

Integral goal and cross-cultural team synergy as determinants of international business

Wu Bo¹, Kateryna Shumilina^{1*}, Irfan Ullah Khan², Al-haj Abdullah Ali Abdullah¹, Kashif Nazar Khan³

¹ Zhejiang Gongshang University

² Zhejiang University

³ Comsats University, Islamabad

Authors' Contribution: Wu Bo supervised this research, Kateryna wrote this paper (corresponding author), Irfan reformatted the references, Kashif Nazar Khan proofread the paper, and Al-haj verified the paper.

* **Corresponding author:** Kateryna Shumilina, Zhejiang Gongshang University; Email: katerynashumilina@gmail.com.

ABSTRACT

Most of the authors conduct empirical research in a large range of academic scientific fields. Due to the focus on empirical research, concentration on conceptual ideological research is rare in recent times. This study is conceptual research, addressing the key question of cross-cultural team synergy, the construct which has not yet got due attention in the literature. The paper responds the calls for pragmatic cross-cultural sustainability scholarship. The framework proposed in the paper demonstrates business/company sustainability emanating from team synergy particularly in cross-cultural environment. The research shows that Cross-Cultural Team Sustainability is achievable considering a range of factors, including cross-cultural competence of the team members, the integration role of a leader and integral goal, efficient team processes of discussion and decision making, using specific cross-cultural mind grouping instruments.

KEYWORDS: cross-cultural team sustainability, integral goal, international business sustainability, cross-cultural competence, social responsibility, international mind grouping

ABBREVIATIONS

CCTS – cross-cultural team sustainability

INTRODUCTION

Team composition in cross-cultural setting is one of the most influential factors as cross-cultural differences add ambiguities but at the same time give new opportunities for unique synergetic effect. Dealing with different cultural logics effectively requires cross-cultural competence



<https://ss.damray.com>

OPEN ACCESS

Received: June 18, 2019

Accepted: June 25, 2019

Published: June 27, 2019

Copyright: ©2019 Jeremy Chatterjee *et al.* This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

(3C) otherwise conflicts will hinder the workflow. The concept of 3C involves psychological traits, knowledge, skills and abilities, fusing intercultural adaptation and adjustment. Environment and society are not the individual properties rather the collection of individual and group care; hence, research on sustainability is gaining attention. It has been researched from many social, business and cultural perspectives. The main focus is to understand what spreads and expands principles of sustainability in community, business, team and individual. In contemporary business multiculturalism has become a daily routine and our research is organized around theoretical analysis of cross-cultural team sustainability (CCTS). A range of scientific domains have paid particular attention to team resilience and sustainability, among them military [1], health [2], and management [3]. Main focus of their works is that team members are interconnected, not isolated. Their experiences are shared thus team level of research in sustainability and resilience should gain privilege over individual [4]. Teams have become the main organizational structure in companies and businesses [5]. Salas *et al.* define teams as composite complex systems, represented by two or more individuals, who socially interact, recursively, dynamically, adaptively, having common or shared goals, contribute meaningfully into task management, goal interdependencies and feedback, often characterized by hierarchical structure, with a limited life-span, the expertise and roles are distributed in between the members, within an environmental/organizational context, including and being influenced by processes and competencies, cognitive and affective states, results and outcomes, and team member judgments and perceptions of the team effectiveness [6]. They represent workflow of an organization, satisfy operational necessities, innovate, create, represent synergy, globally unfold market opportunities [7]. In this way we put CCTS as a determinant for business or company sustainability in international settings. The paper analyzes factors influencing CCTS, including leadership, team composition and team processes, highlighting an underestimated factor of integral goal. In this way our paper is supposed to be of appreciation for the corporate sustainability researchers and company leaders, who aim to practically implement the values and activities of sustainability.

DEFINITION AND CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABILITY

The United Nations Commission Report of 1987 names sustainability as: '*Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*' [8]. In other words its social responsibility on all levels: global, environmental and economic.

