

Diverse High-Performing Teams: An Interview Study on the Balance of Demands and Resources

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Abstract : With such a large proportion of organisations relying on the use of team-based structures, it is surprising that so few teams would be classified as high-performance teams. While the impact of team composition on performance has been researched frequently, there have been conflicting findings as to the effects, particularly when examined alongside other team factors. To broaden the theoretical perspectives on this topic and potentially explain some of the inconsistencies in research findings left open by other various models of team effectiveness and high-performing teams, the present study aims to use the Job-Demands-Resources model, typically applied to burnout and engagement, as a framework to examine how team composition factors (particularly diversity in team member characteristics) can facilitate or hamper team effectiveness. This study used a virtual interview design where participants were asked to both rate and describe their experiences, in one high-performing and one low-performing team, over several factors relating to demands, resources, team composition, and team effectiveness. A semi-structured interview protocol was developed, which combined the use of the Likert style and exploratory questions. A semi-targeted sampling approach was used to invite participants ranging in age, gender, and ethnic appearance (common surface-level diversity characteristics) and those from different specialties, roles, educational and industry backgrounds (deep-level diversity characteristics). While the final stages of data analyses are still underway, thematic analysis using a grounded theory approach was conducted concurrently with data collection to identify the point of thematic saturation, resulting in 35 interviews being completed. Analyses examine differences in perceptions of demands and resources as they relate to perceived team diversity. Preliminary results suggest that high-performing and low-performing teams differ in perceptions of the type and range of both demands and resources. The current research is likely to offer contributions to both theory and practice. The preliminary findings suggest there is a range of demands and resources which vary between high and low-performing teams, factors which may play an important role in team effectiveness research going forward. Findings may assist in explaining some of the more complex interactions between factors experienced in the team environment, making further progress towards understanding the intricacies of why only some teams achieve high-performance status.

Keywords : diversity, high-performing teams, job demands and resources, team effectiveness

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