



## Effect of team diversity on team cohesion in faith-based organizations: A case of St. Martin catholic social apostolate in Nyahururu, Kenya

Daniel Kabiru Wanjiku <sup>(a)\*</sup> David Gichuhi <sup>(b)</sup> Peter Mwaura <sup>(c)</sup>



<sup>(a)</sup>Department of Development Studies, St. Paul's University. P.O Box St. Paul's University, Private Bag, Limuru, Kenya

<sup>(b)</sup>Department of Human Resource Development, Karatina University. P.O. BOX 1957—10101, Nyeri, Kenya

<sup>(c)</sup>Department of Commerce, Laikipia University. P.O. BOX 1100—20300, Laikipia, Kenya.

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### ABSTRACT

Team diversity management helps to improve the cohesion of a team and ultimately, organizational development is enhanced. The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of team diversity management on team cohesion at St. Martin Catholic Social Apostolate, Kenya. The study adopted a descriptive research design. The target population for the study was 115 employees at the St. Martin Catholic Social Apostolate in Kenya. Stratified and simple random sampling procedures were used to sample 92 employees. Data was collected using a questionnaire and the collected data was analyzed through the use of the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) version 21. Descriptive statistical analysis involved the calculation of percentages and frequencies while inferential statistical analysis involved Pearson correlation in establishing the association of the variables under investigation. and Chi-square tests. Data was presented in the form of tables and charts. Qualitative data were analysed thematically and presented in the form of narratives. The study ensured that ethical considerations were adhered to. The study found a statistically significant relationship between team diversity management and team cohesion ( $p < 0.05$ ). The study concludes that each team member is held accountable for their activities and the decisions they make regarding the team and is included in team activities. The study recommends that the team leaders ensure that all team members are included in all team activities. This can be achieved through creating environments and opportunities that allow the team members to provide their opinions openly.

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## Introduction

The diversity of a team affects how people in a team view themselves and others and this matters when it comes to the cohesion and results of the teams. Bodla, Tang, Jiang and Tian (2018) postulate that when teams view themselves as capable of accomplishing a task, they become creative and they generate ideas through the exchange of skills, knowledge and expertise. The experiences of the individual team members can lead to variances in their knowledge, skills, behaviour and expertise. Therefore, team leaders should be careful to ensure that these knowledge, skills, behaviour and expertise are properly harnessed and that expected team goals are achieved.

Focusing on faith-based organizations, Krispin (2017) indicates that churches and ministry organizations do use teams to achieve their goals and objectives. For cohesion to be fostered, the leaders have to ensure that unity is nurtured and facilitated within a team. This requires the review of social research and biblical foundations that are founded in the bible. Teams need cohesion to function properly. The diversity of a team can make or break the team and its purpose. Anderson (2017) also states that much of the scholarly work on teams in faith-based organizations has focused on churches. As such, Christian values are often considered when analyzing teams in faith-based organizations. These values give room for the teams to consider diversity in their composition. In Australia, Pepper, Powell and Bouma (2019) assert that in the recent past, there has been an influx of individuals from different backgrounds.

\* Corresponding author. ORCID ID: 0000-0003-4229-8506

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This has made faith-based organizations more diverse in terms of gender, culture and experiences. As organizations, Australian churches are striving to achieve social cohesion among groups and teams which promotes the acceptance of all individuals from different denominations. This plays a great role in building and bridging social capital in the organizations.

From an African perspective, Dyikuk (2019) views cohesion in faith-based organizations as a concept which helps to bring together individuals in a team and cater to their well-being so that they can attain common goals. This kind of cohesion is viewed to uphold ecumenism and extends to achieving social cohesion. Faith-based organizations not only include elements of work cohesion but also of social cohesion which focuses on communities. Cohesion is strengthened by demographics such as having equality in the gender composition of a team. Faith values increase the feelings of unity among team members where they can share their experiences and in the case of inter-faith cohesion, tendencies of tensions among team members can be dealt with.

