

## Effects of Moral Value Diversity on Team Composition and Team Cohesiveness

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### Abstract

*In the 1980s, work teams became the hot topic in the business and academic worlds. Organizations are enthusiastically using teams and team-based structures. This team oriented structures are intended to improve organizations' productivity, quality, and customer service. Thus, more research is suggested on issues such as the effectiveness work teams. Researchers have cited the importance of cohesion of teams and team effectiveness. Moreover, they viewed cohesion as "a general indicator of synergistic group interaction—or process". In addition, in literature variety of work group compositions are mentioned widely. The most popular composition variables include demographic characteristics and moral value diversity. It is stated that, diversity in composition of a work team had effects on social team processes such as team cohesiveness and team performance. Due to the rapid changes in perceptions of society and wide variety of moral values, people are forced to choose their team members among highly diverse population. With regarding to the suggestions in the literature, in this paper we will be examining composition of a work team in manner of moral values and its effect on team cohesiveness which is an antecedent of team performance. Twelve study groups, each composed of five students, are used as research sample. A questionnaire including team cohesiveness and moral values items will be distributed to students and in the end, their performance will be evaluated by the lecturer of the work teams.*

### 1. Introduction

In the 1980s, work teams became the hot topic both in the business and academic worlds. Since then, organizations have been enthusiastically using teams and team-based structures (Mueller, Procter and Buchanan 2000; Van Hoote gem, Bender, Delarue and Procter 2005). In fact, some researchers have estimated that in the future, as much as 40% to 50% of workforce will be working in some form of self-managed or empowered teams (Stewart, Manz, & Sims, 1999). The reason for the increase in the use of teams could be attributed to their positive outcomes such as improving organizations' productivity, quality, and customer service (Guzzo & Salas, 1995). In addition, it is observed that growth rate of team-based organizations has demonstrated an increasing trend (Guzzo & Salas, 1995).

Moreover, variety of work group compositions is mentioned widely throughout the literature. The most popular composition variables include demographic characteristics and moral value diversity (Williams & O'Reilly, 1998). It is stated that, diversity in composition of a work team has effects on social team processes such as team cohesiveness and team performance. For instance, due to the rapid changes in perceptions of society and wide variety of moral values, people are forced to choose their team members among highly diverse population.

Regarding to the suggestions coming from the literature and the increased demand for team-oriented structures, this paper aims to examine team composition and its relationship between moral values of the group.

### 2. Diversity in the Team (Composition of the Group)

Recent research on work group composition has explored a wide variety of variables and group outcomes. Task performance, social processes, and satisfaction of group member needs are considered as the most popular outcomes whereas; the most popular composition variables include demographic characteristics such as race, age, gender,

functional background and tenure and, morality of team members (Williams & O'Reilly, 1998). Researches about diversity and team performance are focused on two main diversity styles: (1) Demographic and (2) Moral Diversity.

### 2.1 Demographic Diversity:

Demographic diversity can be defined as the state of a group when a substantial percentage of its members fall into categories based on the principal demographic features. Demographic features are socially marked aspects of identity that one did not choose and that cannot be changed easily. Race, gender, and ethnic or national origin are the three common demographic features.

Race and age are important variables in team research because they are visible characteristics that may be used for social categorization (Tajfel, 1981; Turner, 1987). The natural tendency for people to categorize and compare themselves with others can lead to the stereotyping and it could lead to polarization of distinct social groups. Social categorization theory would, therefore, predict that groups of people with dissimilar characteristics would be less productive because of the conflict and lack of cooperation produced by the stereotyping. All else being equal, groups of similar people should display less internal conflict and greater task performance (Hewstone and Greenland, 2000).

Another possibility, however, is that diversity may be positively related to group performance. If different people possess different skills, information, and views of the world, it is possible that diversity may contribute to the quality of performance where such diversity is needed, recognized, and valued. Pelled and her colleagues (Pelled, 1996; Pelled, Eisenhardt, and Xin, 1999) proposed that emotional and substantive conflicts are caused by different types of diversity. Emotional conflict, however, did not significantly predict group performance. For instance, Pelled et al. (1999) suggest that age is used for comparison purposes to judge one's accomplishments and career progression. Therefore, people of similar ages are more likely to be competing for recognition or promotions. On the other hand, Jehn, Northcraft, and Neale (1999), however, found that diversity in terms of sex and age was positively related to relationship conflict.