It is supposed to initiate individuals, companies and communities to promote practices protecting natural and human resources to enjoy life for our and future generations. Sustainability got a vast interest in different areas of research and social agendas. United Nations has initiated a decade 2005-2014 to promote transformative Education for Sustainable Development around the world [9]. Catholic Church has proclaimed contribution to awakening the values and moral forces to support and create just structures and their effectiveness in the long run [10]. 12,000 corporations from 145 countries signed United Nations Global Compact, showing their will to follow principles of sustainability in the areas of Environment, Human Rights, Labor and Anti-Corruption [11]. In this direction the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) trend in science and corporate culture has started to gain significance, and cross-cultural interest in CSR is also on rise [12]. Advantages of CSR practice for the companies have several dimensions. According to Sweeney [13] it improves their social reputation, attracts good employees, increases staff retention, attracts consumers and their loyalty. Driven by these social trends, companies have started changing their environments and business strategies, vision, culture and operations for corporate sustainability [14].

WHAT COULD BE TEAM SUSTAINABILITY?

The implementation of sustainability in a company should involve strategic, normative and operational levels [15]. It must become organizational culture of the whole organization, its leaders, teams and individuals [16]. In unison with the resource-based-view [17] we posit that teams, being the main internal resource and organizational pillar of most companies, stipulate its success and sustainability respectively. Based on the general sustainability definition and the team functions in a company we propose to define **team sustainability as team development that meets necessities and designated results of the team without compromising the ability of the other company members, whole company and society in general to achieve their necessities in present and future generations.**

The effect of culture is powerful in achievement of environmental sustainability [18], amendment of educational systems in the name of sustainability [19], global political sustainability [20], management [21,22], making tourism sustainable [23], etc. Nevertheless the area of cross-cultural team sustainability has not been mentioned and elaborated enough.

The core of any team involves their common interactions, processes, collaborations and conflicts within and outside the team, shared beliefs, norms

and models, group affect and cohesiveness [24]. In the image of team effectiveness by Cohen & Bailey [25], we put team sustainability as a function of four main factors, including team environment, design, processes and personal traits of team members.

ROLE OF ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING FOR TEAMS SUSTAINABILITY

Teams operate within a company environment, thus the company's strive for corporate sustainability in economic development, social responsibility and environmental protection evinced in sustainable strategic and profit-driven company activities [26] would be an important environment for team sustainability. It also lead to the need of paying attention to unattended wants of community [27] At the same time organizational culture incorporating beliefs, values and experience of a company, its material system and structure together with behavioral patterns of its members [28] is like water, which the team and its members absorb in every day functioning. It influences subtly but strongly. If it is focused on sustainability, the team sustainability orientation will be subconscious. HR management of such company selects the employees, whose inner values correspond to sustainable approach. Simultaneously the attitude and perception of sustainable development on each layer of company leadership influences the whole process of corporate strategy design and activities towards sustainability [29] within the organization and the team.

In our model the role of leadership correlates with the integral model of society [30], when the leader is an integrator, who stays in relationship with every team member as all the elements of nature, but at the same time respectable and responsible for the team processes. In image of integral education principles [31] such leaders nurture reflective thinking [32], when each team member directs his activity and own development himself. Effective leaders capable of providing support for sustainability are strongly oriented to achieve task- focused social climate [33] and puts meaningful integral goals. They give adequate time to do the quality work and an opportunity for self-reflection through additional information, choice of assignments (within the team work array), give a quality feedback without judging, but motivating for results and sustainability. Hence when company, its leadership and goals are conformable with sustainability focus, team sustainability would develop faster and easier.

TEAM COMPOSITION

Adaptation is transformation of one's behavior according to circumstances; environment and