In Tanzania, Masanja and Chambi (2020) studied the team-building process in organizations and concluded that aspects of teams such as team cohesion as relatively new concepts for the organizations. As such, the organizations did not acknowledge the importance of teams and team processes in the overall well-being of the organizations. This had a negative in the organizational development of the organizations. Further, in faith-based organizations, Masanja and Chambi (2020) highlighted that there have been limited efforts to study teams, their diversities and their composition. This limits scholarly understanding of team cohesion in faith-based organizations.

In Kenya, Ogalo (2019) highlights that organizations that work through teams are bound to have good performance and productivity. The organizations view working in teams as a strategy to improve organizational performance and attain a competitive advantage over competitors. Correspondingly, Nzisi (2017) notes that in faith-based institutions, strategic plans should include teamwork and the institutional leaders should devise means of ensuring that the teams should work cohesively. To attain this, team formation should consider the composition of the team, experiences of the individual team members and size of the team to work collaboratively, effectively and efficiently.

St. Martin Catholic Social Apostolate (CSA) is a faith-based organization based in Nyahururu in Kenya. The organization focuses on attaining sustainable development through empowering communities and enriching the lives of the needy and vulnerable in different communities in Kenya such as communities in Laikipia, Nyandarua and Baringo communities. Kalekye, Murage and Gachara (2019) highlight that a transformative model that focuses on transforming communities through collaborations with the community members, volunteers and other organizations and entities is used at St. Martin CSA. The organization targets the abled people in the communities to form a network of empowered volunteers who bring about the needed changes in the communities. Focusing on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Kenya's Vision 2030, St. Martin CSA seeks to attain goals focusing on education, health, gender, reducing inequalities and partnerships to help improve the well-being of community members (St. Martin CSA, 2020).

To maintain the health and well-being of St. Martin CSA which is founded on the fundamentals of organizational development, the organization's activities are formed around the programmes and projects which has led to the formation of teams to achieve organizational goals. Therefore, the organization operates within four main teams which are the path towards autonomy, children-in-need, addiction and mental health, and peace and reconciliation (St. Martin CSA, 2021). According to St. Martin CSA (2019), the organizing in teams has led to evolutions in the organization as different programmes have also undergone changes aligned to the mission and vision of the organization. These changes have challenged the formation of team cohesion which includes managing the different aspects of team diversity.

Faith-based organizations seek to ensure the development of teams of employees as well as volunteers. This dynamic makes the approach to team cohesion different in faith-based organizations from other organizations such as sports-based organizations. At St. Martin Catholic Social Apostolate, Kalekye et al. (2019) highlight that the transformative model used creates complexities in the operational activities of the organization. These complexities transcend to team formation and cohesion. Even with the formation of teams in different organizational programmes, difficulties in team cohesion and management are still faced in the organization. It is against this backdrop that this current study seeks to determine the effect of team diversity management on team cohesion at St. Martin Catholic Social Apostolate, Kenya.

## **Literature Review**

### **Empirical Review and Hypothesis Development**

Hennekam et al. (2018) conducted a study on religious diversity in French organizations. Using semi-structured in-depth interviews, the study sought to assess how religious diversity was managed in the organizations' teams. The results elucidated that communication was paramount in ensuring the open and free expression of views and ideas. The team members had to communicate in a respectful manner that ensured that they respected the beliefs and values of their team members. The team managers also adopted flexibility and adaptability in the way they approached the team members. For instance, during Ramadhan, the team managers reduced the workload for the Muslim team members and this was understood by all the other team members.

In Ireland, Graham and Wright (2021) studied team diversity perspectives in the information and technology sectors. Guided by the interpretivism paradigm, the study included semi-structured interviews and the results indicated that diversity management for team

members helped to create perceptions of an inclusive workplace which led to cohesion at different levels of the organization. The aspect of employee inclusion by asking the employees to participate in different team activities led to them feeling happier, motivated and empowered. As team members, inclusion led to the satisfaction of innate desires to deal with team dynamics which was founded on the team dynamics theoretical underpinning. Among the respondents, about 60% felt that their organization promoted employee inclusion in team activities which upheld aspects of organizational development and performance.

