Personality-Team Composition in Multiple Team Membership

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Purpose/Motivation:

Recently, researchers have been discussing the ideal team composition for traditional teams in terms of personality depending on the team structure (Hollenbeck, 2000, p. 543) and have empirically examined how different levels of personality within traditional teams influence team performance, team cohesion and other team level phenomena (Barrick, Stewart, Neubert, & Mount, 1998, p. 378; Mohammed, Mathieu, & Bartlett, 2002, p. 798; Peeters, Van Tuijl, & Rutte, 2006, p. 379). However, the ecology of teams is changing: "65 to 95 percent of knowledge workers across a wide range of industries and occupations in the United States and Europe are members of more than one project team at a time" (O'Leary, Mortensen, & Woolley, 2011, p. 461). This provided the occasion to apply Hollenbeck's framework of the critical individual difference variables in terms of personality with various structures for traditional teams (Hollenbeck, 2000, p. 543) to the Multiple Team Membership (MTM) setting.

Theories: *MTM* is defined "as a situation in which individuals are concurrently members of two or more teams within a given period of time" (O'Leary et al., 2012, p. 146). In contrast to MTM, members of traditional teams only engage in one team. The term *team composition* refers to a configuration of characteristics that are present within a small group (Levine & Moreland, 1990, p. 593) and differences in it influence team outcomes such as team effectiveness (Barrick et al., 1998, p. 378; Mohammed et al., 2002, p. 798; Peeters et al., 2006, p. 379). Lastly, Hollenbeck's structure-person-fit theory highlights that depending on the team structure specific role characteristics need to be present within a traditional team that provide insights into what type of members (in terms of personality) are best suited for various team structures.

Approach/Methodology: In my thesis I propose the ideal team composition in terms of personality for teams whose members are engaged in MTM to enhance team performance. To do this, I describe two distinguishing features (time-pressure and context-switching) between the two types of teams. Then, based on Hollenbeck's structure-person-fit theory, I explain for traditional teams which levels of the personality traits within the five-factor model are favorable for team performance. To propose the ideal team composition for MTM-teams, I discuss the ideal measurement strategy for two traits within the five-factor model which build the

foundation of team performance. Moreover, I formulate relationships of the other personality traits with team cohesion and team learning and include the personality trait self-monitoring since it complements the other personality traits.

Findings: My work demonstrates that the ideal team composition in terms of personality for MTM-teams differs from the ideal team composition for traditional teams, see figure below.

Table 4: Ideal Team Composition for Teams whose Members Engage in MTM

Key Trait	Best Measurement-Strategy		Output
	MTM	Traditional Teams	
Emotional stability	Minimum	Mean	OAP
Openness to experience	Minimum	Mean	OAP, TL
Agreeableness	Mean	Minimum	TC, TL
Extraversion	Mean	Variance	TC, TL
Conscientiousness	Variance	Minimum	TC, TL
Self-monitoring	Mean	X	OAP

Note: X = not part of the framework; OAP = Overall Ability to Perform in an MTM-setting; TC = Team Cohesion; TL = Team Learning.

The best measurement strategy for the 'big five' personality traits and self-monitoring to maximize team performance was identified for MTM-teams.

Research Limitations: While this thesis proposes an ideal team composition in terms of personality traits of the FFM, it is based on only a subset of all pallets of personality characteristics which presents a limitation.

Research Implications: The conceptual work uncovered that working in multiple teams differs significantly from working in only one team which suggests that theories on traditional teams should be re-examined in the light of MTM.

Practical Implications: To enhance team cohesion and improve team learning and ultimately team performance it might be fruitful for managers to consider the team composition in terms of personality when forming teams or when assigning new team members to a team.

Contribution: My paper contributes to the performance management literature in general and identifies a number of meaningful research questions that are fruitful to pursue.

Paper type: Conceptual

Further readings:

For relationship between personality and team performance:

Barrick, M. R., Mount, M. K., & Judge, T. A. (2001). Personality and performance at the beginning of the new millennium: What do we know and where do we go next? *International Journal of Selection and Assessment, 9*(1-2), 9-30.

Barrick, M. R., Stewart, G. L., Neubert, M. J., & Mount, M. K. (1998). Relating member ability and personality to work-team processes and team effectiveness. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 83*(3), 377-391. doi:10.1037/0021-9010.83.3.377

Barry, B., & Stewart, G. L. (1997). Composition, process, and performance in self-managed groups: The role of personality. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 82*, 62-78. doi:10.1037/0021-9010.82.1.62

Mohammed, S., & Angell, L. C. (2003). Personality heterogeneity in teams: Which differences make a difference for team performance? *Small Group Research, 34*(6), 651-677. doi:10.1177/1046496403257228

Mohammed, S., Mathieu, J. E., & Bartlett, A. L. (2002). Technical-administrative task performance, leadership task performance, and contextual performance: Considering the influence of team- and task-related composition variables. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 23*, 795-814.

Peeters, M. A. G., Van Tuijl, H. F. J. M., & Rutte, C. G. (2006). Personality and team performance: A meta-analysis. *European Journal of Personality, 20*, 377–396. doi:10.1002/per.588

For MTM-teams:

Cummings, J. N., & Haas, M. R. (2012). So many teams, so little time: Time allocation matters in geographically dispersed teams. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 33*(3), 316-341. doi:10.1002/job.777

Mortensen, M., & Haas, M. R. (2018). Perspective—Rethinking teams: From bounded membership to dynamic participation. *Organization Science, 29*(2), 341-355. doi:doi.org/10.1287/orsc.2017.1198

O'Leary, M. B., Mortensen, M., & Woolley, A. W. (2011). Multiple team membership: A theoretical model of its effects on productivity and learning for individuals and teams *Academy of management Review, 36*(3), 461–478.

O'Leary, M. B., Woolley, A. W., & Mortensen, M. (2012). Multiteam membership in relation to multiteam systems. In *S. J. Zaccaro, M. A. Marks, & L. A. DeChurch (Eds.), Organization and management series. Multiteam systems: An organization form for dynamic and complex environments* (pp. 141–172). New York: Routledge.

For Structure-Person-Fit Theory and Team Composition:

Hollenbeck, J. (2000). A structural approach to external and internal person-team fit. *Applied Psychology, 49*(3), 534-549. doi:10.1111/1464-0597.00030

LePine, J. A. (2003). Team adaptation and postchange performance: Effects of team composition in terms of members' cognitive ability and personality. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 88*(1), 27-39. doi:10.1037/0021-9010.88.1.27