

Article

Promoting Effective Management of Cultural Diversity in Multinational Construction Project Teams

Alex Kojo Eyiah ¹, Francis Kwesi Bondinuba ^{2,3,4,*} , Lucy Adu-Gyamfi ⁵ and Murendeni Liphadzi ⁶ 

¹ ALKEY Knowledge Enterprise, Accra P.O. Box 293, Ghana; a.k.eyiah@africaninfrastructure.org

² Department of Construction Technology and Quantity Surveying, Faculty of Built and Natural Environment, Kumasi Technical University, Kumasi P.O. Box 854, Ghana

³ Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment, Durban University of Technology, P.O. Box 1334, Durban 4000, South Africa

⁴ The Urban Institute, School of Energy, Geoscience, Infrastructure and Society, Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh EH14 4AS, UK

⁵ Quality Control Company Ltd. (COCOBOD), Accra P.O. Box M54, Ghana; lucy.adu-gyamfi@qccgh.com

⁶ Sustainable Human Settlement and Construction Research Centre, University of Johannesburg, Johannesburg P.O. Box 524, South Africa; mliphadzi@uj.ac.za

* Correspondence: francis.kbondinuba@kstu.edu.gh or fb3000@hw.ac.uk

Abstract: This study investigates the management of cultural diversity and its implications for the success of infrastructure projects. It was conducted qualitatively at a multinational organisation, involving twelve semi-structured interviews with participants from Europe, Asia, America, and Africa. Content analysis identifies relevant units and categories based on theory and empirical data. A positive work environment promotes flexibility in decision-making through effective communication, problem-solving, and distinctive familial characteristics. Key success factors include effective communication, team building, strong relationships, language barriers, diverse perspectives, mutual respect, hygiene, safety, welfare facilities, and technical challenges. Successful construction firms integrate changes in cross-cultural team selection, joint decision-making, communication, teamwork, effective people selection, and project selection, enabling consistent high-performance levels across various organisational levels in project teams. Project managers can enhance team dynamics, productivity, and project success by promoting cultural diversity through training in interpersonal skills, language proficiency, and cultural intelligence, encouraging collaboration, clear goals, and inclusive decision-making processes. The paper explores Ghana's multicultural diversity through interviews and case studies, highlighting its under-explored and understudied topic in gas-to-power projects. This paper has generalizability limitations based on one case study.

Keywords: culture; diversity; multinational; teams; gas-to-power; projects



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1. Introduction

Multinational construction projects involve diverse cultural teams, fostering innovation and problem-solving and presenting challenges like communication barriers and decision delays. Construction companies are becoming more well-established internationally, with increased cross-border activity due to the globalisation of the marketplace and the world economy, increased urbanisation, and migration. Furthermore, the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic has considerably impacted the way construction project teams work [1], often bringing them into contact with varied stakeholders they have never worked with before through physical and virtual means [2]. Davidavičienė et al. [3] believe that

getting multicultural project teams to work together effectively has become a significant difficulty due to a lack of team integration and cultural differences. Yet, these differences can be an asset if properly managed [4]. The cultural diversity of the multinational teams working on a mega construction project is causing problems, including poor communication, delayed decision-making, and disparate work processes that result in miscommunication, poor teamwork, and higher expenses and delays. The project faces challenges due to cultural diversity, causing communication breakdowns, inefficient decision-making, and misunderstandings, threatening project delays and increased costs.

In this context, culture is a multifaceted term that permeates every facet of human existence. It includes history, government, religion, language, tradition, economics, ethics, and cultural practices [5]. The Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK) guide defines culture as “the entirety of socially transmitted behaviour patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions, and all other products of human work and thought” [6]. Culture is “a set of shared values, assumptions, and ideas that are learned via membership in a group and that impact the attitudes and behaviours of group members”, according to López-Duarte et al. [7]. This evidence suggests that culture can be taught, communicated, and passed down from generation to generation, yet cultures take time to form and evolve [8].

Furthermore, human societies have several tiers of culture, from national to organisational, company, religious, traditional, and industrial. For this study, culture refers to the observable differences in how project team members behave and interact due to their varied upbringings, travels, and work experiences. Therefore, the success or failure of a construction project can be affected by the geographically dispersed knowledge, perspectives, and diversity of the team working on it. Language hurdles, disparate work ethics, and uneven approaches to problem-solving are just a few of the cultural differences that pose difficulties for the Amandi project. These problems cause delays, misunderstandings, and wasteful use of resources by impeding efficient teamwork, coordination, and resource management.

Further, cultural variety can signify different things depending on the audience and the field of study. It can refer to a group of people from different cultural backgrounds working towards a common purpose or working together to complete a construction project. Dissimilarities in a culturally varied group may manifest in various ways, including but not limited to linguistics, religious practises, social norms, work practises, interpersonal dynamics, social ideals, and celebration practices. Townley et al. [9] state that cultural diversity (CD) occurs when members of two or more culturally divergent groups are integrated into a single social system. According to Corritore et al. [10], CD is the human distinction that significantly impacts the culture and operation of organisations. This paper, like the work of Corritore et al. [10], concerns how people from diverse cultures come together to achieve a common goal. Conversely, a global project team comprises people from various countries; it is a group with members from at least three distinct countries, as defined by [11].