Raithel, van Knippenberg and Stam (2021) studied team diversity among thirteen global team leaders from multinational companies. The study was paper-based and online surveys and the findings indicated that team diversity included categorizations of in-groups and out-groups which led to biases in work performance and created hostile work environments with no cohesion to perform work. To deal with these dysfunctions, team leaders were encouraged to ensure employee inclusion in all team activities so that no team member was left behind and everyone felt that they were part of the group. Also, the team leaders were encouraged to focus on creating opportunities that would help the team members become transparent and accountable for their actions. This would help to recognize the potential of the team members which would help in building the synergy among the team members.

In Nigeria, Inegbedion et al., (2020) conducted a survey on 178 respondents in multinational organizations with team diversity management and cohesion being the latent variables. The results of the study indicated that management of team diversity was an important facet of the team and organizational efficiency. Team diversity management aimed at capturing the heterogeneity of the team and exploring a common goal which was for the benefit of the individuals and the organization. Proper team diversity management involved communication which helped to minimize challenges while leveraging the benefits of the diversity of the teams. This led to the understanding of team diversity management as sacrosanct to organizational development and success.

van Knippenberg, Nishii and Dwertmann (2020) studied diversity management and team synergy in global organizations and found out that team diversity management practices led to improved decision-making, problem-solving and creativity. However, the data elicited resulted in findings that team diversity management was important in reducing in-group thinking which led to the “us-versus-them” mentality that reduced team performance. This involved trust, developing an accountability structure and open communication to build team cohesion. Top management support also helped in the management of team diversity. Jabari and Muhamad (2021) conducted a study on diversity management in faith-based organizations focusing on eighty-five global Islamic banks. The study found that managing team diversity helped to improve the decision-making processes in the banks through the introduction of new perspectives and ideas to the team. The team leaders were tasked that the clearly communicated with the team members to help clarify the team’s mandate and align it with the organization’s mandate.

#### *Research Hypothesis*

H<sub>0</sub>: Team diversity management has no statistically significant effect on team cohesion at St. Martin Catholic Social Apostolate, Kenya.

## **Research and Methodology**

### **Data**

This study was conducted at the St. Martin Catholic Social Apostolate which is located in Nyahururu Sub County, Laikipia County, Kenya and it is about 200km north of Nairobi. The research design for this study was descriptive. The target population was 115 employees in the organization who work in four main programmes of the organization which are divided into teams. The main programmes are children in need, addiction and mental health, peace and reconciliation, and path towards autonomy. A stratified sampling procedure was used to sample 92 respondents as well as ensure that the respondents fell under homogenous categories which helped to understand them better. Thereafter, simple random sampling was used to select the respondents to ensure that there was no bias in the selection the respondents (Kumar, 2018).

### **Validity and Reliability Test**

To collect data, a questionnaire with open- and close-ended questions was used. The questionnaire was undertaken through validity and reliability tests where a pilot study was conducted. This was done to ensure that the data was not contaminated. Fifteen respondents from the organization were chosen but they did not participate in the actual study. This number was chosen because it surpasses the 10% threshold and was deemed suitable for piloting. The chosen respondents for the pilot test were given the questionnaires to answer and these answers were used to test the validity and reliability of the research tools. Content and construct validities were used to analyze how the questions were constructed as well as their sequence as they appeared on the questionnaire. As a result of the validity tests, the needed changes, amendments or modifications were conducted as appropriate.

On the other hand, reliability was tested using Cronbach’s Alpha. A coefficient of 0.7 was used to test the reliability of the data. According to Nayak and Singh (2021), a coefficient that is between 0.7-0.9 is deemed appropriate to consider the questionnaire as reliable to conduct a given study. A study by Bughao and Baltar (2021) aimed to test the internal consistency of the self-report questionnaire. Using the Cronbach’s Alpha test, team cohesiveness indicated a value of between 0.71 and 0.77 and because it held the threshold of 0.7, the questionnaire was deemed to be reliable. Similarly, in a study on team cohesion, Pope (2019) tested the questionnaire using the Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient and found the coefficient value of 0.75 which presented the questionnaire to

be reliable to be used for the study. In this current study, the Cronbach Alpha test was conducted and the results indicated that the Cronbach's Alpha was 0.796. This indicated a high level of internal consistency for the questionnaire showing the questionnaire was reliable to be used in the study.

