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Quantitative Analysis: Team management for Better Employee Performance in the US Retail Supply Chain

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Abstract

Purpose: Former research has argued that organizations in distribution channels face several issues to make a better team-based system. The purpose of the present research is to measure between employee's job performance and three major issues which disturb a solid team system. **Research design, data and methodology:** Scant past studies are available to guide for team practitioners which elements should be eliminated to improve team performance. To achieve this goal, the present authors obtained 267 US workers in distribution channels and conducted ANOVA test to measure the relationship between three team issues (Free-rider, Trust, and Communication) and job performance. **Results:** Our statistical findings clearly suggests that there was a statistically recognizable difference at the significance level of probability between the mean value of employees' job performance and three major issues, showing the high degree of job performance can be occurred by eliminating three major team issues. **Conclusions:** Therefore, the present research concludes that it is necessary that team-based management in the supply chain should focus on removing free-rider issues and also adopt open communication lines to overcome team-building challenges due to communication. Above all else, the ability to increase trust can be enhanced via task delegation and more team members' engagement.

Keywords : Team Performance, Supply Chain Management., Organizational Structure.

JEL Classification Codes : L81, J53, D30

1. Introduction

One of the business sector's vital responsibilities is leading a team to increase performance and achieve an organization's goals (Bang & Midelfart, 2017). A single issue, such as communication breakdown, has the potential to alter workplace productivity and engagement. Great tact is needed to make the team united although it is not possible to conform to all attributes required. Team

management is made better when the members are given ownership in decision making and held accountable for their actions (Fulk, Bell & Bodie, 2011). Given that communication is necessary for a team's success, setting a standard of expectations can increase better management of a team.

It is significant in the distribution channels that as an organized team practitioner, one should have a deep knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of each of the team members (Mach, Dolan & Tzafir, 2010). The best approach in enhancing teamwork in the supply chain channels such as whole sailors, retailers, agents was reinforcing the weakest link and letting each lead in an area where skilled for efficiency and increased performance. The addition of team-building skills and exercises can be a great way of discovering the strengths and weaknesses of each of the individuals (Fulk et al., 2011). The use of technological software tools such as Proof hub can increase

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any business organization's team management abilities (Raes, Heijltjes, Glunk & Roe, 2011).

As such, the team members, projects, and interests get consolidated in a single unit that can take the experience to a new level. Also, the use of a good work environment in terms of furniture and interaction can improve teamwork for almost every organization in society (Raes et al., 2011). The addition of incentives can increase the team management abilities where the best team players get rewarded in cash, vacation, among other things (Lin, Baruch & Shih, 2012). It is the reward that enables employees to be motivated, think outside the box, and devise better team management skills. As such, it is essential to praise jobs done effectively and give constant feedback to each of the participants.

Our previous research (Kang & Hwang, 2017) already suggested based on numerous prior studies that there are several problems that organizations face to make a better team-based system. Those problems were mentioned by conflicts among performers and teams such as 'free-rider' issue, 'trust' issue which is determined by assigning difficult jobs unfairly' and 'communication' issue between high performers and average performers. For the present research,

we conduct empirical analysis to make our previous research more robust using 276 U.S workers in various distribution channels. Finally, we figured out that team practitioners in distribution channels may handle and improve their team against arising team issues, resolving the above three critical issue.

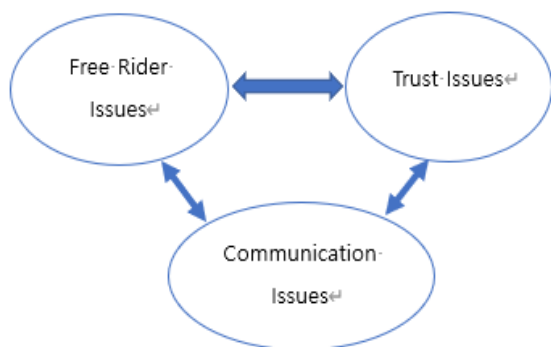


Figure 1: The Structure of Emerging Issues

2. Literature Review

Team management in the distribution sector is important for business, as most levels require teams to enhance performance at different hierarchies (Raes et al., 2011; Sudharshan & Sanchez, 1998). The teams described are essential in making decisions that concern the present and

future directions taken by an organization. It is also the purpose of teams to inform others on different tasks and determine organizations' performance to a large extent. It is argued that team size, tasks, rewards, composition, and purpose influence an organization's performance (Wiersema & Bird, 2017). It is stated that team management in distribution channels for better performance depends to a large extent on four factors. According to Haas (2010), the four factors are input factors, process factors, emergent states, and output factors that shape a team's performance. The input factors are considered to be the relatively constant attributes of an organization. They include the business team's purpose, tasks, size, composition, and various reward systems adopted. The process factors are associated with attributes that describe how an organization works (Seibert, Wang & Courtright, 2011). For example, process factors include communication, behavioral integration, and team leadership.