Managing global project teams presents unique challenges related to cultural diversity (CD) that all businesses must address. Project success may be influenced by the performance of the project team, which in turn may affect the extent of CD utilisation. Due to the ineffective management of cultural diversity, caused by misunderstandings, poor leadership, and differing work practices, the construction project is experiencing delays and budget overruns. The impact of these issues depends on the building company’s management techniques and the project’s specifics. Several studies have shown that the advantages of multicultural teams could outweigh their challenges if the issues associated with cultural diversity are effectively managed. Involving individuals from diverse backgrounds on a project enhances innovation, flexibility, and productivity. Borges et al. [12] conclude that project managers must possess a strong understanding of cultural diversity

concepts to address the challenges presented by multicultural teams. As Newman et al. [11] further stated, culturally rich teams can only be productive if they are well led.

Culture-based team research is crucial for enhancing the pitch, as highlighted by [13]. Yu et al. [14]. Hajro et al. [15] have argued that our understanding of how various cultures influence the behaviours of project teams could be significantly improved. Numerous studies have shown that project leadership is vital in achieving deadlines, budgets, and quality standards. Cultural diversity in multinational construction teams has been insufficiently examined, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. It underscores the need for a more in-depth investigation of its practical effects on communication, teamwork, and leadership dynamics. Nonetheless, few case studies exist on successful multicultural project management, particularly from the Ghanaian perspective, within the existing literature. The study proposes methods to tackle the cultural diversity challenges of the Amandi project, such as inclusive leadership, clear communication guidelines, and cultural awareness training. These measures mitigate cultural misunderstandings, enhance teamwork, and elevate project performance.

Consequently, this research aims to increase understanding of the impact of cultural elements on the management of project teams. This study explores the impact of cultural diversity on projects, examining communication, teamwork, decision-making, and project efficiency and proposing management strategies for improvement.

This report presents the findings of an investigation carried out at a multinational corporation operating in the energy sector in Ghana. Following this introduction, the study is structured into five sections: the definition of culture, cultural diversity, research methodology, findings, and discussion. The final section concludes with recommendations for future research. The study aims to explore the impact of cultural diversity on the project's performance and success and to identify effective strategies for addressing these challenges.

1.1. Cultural Diversity and Multinational Project Teams

Studies have established that management practices are embedded in national cultures and that the search for a universally acceptable way of managing multicultural teams is meaningless. Diversity increases ambiguity, complexity, and confusion in group processes, leading to negative effects on team unity, high stress and uncertainty, and conflicts. Miscommunication is one of the major causes of teamwork difficulties, and challenges faced by multicultural teams lie in the diverse cultural backgrounds of their team members. Almashhadani and Almashhadani [16] raise the issue of trust and whether it is possible to build and maintain trust in multicultural project teams. Newman et al. [11] note that culturally diverse teams experience more mistrust than homogenous teams due to misinterpretation in a cross-cultural environment. Mistrust also leads to increased stress compared to homogenous teams. Stahl and Maznevski [17] explained that the impacts of cultural diversity on cohesion vary depending on the type of diversity. According to Brett et al. [18], decision-making is problematic as cultures differ greatly in their decision-making style.

This can lead to some difficulties in the team's collaboration effort. However, multicultural teamwork has potential gains, such as increasing the available pool of resources and creating an internal culture. Cultural diversity influences individuals' satisfaction and inspires creativity within a team. Multicultural teams offer companies distinct advantages, such as a higher level of creativity in the working environment. Members of multinational teams can list more ideas, alternatives, and solutions due to their cultural influences. Diversity also ensures that the team will have an adequate mix of skills, knowledge, expertise, and experience to guide itself. The correlation in the skills of two individuals drawn from the same country is likely larger than that between individuals from different countries.

Cultural diversity also makes teams more flexible as there is no common set of directives or rules from their culture that must be assumed to exist within other cultures.

Alt text: Table 1 shows the effect of CD on multicultural teams. These include language conflict and communication, among other things.

Table 1. The effect of CD on multicultural teams.

Variable	Effect on Multicultural Teams		Source
	Positive	Negative	
Language		×	[17]
Conflict		×	[17]
Subconsciously held cultural differences		×	
Communication		×	[14,17]
Cultural backgrounds		×	[17]
Trust	×	×	[16]
Lack of cohesiveness		×	[18,19]
Decision-making		×	[14]
Innovative	×		[20,21]
Creative	×		
Efficiency	×		
Skills	×		[20,22–24]
Values	×		
Talents	×		
Asset	×		[25,26]
Internal culture	×		[27]
Distinct advantages	×		[18]
Skills			
Knowledge	×		[20,22]
Expertise	×		
Experience	×		
Flexibility	×		[14]

Source: Authors' construct, 2022.

1.2. Managing Cultural Diversity

Kissi et al. [27] suggest that rapid changes in the structure of multicultural project teams require task- and relationship-centred leadership styles. Borges et al. [12] posit that strategies such as cultural awareness leadership, effective cross-cultural communication, mutual respect, and reconciliation are necessary for projects executed by multinational teams to succeed. Liliweri and Praing [20] note that project practitioners must identify and understand the local culture by adapting to the situation. Adair et al. [22] note that a critical strategy to mitigate culture-induced project failure is respecting other people's values and developing communication skills. Newman et al. [11] propose three approaches to be adopted when working in a culturally diverse environment.