The data collection procedure included the researcher obtaining a letter of authorization from St. Paul's University and this letter was used to attain a permit from the National Commission of Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). The NACOSTI permit was used to gain permission from the Laikipia County Government to conduct the study. When all the research permits were provided, the researcher presented them to the management of St. Martin Catholic Social Apostolate to ask for consent to conduct the study. When permission was granted, the researcher approached the respondents and explained the intent of the study. When the respondents accepted to participate, the researcher selected those who participated in the study.

The researcher used a research assistant to help in fieldwork activities. The research assistant was trained beforehand to ensure that she had the right capabilities to conduct the fieldwork activities as required. As such, the researcher recruited a research assistant who had a diploma in social sciences and experience in data collection and analysis was deemed as an advantage. After the training, the research assistant helped in handing over the study's questionnaire to the respondents and then an ample time of one week was provided for the respondents to give their answers after which the questionnaires were picked and prepared for analysis. To increase the response rate, the researcher ensured that he followed up on the respondents and urged them to fill out the questionnaire. This study ensured that research ethics were upheld. The respondents were duly selected and explained to the purpose of the study and their consent was sought to participate in the study. Their responses were also treated as confidential and anonymous and were only used for this study. The respondents were asked not to provide their names anywhere in the questionnaire.

## Analysis and Findings

After collecting the questionnaires from the respondents, the researcher coded, cleaned and analyzed quantitative data using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21. Descriptive statistical analysis involved the calculation of percentages and frequencies. On the other hand, inferential statistics were analyzed using Pearson Correlation and Chi-square tests. The findings were presented in form of charts and tables. For the qualitative data, thematic analysis was conducted where data was analyzed according to the study's objectives and then the findings were presented in form of narratives. The findings of this study show that a sample of 92 respondents was chosen to participate in the study. However, only 87 questionnaires were properly filled and returned which gave a return rate of 94%. The findings on the demographics of the respondents are indicated in Table 1 and they show that the study had more female respondents (51.8%), but there was gender parity among the respondents as the men were 48.2%. There was also an indication that the majority of the respondents (41.4%) were aged between 41 and 50 years and there was age diversity as each age category from 20 years to above 50 years had representation in the study. Additionally, 56.3% of the respondents had undergraduate degrees which implied that they could answer the questionnaires as they were required to. Also, 75.8% had worked in the organization for more than 8 years which implied that most of the respondents would be able to provide the required answers from a good point of knowledge of the organization. Moreover, having respondents from each of the programmes was deemed important as all areas of team diversity according to the study would be addressed with different points of view from each of the organization's teams.

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics Distribution of Respondents**

Demographic Characteristic	Category	Percent (%)
<b>Gender</b>	Female	51.8
	Male	48.2
<b>Age</b>	20-30 years	13.8
	31-40 years	35.6
	41-50 years	41.4
	>50 years	9.2
<b>Highest Level of Education Completed</b>	College Diploma	33.3
	Undergraduate Degree	56.3
	Master's Degree	10.3
<b>Years worked in the organization</b>	0-3 years	6.9
	4-7 years	17.2
	8-11 years	42.5
	12-15 years	21.8
	>15 years	11.5
<b>Programme respondents work in</b>	Children in Need	43.7
	Addiction and mental health	31.0
	Peace and reconciliation	9.2
	Path towards autonomy	16.1

### Team Cohesion

In this study, the dependent variable focused on team cohesion. The data was analyzed and the findings were as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Team Cohesion

Questions	Responses	
	Options	Per Cent
Does working together as a team make you feel accepted by your team members?	Options	Per Cent
	Yes	88.5
	No	11.5
	Total	100
Do you have a sense of pride in working in your team?	Options	Per Cent
	Yes	72.4
	No	27.6
	Total	100
Are you able to interact well with your team members?	Options	Per Cent
	Yes	54.0
	No	46.0
	Total	100
Does working together as a team motivate you to perform work tasks in the organization?	Options	Per Cent
	Yes	90.8
	No	9.2
	Total	100

