

## **Developing Teamwork at Workplace**

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**ABSTRACT:** *The purpose of this study is to understand the importance of teamwork development at workplace. This study attempts to explain the benefits and challenges of teamwork development at workplace. It highlights the process of teamwork development and technology used by teams for better management of teams and effective communication. The study also aims to identify the barriers encountered by teams that have members from different cultural background and how they can be managed.*

**KEYWORDS-***Benefits, Challenges, Technology, and Culture of Developing Teamwork at workplace.*

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

In current business environment, managing human resources has become a vital issue in every field, considering the importance of their contributions in every business process [1]. Organizations recognize the value of human factor to be able to survive the global competition. Thus, firms analyze the activities that can help in motivating employees, giving competent individual sense of self-accomplishment who is dedicated in meeting organization's goals and objectives. Lemons and Strong [2]state that undoubtedly, teamwork is one of such activities that cannot be avoided by any organization. Contemporary firms consider teamwork as an essential feature of a successful business. It is believed that teamwork is helps to utilize workers' skills in an attempt to gain competitive advantage. Organizations that are focused on developing teamwork are likely to experience numerous benefits including better and improved decision making, flexibility amongst workforce and focus on achieving organizational goals with highly motivated workforce and synergy among team members [3]. Nonetheless, there are also certain challenges associated with teamwork at workplace. It becomes difficult to develop an effective team without clarity of goals and vision of the team. Work assigned to team members should according to their knowledge and competence [4]. A team may also fail to perform well if team members are dissatisfied with reward system or with too much control over their actions [4]. Therefore, there is a need to develop teamwork that is fostered with factors such as trust among members and a climate of participation. It will help teams to remain successful and productive. It is essential that team member have certain level of independence with efficient leadership to utilize their skills to the maximum. Furthermore, building and promoting teamwork at workplace is challenging without open communication and adequate delegation of power [5]. Teamwork requires team members to have share goals, vision and values to remain successful

### **II. RESEARCH METHOD**

There are two forms of data that can be collected for the purpose of research that are primary data and secondary data. Primary data is defined as the first-hand information; on the contrary, secondary data is the information that has already been published. A primary data collection method has been adopted for this study, where survey and interview have been conducted with the employees of the organization. A questionnaire survey comprising of 10 questions was conducted with team members to understand the role of teamwork at their workplace and understand their perception regarding teamwork. Leader of the same team was interviewed using structured questions to understand his views in detail regarding teamwork development in his organization. Sample size is essential for an empirical study as it helps to make inferences about population through the sample. A sample of 20 team members was used for the survey and 1 leader for conducting the interview. It is mixed research approach is used, where both qualitative and quantitative data is used for the analysis. Qualitative data is collected through interview, which generates detailed results and therefore, a small sample is used. Whereas, for survey a relatively larger sample size is used i.e. 20 team members for generating quantitative results that would represent other team members (target population).

### III. DEVELOPING TEAMWORK

Volkov and Volkov [6] state that teamwork development is often misinterpreted as being referred to the simple notion of “working in groups” in an organizational setting. In order to better understand the vision of teamwork development of employers. Ellis, Bell [7] have defined teamwork as a process “where two or more employees interact interdependently toward a common and valued goal or objective, and who have each been assigned specific roles or functions to perform” (p.641). Conceptually, the purpose of teamwork development should be to create synergy and work towards achieving a common objective. Teamwork development in every organization, regardless of the nature of business, serves the same purpose of motivating employees and improving organizational competency.

Oke, Olatunji [8] opine that teamwork development can be defined as the process of forming group of people who have different skills that complement each other, they all should be focused on sharing knowledge and skills and dedicatedly work together towards achieving a common goal. They believe that each team member should work collaboratively with others and mutually support them to complete the designated task or assigned projects and achieve their objective. Ibrahim, Costello [9] assert that the main objective working in teams should be to achieve the synergy effect, which is the ability to deliver greater results by working in a team, as compared to working individually. Azmy [10] also defines teamwork development as a cooperative process through which “ordinary people” are able to achieve “extraordinary results”. Ibrahim, Costello [9] also state that working in teams can help members to develop mutual and effective relationships for achieving team goals and delivering benefits to overall organization.