The ethnocentric, synergistic, and integrative approaches are three approaches to creating a conducive work environment. The ethnocentric and synergistic approaches recognise cultural differences to create competitive advantages. In contrast, the integrative approach combines the characteristics of the central project location with those of its international affiliates. The integrative approach maximises the performance of each team member by removing barriers that limit their potential, regardless of whether those barriers are diversity issues such as race, culture, gender, or other barriers that hinder progress.

Project managers must help members understand their cultural differences and facilitate communication to develop effective teams. Project managers must have the ability to understand the culture of the team, adapt their leadership style to the characteristics of team members, and define effective channels of communication.

Adair et al. [22] believe efficient teamwork is critical to the project's success, but it is not easy due to the dynamic nature of project teams and the need for all team members to understand the project scope. Ely and Thomas [23] recommend effectively defining communication channels to avoid problems of understanding regarding deadlines, quality, and costs. Project managers must have flexibility and willingness to support the team, help team members work together, understand their cultural differences, and facilitate communication. To understand the importance of multiculturalism in teams working on global projects, project managers should highlight advantages such as various perspectives, skills, and personal characteristics that contribute to an organisation and team members. It has been argued that diversity makes the workforce heterogeneous, and a culturally diverse environment reflects the changing marketplace and world.

Six reasons for having a diverse workforce include improved understanding of the client base, increased productivity, more incredible innovation and creativity, an increased skill set, improved recruitment and retention of new team members, and a more excellent talent pool. Stahl et al. [24] suggest that project teams should acknowledge and respect cultural differences, establish norms for the team, develop a team identity and outline roles and responsibilities, over-communicate, build rapport and trust, leverage cultural diversity, and forge a community bond. Building norms specific to the team improves collaboration and optimises team performance. Having a shared goal and a common vision of how to achieve it gives the team an identity that can unite them and promote teamwork. Respecting differences, following through on group norms, and having a common goal help build unity within a team.

Cross-cultural teams can be handled successfully with sensitivity and respect for other cultures. It is time to think of cross-cultural teams as an asset, not a liability.

Table 2 depicts the various innovative strategies the teams use to manage cultural diversity, including leadership styles.

Table 2. Innovative strategies for managing cultural diversities.

Strategies	Source
Leadership styles	[28]
Cultural awareness leadership	[29,30]
Effective cross-cultural communication	
Mutual respect	
Reconciliation	[31]
Local culture	
Parochial approach	[32]
Ethnocentric approach	
Synergistic approach	
Effective channels of communication	[27,33]
Communicating diversities	[34]
Building norms	
Social affiliation	Authors' construct

Source: Authors' construct, 2022.

1.3. Theoretical Framework for the Study

The management of cultural diversity in multinational teams in the mega construction project could be understood with the help of social theories, which focus on collaboration, leadership, communication, and decision-making in identifying root causes and potential solutions [35].

The social network theory primarily deals with a group or network's relationships with their structures and information flow [36]. This theory holds that understanding how interpersonal relationships impact resource and information sharing is crucial. Cultural diversity in the project influences social networks negatively, which affects knowledge sharing and creates silos in communication [19]. SNT helps comprehend how these unofficial networks affect information flow and project success. For instance, one cultural background may exclude others and impede information sharing [36]. This study uses SNT to investigate how cultural diversity influences information organisation and sharing among project teams and identifies misunderstandings and obstacles to productive teamwork.

Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory posits that people and their environments interact, particularly relevant to the construction project as it elucidates how cultural experiences shape decisions and actions [37]. Amandi project teams are multicultural; thus, they operate within varied cultures, norms, and practices that affect their behaviours and decision-making processes. Leadership styles, communication methods, and decision-making approaches differ across cultures, and these variations can lead to misunderstandings [17]. This theory aims to explain how learned behaviours impact performance, teamwork, and collaboration by examining how individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds adapt their behaviours to align with the project environment [28].

The Theory of Cross-Cultural Communication emphasises the importance of understanding and analysing cultural contexts in communication; otherwise, miscommunication may occur due to a lack of acknowledgement of cultural differences in communication styles, values, and norms [38,39]. The construction project is particularly susceptible to communication breakdowns when team members from diverse cultural backgrounds fail to understand each other's communication preferences. This misunderstanding misalignment can lead to conflict, delays, or task errors [39]. The research will elucidate how cultural variations impact the ongoing project through the lens of cross-cultural communication theory. Cultural sensitivity is crucial in enhancing communication effectiveness within a team [19].

Geert Hofstede's theory on cultural dimensions explains how the culture of a society construes its values, interactions, and behaviours. These dimensions include Masculinity vs. Femininity, Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, and Individualism vs. Collectivism [40]. Hofstede's dimensions unveil how cultural backgrounds influence teamwork and behaviour: low-power-distance cultures may favour egalitarian decision-making, while high-power-distance cultures may prefer hierarchical structures. These factors will help in analysing communication issues in Amandi project teams. Comparing these cultural aspects will help find the areas of misalignment and thus help improve the work practices [19].

