultures and to contribute in expanding the behavioral management research sector in the field of Industrial Psychology.

1.4. Focus of the Study

The main focus of this study is to examine the culturally diverse work team environment and its impact on Abu Dhabi University's work team performance. An insight of the work environment and how different languages, cultures, values, and religions affect the team will be provided.

1.5. Significance of the Study

The significance of the concept of cultural diversity on teamwork is crucial as it is an important aspect for future companies. Multicultural teams are noticeably increasing in organizations all over the world and therefore, such a research is required to widen the understanding of this topic and provide reasoning for the success of international businesses [2].

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review discusses previous studies that were done regarding the impact of culture and inter-cultural diversity on organizational behavior. This section will give readers an insight on the topic as culture is an important factor when it comes to how employees behave at their workplace. This topic of study is an essential aspect of any organization since it can greatly affect the performance of its employees.

Furthermore, cultural diversity in its broadest form can be defined as a learned behavior highly influenced by values, beliefs, and religion shared by a group of people and passed from one generation to another [3]. Moreover, according to Kokemuller, cultural diversity is the existence of employees from different ranges of backgrounds and different characteristics in an organization. In his article, Kokemuller states that employees differ in experience, age, culture, race, ethnic origin, and sexual orientation and all these aspects are contributed to diversity [4]. Thomas, in his research, distinguishes three key ways in which culture influences teams in an organization, these include: the norms of the cultures present in the work team, how culturally different individual team members are, and the proportion of cultural diversity in a team's composition [5]. Diversity is known to be a positive feature in an organization as it leads to an increase in the productivity levels; however, diversity also creates major challenges for company leaders as multiple individuals from different regions, religions, and traditions come to work together [4].

The article 'managing ethically cultural diversity: learning from Thomas Aquinas' by Joao Cesar das Neves and Domenec Mele discusses how cultural diversity is now an essential part of any organizational structure. It provides an innovative and creative organizational environment along with a hybrid of working techniques that in the long run lead to high competitiveness in the global market, cost effectiveness, increased job motivation, and product diversity [6]. Furthermore, teams that consist of employees with different backgrounds, view points and cultural values can help to generate a wide range of ideas that may encourage cautious team members to express their own opinions. In addition to that, diversity encourages constructive conflicts that enhance creativity and increase the efficiency and the quality of decisions [7], [8].

On the other hand, some researchers argue that employees from the same culture tend to form teams in an efficient manner while employees from diversified cultures have a tendency to experience several cultural issues which lead to a delay in team formation processes [9]. Moreover, culturally diversified team members tend to have different opinions about desirable team behaviors due to varying cultural backgrounds and such perceptions may lead to conflicts in the workplaces [10]. Additionally, culturally diverse team members are subject to experience low satisfaction and performance levels due to poor communication and decision-making [11]. In his article, Chevrier (2003) argues that uncertainty, confusion, and complexity exist within multicultural team members and may lead to a less effective team [12]. Furthermore, a culturally diverse work team is subject to many issues related to language, norms, and communication, such issues can negatively affect team performance and should be resolved in order to ensure effective team performance [7].

The main concerns when managing a culturally diverse team can be dissimilar attitudes, disagreements, and lack of communication within team members. Managers at any organization must be able to deal with such issues and treat all employees in a fair manner. Joao Neves and Domenec Mele state that management should adopt a rational thinking method towards employees by pursuing good and rejecting evil. The practice of rational thinking will increase employee's loyalty towards the organization as well as encourage a healthy and positive environment [13]. Multiple researchers agree that a culturally diverse workforce represents a source of competitive advantage for organizations in the long run [14]. Many also agree that a culturally diverse workforce can lead to high organizational performance [15]. In these present times, Organizations focus on increasing their flexibility and responsiveness in the global market through implementing a culturally diverse environment [16].