The emergent factors that affect team management are associated with cognitive and motivational attributes that emerge based on team members' interaction (Kim, 2018; Wheelen, Hunger, Hoffman, & Bamford, 2017). Examples of the emergent states that affect team management are team cohesion, team norms, and the perception of one's psychological safety. On the other hand, output factors entail the different outcomes achieved by a team that determines the performance and management of a team (Wheelen et al., 2017). The examples involve the individual growth and performance of a task allocated. It is argued that teams' better performance is achieved when teams attain effectiveness in tasks, team viability, individual growth, and wellbeing (Kameda et al., 2011). The involved engagement of a team should thus aim at the performance of tasks that add value to an organization. The second attribute involves the growth and wellbeing of each of the individual members of a team. Therefore, as provided by Wheelen et al., (2017) the facilitation of each of the members' training is necessary, and skills development increases an organization's performance. The ability to increase a team's capacity to work independently in the future is critical in enhancing better performance.

Team viability in distribution channels is an important attribute that helps increase performance and triggers the development of a team in diverse ways. Viability develops due to the interaction, context, and input factors in a team (De Jong et al., 2016). Besides simply addition of value to an organization, better team management seeks to attain viability or wellness of each of the involved individuals. It is because viability affects the performance of a team's tasks and individual members' growth. It should be considered appropriate in better managing teams (De Jong, Dirks & Gillespie, 2016). It is established based on

literature and empirical studies that effective team management should promote the element of adaptability to changes in internal and external environments of a business (De Jong et al., 2016). The quality of decisions made has to have the ability to adjust to the ever-changing external demands of an organization. Schaubroeck, Lam and Peng (2011) asserted that the strategic plans are needed to handle teamwork leadership and solve problems with adaptable solutions.

The direction, commitment, and alignment are some of the outcomes that indicate effective management of teams with improved performance (Schaubroeck et al., 2011). The direction is defined as a reasonable level of agreement by the members on the organization's goal, vision, and mission. As such, it promotes unity in engaging a team to perform different assigned tasks (De Jong et al., 2016). Team management that is better sets a direction and ensures that it is widely shared among the involved participants within an organization. The better management of teams in distribution channels often entails the coordination of different activities and strategies to enhance efficiency (De Jong et al., 2016; Na, Park & Kwak, 2018). Effective teams develop a sense of commitment and approve the willingness of each of the members in order to realize the desired outcome. It is made possible by setting target commitment goals and outcomes. Lee and his associates (2010) denoted that if individuals of a team are willing to participate in the team's management, then the outcome is that performance will increase. Therefore, commitment is needed in almost every area for better management of teams (Lee, Gillespie, Mann & Wearing, 2010).

Effective team management in distribution channels should involve the provision of adequate space for learning and sharing new perspectives (Lee et al., 2010). If leaders are to have better teams that lead to an increase in performance, there should be a constant investment in new skills and allowance for expansive knowledge of teamwork performance. Regular and educative team meetings to give constant feedback on performance are ideal for improving performance and coherence needed in effective team management. The setting of meetings energizes and motivates the members of a team in the performance of different duties (Ryu & Lee, 2016). Members become better at the performance of their assigned tasks with team meetings and can serve as a source of emotional support. As such, members can consult with each other and share resources that increase performance.

Effective team management in distribution channels is built on psychological safety, which means no one will get punished for speaking up on an issue of concern. Therefore, the effectively managed team are those that allow members to express their opinions freely and disagree with each

other's point of view. In a study involving 51 teams, it was established effective management of teams had to be based on the enhancement of their psychological safety (Mellizo, 2013). As such, individuals whose teams permitted effective psychological safety enabled members to learn from each other's mistakes. Learning from mistakes is important in promoting improved team performance as better attributes are developed and transmitted among the members.