The study offers a comprehensive overview of managing cultural diversity in construction projects, exploring various theories that highlight different aspects. Social cognitive theory aids in analysing how individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds learn from their environment and how these acquired behaviours impact the teams [37].

Social network theory will explain how cultural differences may cause hindrances to the informal sources of communication, which can further cause hindrances to cooperation and communication [36]. Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory will be applied to discuss how cultural values influence project team behaviours such as decision-making,

the exercise of authority, and teamwork [37]. Cross-cultural communication theory will be used to explain gaps in communication at the construction project and give practical recommendations for improving project outcomes and resolving cultural issues [38]. The study will examine cultural diversity in the construction project and present issues and solutions to improve communication and cooperation for better project success.

2. Materials and Methods

This study is characterised by qualitative and descriptive research to examine how cultural issues can influence the management of multinational project teams. Qualitative research is key to understanding the “how” of the phenomenon, especially when trying to understand the development of the individual within their context. The case-study approach was adopted as it allows different data collection methods. A semi-structured questionnaire was used to apprehend distinct perspectives, and interview questions were framed based on an understanding of cultural diversity and the management of project teams. Attention was paid to simple language, obtaining personal information, and avoiding company-sensitive information.

The first draft of questions was pilot-tested and subsequently revised, incorporating relevant suggestions. Reliability and validity are important for analysing outcomes and evaluating the quality of a study. This study is reliable due to its objective and independent answers and a pattern of similar answers from the interviews. To enrich the quality of the sample and maintain adequate internal reliability, we decided to interview at least three leaders of each of the three major companies involved in the project. Many researchers have developed their interpretation of the meaning of validity, such as the study’s rigour, quality, and trustworthiness.

The research aimed to understand the impact of cultural diversity on communication, decision-making, and teamwork in the construction project. It used social theories like social cognitive, social network, and Hofstede’s cultural dimensions theory to design interview questions. The study also explored respondents’ experiences and practices of working, interacting, and problem-solving. It highlighted challenges and opportunities for improvement in these areas, comprehensively exploring the project’s practical problems.

These requirements are met as this study is thoroughly conducted with a conceptual framework research design to address our problem formulation. Lim [39] and Malik et al. [40] contend that qualitative analysis involves examining data and constructing understanding, uncovering connections and patterns, and identifying significant aspects of the phenomena under investigation. Coding can be employed to organise, manage, and retrieve meaningful data, thereby reducing the likelihood of errors. However, caution should be exercised when using intensive coding techniques as they may yield less usable data. To be effective, coding should be applied judiciously.

Semi-structured interviews offer flexibility in exploring key themes while maintaining consistency in research questions. They allow participants to detail personal experiences and allow for more responses. Due to multicultural diversity, interviews are conducted in respondents’ preferred language, either on-site or remotely. Each interview lasts 45 min to 1 h and collects valuable information. The study utilised audio recording, transcription, and anonymisation to maintain data integrity and protect respondents’ identities. Thematic analysis was employed to identify response patterns, themes, and trends. The process involved coding transcripts, developing themes, cross-referencing themes, and using software tools like NVivo14 to organise, code, and analyse qualitative data. This well-structured, systematic, and robust analysis process allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the data.

This study selected respondents based on their involvement in the construction project and their ability to provide insights into cultural diversity within multinational teams. The respondents were chosen from various roles, including project managers, team leaders, and workers, to capture diverse perspectives from leadership to execution. They were drawn from different cultural backgrounds to ensure a range of experiences and views related to cultural differences were represented. The respondents should have at least 1–2 years of work experience with the Amandi project to share substantial experience with multicultural collaboration. The study chose eight respondents to balance comprehensive data with a manageable scope. The sample size was chosen due to its diversity of perspectives, practical feasibility, and the potential for rich, detailed responses within time and resources. The selection was based on the need to capture diverse experiences related to cultural diversity without overwhelming the data collection process. The study also considered the saturation point, where data collection should stop due to no new themes or insights emerging. The eight respondents provided varied perspectives to achieve saturation within the study's scope.

The Case

The case study is a 200 MW combined cycle, dual-fuel power project located in Aboadze in the western region of Ghana. It was the only large-scale independent power generation project in sub-Saharan Africa to achieve a financial close in 2016. It was named the 2016 African Power Deal of the Year by Project Finance International and IJ Global. The USD 552 million investment required for the project comprised USD 134 million in equity from the sponsor group and USD 418 million in debt financing provided by a group of lenders, including the US Government's development finance institution and the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC). Three major teams on the project were the special purpose vehicle (SPV), engineering procurement contractor (EPC)/main contractor, and subcontractor. The SPV had representatives on-site to oversee the EPC/main contractor, and a subcontract company was hired to perform civil work on the project.

3. Results

This study aimed to explore cultural diversity's influence on managing multinational project teams. This section provides the results and discussions. It is structured around the major themes employed in conducting the interviews: experience in managing multinational teams, challenges and benefits of working with a multinational team, success factors for the effectiveness of multinational teams, and cultural diversity and team performance.

Profile of Respondents

Table 1 summarises the profiles of the managers of the three teams that participated in the study. It shows the nationalities of the eight managers as French (2), Welsh, Irish, Greek, Russian, and Ghanaian (2).