The findings in Table 2 indicate that 88.5% of the respondents agreed that working together as a team made them feel accepted by their team members. Also, 72.4% of the respondents indicated that they had a sense of pride working in their teams, 54.0% of the respondents indicated that they were able to interact well with their team members, and 90.8% of the respondents agreed that working together as a team motivates them to perform tasks in the organization. Additionally, the respondents asserted that team cohesion was important in the running of the organization. This was captured by one of the respondents who said: “In this organization, work is organized according to the four teams. To achieve organizational goals, there has to be cohesion. Otherwise, it would be difficult to attain the goals of the organization. When the team is cohesive, the members are united in the way they talk to each other and the way they work with each other. Frankly, this is a motivating factor for my team and the members view this as a good environment for tasks to be properly done.” (Respondent 84, Research data, 2022). These findings agree with those of Rutto (2018) who found out that in faith-based organizations, high degrees of team cohesion were vital in organizations. Team cohesion included the team members working in synergy and interacting feely and clearly with each other. This was a motivating factor which improved employee productivity and organizational performance. Also, in line with the team dynamics theory, Gençer (2019) also agrees that that the extent of team cohesion leads to healthy competition within and outside the organization. This lays a good foundation for organizational development to be attained.

**Team Diversity Management**

In this study, the fourth objective focused on team diversity management. The data was analyzed and the findings were as shown in Table 3.

**Table 3:** Team Diversity Management

Questions	responses	
	Options	Per Cent
Do your team leaders provide a safe environment for team members to communicate?	Options	Per Cent
	Yes	49.4
	No	50.6
	Total	100
Are you given a chance to openly express your ideas or opinions in your team?	Options	Per Cent
	Yes	41.4
	No	58.6
	Total	100
Are you able to give constructive criticism to each other in your team?	Options	Per Cent
	Yes	47.1
	No	52.9
	Total	100
In your team, is each team member held accountable for their activities and decisions made regarding the team?	Options	Per Cent
	Yes	78.2
	No	21.8
	Total	100
In your team, is each team member included in team activities?	Options	Per Cent
	Yes	63.2
	No	36.8
	Total	100

The findings in Table 3 indicate that 50.6% of the respondents did not agree that their team leaders provided a safe environment for the team members to communicate. Also, 58.6% did not agree that they are given a chance to openly express their ideas or opinions in their teams. On provision of constructive criticism, 52.9% of the respondents indicated that they were not able to provide constructive criticism to each other in their team. Likewise, Raithel et al. (2021) found that grouping individuals into different teams created categorizations of in-groups and out-groups which led to biases in work performance and created hostile work environments with no cohesion to perform work.

Also, in this current study, 78.2% of the respondents agreed that each team member was held accountable for their activities and decisions made regarding the team. On inclusion in team activities, 63.2% of the respondents indicated that each team member was included in team activities. Further, the respondents were asked about their opinions on the role of team diversity management in team cohesion. The respondents agreed that proper identification and management of a diversity of team members was important for the development of team cohesion. One of the respondents indicated;

”In my opinion, teams are usually diverse based on different factors such as gender and religion. So far, I have witnessed the organization’s management encouraging us to embrace each other’s differences and this helps team leaders to manage the team diversities which is good for team cohesion. However, there is a lot that has to be done especially in team communication on diversity and this point to team leadership. Each member has to contribute to the success of the organization.” (Respondent 39, Research data, 2022).

These findings are similar to those of Jabari and Muhamad (2021) who found out that managing team diversity included understanding what the diversities were and coming up with a good strategy to manage the diversity. Communication was found to be important for ensuring that the team members clearly communicated the team tasks and how to attain them. There was the inclusion of each team member in the team activities and the team members were held accountable for their activities. This helped in decision-making processes and building strong team cohesion.