It is also established that trust is an essential component in team management that makes the difference between better and poor performance in business organizations (Mach et al., 2010). It is argued that teams with a high level of trust in distribution channels are better in differentiating between the relationship conflicts in an organization and tasks that need to be performed. As such, they grow, learn, and contribute so effectively in a rapidly transforming world (Mellizo, 2013). Therefore, when managers of a team build-essential trustworthy patterns in handling team and transparency, teams grow to be strong and better as a result. According to Browne, Dreitlein, Ha., Manzoni and Mere (2016), team cohesion, built by interpersonal attraction, group pride, and commitment to tasks, is an important way to manage better and coordinate teams in business society. It is argued that team output is based on the strong coordination among the three attributes of team cohesion. When ranked in order of importance, it was established that commitment was the main factor that enhanced performance, followed by group pride and interpersonal attraction (Brock, Abu-Rish, Chiu, Hammer, Wilson, Vorvick & Zierler, 2013). Therefore, the effective team in distribution channels has a set of norms that encourage cohesion and lead to increased team performance.

3. Critical Issues from Prior Literature

3.1. Free Rider Issue

The free-rider problem emerges when a member of a team does not take part in weightlifting but still benefits in the rewards and leads to low performance of an organization (Mellizo, 2013). It is common for some people to desire to benefit from the resources without corresponding investment in terms of effort. Therefore, given that the total output in an organization is dependent on individual efforts, it is necessary to overcome the challenge for the effective management of teams.

One of the best ways to overcome the free-rider problem is to make tasks more meaningful for the involved participants. The issue of free-rider often emerges when people do feel that the task to get performed does not add

any value to them and the organization (Dingel, Wei & Huq, 2013). It is essential to constantly motivate each of the employees because they will get motivated to work as they recognize their efforts' significance. Therefore, proper delegation and explanation of the importance of the tasks to be performed are needed for the proper engagement of all the team members (Dingel et al., 2013; Mellizo, 2013).

It is important sometimes to help the free-rider realize how less they are doing by comparing them with their peers (Mellizo, 2013). The use of reports and statistics on performance are key tools to unlock laziness in the free-riders' minds. The provision of incentives and dedication of time to give feedback on work performed is critical to improving an organization's performance. As such, it is essential to shrink or reduce the team for effective feedback on performance (Kang & Hwang, 2017; Mellizo, 2013). As a last resort to overcome the free-rider challenge, it would be beneficial to assign each of the identified individuals specific responsibilities and assessing them (Kang & Hwang, 2017). In large groups, people take advantage, and others permit so by not seeking to offend anyone. However, with a clear delineation of the roles of each person, it is possible to overcome the problem.

3.2. Trust Issue Among Teammates

The challenge of managing teams emerges when each of the members does not trust each other. It is necessary that the relationships within teams are built with strong tact to enhance interpersonal interactions and performances (Schaubroeck et al., 2011). If members cannot be sure that their opinion matters and that they can criticize others' decisions, mistrust develops as a result. Therefore, the team members get demotivated in handling their tasks that slow down the level of performance in an organization (De Jong et al., 2016). It is significant that respect and interpersonal trust get established to enhance the trust needed for increased teamwork performance (De Jong et al., 2016). The barriers to trust need to be broken for the organization to attain the needed trust level. One of the best starting points is encouraging a culture of open communication and team-building exercises. As individuals meet on a regular basis and bond with senior officials, it will be easier to enhance trust within an organization (Schaubroeck et al., 2011; Barczak, Lassk & Mulki, 2010).

The other tool is the employment of realistic timelines needed in the delivery of the work. It is often the setting of improper timelines that decrease an organization's trust and performance. The use of Gantt charts, in particular, can contribute to solving distrust by enabling the team members to stay on schedule in most of the needed tasks. Therefore, with increased access to all the tools, it will be easier to handle deadlines and increase the participants'

trust (Kang & Hwang, 2017; Schaubroeck et al., 2011; Barczak et al., 2010). The delegation of tasks is another area if leveraged that can increase trust within a team. It happens that if people receive the largest share of responsibility, their trust in the leaders tends to decrease, especially if their peer's handle-less tasks (De Jong et al., 2016). It is important that each person gets assigned a task based on their individual abilities, not to demotivate or decrease performance while building trust. Therefore, the use of the right tools in the allocation of tasks is needed to increase the involved organizations' performance.