**Fig.1 Factors affecting Developing Teamwork at Workplace.**

#### 3.1 Benefits of Developing Teamwork

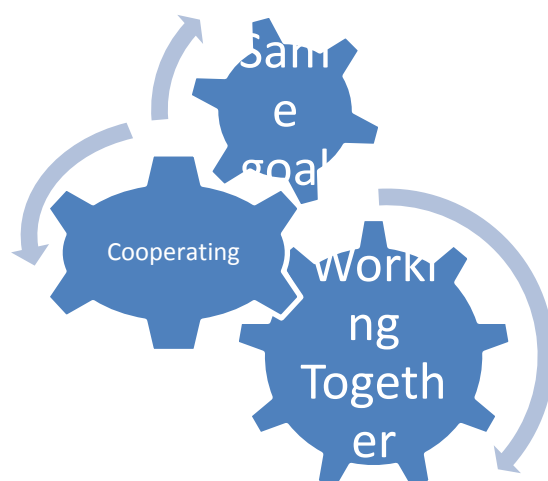
There are numerous benefits that can result from building teams at the workplace. It has become important in today’s business environment as teamwork results in gaining problem-solving synergy, as multiple minds work on one solution [11]. When an individual works on resolving any specific organizational issue that employee puts in his personal knowledge and experience to seek for solution. However, using teamwork can help in determining multiple solutions as team members pool their collective ideas to address the issue [12]. Every institution finds teamwork beneficial as the advantages of teamwork in terms of synergies help them to manage their resources effectively [13].

Teamwork is important for improving creativity and innovation, it is essential for making quality decisions, each team member has greater commitment to the assigned tasks and teamwork helps organizations to increase the level of motivation of their employees. Members, Kirchof [14] states that teamwork at workplace is important as it enables to increase effectiveness as members work in an organized manner by collaborating and communicating with each other. As a result, members are able to work in a planned manner and they are able to exchange ideas and information on a regular basis. Therefore, teamwork is particularly preferred by those organizations that aim to reduce the costs and enhance their organizational effectiveness [15].

### 3.2 Challenges of Developing Teamwork

While there are several benefits of teamwork at workplace, organizations also encounter certain challenges that make it difficult for them to build effective teams. Liff and Wikström [16] pointed out effective leadership and management of team as a major challenge in creating effective working teams. They recommended that there is a need to have an effective leadership strategy that emphasizes on developing strong relationships among team members by carefully assigning tasks and avoiding compartmentalization that results in decline in team creativity and efficiency. McInnes, Peters [17] further stressed the importance of effective leadership for reducing barriers while working in teams, as lack of leadership results in confusion regarding roles and responsibilities and poor communication. Another challenge is creating a working climate that promotes teamwork and cooperation which should be initiated by the leader [5].

Additionally, management should consider it as their responsibility to encourage development leaders that focus on teamwork. Leaders should ensure to provide a sense of purpose and direction to the team so they must monitor team's performance and support them when required. Another major challenge highlighted by Yusuf and Anuar [18] is managing in conflict in teamwork. They opine that in any organization while working in teams, employees and employers work in harmony to achieve organizational goals. However, in doing so they are likely to face some conflicts and therefore, they need to work collaboratively to address the conflicts. If managed efficiently, conflicts can be constructive for teamwork [19]. It is important for maximizing creativity and synergy in teams; being unable to manage conflicts however, can be very disruptive and devastating to individual team members [19].



**Fig.2. Challenges of Developing Teamwork at workplace.**

### 3.3 Characteristics of Developing Teamwork

A team at workplace should be developed by including members with wide range of skills, experience and knowledge, which enable them to work productively. Each team member should be committed to achieve shared team's goals [20]. Furthermore, leaders need to foster a climate of participation and encourage members to come up with new ideas and take risks. Martinich [21] highlights certain characteristics that are important for developing a strong and successful team. In order to form an effective team the role of the leader should be to encourage every individual team member to work towards one common/ shared goal (i.e. preferably the organization's goal) and the one with significant value for overall organizational performance. Secondly, each member should focus on delivering best performance that supports the common goal. Commitment is another important characteristic of a successful team, where it is important that team sets its own agenda that supports overall team goal. The upper management should not communicate agenda, as it can result in diminished commitment. Fidalgo-Blanco, Sein-Echaluce [22] opines that accountability amongst team members can be developed through working towards common goal, which eventually develops a climate of trust. Volkov and Volkov [6] identifies that teams with individuals with multiple skills can help in developing strong teams for generating new ideas. Also, they must have complementary skills; therefore, with diverse skills and experience members can support each other [12].

### 3.4 Technology of Developing Teamwork

Factors such as effective communication and coordination are considered essential for effective teamwork [23]. With technological advancement it has been possible to communicate and collaborate with team members who are in one location (i.e. meeting face-to-face) [24] or geographically dispersed (i.e. through virtual teams) [25]. Recently, with globalization and informational technology development, several businesses are considering reevaluating their strategies for enhancing productivity and being more efficient in their operations [26]. As a result, virtual teams have been developed in organizations, utilizing recent technologies for teamwork development. The purpose of these teams is to operate remotely from each and depend on communication technology to achieve common team goals.