social influence, when adjustment is subjective perceptions while adaptation [34]. Successful cross-cultural adaptation and adjustment is revealed in fruitful relations with foreigners, efficient cooperation and work environment, perceiving the communication comfortable and positive, being warm and respectful with representatives of other cultures [35]. And our hypothesis is that CCTS will increase if the team members will possess high level of 3C. There is a versatile literature on 3C measurement instruments, but cultural intelligence (CQ), Intercultural Adjustment Potential Scale (ICAPS), and Multicultural Personality Inventory (MPQ) are the most extensive for assessing 3C [36]. Ang et al. [37] defined CQ as a special kind of individual intelligence, enabling effective dealing within culturally diverse environment. It is measured on four levels: metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral CQ. ICAPS assesses personal physiological skills of openness, critical thinking, emotion regulation, empathy, flexibility, interpersonal security, traditionality of thinking and tolerance for ambiguity [38]. MPQ was designed by van der Zee and van Oudenhoven [39] to measure multicultural effectiveness. It includes open-mindedness, adventurousness/curiosity, cultural empathy and emotional stability, orientation to action, flexibility and extraversion. Summarizing the main ingredients of the 3C as they have visible correspondences in comparison of all the measurement instruments: open-mindedness, social initiative, flexibility, cultural empathy, critical thinking and emotional stability are the main personal qualities, reinforcing 3C [40]. When HR management of a company recruits congruous personnel, while creating a cross-cultural team (CCT), sustainability of a multicultural team will increase, as discouraging confictions will be eliminated or decreased to minimum and the collaboration within the team will be synergetic.

TEAM PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

The main objective of a team is to produce results. It is involved in a number of intra and inter team connections to increase effectiveness. Team processes include four main perspectives: normative, cognitive, psychological perspectives and problem-solving [41]. Diversity of tasks and speed of change is increasingly pressurizing environment involves decision making into every stage of team processes. The two main stages of decision making are generating ideas/possible solutions and choosing the most relevant one after evaluation of options [42]. In cross-cultural environment they are encumbered by cultural differences, perceptions and logics. Therefore decision making instruments should be different. We propose to aggregate a new mind

sourcing technique “international mind grouping” especially pertinent for cross-cultural teams, a feature-rich generic method, combining synergetic capacities of cross-cultural cooperation and ruling out its inhibiting factors. This method would be based on research of the available mind sourcing techniques, the analysis of their inducing and counterproductive elements and would embody the most relevant findings of the main theories, dealing with cross-cultural differences, like institutional logic, cultural intelligence and cross-cultural competence.

TEAMWORK DESIGN

Efficient teams comprise individuals, who realize what is best for the team and behave in the same manner willingly to supports the team [43]. According to Shaffer and Anundsen [44], team design is productive when the members experience a sense of community, which grows over time. It starts from common practice, dependency on each other, making common decisions, identifying their group as a part of something bigger and commitment to the group well-being in a long run. For the best team functioning in cross-cultural settings they should follow the universal communication guidelines and life skills, which are consistent in all communities and cultures, being core human values. Trust, truth, integrity, responsibility, common sense, active listening with eyes, ears, heart and undivided attention, perseverance, patience, flexibility, resourcefulness, effort to solve problems, with the attitude to each other and the world on principles of impartiality, no judgments, belief in yourself and capabilities of others, and goal orientation [45]. Such teams will incorporate sustainability automatically as based on same values. Contradictions evolve because of our mind limitations, as in the nature nothing is contradictory; everything integrally coexists and complements each other. In quality team design all members should strive for such pattern, putting firstly a sublime goal to form a common field of love, participation, care, warmth, priority to achieve association in-between, and then the best specific results/decisions will come [46].

Another aspect of sustainability oriented team design is substantial early planning for sustainability and support [47]. For successful sustainability of a team needs to plan and develop shared vision and communication patterns, common objectives, improvement orientation of the collaboration, systematic self-governance and self-management, proactive problem solving [48], approaches to integration and full engagement of the team [49]. In strive to achieve wisdom and sustainability teams should also be focused on constant development, which is implemented through facilitation techniques, training, coaching and exposure to new experiences [50].

INTEGRAL GOALS

Important role for any team activity plays a goal. Numerous cognitive, social and behavioral theories highlight goal setting as an effective method to increase performance [51]. Goal level [52] and goal specificity [53] affect performance. High specific goals endeavor increased performance [54]. If the desired outcome is sustainability of a team, we suppose, that high specific integral goals will be the prime stimuli. The goal must be higher than of each team member, but at the same time non contradictory to their personal goals, comprising them.