The article 'Cross-Level culture congruence: Implications for managing diversity in multinational corporation' by Jennifer Palthe discusses the importance of interconnecting the

national, individual and organizational culture in a multinational organization. According to Palthe, the effects of diversity are most apparent in the multinational environment since they are the centers of a diverse workforce and in order to be competent in an international organization, an employee must be capable and flexible of working with others regardless of their cultural background. Palthe discusses how employees tend to contribute on an individualistic level which acts as a major step backward since most organizations are involved in eradicating differences. This may serve as a problem to the firm as teamwork is then compromised through the focus on an individualistic approach [17].

A research paper by Lynne Leveson, Therese Joiner and Steve bakalis discuss an employee's perception of cultural diversity within an organization. The research highlights the relationship between organizational support and management of cultural diversity. A major concern in a diverse workforce is the support of the management towards their employees. Management may respect and appreciate employees based on differences such as race, gender, color, ethnicity and cultural background [18]. A study suggests that a culturally diverse organization requires managers to have proper tools, training, evaluation, monitoring programs, and support from top management in order to provide appropriate training to other employees. Such training is required in the workforce so employees are aware of prejudices and have the ability to manage their own actions [19]. Additionally, managers that lead multicultural teams should be able to guide the development of the team and provide a clear division of roles and responsibilities by hiring individuals with positive attributes [7],[20]. Furthermore, researchers recommend that managers must understand the diverse culture in their organization, set specific goals, policies and expectations for their employees, adapt leadership styles to employees' types, and manage conflicts in order to obtain positive outcomes [21].

According to Leveson and Joiner, employees perform efficiently and have more motivation to work in an environment where diversity is appreciated and holds high value. This provides employees with a sense of belonging and involvement thus ensuring the existence of a united team at the workplace [22]. All in all, taking into account the above-mentioned reviews, cultural diversity plays a major role in the success of a firm and the outcomes are highly dependent on how well multicultural team members work with each other along with the guidance of the management department to deal with issues that result from a multicultural team.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

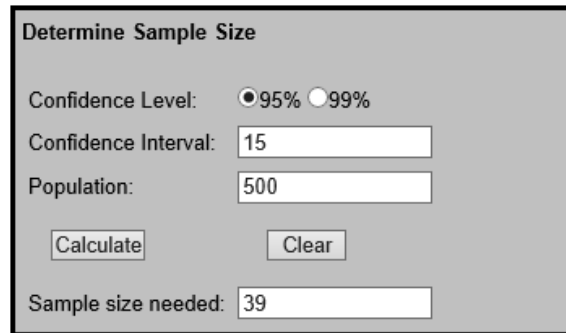
This research focuses on the impact of cultural diversity on work team performance at Abu Dhabi University (ADU). This section will provide an insight on the methods used to gain information regarding the topic and what will be used in order to construct this research paper.

3.2. Sources of Data

Primary and secondary sources will be used throughout this research, our primary source consists of a questionnaire that contains 11 questions regarding the impact of cultural diversity on work team performance, while our secondary sources focus on research papers and articles found through ADU's library database. Our questionnaire will provide quantitative data that will be used to analyze statistics and formulate graphs.

3.3. Sample Size

The sample size used for this research is 39 employees, this number was determined through a sample size calculator from a survey software system. As shown below, the calculator assisted in clarifying the total sample size needed, while the inputs were the confidence level, confidence interval and the population of the company. Amounts of 95%, 15, and 500, were used, respectively. This sample size will be used to survey the employees at Abu Dhabi University.



Determine Sample Size

Confidence Level: ☒ 95% ☐ 99%

Confidence Interval:

Population:

Sample size needed:

Figure 1 Sample Size Calculator [23].

3.4. Method for Data Collection

Quantitative and qualitative approaches will be used throughout this research. The quantitative method consists of 11 questions that focus on the employee's personal details, cultural diversity at ADU, and job satisfaction levels. The statistics and graphs resulting from the questionnaire will be formed through a survey analysis program known as survey monkey. Survey monkey will analyze the result of each question and provide a graph that discusses the result in depth. This questionnaire will be distributed to 39 employees from multiple nationalities and different genders at Abu Dhabi University. Secondary sources such as previous research articles, journals, and books are used in order to construct the literature review section of this study. The ADU library database was used in order to attain articles that focus on the impact of multicultural teams on work performance.