There are different communication technologies that can be used by teams for participation and coordination. For instance, computer-mediated communication systems (CMCS) can facilitate in both synchronous and asynchronous meetings. In synchronous meetings that occur face-to-face technologies such as audio (telephonic) or video conferencing can be used. For asynchronous meetings that are more structure than synchronous meetings, technologies such as electronic mail (E-mail) and Internet Usenet newsgroup can be used for communicating with team members[26]. Furthermore, there are other software tools that are used by virtual teams. For example, Group Support System (GSS) is an information technology-based environment; CMSC is used for supporting teamwork in which members are geographically dispersed. Through these systems it is possible for team members, to organization, share and evaluate information online. In addition to this, there chat and meeting tools such as GTalk, Yahoo, Skype and MSN that facilitate members to communicate in real-time with each other by typing, video or voice calls or all three together. Hence, use of technology has become vital for teamwork success.

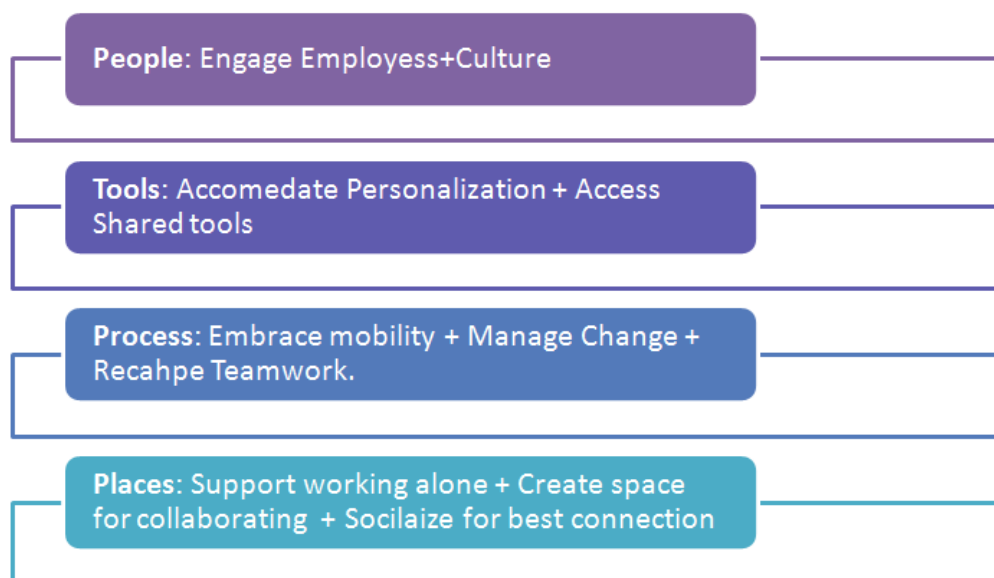


Fig.3. Technology of Developing Teamwork at Workplace Strategies.

## IV. DATA ANALYSIS

In order to analyze the data collected through survey SPSS is used and the information is represented through graphs and tables. However, the interview data is analyzed by evaluating responses of the leader without any bias.

### 4.1 Interview

Interview was conducted with the leader of a team of 20 members to understand his perception regarding leading a team and managing it successfully.

#### How do you promote accountability among your team members?

In response to this question the leader responded “I ensure that tasks are assigned to the team members and they are clear about the team goals. I provide them directions; however, they are encouraged to take decisions and make mistakes. In this manner they are accountable for their actions and take complete responsibility of their work”.

#### How do you ensure that work assignments are distributed fairly?

The leader was asked the approach that he uses for distributing work equally among the team members. He responded “I divide the project into different tasks and milestones and ensure that each team member is

assigned work according to his/ or her capabilities. Each member should work towards achieving the common and shared goals”.

**How important is employee participation and empowerment in your team?**

With reference to employee empowerment and participation the leader stated “I find it extremely important to encourage each team member to participate. In my opinion, this brings creativity and new ideas to solve different problems. It also helps in achieving goals efficiently and increase productivity. Furthermore, employees feel motivated when they are asked for their opinions”.

**What challenges do you encounter in developing teamwork in your organization?**

Although there are several benefits of working in a team, but there are also certain challenges encountered by a leader while working in a team. The leader agreed to this by stating that “it is certainly not an easy task to lead a team and manage all the members. Every team member has different personality and different way of working; therefore, I need to develop understanding with them to lead them effectively. Additionally, due to these differences there are also conflicts among team members, but they are resolved with open communication and by addressing them timely. Nonetheless, these differences and conflicts are often healthy for the team”.