Alt text: Table 3 shows the profiles of respondents, who include French, Greek, Welsh, Irish, Ghanaian, and Russian, with diverse experiences.

It could also be deduced from the table that all eight managers had considerable experience handling multinational projects. The average experience from the respective groups ranged from 10 to 21 years. The main contractor (MC) managers were the most experienced, aged 15–27 years. The range of experience for the special purpose vehicle (SPV) was from 2 to 25 years, and that of the subcontractor (SC) group was 8 and 12 years. These findings indicate that the participants have worked with project team members from different nations and that the information provided could be relied upon to make inferences. It could also be deduced from the table that members of the eight different

project teams originated from twenty-three (23) different nations. These countries have different cultures, which would affect the management of the respective teams. This makes the choice of the present topic for research very relevant and significant.

Table 3. Profile of respondents.

Name	Nationality	Experience in Multinational Projects	Team Nationalities	Team Diversity
MC1	French	22	10	German, Lebanese, Ghanaian, Nigerian, Tunis, Swiss German, Indian, USA
MC2	French	27	11	French, German, Nigerian, Chinese, Ghanaian, UK
MC3	Greek	15	10	Greek, French, Turkish, Lebanese, UK, Spanish, Russian, Belarus, Ghanaian
SPV1	Welsh British	20	6	UK, Ghanaian, Indian, New Zealander
SPV2	British Irish	25	6	UK, Indian, New Zealander, Ghanaian, Romanian, Macedonian
SPV3	Ghanaian	2	6	Ghanaian, UK, New Zealander, Indian, Romanian
SC1	Russian	12	8	Russian, Polish, Romanian, Greek, Albanian, Maldivian, Georgian, Ghanaian
SC2	Ghanaian	8	8	Georgian, Romanian, Greek, Albanian, Ghanaian, Russian

Source: Authors' construct, 2022.

Respondents were asked their opinion concerning the importance of managing culture in multicultural teams, and their responses are below. According to MC1, it is important to understand cultural differences in a globalised world to work together well and reach shared goals. MC2: Cultural awareness is key in avoiding misunderstandings and building trust among team members, ultimately leading to better teamwork and productivity. MC3: Cultural sensitivity enables leaders to manage diverse teams with empathy and respect, fostering a positive and inclusive work environment.

SPV1: Everyone is different. They have different religions, lifestyles, and histories. Thus, multiculturalism requires understanding everyone's background. SPV2: As mentioned, years ago, this was hard. Many African countries now speak English, which is the international business language. Many ex-pats realise that they must adapt to the country's culture. Good management alerts them and sets boundaries. SPV3: Different cultures, backgrounds, and attitudes make it important. As a manager, you must understand each person's culture and background to relate to them and the group. Cultures must be managed because what one finds funny may offend the other. You must understand each person's culture, attitude, and upbringing. Managing cultures reduces team conflicts.

Furthermore, for SC1, being part of a big family has also provided us with a strong support system where we can rely on each other during good and bad times. This sense of, as in SC2, the community has helped us grow and develop as individuals, which, as in SC3, makes us stronger and more resilient in the face of adversity.

On what respondents felt or considered as differences in working with a multinational team, these were their responses: MC1: Considered differences in language, culture, challenges, safety culture, technical aspect, problem-solving, expertise and professionalism, educational level, and beliefs. In the opinion of MC2, differences based on beliefs can be either religious or regarding approaches. For example, in the UK, people have similar upbringings, but in Africa, some come from extremely poor areas, and some are very rich. To understand the differences, it is important to understand how they go about their job

and how they do it. For MC3, there are differences between the ex-pats and locals regarding working hours.

SPV3 said the ex-pats could work up to 10 or 12 h a day, while the locals have a contract that is 8 h a day. The locals need time off for their families, while the ex-pats mostly do not have their families. There are also differences in culture, attitudes, education, upbringing, and personal experiences from working on other projects (SPV1). Differences in the background of members, religion, language barrier, and cultural morality are also noted. SPV1 suggested that coming from a UK background, I know I am expected to be on call 24/7. That means I need to have a good setup in the house, like WIFI and backup power (generator), and Ghana is well set up. When I worked in Rwanda, it took nearly six weeks to get WIFI for where I was working.

Whilst we had power, it was extremely intermittent, and there was no backup generator. To SPV2, the difficulty is that the locals need to understand the culture of the ex-pats, and then they see that the ex-pats should be adapting to theirs. I agree, but it depends on the size of the team we have. We have a small, dedicated team, and it is easier to work with them and explain the ex-pat culture to them. The real thing is being respectful and engaging. The way we have worked is to get our team together and have open discussions. Again, it is down to the manager and controller; the sort of manager would have worked in different countries and is used to it (SPV1). They become very shy and afraid to get the local people to engage. It would be best if you got the shyness out as a manager. You also get the staunch ones on the other side, and they want everybody to adapt to the locals. You try to discover how to do it (SPV3).