3.5. Limitation

The only limitation present in this research is the number of employees used for the survey analysis and the focus on only one institute. This research can be expanded and cover a wider number of individuals and companies in order to gain an even more in-depth analysis result. This limitation can be fulfilled by collecting primary data from multiple other organizations that focus on building multicultural teams.

4. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

This research focuses on five demographic variables: gender, age, nationality, education qualification, and years of work experience at ADU. The mentioned variables are considered since they have the ability to affect the outcome of the survey. The results showed that from 39 employees, the gender response was 64.1% for females while 35.9% for males. The majority of the respondents belonged to the age group of 40 and above, this group consisted a response rate of 64.10%, followed by 33.33% in the age group of 25 – 40, and 3.56% in the age group of below 25 years. ADU consists of employees from all over the world and therefore the highest percentage of response is 43.59% in the "other" category, 38.46% in the Southeast Asian group, and 17.95% in the Arab group. The highest range for education qualification was 69.23% for respondents with a postgraduate degree. In addition, the

employees of ADU differ in the years of work experience with the highest response as 41.03% in the category of 7-12 years, 38.46% in 1-6 years, 15.38% in the group of 12 months and under, and 5.13% in the category of 12 years and above.

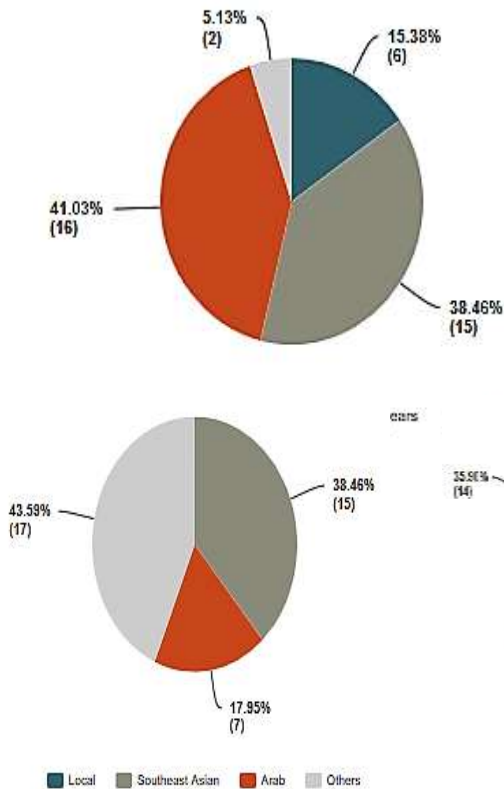


Figure 5 Gender

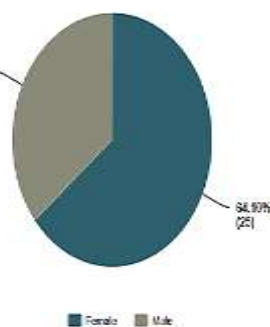


Figure 6 Educational Qualification

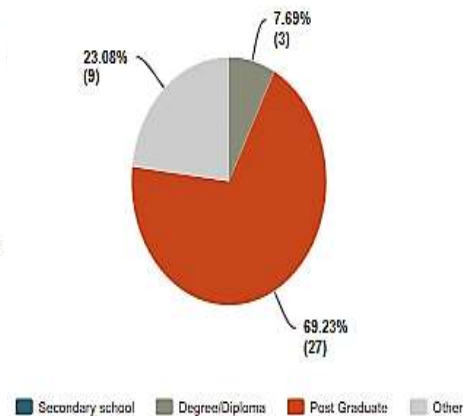


Figure 4 Nationality

Table 1 ADU employs based on culture

Answer Choices		Responses	
Strongly Agree (1)		0.00%	0
Agree (2)		20.51%	8
Neutral (3)		12.82%	5
Disagree (4)		38.46%	15
Strongly Disagree (5)		28.21%	11
Total			39
Basic Statistics			
Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean
2.00	5.00	4.00	3.74
		Standard Deviation	
		1.08	

As shown above, the majority of the respondents believe that Abu Dhabi University does not hire employees based on their culture or country since the response rate is 38.46% for the disagree option and 28.21% for strongly disagree. 12.82% replied as neutral and 20.51% responded as agree.