CCTS MODEL AND CONCLUSION

In condition of globalized business accordingly the cross-cultural team sustainability gains prevalent scientific interest and is the center of corporate sustainability success. Literature review shows that many different cross-cultural backgrounds are connected with sustainability as a global social thrive. We have observed the components of CCTS from the dimensions of team composition, team environment, the generic effect of the integral goal, effective team processes acceleration and its cross-cultural technique requirement. The combination of all these interconnected elements constitutes the model of CCTS achievement as a way to reach cross-cultural company or project sustainability, proposed in our research (Figure 1).

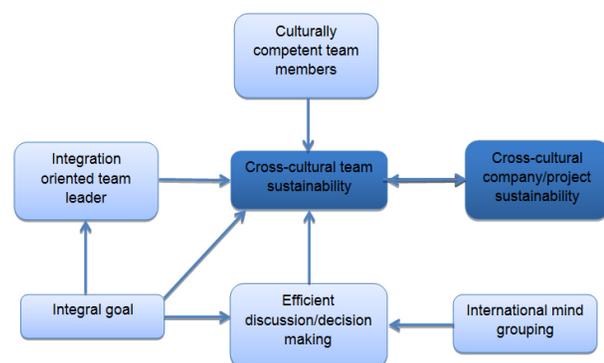


Figure 1. Cross-cultural team sustainability

The research outcomes suggest that CCTS is achievable with the combination of specific factors, influencing its facets. CCTS is firstly affected by the composition of a team, therefore cultural competence of the team members plays important role for the team integration and effectiveness. Company sustainability vision and integration oriented leadership is supposed to integrate, teach and lead the team to a high specific integral goal pertinent to sustainability. The integral goal affects and includes the goal of the leader himself, motivates the team, improves the team processes of efficient discussion and decision making thus productivity of the team.

At the same time cross-cultural setting implicates specific efficient decision making instruments and we suppose that such instrument “international mind grouping” can be created on the next stage of the research. Cross-cultural company/project from one side is an environment in which a team operates and influences its culture and focus, from the other side teams are composite elements of companies and thus condition and determine company sustainability.

The main limitation of the research is its being entirely speculative until verified, or not, by empirical

studies. We invite cross cultural-management researchers to move from whether companies need to integrate or not sustainability but how to achieve it in practice, especially on the level of teams. This paper can help identifying the key arguments to drive the integration of sustainability practices within the organization, outlining the tools and processes involved.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Authors declare no conflict of interest.