A follow-up question was asked about whether ex-pats are very sensitive to knowing the time patterns and whether they often care about each other's background; the answers are provided below. SPV1 and SPV2 discuss the difficulty of adapting to the culture of ex-pats in Ghana. They both agree that having a good set-up in the house, such as WIFI, backup power, and a backup generator, is important. However, the locals need to understand the culture of the ex-pats and are often shy and afraid to engage. They have worked to get their team together and have open discussions. It is down to the manager and controller to get the shyness out of a manager (SPV1; SPV2). Ex-pats are afforded a better contract due to them being outside their environment, and managers need to do a background check to know the interests of team members.

Additionally, there is an exception to every rule, but it does not mean 100% of people of a particular nation are like that. Everyone on the team has met the criteria for their cultural setting, so it is important to avoid generalising (SPV2). Regarding a multicultural team's working environment or atmosphere, MC1 said the team is also discerning. Hence, we are careful what we say, restate, and ensure everyone understands. MC2 said diverse experiences enrich discourse. MC3 also think leaders, managers, and supervisors translate decisions into English for the team. How managers and supervisors communicate with workers is a problem. Information transmission is difficult.

In the SPV1 view, each discipline has one team member who makes discipline-specific judgements. The person still seeks help from others; however, SPV2 said this depends on my values—fun, justice, technological and social responsibility, and openness. Please participate. Fun means working hard and enjoying it. Unlike ex-pats, locals would not ask if they do not know. SPV3 also said intellectual. Work-related discussions often generate distinct perspectives from their varied experiences. Ex-pats work abroad more than Ghanaians. Ex-pats travel and see more. Discussions show that several countries have experience with a project. Ex-pats may encounter many work norms and specifications. Ghanaians may only follow national standards. Ex-pats have more to say than locals. This educates a worldwide team.

In contrast, SC1 believes in team talks. I usually give team instructions or work schedules. I understand Greek and Russian. SC2 claims we sometimes meet as a team to resolve difficulties despite our hierarchical structure. There is no autocracy, either. The study tried to determine what respondents consider a team's strength. MC1 said the following: We have varied perspectives and problem-solving methods. It is fun to employ diverse cultures and perspectives occasionally. Time zones require additional organisation. For instance, if I send a mail from France in the evening to ask a team member in Korea or India a question, I know I will receive a response by the time I get to work the next morning because people work overnight due to time zones. I can only schedule conference calls in the afternoon for my US colleagues. Productivity: Competencies. MC3 thinks the team must have similar project experience and can solve problems easily. Experienced.

Most team members possess multicultural project experience, which enriches the team with diverse cultures. Given that it is a small team overseeing a large project, this experience serves as a considerable asset. I have never worked on a project with such a small management team; however, they contribute valuable knowledge.

The study further aimed to understand the weaknesses of a multicultural team. MC1 suggests that language differences lead to confusion and misinterpretation. We must be mindful of our language as perceptions require mutual consideration. Individuals from similar backgrounds, such as French teammates, will naturally bond. We must proceed cautiously and foster effective teamwork and a supportive atmosphere. MC2 addresses miscommunication, collaborative styles, and tensions. MC3 highlights that, due to their mentalities, the team struggles to meet stringent safety and quality standards on such a large project.

SPV1: My team is strong. Coercive. The team may need more individuals to do what must be done; therefore, pressure is considerable. That should not have started little. Because budgets always cut staffing first. It is never good, but it is cheaper. So, squad size is a vulnerability. Ex-pats and locals. They feel superior. Self-serving people labour. Technology expertise. SPV3: More cultural upbringing. Certain words offend. Each system must be able to understand everyone's culture fully. In ideal circumstances, you teach team members to stay within specific lines. SC1: Safety culture, time, and theft. Language. Getting work instructions from locals is challenging.

What would you consider the top three skills to manage multicultural teams? MC1: First, improve communication. This is crucial—I must ensure the team understands me. Second, as a manager, be open-minded. Third, adaptability to time patterns. I avoid lunch meetings with the French. MC2: Manage, communicate, and set expectations. MC3: Patience, international language skills, and motivating team members to meet project goals. Financially, team building and recognition. SPV1 said the following: Engaging everyone—empowering them to make a difference—by giving them good responsibility. SPV2: Open-door policy, good listener, and achievable goals. Teamwork and confidence. SPV3: Listening. That shows your desire to understand my perspective. Managers should listen and watch, especially during disputes. You require multicultural team management experience. Listening, observation, and experience rank highest. SC1: Organization, people skills, international language, and adaptable leadership. SC2: Patience, multicultural team management, and good supervision.

Respondents were again asked what they would consider key success factors in managing multicultural teams. MC1 said to communicate well and ensure everyone on the team wants to understand each other. Good team building can help find opportunities, especially when everyone needs to get to know each other at the start of a project. To ensure everyone on the team is ready and willing to talk. MC2: Being able to change and

communicate well. MC3: Be able to come together and work as a team without being rude, too strict, or unfair. Getting the team and management to work together better.

SPV1: Give the team power and let them know they have the support of management, which is especially important since the management team is small. SPV2: Values, fairness, honesty, and being a good citizen (touching hearts and minds of the local people from a social aspect). This is about who you are, not what you did as a manager. SPV3: Best productivity and best efficiency. You do not have to waste time settling small fights and disagreements between team members because they do not understand each other. SC1: Good leadership, experience, ability to learn quickly, and the ability to delegate. SC2: A team that agrees on a decision and works well together.

