The Conditional Effects of Hard and Soft Skills in Student Virtual Teams

Elena Lvina,
St. Joseph's University, USA.
E-mail: elvina@sju.edu

Abstract
This study contributes to the research community and academic practitioners in the field of virtual global teams. It explores the intricacies of the student teams learning and performing in a virtual environment. Its major research question aims to explain how soft skills of the team members can affect group processes and outcomes. Unlike cognitive skills and their development, soft skills and highly effective pedagogical tools such as peer learning and teamwork, remain understudied in the academic virtual environment. The soft skills are studied in conjunction with hard skills of the team members, and are hypothesized to predict the successful outcomes for teams above and beyond their cognitive skills and functional expertise. In addition, the role of various contextual variables, such as the use of breakout rooms and peer evaluation, is addressed. Notably, the answer to these questions is largely missing from the current literature, which is a serious omission considering the rapid growth of the online education and reportedly low team skills of the recent college graduates. Filling the existing gap, this study can provide some practical guidelines for instructors employing global and virtual teams and help develop successful teams to ensure robust learning.