**Has teamwork development proven to be beneficial for your organization?**

Since teamwork development is not only beneficial for the team, but also for the organization, the interviewee was asked if he agrees. In response to this question he stated that “Yes, I agree that teamwork development facilitates in delivering returns to the organization in terms of enhanced efficiency with higher productivity, as team members work together to achieve shared goal. Therefore, they generate better ideas to get the work done quickly and more effectively”.

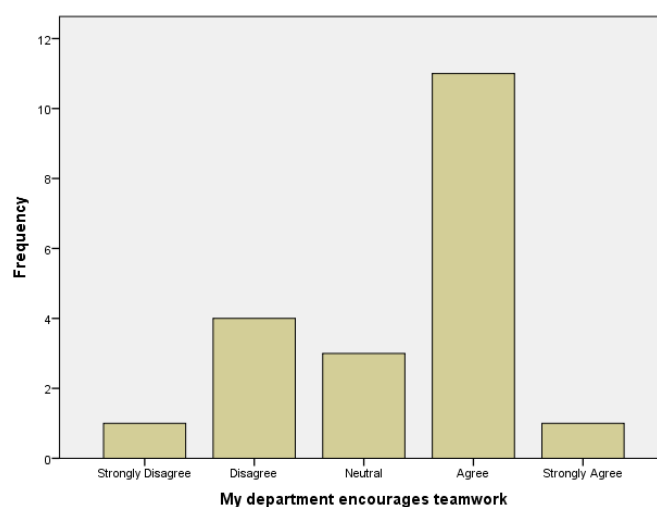
**4.2 Survey**

A survey was conducted with the team members of an organization to understand teamwork development at their workplace and their views about it.

**Question 1**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Disagree	1	5.0	5.0	5.0
Disagree	4	20.0	20.0	25.0
Neutral	3	15.0	15.0	40.0
Agree	11	55.0	55.0	95.0
Strongly Agree	1	5.0	5.0	100.0
Total	20	100.0	100.0	

Table.1My departments encourage teamwork.



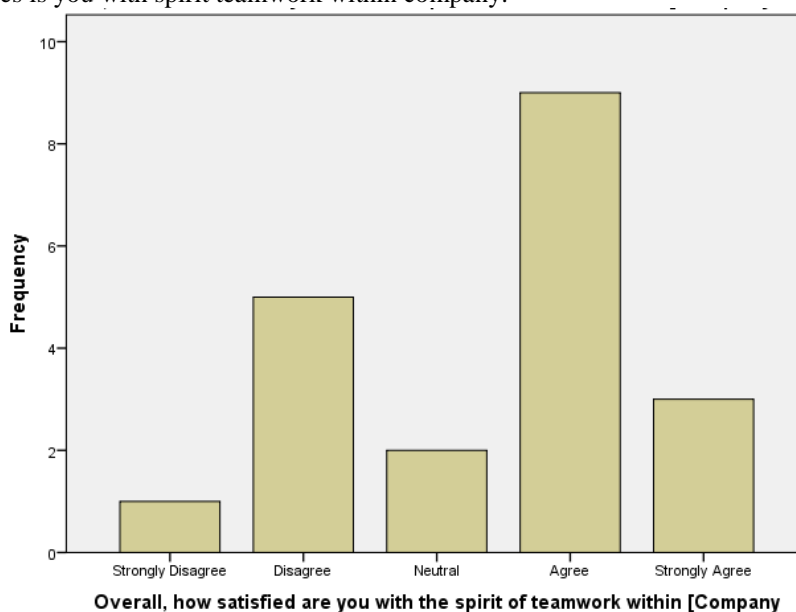
**Fig.1My departments encourage teamwork.**

Survey respondents were asked if their department encourages teamwork. In response to this question 55% agreed, 5% strongly agreed and 15% remained neutral that their department encourages teamwork. While there were 4 participants who disagreed and 1 who strongly disagreed.

**Question 2**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Disagree	1	5.0	5.0	5.0
Disagree	5	25.0	25.0	30.0
Neutral	2	10.0	10.0	40.0
Agree	9	45.0	45.0	85.0
Strongly Agree	3	15.0	15.0	100.0
Total	20	100.0	100.0	

Table.2 How Satisfies is you with spirit teamwork within company.