REFERENCES

1. Stevens R, Galloway T, Lamb J, Steed R, Lamb C. Team resilience: a neurodynamic perspective. In *Foundations of Augmented Cognition*. Ed. Schmorow D.D., Fidopiastis C.M. NY: Springer International Publishing; 2015. P.336-47.
2. Rodriguez-Sanchez MA, Perea MV. The secret of organization success: a revision on organizational and team resilience. *Int. J. Emerg. Serv.* 2015;4:27-36.
3. Amaral A, Fernandes G, Varaja o J. Identifying useful actions to improve team resilience in information systems projects. *Procedia Computer Science.* 2015;64:1182-9.
4. Brodsky AE, Welsh E, Carrillo A, Talwar G, Scheibler J, Butler T. Between synergy and conflict: balancing the processes of organizational and individual resilience in an Afghan women’s community. *American Journal of Community Psychology.* 2011;47:217-35.
5. Gordon J. Work teams: how far have they come? *Training.* 2002;29:59-65.
6. Salas E, Diazgranados D, Klein C, Burke CS, Stagl KC, Goodwin GF, Halpin SM. Does Team Training Improve Team Performance? A Meta-Analysis. *Human Factors.* 2008;50(6):903-33.
7. Stagl KC, Burke CS, Salas, E, Pierce L. Team Adaptation: Realizing Team Synergy in Understanding Adaptability: A Prerequisite for Effective Performance within Complex Environments; 2015:117-41.
8. Bruntland Commission Report World Commission on Environment and Development, *Our Common Future*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press; 1987.
9. Singh TP, Bisht NS, Rastogi M. Towards the integration of sustainability in the business curriculum. *Journal of Global Responsibility.* 2011;2(2):239-52.
10. Benedict XV1. *Deus Caritas Est (God is Love)*, Encyclical Letter of the Supreme Pontiff Benedict XVI., San Francisco: Ignatius Press; 2006.
11. United Nations Global Compact. 1999. Available at <<http://www.unglobalcompact.org/>>, (February 24, 2019).
12. Farooq Q, Hao Y, Liu X. Understanding corporate social responsibility with cross-cultural differences: A deeper look at religiosity. *Corp Soc Resp Env Ma.* 2019;1(7). <https://doi.org/10.1002/csr.1736>
13. Sweeney E. Towards the sustainable supply chain of the future. *Injury Prevention.* 2009;18(Supplement 1), 99-99.
14. Baumgartner RJ. Managing corporate sustainability and CSR: a conceptual framework combining values, strategies and instruments contributing to sustainable development. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management.* 2014;21(5):258-71.
15. Baumgartner RJ. Managing corporate sustainability and CSR: a conceptual framework combining values, strategies and instruments contributing to sustainable development. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management.* 2014;21(5):258-71.
16. Borland H. Conceptualising global strategic sustainability and corporate transformational change. *International Marketing Review.* 2009;26(4/5):554-72.
17. Barney JB. Firm resources and sustained competitive advantage. *Journal of Management.* 1991;17(1):99-120.
18. Park H, Russell C, Lee J. National culture and environmental sustainability: a cross-national analysis. *Journal of Economics & Finance.* 2007;31(1):104-21.

19. Paunković J. Chapter 16 – educational programs for sustainable societies using cross-cultural management method : a case study from Serbia. in *Global Sustainable Communities Handbook*. Green Design Technologies and Economics. New York: Springer-Verlag; 2014. p.387-404.
20. Renn O. Sustainable Development: Exploring the Cross-Cultural Dimension. *Global Sustainability: The Impact of Local Cultures*. in Wilderer PA, Schroeder ED, Kopp H. *Global Sustainability: The Impact of Local Cultures*. London: Wiley; 2005. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1002/3527604251.ch2>
21. Newenham-Kahindi A. Managing Sustainable Development through Cross-Cultural Management: Implications for Multinational Enterprises in Developing Countries. In: Newenham-Kahindi A, Kamoche KN, Chizema A, Mellahi K. (eds) *Effective People Management in Africa*. London: Palgrave Macmillan; 2013.
22. Farooq Q, Fu P, Hao Y, Jonathan T, Zhang Y. A Review of Management and Importance of E-Commerce Implementation in Service Delivery of Private Express Enterprises of China. *SAGE Open*; 2019. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244018824194>
23. Prentovic S, Batat W. Towards viral systems thinking: a cross-cultural study of sustainable tourism ads. *Kybernetes*. 2014;43(3/4):529-546.
24. Cohen SG, Bailey DE. What makes teams work: group effectiveness research from the shop floor to the executive suite. *Journal of Management*. 1997;23(3):239-90.
25. Cohen SG, Bailey DE. What makes teams work: group effectiveness research from the shop floor to the executive suite. *Journal of Management*. 1997;23(3):239-90.
26. Salzmann O, Ionescu-Somers A, Steger U. The business case for corporate sustainability: literature review and research options. *Eur. Manag. J.* 2005;23(1):27-36.
27. Hao, Y., Farooq, Q., & Zhang, Y. (2018). Unattended social wants and corporate social responsibility of leading firms: Relationship of intrinsic motivation of volunteering in proposed welfare programs and employee attributes. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, 25(6), 1029-1038. <https://doi.org/10.1002/csr.1681>
28. Brown AD. *Organisational Culture*. Harlow: Pitman Publishing; 1998.
29. Maon F, Lindgreen A, Swaen V. Thinking of the organization as a system: the role of managerial perceptions in developing a corporate social responsibility strategic agenda. *Systems Research and Behavioral Science*. 2008;25(3):413-26.
30. Goerner SJ. Integral science: rethinking civilization using the learning universe lens. *Systems Research and Behavioral Science*. 2003;20:339-58
31. Olsen KD. How education can lead the way to an integral society: a proven model for doing so already exists. *World Futures*. 2004;60:287–93.
32. Phiri A, Bano N, Raouf A. Interpersonal skills and emotional management: Impact of leadership on job satisfaction of workers. *Adv Dev Educ Psychol*. 2019;1(1):1-6. DOI: 10.25082/ADEP.2019.01.001
33. Florin P, Mitchell R, Stevenson J, Klein I. Predicting intermediate outcomes for prevention coalitions: A development perspective. *Evaluation and Program Planning*. 2000;23:341–46.
34. Matsumoto D, Hwang HC. Assessing cross-cultural competence: a review of available tests. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*. 2013;44(6):849-73.
35. Brislin RW. *Understanding culture's influence on behavior*. Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich; 1993.
36. Matsumoto D, Hwang HC. Assessing cross-cultural competence: a review of available tests. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*. 2013;44(6):849-73.
37. Ang S, Van Dyne L, Koh C. Personality correlates of the four-factor model of cultural intelligence. *Group & Organization Management*. 2006;31:100-23.
38. Matsumoto D, LeRoux JA, Ratzlaff C, Tatani H, Uchida H, Kim C, Araki S. Development and validation of a measure of intercultural adjustment potential in Japanese sojourners: The Intercultural Adjustment Potential Scale (ICAPS). *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 2001;25:483-510.
39. van der Zee KI, van Oudenhoven JP. The Multicultural Personality Questionnaire: A multidimensional instrument of multicultural effectiveness. *European Journal of Personality*. 2000;14:291-309.
40. Matsumoto D, Hwang HC. Assessing cross-cultural competence: a review of available tests. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*.