Respondents' perspectives on the significant challenges of working on a multicultural team were varied. MC1 suggested different time zones, cultural differences, technical challenges, and a language barrier; MC2 indicated different mentalities and cultures, respect for colleagues, and hygiene issues; MC3 said safety aspects, welfare facilities, and individual attitudes. SPV1 indicated a few challenges, such as setting up the team, communication, finances, managing expectations, the fear of failing, respect, and language. For subcontractors, SC1 suggested adapting to the environment, health issues, climate, cultural differences, and language barrier. SC2 suggested a language barrier for ex-pats working long hours, and Ghanaian working hours were contracted at 8 h.

The benefits respondents derived from working in multicultural teams based on their experiences are as follows. The benefits of working in multicultural teams, according to MC1, include discovering different cultures, different ways of thinking, and speaking other languages. Different work time patterns: MC2 said working at different places, cross-cultural experience, productivity, new challenges, information, flexibility, learning the traditions and ways of living in a project area or location, and MC2 suggested exposure to different approaches to the workplace. SPV2 suggests that ex-pats meet different people and get to know and understand them, while locals enjoy being part of the team. The most critical details in this text are that SPV3, SC1, and SC2 have experienced different cultures from different countries, including different dialects, manners, morals, and building relationships. They have also gained experience communicating with team members who need help understanding English by learning basic foreign languages, using Google Translate, and disseminating information to other team members and locals. Finally, SC2 has improved in being flexible and has hard work, experience, exposure, diverse problem-solving skills, and improved communication in the English language.

4. Discussion

The study's results are discussed under seven broad themes: the working environment, the importance and benefits of managing culture, the benefits and experiences gained from working in multicultural teams, the strengths and weaknesses of multicultural teams, the skills needed to manage them, success factors in managing a multicultural team, and challenges and differences in working with a multicultural team.

4.1. Description of the Working Environment in a Multicultural Team

The main contractors (MC1, 2, and 3) think that team members' different backgrounds make for better discussions and rich experiences. However, there is inherent tension due to language and cultural differences, which can affect the decision-making process. SPVs believe that project managers need to do a few background checks to understand the interests of team members and the habits that trigger certain behaviours. Stahl et al. [24] believe managers should acknowledge and respect cultural differences, establish norms for the team, develop a team identity, outline roles and responsibilities, over-communicate,

leverage cultural diversity, and build rapport and trust. SC1 and 2 believe ensuring a conducive atmosphere on project sites is crucial to successful multinational projects. Kissi et al. [27] paint a similar picture of a conducive atmosphere as “flexibility”. Team members’ awareness of their diversity makes them more flexible when adapting to changes.

4.2. Importance and the Benefits of Managing Culture in Multicultural Teams

The answers from MC1, MC2, and MC3 show that it is very important to manage multinational project teams because it lets project managers learn about the different cultures of team members, which helps them communicate better. It backs up Budur’s [28] claim that “the project manager’s ability to communicate directly affects how well the project turns out”. On the other hand, the SPVs could only agree with the main contractors about the problems that might come up in a multicultural team where people from different cultures work together. Team members (locals and expatriates) are brought on with different histories and have different approaches to life, religions, and beliefs. Farinha et al. [29] state that “challenges faced by multicultural teams lie in the diverse cultural backgrounds of their team members”. So, from a multicultural perspective, one must understand everybody’s background, that is, their culture, attitudes, and upbringing.

Subcontractors one and two (SC1 and SC2) also believe that managing culture in a multicultural team is important because team members are from different countries. Multicultural teams provide project managers with rich experience, making problem-solving easier. The managers alluded to the fact that multicultural teams are enlightened by learning about other cultures from other countries regarding how others do their work and their manners and etiquette. We have worked together for nearly ten (10) years, making us look like a big family now (SC1). This affirms the position of Kissi et al. [27], who argued that “diversity does ensure that the team will have the adequate mix of skills, knowledge, expertise, and experience to guide itself”.

4.3. Benefits and Experience Gained from Working in Multicultural Teams

Main contractors (MCs) believe that multicultural teams bring several benefits to project teams, such as different ways of thinking and sharing of experiences, cross-cultural experiences, new challenges, adopting different work time patterns, and the beauty of having different skills on a team. Ely and Thomas [23] think that people from different cultures can give ideas from different points of view. This makes it easier to spark creativity and improve team performance. Newman et al. [11] state that members of multinational teams can list more ideas, alternatives, and solutions and that diversity in multicultural teams can bring better results with more creative solutions.

Kissi et al. [27] state that different cultures provide different distributions of skills and knowledge. The correlation in skills between two individuals drawn from the same country is likely more significant than between individuals from different countries. Subcontractors (SC1 and 2) posit that a project manager enjoys the benefits of having a blend of experienced ex-pats and a team of experienced locals in the same multinational project team and that experience, knowledge outside their scope of work, vast exposure to other nationalities, different approaches to problem-solving, and teamwork are critical elements needed to achieve a common goal.