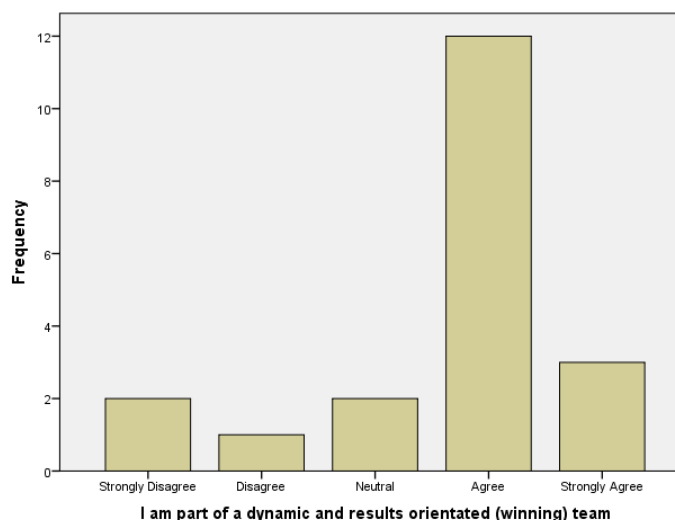
**Fig.2 How Satisfies is you with spirit teamwork within company.**

Respondents were asked if they were satisfied with teamwork spirit in their organization. 45% of the survey participants agreed and 15% strongly agreed that they were satisfied. While there were also 5% who strongly disagreed, which shows their dissatisfaction with teamwork in the organization?

**Question 3**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Disagree	2	10.0	10.0	10.0
Disagree	1	5.0	5.0	15.0
Neutral	2	10.0	10.0	25.0
Agree	12	60.0	60.0	85.0
Strongly Agree	3	15.0	15.0	100.0
Total	20	100.0	100.0	

**Table.3 Part of a dynamic and results oriented (winning) team.**



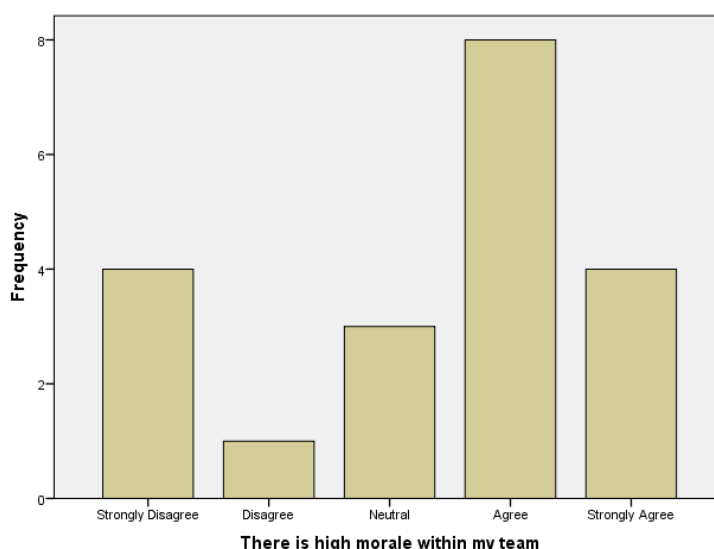
**Fig.3**Part of a dynamic and results oriented (winning) team.

Survey participants were asked if they consider themselves as being part of a result oriented team, and the results showed that 60% agreed and 15% strongly agreed with the statement. However, there were 10% of the participants who strongly disagreed and did not consider themselves as being part of team that focuses on achieving shared goals.

**Question 4**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Disagree	4	20.0	20.0	20.0
Disagree	1	5.0	5.0	25.0
Neutral	3	15.0	15.0	40.0
Agree	8	40.0	40.0	80.0
Strongly Agree	4	20.0	20.0	100.0
Total	20	100.0	100.0	

**Table.4** There is a high morale within my team.



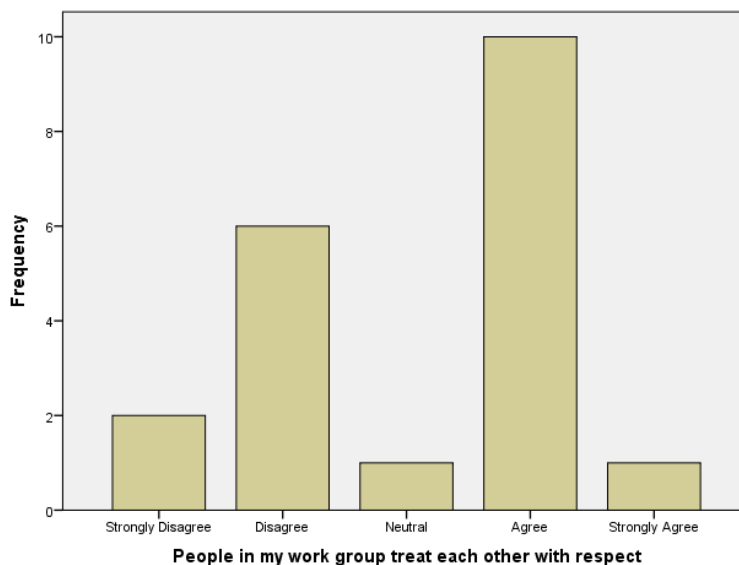
**Fig.4** There is a high morale within my team.