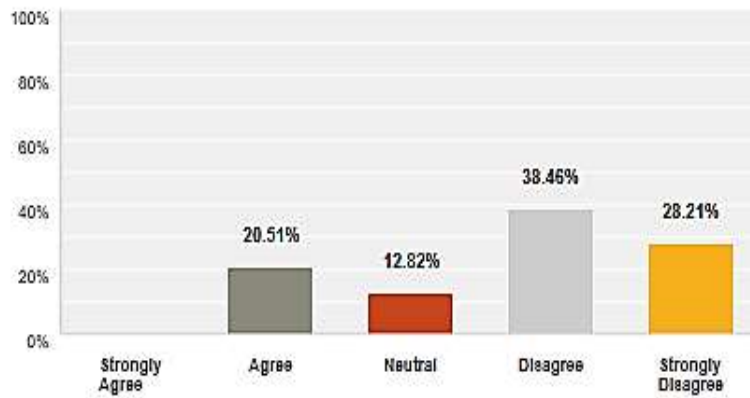


Figure 7 ADU employs based on culture

Table 2 Conflicts faced when working in a multicultural environment

	1 - Strongly Agree (1)	2 - Agree (2)	3 - Neutral (3)	4 - Disagree (4)	5 - Strongly Disagree (5)	Total Respondents
Miscommunication in Languages	10.53% 4	26.32% 10	18.42% 7	31.58% 12	13.16% 5	38
Cultural Differences Awareness	15.79% 6	26.32% 10	28.95% 11	21.05% 8	7.89% 3	38
Attitudes/Behaviours Toward Time	17.95% 7	43.59% 17	28.21% 11	7.69% 3	2.56% 1	39
Team Members Structure and expectations	5.26% 2	60.53% 23	23.68% 9	5.26% 2	5.26% 2	38
Decision making issues	15.79% 6	42.11% 16	15.79% 6	21.05% 8	5.26% 2	38

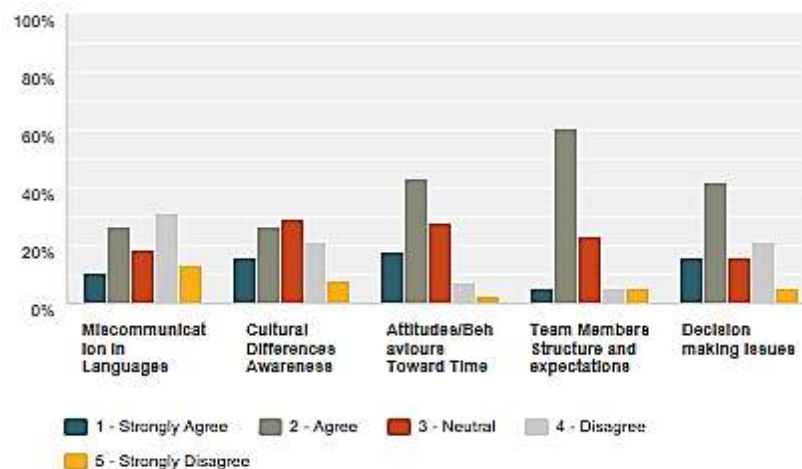


Figure 8 Conflicts faced when working in a multicultural team

The graph above discusses the conflicts that employees at ADU may face when working in a multicultural team. First, 31.58% and 13.16% disagree and strongly disagree that they face miscommunications in languages, 28.95% are neutral, and 26.32% and 10.53% agree and strongly agree that they face this issue. Second, the majority of 28.95% are neutral with the cultural difference awareness at ADU, 15.79% and 26.32% agree and strongly agree that this conflict is present, while 21.05% and 7.89% disagree and strongly disagree with it. Third, 43.59% and 17.95% agree and strongly agree that there are different behaviors towards time present at ADU, 28.21% are neutral, and 7.69% and 2.56% disagree and strongly disagree. Fourth, the highest percentage of 60.53% and 5.26% agree and strongly agree that there are