3.3. Lack of Communication

The challenge of communication in a team originates, especially when open communication lines are ignored in team management (De Jong et al., 2016). Leaders in the business world have the mandate to ensure everyone moves in the same direction in line with an organization's goals. The only possible way to achieve that is through the establishment of an open network of communication (Russell, Funke, Knott & Strang, 2012). However, the poor quality of communication and negative perception by the employees has the potential to minimize the performance and team management in an organization. The work environment operation is based on the level of communication maintained by the involved parts (Russell et al., 2012). It is stated that a poor communication chain in an organization is similar to a network of broken-down parts of an engine; as such, it only leads nowhere. Thus, the peaceful co-existence and bonding that improves the values of a group are often hindered by poor-communication strategies being employed in a team (Melo, Cruzes, Kon & Conradi, 2013).

It is important to give constant communication on the essence of the existence of the team to avoid the issues that hinder communication (Melo et al., 2013; Kang & Hwang, 2017). The identification of the instances of communication breakdown and dedication of efforts in rectifying is the initial right approach to enhance team performance and management (Russell et al., 2012). Therefore, the use of constant ways of obtaining feedback from the team members is a crucial way to obtain the needed performance and increase the communication of a team. It can also be essential to invest in organization communication tools and common opinion sharing platforms that can increase team management in an organization (Russell et al., 2012). As such, having a common website, one on one chat sites, and group conversation can help stimulate effective communication for a team. The use of technology will save them time and resources and enable the team members to work more efficiently (Melo et al., 2013; Warkentin & Beranek, 1999).

Thus, communication is an important feature to managing teams, and technology can help overcome the challenge.

The encouragement of intra-team communication can improve the performance and management in an organization. The common areas where communication challenges emerge is between the involved individuals. Thus, there should be an open policy to increase the interaction among the participants in a team. If possible, creation of documented records can help assess the progress levels in intra-team communication (Melo et al., 2013; Kang & Hwang, 2017; Warkentin & Beranek, 1999). The use of assessment tools can also be important in analyzing the performance of a team.

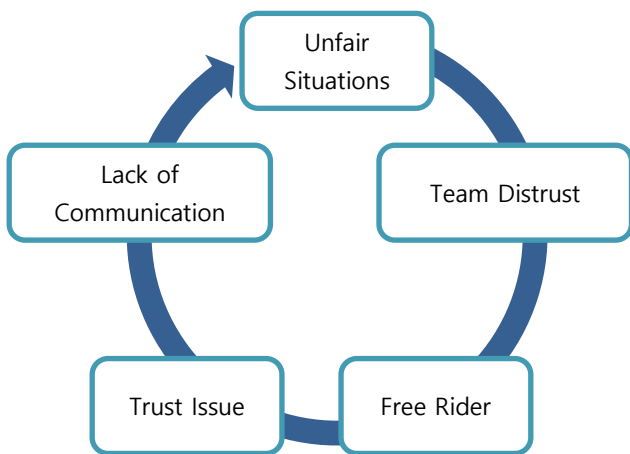


Figure 2: Vicious Cycle of Team Problems

4. Methodology and Findings

4.1. Research model and hypotheses

Throughout several past studies, the present research classified emerging team problems into three issues such as ‘Free-rider issue’, ‘Trust issue’, and ‘Lack of communication’.

Investigating the relationship between three main issues and employee job performance in various distribution channels, we formulated our research model and hypotheses matched with the research model. The figure 3 indicated our research model.

Based on our research model, the hypotheses associated with the research question are:

Hypothesis 1: Free rider issues in team has a significant impact statistically on team member’s job performance.

Hypothesis 2: Trust issues in team has a significant impact statistically on team member’s job performance.

Hypothesis 3: Lack of communication in team has a significant impact statistically on team member’s job performance.