- 2013;44(6):849-73.
41. Kerzner H. *Problem Solving and Decision Making. Project Management 2.0*. NY: John Wiley & Sons, Inc;2015.
 42. Putman VL, Paulus PB. Brainstorming, Brainstorming Rules and Decision Making. *Journal of Creative Behavior*. 2011;43(1):29-40.
 43. Hackman JR. The design of work teams. In J. Lorsch (Ed.), *Handbook of organizational behavior* New York: Prentice-Hall; 1987. p. 315-42.
 44. Shaffer CR, Anundsen K. *Creating Community Anywhere*. New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Perigee Books (The Putnam Publishing Group);1993.
 45. Goerner SJ. Integral science: rethinking civilization using the learning universe lens[J]. *Systems Research and Behavioral Science*. 2002;20(4):339-58.
 46. Chemerinskaya Y. *Kruglaya metodika [Round method]*. Moscow (Russia): Mann, Ivanov & Ferber; 2014.
 47. Berry WL, Senter S, Cheadle A, Greewald HP, Peason D. Evaluating the legacy of community health initiatives. *American Journal of Evaluation*. 2005;26:150–65.
 48. Foster-Fishman PG, Berkowitz SL, Lounsbury DW, Jacobson S, Allen NA. Building collaborative capacity in community coalitions: A review and integrative framework. *American Journal of Community Psychology*. 2001;29:293–99.
 49. Darlington Y, Feeney JA. Collaboration between mental health and child protection services: Professionals perceptions of best practice. *Children and Youth Services Review*. 2008;30:187–98.
 50. Nielsen TM, Halfhill T. A strategic contingency model of team leadership. In R. Burke & C. Cooper (Eds.), *Inspiring Leaders*. London: Taylor and Francis; 2006.
 51. Latham GP. Goal setting: A five-step approach to behavior change. *Organizational Dynamics*. 2003;32(3):309-18.
 52. Locke EA, Latham GP. Building a practical useful theory of goal setting and task motivation. *American Psychologist*. 2002; 57:705-17.
 53. Latham GP. Goal setting: A five-step approach to behavior change. *Organizational Dynamics*. 2003;32(3):309-18.
 54. Locke EA, Latham GP. Building a practical useful theory of goal setting and task motivation. *American Psychologist*. 2002; 57:705-17.