specific team member expectations based on culture, 23.68% are neutral, and 5.26% disagree and strongly disagree. Last, 42.11% and 15.79% agree and strongly agree that they face decision-making issues in a multicultural team, 15.79% are neutral, and 21.05% and 5.26% disagree and strongly disagree.

Table 3 Do you feel appreciated at ADU?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes (1)	74.36%	29
No (2)	15.38%	6
Other (please specify) (3)	10.26%	4
Total		39

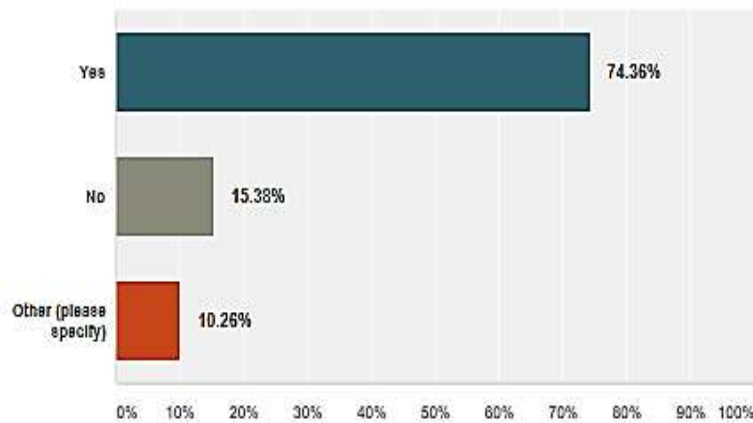


Figure 9 Do you feel appreciated at ADU?

According to the above graph and table, the majority of respondents, 74.36%, state that they do feel appreciated at ADU, however, 15.38% responded the opposite, while 10.26% said that they feel appreciated sometimes.

Table 4 Conflicts caused due to cultural differences at ADU.

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes (1)	44.74%	17
No (2)	52.63%	20
Other (please specify) (3)	2.63%	1
Total		38

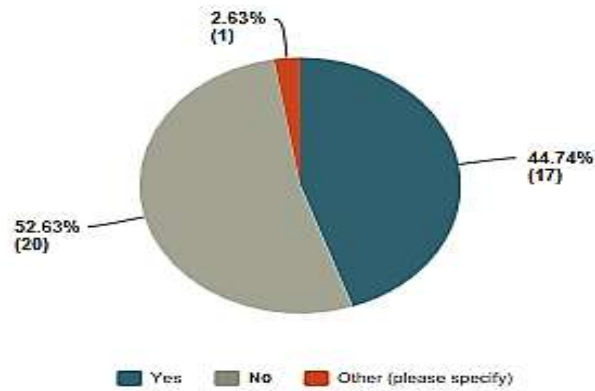


Figure 10 Conflicts caused due to cultural differences at ADU.

This chart displays the percentages of employees that have faced conflicts due to the cultural difference at Abu Dhabi University. The majority of 52.63% state that they have never experienced such issues, while 44.74% responded that they have experienced such problems.