### 2.2 Moral Diversity

Several organizational behavior researchers have suggested that different kinds of diversity may create diverse effects. Jackson, Stone, and Alvarez (1992) distinguish demographic characteristics from personal attributes. Personal attributes are subjectively constructed, psychological and interpersonal characteristics such as status, knowledge, behavioral style, which can change through socialization processes. Values are also mentioned, however, they had been not discussed thoroughly. Williams and O'Reilly (1998) and Milliken and Martins (1996) suggest that researchers should examine value diversity along with demographic diversity and other kinds. One study that addresses value diversity directly (Meglino, Ravlin, & Adkins, 1989) claim that value similarity between workers and their supervisors was positively correlated with job satisfaction and commitment. Another study (Jehn, Northcraft, & Neale 1999) state that high value diversity predicts lower team effectiveness, efficiency, and morale, while high informational diversity (i.e., "differences in knowledge bases and perspectives") is correlated with higher team effectiveness.

In this study, we suggest that the concept of diversity is valuable, however, this concept majorly referred to moral values such as what the team members believe socially acceptable or not acceptable. Thus, we are focusing on effect of moral value diversity to highlight important values which people's worldviews are based on.

Moral diversity can be defined as the state of a group when a member does not value the most valued moral goods of a community. Moral values are social, personal, or spiritual beliefs such as justice, social harmony, self-actualization, faithfulness which are needed to evaluate and justify the behaviors of others (Shweder & Haidt, 1993; Shweder, Much, Mahapatra, & Park, 1997). Moral goods are experienced as affectively loaded self-truths or perceptions. People care strongly about them and find it difficult to explain their values to someone who does not share their intuition (Haidt, 2001).

Another well known study in the subject is "Constructing Values in Western Europe: Unity, Diversity and Change" by Hardling and Phillips (1986). In their research, the researchers developed a valuable scale called as "Morally Debatable behaviors Scale (MDBS)" which measures the acceptability of various moral issues. Later, Katz et al. (1994) reconstruct this scale and examine morality in three aspects. The first aspect is "Personal-sexual Morality" focusing on life, death and sexual morality. This aspect is composed of subjects that are related with people's point of view about sexual subjects such as abortion, homosexuality, divorce, etc. The second aspect is "Self-Interest Morality" emphasizing personal integrity and honesty. The issues like cheating on tax, bribe or unethical behaviors are grouped under this aspect. And the final aspect is "Legal-illegal Morality" that examines the behaviors which are formally restricted by the law. MDBS is considered as a powerful scale which is still able to provide practical means of assessing what people believe, the strength of their conditions as well as individual differences in moral tolerance.

According to the literature discussed above, it is possible to state that moral diversity is experienced by a group in which there are many different ideas of right and wrong, and there is no consensus about which moral value should be followed as a shared value. Moreover, it is expected that individuals tend to form groups with people who share similar moral values. Thus, our study tries to find out whether individuals are composing groups with people sharing similar moral values while they are free to choose their teammates. According to this objective, our hypotheses are as follows:

- H<sub>1</sub>: Morality demonstrates difference among males and females.
- H<sub>1a</sub>: Self-Interest morality demonstrates difference among males and females.
- H<sub>1b</sub>: Legal-Illegal morality demonstrates difference among males and females.
- H<sub>1c</sub>: Personal-Sexual morality demonstrates difference among males and females.
- H<sub>2</sub>: Morality demonstrates difference among work groups.
- H<sub>2a</sub>: Self-Interest morality demonstrates difference among work groups.
- H<sub>2b</sub>: Legal-Illegal morality demonstrates difference among work groups.
- H<sub>2c</sub>: Personal-Sexual morality demonstrates difference among work groups.

### 3. Methodology

This study is based on a questionnaire survey asking participants the justifiability of behaviors demonstrating moral issues which they face in their lives or have an opinion about. An information paragraph was written on the questionnaire sheet in order to both clarify the objective of the study and ensure the confidentiality.