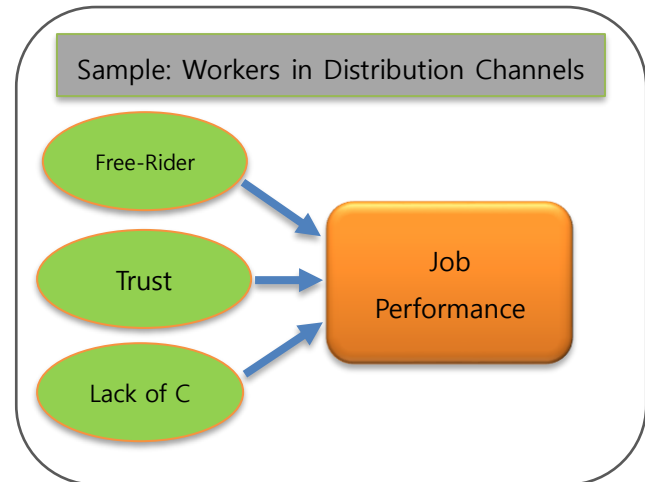


Figure 3: Research Model of the Present Research

4.2. Variables

All items of survey instrument were made up of total 12 questions. In more detail, the questionnaire included 3 questions regarding the free rider issues and 3 questions of trust issues, and team communication items consisted of total 3 questions. Lastly, the dependent variable for this research is an employee job performance which was used by 3 questions. The ‘Likert scale’ ranging from 1 to 5 (1=Strongly disagree, 5=Strongly agree) was used to measure the connections between three independent variables and a dependent variable.

Table 1: Used Variables for this research

Main Factor	Number of Questions	Prior Research
Free-rider	4	Kang and Hwang (2017)
Trust	3	Kang and Hwang (2017)
Team Communication	2	Kang and Hwang (2017)
Job Performance	3	Bowra et al., (2012)

Three independent variables were borrowed directly from our previous research (Kang & Hwang, 2017) and a dependent variable (Job performance) was excerpted from the previous study of Bowra., Sharif, Saeed and Niazi (2012). The table 1 shows prior studies in more detail that were borrowed by the present research and these studies

indicated a high degree of quality (content validity) for their instruments.

4.3. Information of Data Collection

The present research collected total 267 U.S employees in three distribution channels between July 3, 2020, and August 8, 2020, distributing questionnaires through in person and an online survey system. Although total 450 questionnaires were distributed, the final dataset which was returned revealed only 315 datasets. However, final usable dataset was only 267 because we eliminated 48 sets which were more than 20% of the items in the survey were not answered by the respondents (Nazarian, 2013).

Table 2: The summary of solutions

	Total	Percentage (%)
Questionnaires Distributed	450	100%
Uncollected Questionnaires	135	22%
Collected Questionnaires	315	78%
Discarded Questionnaires	48	7%
Usable Questionnaires	267	71%

As a result, usable obtained surveys for data analysis were confirmed by 267 datasets, identifying 77.4% valid response rate. Table 2 indicated the information of total obtained dataset and Table 3 presents the breakdown information of data obtained per distribution channels

Table 3: The summary of solutions

Main factor	Total	Percentage (%)
Agency	57	48%
Wholesaler	76	35%
Retailer	134	17%

Table 4: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Profile	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender Male	206	64.7
Female	61	35.3
Job level Non-Managerial	203	58.8
Managerial	64	51.2
Age distribution 20s	45	17
30s	99	43
40s	74	24
50sOver 50s	49	18

4.4. Findings of Data Analysis

4.4.1. Descriptive Statistics

In order to take a look at basic statistics such as mean, mode, median, and standard deviation, the current research conducted firstly the descriptive statistics analysis, providing and summarizing the obtained large set of final dataset (Sample). Table 5 indicates the basic information of the descriptive statistics based on five-point Likert scale (5= Strongly Agree, 4= Agree, 3= Neutral, 2= Disagree, 1= Strongly Disagree).

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Mode	Median	SD
Free Rider	14,52	13	12	6.41
Trust	10.68	10	10	4.23
Team Communication	6.22	6	5	3.67
Job Performance	9.96	7	9	4.89

4.4.2. Reliability Analysis

Prior to conduct main statistical analysis, we measured the Cronbach's alpha value to gauge internal consistency. Basically, if alpha value reveals greater than 0.6, variables of the main factor can be regarded by which they have a reliable consistency and implied as the acceptable value. As indicated the table 6, all main factors for this research showed more than 0.7 Cronbach alpha value and we could decide all sub-factors, identifying strong connections among variables (See the table 6).