Table 5 Would you stay if you receive an attractive offer?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes (1)	35.14%	13
No (2)	45.95%	17
Other (please specify) (3)	18.92%	7
Total	37	

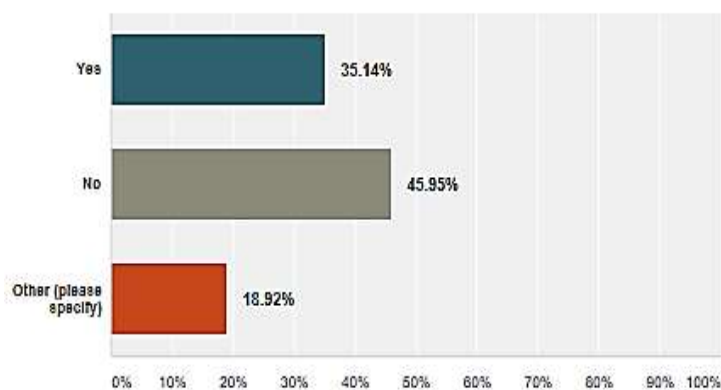


Figure 11 Would you stay if you receive an attractive offer?

As seen above, this table discusses whether employees would stay at ADU if they received an attractive job offer from somewhere else. 45.95% responded that they would not stay, 35.14% would stay, and 18.92% specified different responses such as “it would depend on the type of offer”.

5. OBSERVATION

Abu Dhabi University is a culturally diverse workforce as shown in this research, the 39 respondents were Arab, Southeast Asian, and from other continents such as Europe. This

shows that ADU focuses on bringing a multicultural work team in order to increase their efficiency and become one of the top universities in the GCC. The respondent's ages ranged from 25 to 40 and above since the majority that was interviewed were professors holding PhDs. The gender variable was more favorable to females since the response rate was higher, this does not provide that ADU is comprised mainly of female employees, but may give an insight to a sample size of the workforce. From the findings of the research, it seems that ADU creates a comfortable working environment for their faculty given that the highest response was of 7 to 12 years and above. This also shows that ADU focuses on building loyalty and a feeling of belonging in its working environment.

When asked whether ADU would hire based on culture or background, 26 out of 39 agreed that ADU would not recruit employees due to the culture they belong to, however, 8 out of 39 believe the opposite. Moreover, if the conflict aspects at ADU are discussed, almost half state that they face miscommunications in language, while the other half express the opposite. Additionally, 16 out of 38 declare that there is an awareness of cultural differences in their work environment, however, 11 out of 38 disagree to that. 24 from 39 agree that there are different attitudes towards time and this depends on the culture of the employee, yet 4 respondents disagree. 25 out of 38 also agree that team members are expected to provide different outcomes based on the country they belong to. In addition, 21 respondents reported that they face decision-making issues when in a multicultural team due to different opinions, while 10 state that they do not face such issues.

When asked about conflicts in general, it was observed that half of the respondents faced issues while the other half do not. In open-ended responses, respondents stated that ADU promotes high respect for cultural diversity among faculty and staff and that they are extremely satisfied with their working environment. However, some employees discuss how other team members from ethnic clusters that result in acts of favoritism and that management should focus on diversifying all departments so such risks are eliminated. The majority also states that they feel appreciated at ADU, yet they may leave their current position if they are offered an attractive job somewhere else. This shows that on an individual level, employees at ADU have different opinions towards the actions of the company and this may also be dependent on the culture of the individual and his perception of the environment.

6. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

This research discusses the impact of cultural diversity on work team performance in Abu Dhabi University. A survey was used as quantitative data to determine the impact of diversity on employees, this questionnaire focused on general demographics, cultural diversity's impact, and individual reflections. After conducting the analysis, it can be said that there is a dual impact on the level of performance in Abu Dhabi University. A positive and negative correlation between cultural diversity and work team performance can be seen. Employees in ADU seem to be satisfied with the overall working environment and face no issues while working in a multicultural team, the opposite is also true as some employees do face issues and state that cultural clusters are formed which hinder decisions of other team members.

Creating a multicultural work team is very important for the business world nowadays. It acts as a means to improve a corporation's productivity if it is monitored and implemented in the right manner. A diverse culture may increase chances of conflicts, it is the duty of higher management to assure that such cases do not occur by providing training that focuses on dealing and communicating with a multicultural team or guides employees to workshops that deal with team bonding activities and encourage working with members from different cultures. Moreover, diversity should exist in all sectors of a company so that no specific cultural clusters are formed.

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