In the questionnaire, the morally debatable behaviors scale developed by Harding et al (1986) is used. Scale is composed of three different groups of moral behaviors: (1) Personal-sexual Morality, (2) Self-interest Morality and (3) Legal-illegal Morality. In addition, in order to understand whether the group members in our sample demonstrate a cognitive similarity, we include two more questions about the similarity of their idea of life and ethical views; these questions are:

- The group members share similar life philosophies.
- The group members agree on moral issues and ethical standards.

These three aspects measured with total 22 items, each is represented by 8 items. Some items are common to self-interest and legal-illegal morality. Items were measured through using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 which is "Strongly inappropriate" to 5 "Strongly appropriate".

Since the scale is in English, they are translated in Turkish in order to create convenience for the participants of the study. After the translation of the questions, opinions of experts (i.e.: lecturers and professors) have been taken. Furthermore, a pilot study is done to ensure the questions are understandable.

The sample population was the business administration students of a Private University in Turkey who were assigned to compose a group (form with three people at least) and construct an imaginary business, as their term projects. There are fifteen project groups which are formed by 68 students (N). Distribution of the sample can be seen below:

**Table 1.** Distribution of the sample

Group distribution	Gender	
	N	N
Three peered groups	2	
Four peered groups	3	Female 37
Five peer groups	10	Male 31
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>68</b>

68 questionnaires have been distributed to sample after their final presentation of their business project. All questionnaires have returned and all of them are valid to use for this research.

#### 3.1 Data analysis

In order to gain insight into the effect of moral values in group composing, different types of questions and statements are asked in the questionnaire, and then these were analyzed by diverse statistical techniques and procedures.

The accumulated data were processed by SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) program. In order to test internal consistency, reliability analysis is used. In general, the number that is acquired from reliability analysis demonstrates the strength of diverse items complementing each other in the measurement of diverse features of the scale. The results of our reliability analysis of Morally Debatable Behaviors questionnaire proved that all items are reliable to use in this research.

**Table 2.** Result of Reliability tests of Questionnaire.

<i>Case Processing Summary</i>			<i>Reliability Statistics</i>	
	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>	<b>N of Items</b>
Cases	Valid	67	98,5	,843
	Excluded <sup>a</sup>	1	1,5	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>100,0</b>	

Likert-scale questions were comparatively analyzed for the groups and gender through usage of t-tests and Anova (Analysis of Variance).

#### 4. Findings and Discussion

In order to test the first group of hypotheses (H<sub>1</sub>; H<sub>1a</sub>; H<sub>1b</sub>; H<sub>1c</sub>) mentioned above, independent t-test is used. Result of the independent t-test could be seen in Table 3.

Table 3. Result of Independent T-test (Gender)

<b>Independent Samples Test according to Gender</b>					
t-test for Equality of Means					
	<b>t</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Sig.(2-tailed)</b>	<b>Mean Difference</b>	<b>Std. Error Difference</b>
<b>General Morality</b>	2,671	66	,010	,32354	,12115
<b>Self interest Morality</b>	3,003	66	,004	,36368	,12112
<b>Legal-illegal Morality</b>	3,363	66	,001	,47199	,14037
<b>Personal-sexual Morality</b>	1,324	66	,190	,22308	,16847

According to the result of the independent t-test, H<sub>1</sub>, H<sub>1a</sub>, H<sub>1b</sub> are approved. However, H<sub>1c</sub> is rejected. These results demonstrate that there is a significant difference between genders in the matter of morality which is also supported by the literature (i.e.: Franke et al 1997; Ambroso and Schminke 1999). However, our findings demonstrate differences especially in self-interest morality, legal and illegal morality whereas; females and males show similarities in personal-sexual aspect. As the means within genders are compared (See Table 4), it is found that females are more tend to act morally when moral ambiguity is present. Especially, regarding the issues which includes self-interest (i.e.: keeping the money that had been found, lying in their own interest, etc.) and legal prohibited actions (i.e.: cheating on tax and buying something stolen, using drugs, etc.). However, the findings do not demonstrate a significant difference in terms of personal-sexual morality. This means females and males have similar point of views regarding the issues such as homosexuality and abortion.