Table 6: Results of Cronbach's Alpha Analysis

	Questions	Alpha Values
Free rider	1-4	0.711
Trust	5-7	0.786
Team Communication	8-9	0.725
Job Performance	10-12	0.803

4.4.3. Main Results of the Research

In order to figure out whether there is a significant difference in employee's job performance depending on the intensity of three team management issues (free-rider issue,

trust issue, and communication issue), the present authors conducted the ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) statistical methodology. To compare the difference thoroughly among variables, intensity levels for each respondent are grouped into third quartile ($G(i)$) to see if there is a difference in the average Job performance for each group ($G(i), i=1,2,3$). As a result of the statistical analysis, it was confirmed that there was a statistically recognizable difference at the significance level of probability. This implies that there was a difference in the mean of employees' job performance depending on the level of three team issues for each group ($G(i), i=1,2,3$). After this, the Duncan test, a post-test, was also conducted to measure in more details which groups had

differences statistically. The findings showed the average of job performance (Dependent variable) for each group was 3.27 ($G1$), 3.91 ($G2$), and 4.11 ($G3$) and we found out that the high degree of three team problems may cause a low employee job performance, reducing their motivation to perform maximumly.

All in all, based on our statistical findings, we can conclude that most serious team problems in distribution channels is the lack of communication between workers and management team, and that could lead to less motivated employees to perform their jobs. Free-rider and trust cause less motivated, but they are lower than communication issues.

Table 7: Results of ANOVA test between Variables

	Average	N	Standard Deviation	F-Value	P-Value	Duncan Test
G(1)	3.56	46	1.00	30.429	0.023	{G(1)} {G(2)} {G(3)} All three groups are not separated and they are combined together as team conflict issues.
G(2)	3.53	98	0.71			
G(3)	3.68	122	0.79			
Total	3.59	267	0.88			

5. Conclusion and Implication

Team management in the supply chain is significant in not only achieving the organization's goals but also increasing performance as well. The best techniques in team management that increase performance often encourage open lines of communication. That means the employees and each of the members of the organization in the distribution channels get the freedom to decide and can be held accountable for their actions. As such, it is possible to conclude that effective team management is not an individual task within a large organization. On the contrary, it entails the effort and collective abilities of each of the team's individual participants. The effective management of teams often involves the application of diverse methods such as technological tools, incentives, and evaluation of each member in a team. The alignment of tasks in a team should consider the strength and skills of each of the participants. As such, technology can be powerful, especially in enhancing the needed teamwork communication task in the business world. In certain cases, the use of rewards on the best performers in society can significantly enhance teams' performance and motivate the participants.

Based on the empirical results of the present research, the literature review evaluation revealed that effective team management should be accomplished at three levels. The input stage is that start where elements such as who

constitutes a team and size should be considered. The second aspect is the process level, where the management of the team is to consider tasks performed. The third attribute concerns itself with emergent factors such as individual psychology and feeling of wellbeing in a team. The final aspect is the output that is geared towards the goals of a team. Thus, effective team management in the US supply chain has to be based on all of the four spheres of managing a team. It is important to note that business organizations in distribution channels can overcome common barriers to building effective team management. Task specification and assignment can help reduce the free-rider challenge that affects most organizations. It is necessary that organizations also adopt open communication lines to overcome team-building challenges due to communication. Above all else, the ability to increase trust can be enhanced in task delegation and more team members' engagement.

6. Future Recommendation

As already stated in the previous sections, to fill out chasms in the distribution literature, the current research tried to identify the connections between three problems for well-established team management and worker job performance in various distribution channels, and figured out the meaningful statistical findings which indicate three issues such as free-rider, trust, and team communication

may have significant impacts statistically with employee job performance in supply chain. Finally, we could conclude that all hypotheses were accepted based on the expected directions between independent variables and dependent variables. Nonetheless, future study should consider the brief limitation that the current research has. Even if this research used reasonable sample size, the results of the current research will not be applicable to other sectors because we focused on the distribution sector. In addition, the current research will not be able to cover every geographic region due to obtaining the sample only in United States.

Regarding the future recommendation, we suggests that the upcoming studies should utilize other survey instruments instead of variables of the current research. As a result, future studies will be able to provide more solid connection among team management factors, investigating statistical findings to eliminate team-based problems. We strongly suggest that many kinds of pre-existing instruments might be obtained through various channels such as journal publication articles, books, and occasionally direct requesting from authors.

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