Survey participants were asked whether working in teams increases their morale or not. The results indicate that 40% agreed to the statement; reflecting that majority of the team members has high morale. Also 20% strongly agreed, but 20% also strongly disagreed, which shows that some of the team members have low morale.

**Question 5**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Disagree	2	10.0	10.0	10.0
Disagree	6	30.0	30.0	40.0
Neutral	1	5.0	5.0	45.0
Agree	10	50.0	50.0	95.0
Strongly Agree	1	5.0	5.0	100.0
Total	20	100.0	100.0	

**Table.5 People in my work group treat each other with respect.**



**Fig.5 People in my work group treat each other with respect.**

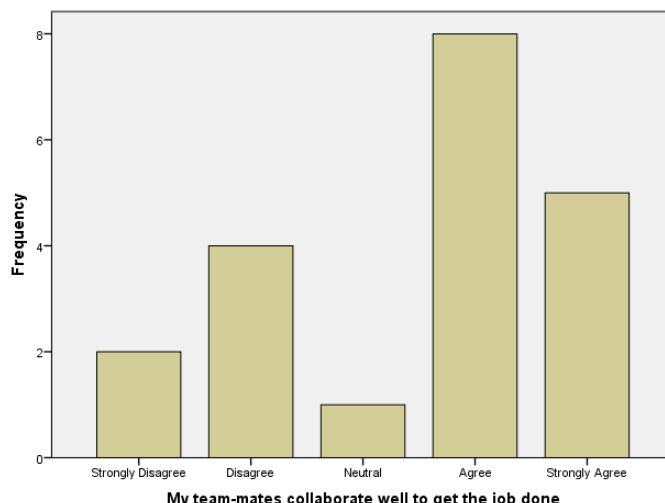
In order to understand the relationship between the team members, survey participants were asked if they treat each other with respect. The results showed that while more than 50% strongly agreed and agreed. There was also a greater percentage (i.e. 30%) of the participants who disagreed indicating that they did not consider as being respected within the team.

**Question 6**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Disagree	2	10.0	10.0	10.0
Disagree	4	20.0	20.0	30.0
Neutral	1	5.0	5.0	35.0
Agree	8	40.0	40.0	75.0
Strongly Agree	5	25.0	25.0	100.0
Total	20	100.0	100.0	

**Table.6 my team-mates collaborate well to get the job done.**





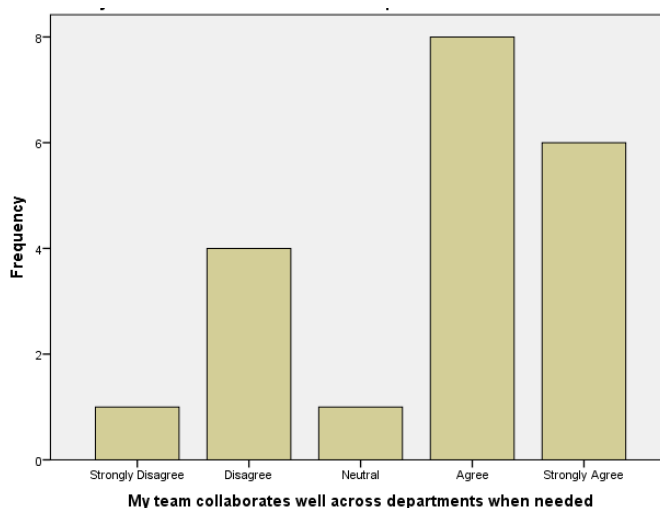
**Fig.6 My team-mates collaborate well to get the job done.**

In response to this question majority remained positive showing that team members collaborate with each other to accomplish the assigned task. 25% strongly agreed, 40% agreed and 5% remained neutral. However, 20% disagreed and remaining 10% strongly disagreed.