**Effect of Team Diversity Management on Team Cohesion**

To further gain an understanding of the relationship between team diversity management and team cohesion, Pearson Correlation and Chi-square tests were conducted. To achieve this, the researcher transformed the questions and computed the variables which helped to create new dummy variables named team diversity management and team cohesion. The Pearson correlation test was conducted first and the results are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4:** Correlation between Team Diversity Management and Team Cohesion

		<b>Team Diversity Management</b>	<b>Team Cohesion</b>
<b>Team Diversity Management</b>	Pearson Correlation	1	.417**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	87	87
<b>Team Cohesion</b>	Pearson Correlation	.417**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	87	87

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As indicated in Table 4, the Pearson correlation coefficient value is 0.417 with a p-value of 0.000. According to Duerk (2021), the strength of variables can be positive or negative when the correlation coefficient value is 1 or -1 respectively. A correlation coefficient that is between 0.1 and 0.4 is considered a weak relationship, a correlation coefficient that is at 0.5 is considered a moderate relationship, and a correlation coefficient that is between 0.6 and 0.9 is considered a strong relationship.

In this study, there is an indication that there is a statistically significant weak and positive relationship between team diversity management and team cohesion (p<0.05). These findings do not agree with those of Inegbedion et al. (2020) who found out that team diversity management was strongly related to team cohesion. Team diversity management strongly helped to capture team heterogeneity and explored common team goals which worked for the benefit of the members and the organization. Strong communication helped to minimize challenges while leveraging the benefits of the diversity of the teams. This led to the understanding of team diversity management as sacrosanct to organizational development and success.

To further understand the association between work experience and team cohesion, a Chi-square test was conducted and the results are shown in Table 5.

**Table 5:** Chi-Square Results for Team Diversity Management and Team Cohesion

	Value	Df	Asymp.Sig. (2-sided)
<b>Pearson Chi-Square</b>	462.846 <sup>a</sup>	378	.002
<b>Likelihood Ratio</b>	247.641	378	1.000
<b>Linear-by-Linear Association</b>	33.835	1	.000
<b>N of Valid Cases</b>	87		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .01

The findings in Table 5 indicate a Pearson Chi-Square value of 462.846 and a p-value of 0.002. These findings imply that there is a statistically significant association between team diversity management and team cohesion ( $p < 0.05$ ). As such, this study does not accept the hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) that team diversity management has no statistically significant effect on team cohesion at St. Martin Catholic Social Apostolate, Kenya. Equally, Hennekam et al. (2018) found that team diversity management and team cohesion were significantly associated with each other. For instance, the team leaders understood that there was religious diversity among the team members and as such, religious activities such as Ramadhan were recognized and the Muslim team members had reduced workload. This was also communicated to the rest of the team members. Such clear communication helped the team members to respect each other's values and beliefs. According to van Knippenberg et al. (2020), organizations that observed team diversity management practices often achieved effective team cohesion as compared to those that did not observe the practices. The team diversity management practices included clear communication and top management support which improved decision-making, problem-solving and creativity.

## Conclusion

this study deduces that there is a statistically significant weak and positive relationship between team diversity management and team cohesion at St. Martin CSA. Further, there is a statistically significant association between team diversity management and team cohesion at St. Martin CSA. There is accountability practised among the teams where each team member is held accountable for their activities and decisions they make regarding the team and each team member is included in team activities. This helps to build team cohesion. However, this study also deduces that team leaders sometimes do not provide a safe environment for the team members to communicate. The team members are also not able to provide constructive criticism to each other in their team.

This study recommends that team leaders should be encouraged to ensure that all team members are included in all team activities. This can be attained through creating environments and opportunities that allow the team members to provide their opinions openly. This builds transparency and accountability for their actions. Also, this would help to recognize the potential of the team members which would help in building the synergy among the team members. Team cohesion would therefore be effectively attained. Moreover, future researchers should consider researching on other factors that affect team cohesion such as the age of the team members and team leadership styles.

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**Institutional Review Board Statement:** Ethical review and approval were waived for this study, due to that the research does not deal with vulnerable groups or sensitive issues.

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