**Table 4.** Mean Values of Females and Males

Gender		<b>Mean Values</b>			
		<b>General Morality</b>	<b>Self interest Morality</b>	<b>Legal-illegal Morality</b>	<b>Personal-sexual Morality</b>
<b>Male</b>	Mean	2,1496	1,8618	2,1815	2,3548
	Std. Deviation	,56030	,62104	,70846	,75215
<b>Female</b>	Mean	1,8260	1,4981	1,7095	2,1318
	Std. Deviation	,43844	,36363	,43706	,63734
<b>Total</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>1,9735</b>	<b>1,6639</b>	<b>1,9246</b>	<b>2,2335</b>

As the second set of hypotheses ( $H_2$ ,  $H_{2a}$ ,  $H_{2b}$ ,  $H_{2c}$ ) measures whether there is a significant difference among, in total, 15 work groups, one way ANOVA test used and the means of these groups are compared. The results of the ANOVA test are presented as follows:

**Table 5.** Result of ANOVA test

ANOVA					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
<b>General Morality</b>	6,580	14	,470	2,161	,022
<b>Self interest Morality</b>	4,487	14	,320	1,207	,298
<b>Legal-illegal Morality</b>	9,149	14	,653	2,094	,027
<b>Personal-sexual Morality</b>	11,744	14	,839	2,149	,023

Findings of the ANOVA test supported  $H_2$ ,  $H_{2b}$ ,  $H_{2c}$  while; hypothesis  $H_{2a}$  is rejected. Results demonstrate that there is a significant difference between groups in terms of morality, especially; in the manner of legal-illegal and personal-sexual issues. This means that 15 work groups demonstrate significant differences regarding their views on legal issues such as fighting with the police and political assassination. Similarly, these work groups do not share the same views regarding suicide, prostitution or divorce. On the other hand, the findings state that the views of groups are similar when the issue is related to self-interest such as taking marijuana/hashish and buying something which they knew it is stolen. As a result, when students are allowed to form their own work groups, they tend to demonstrate differences in terms of moral behavior between these groups.

Moreover, literature examines work-team groups on a scale which has “action-oriented teams” (Burke et al., 2005) on one side and “decision-oriented knowledge-based teams” on the other. In our case, these work groups are seen closer to the latter side. Several researchers (Ensley & Pearce, 2001; Faraj & Sproull, 2000) cited that these groups mostly rely on their cognitive similarity in order to develop and share information more effectively. In addition to the literature, we notice that the means of answers given to the questions about similarity of group members’ idea of life and ethical views are, in general, bigger than 3.00. Thus, it is possible to say that students are more tend to form groups with individuals sharing similar moral values and philosophy of life.

As a conclusion, since cognitive similarity is identified as a vital foundational element for achieving success (Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2007) and students are success-oriented, they unconsciously form groups with similar moral values in order to get better results. Thus, if the situation requires formally generated teams, the authority should consider the similarities of members in terms of morality to create more effective outcomes. Besides, they should expect to have moral variety among the groups which help the development of diversity in an organization.

Furthermore, it is also important to consider the gender homogeneity of the group members. Particularly, the importance of this issue arises when a moral dilemma appears. In such a case, having more male members in group may create a problem as they are less prone to behave morally especially in legal and self-interest issues. Therefore, in order to have a balance within the group members, the gender homogeneity should also be taken into consideration by the authorities who are responsible to form work-groups.

## 5. Limitations and Future Research

Main limitation of this research can be considered as its small sample size. Number of 68 students might not be enough to represent the whole population of the university in which the study takes place, thus repeating this study with a larger sample could be beneficial in order to generalize the results. Therefore, a further research can be conducted with different departments, different universities and even in different cities. In addition a multi-cultural approach can enrich and fortify the general acceptability of the results. Such an approach may create more demographic differences and this may help us to shed further light in the concept of moral diversity. Another further study may look into the relationship between the moral values and other group variables such as cohesiveness and team performance.

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