**Question 7**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Disagree	1	5.0	5.0	5.0
Disagree	4	20.0	20.0	25.0
Neutral	1	5.0	5.0	30.0
Agree	8	40.0	40.0	70.0
Strongly Agree	6	30.0	30.0	100.0
Total	20	100.0	100.0	

**Table.7 My team-mates collaborate well across departments when needed.**



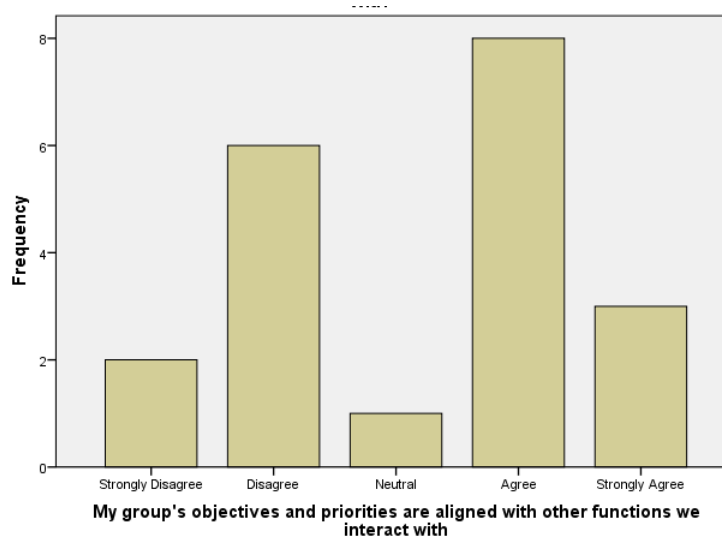
**Fig.7 My team-mates collaborate well across departments when needed.**

Survey respondents were asked if their team also collaborates with other departments when required. In response to this question 30% strongly agreed and 40% agreed that they work collaboratively with other department. While only 20% disagreed.

**Question 8**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Disagree	2	10.0	10.0	10.0
Disagree	6	30.0	30.0	40.0
Neutral	1	5.0	5.0	45.0
Agree	8	40.0	40.0	85.0
Strongly Agree	3	15.0	15.0	100.0
Total	20	100.0	100.0	

**Table.8**My group’s objectives and priorities are aligned with other functions we interact with.



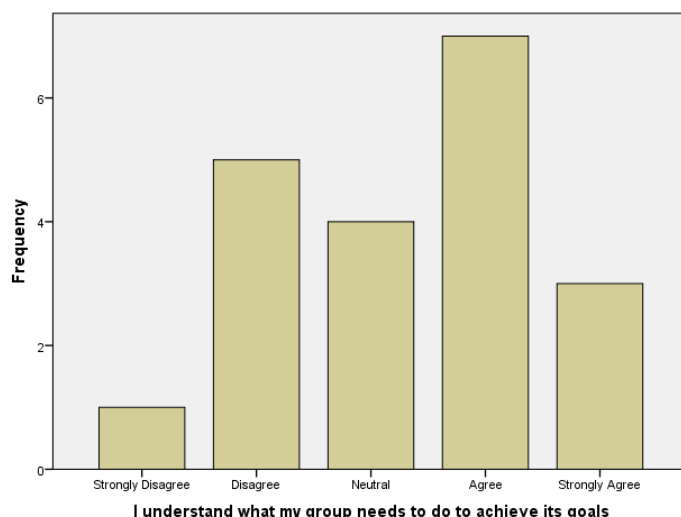
**Fig.8**My group’s objectives and priorities are aligned with other functions we interact with.

Survey respondents were asked if their team’s objectives were aligned with other functions in the organization that they are in coordination with, 40% agreed and 15% strongly agreed. There were also 2 participants who disagreed indicating that team goals are not aligned with organizational goals

**Question 9**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Disagree	1	5.0	5.0	5.0
Disagree	5	25.0	25.0	30.0
Neutral	4	20.0	20.0	50.0
Agree	7	35.0	35.0	85.0
Strongly Agree	3	15.0	15.0	100.0
Total	20	100.0	100.0	

**Table.9**Understanding what your group needs to do to achieve its goals.



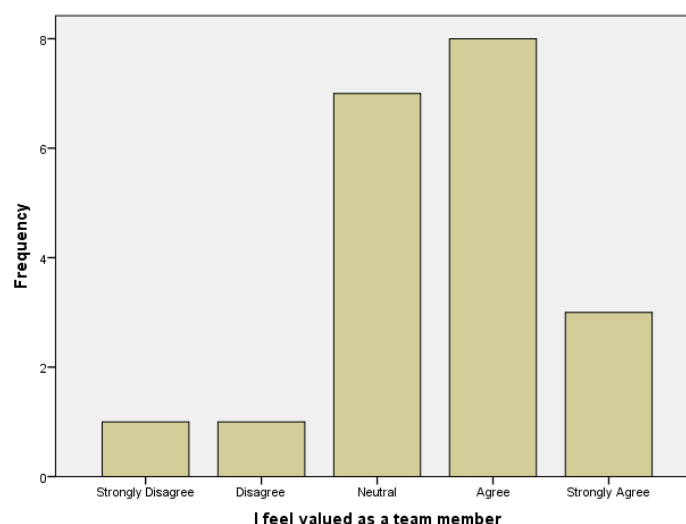
**Fig.9 Understanding what your group needs to do to achieve its goals.**

This question was asked to respondents to understand if the respondents were clear about the directions they need to follow to accomplish the team’s goals. The results showed that while 35% agreed, 15% strongly agreed and 20% remained neutral; there were also 5% of the team members who were unsure about it, which indicates that they were not clearly directed by the team leader.

**Question 10**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly Disagree	1	5.0	5.0	5.0
Disagree	1	5.0	5.0	10.0
Neutral	7	35.0	35.0	45.0
Agree	8	40.0	40.0	85.0
Strongly Agree	3	15.0	15.0	100.0
Total	20	100.0	100.0	

**Table.10How to feel valued as a team member.**



**Fig.10How to feel valued as a team member.**

Participants of the study were asked if they feel valued working in a team, majority responded positively, where 40% agreed, 15% strongly agreed and 35% remained neutral. Only 2 of the survey participants strongly disagreed and disagreed those they do not feel valued working in a team.

## V. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The results of the interview and survey showed that both the team members and the leader understand the importance of teamwork development. As studies have shown that teamwork leads to better productivity and greater efficiency through new ideas and creativity; the study findings also showed that leader and his team members agreed with it [21]. Furthermore, working in a team helps to keep the morale of the team members high and they also feel valued by working in a team. They have a purpose and direction facilitated by the team leader through effective communication.

Past research has also shown that teamwork development is not beneficial for the team, but also helps in achieving overall organizational goals [18]. The results of this research also showed that both the team members and the leader agreed that teamwork helps to achieve overall organizational goals as they collaborate with different departments to work towards common objective. However, in process of developing teamwork at workplace there are certain challenges encountered such conflicts among team members, not having clarity of goals and objectives and ineffective leadership [16]. The interview findings showed that the leader considered conflict management as a major challenge for teamwork development, also the survey results showed that some of the members did not feel valued working in a team, were not able to collaborate with other team members and had low morale. Survey results also showed that some of the members did not have clarity of objectives. Therefore, it is important for the leader and team members to work collaboratively and have effective communication to develop a strong team [27].

## VI. CONCLUSION

Today, organizations have recognized the importance of teamwork development for their business performance. Therefore, it is important to understand what is effective teamwork, how it can be developed and managed to achieve team goals and overall organizational objectives. While, it is understandable that effective teamwork results in various benefits for the firm in terms of increased productivity and enhance efficiency; there are also certain challenges that management encounters in forming effective teamwork. Organizations that is able to understand these challenges and address them timely, remain successful in fostering and nurturing a team-based climate that is dependent on mutual trust and understanding among team members. However, still there are organizations that find it difficult to develop strong and successful teams and often do not foster teamwork at workplace considering its challenges. Nonetheless, they may follow teamwork development model designed by Tucker (1965) highlighting in detail teamwork building process. This can act as a guideline and provide direction to the management for forming successful teams.

Furthermore, with organizations expanding operations beyond national boundaries, they are forming multicultural teams. As a result they encounter further challenges in addressing conflicts among team members belonging to different cultural backgrounds. Consequently, the leaders are required to understand the cultural differences and have knowledge of different cultures for managing their teams effectively. Use of technology can also facilitate these geographically dispersed teams to communicate effectively and manage their differences. This has resulted in forming virtual teams to communicate with members located across national boundaries.

The key to success of any team is to ensure effective communication, collaboration, coordination and cooperation amongst all the team members. Each member should work towards achieving a common purpose and align their individual goals with team's goals. In addition to this, a strong team also requires effective leadership through which they can get sufficient support and encouragement. A successful leader must focus on providing direction to the team and create a climate of trust among team members to work with mutual understanding. It is also necessary for teams to have members with different skills that are complementary. This can help in creating new and creative ideas and supporting each other. A successful team is the one with clarity of goals and dedication of each team member to achieve that shared goal. In doing so, there might be conflicts among team members, as they are likely to have different skill sets, knowledge and experience, but the ability to manage these conflicts can be beneficial for teamwork and for the organization as a whole.

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