4.4. The Strengths and Weaknesses of the Multicultural Teams

Contractors on a project think that the different ways they think about and solve problems are one of their biggest strengths. Sayidganiev et al. [30] said that different cultures spread skills and knowledge differently. People from the same country are more likely to have skills like each other than people from different countries. Stahl et al. [24] said cultural diversity affects people’s happiness and makes a team more creative. Kissi

et al. [27] argued that diversity does “ensure that the team will have the adequate mix of skills, knowledge, expertise, and experience to guide itself”. Ely and Thomas [23] affirm that diverse cultural project teams often create an internal culture that directs the efforts and increases the team’s cohesion, facilitating communication and good performance.

The subcontractors (SC) believe that they must implement systems to coordinate all efforts towards an expected end to ensure an effective team. Teamwork is also a strength, whether in terms of fast work, good work, quality, learning, or team building. The language barrier is a big problem for a multicultural project team because it can make it hard for people to talk to and understand each other. Shatila [31] argued that although people from different cultures get along well, their interactions frequently result in conflicts. Newman et al. [11] say that the diversity of multicultural teams makes them more likely to have problems, such as language barriers, poor communication, and different ways of talking to each other. Subcontractors (SC1 and SC2) talked about how the different cultures of team members can have an effect and cause problems. The contractors also said that they had to pay attention to each other because the different cultures of team members can make it hard for them to meet high-quality standards.

4.5. Skills Needed in Managing Multicultural Teams

The complexity of managing a multicultural project team demands that managers have the skills needed to drive all the efforts of the team members towards the realisation of the corporate goal. The top three skills mentioned by the major contractors to manage a multicultural team effectively are good communication skills, adapting to the best management style, and an awareness of the various cultures by learning an international language. Several researchers have strongly supported the skills above. The first to be cited in the literature is Liu et al. [32], who posits that “the skills required of a project manager are the ability to understand the culture of the people belonging to the team”. According to Ely and Thomas [23], project managers should define communication channels to avoid problems of understanding regarding deadlines, quality, and costs. To this end, the respondents indicated good communication skills, teamwork, and leadership.

The SPVs listed integrating the team, understanding how it works, and getting people to commit to it as their top three skills for managing multicultural teams. The subcontractors (SC1 and 2) believe that organisational skills, human relations, the ability to communicate in everyday or international language, and a flexible leadership style are the top skills that make up their team. Ely and Thomas [24] stated that project managers should define communication channels to avoid problems of understanding regarding deadlines, quality, and costs.

4.6. Success Factors in Managing a Multicultural Team

The main contractors said managing multicultural teams requires good communication, effective team building, strong relationships, and the ability to change. This confirms the position of Shatila [31], who posits that managers of multinational teams should find a balance between the different behaviours and values of the team members so that they find the best strategies to achieve the desired objective. The SPVs, on the other hand, think that a critical success factor is building a culture that gives the team all the skills it needs to do the best job possible on a project. Also, survey respondents said that a high level of management commitment is good for the success of a project. According to Liu et al. [32], “Among the skills required of a project manager is the ability to understand the culture of the team members”. This is so much in line with what the respondents said. To answer this question, the respondents (SC1 and 2) pointed out that ensuring teamwork within a multinational project team is one of the most challenging tasks for the manager. The

challenges project managers often face are how to take advantage of the diversity within the group, set up the team, manage language and communication, handle different levels of financial expectations, overcome the fear of failing, and many more. Brett et al. [18] described it as “inappropriately handling all these issues in a multinational project team”.

4.7. Challenges and Differences in Working with a Multicultural Team

There are many problems that multicultural teams must deal with, like not being able to speak the same language, not being able to communicate well, having different cultures, not respecting team members, problems with hygiene, safety, and welfare, having different mentalities and cultures, and technical problems. Managers must get task teams and project teams to work together and coordinate with each other through social networks and personal interactions between people who live in different places. Project managers also must deal with problems like adapting to the environment, health conditions, climate, cultural differences, language barriers, ex-pats working long hours and expecting locals to work long hours, and different views on time. According to Stahl and Maznevski [17], people are not satisfied working in a diverse environment because they are uncomfortable with dissimilar people. The contractors (MC1, 2, and 3) believe that language, religious beliefs, educational level, and professionalism are key differences that characterise a multinational project team.

Adeshola et al. [33] say that working with multinational teams is different because people are different in race, culture, gender, age, and ability to do physical work. Lim [39] says that a multinational team’s cultural, legal, and political structures and the demographics of its employees in the host country are all different. Farinha et al. [29] say that the different cultures of the people on multicultural teams make them hard to work with. SPVs posit that people from the same background may have a similar appreciation for cultures different from other groups. The position of the subcontractors was like that of the other contractors. Sayidganiev et al. [30] posit that different cultures provide different distributions of skills and knowledge. The correlation in skills between two individuals drawn from the same country is likely more meaningful than between individuals from different countries.

4.8. Implication for Policy, Research, and Practice

For a company to succeed, it needs a workforce that reflects the community. Team member engagement can be increased in five ways: by providing managers with training on the value of diversity and the tools they need to build and maintain a diverse workforce; by evaluating reporting structures and feedback mechanisms; by developing and implementing inclusive policies; by granting employees time off for religious holidays; by providing on-site daycare; by allowing for more flexible work hours; and by forming employee-led task forces. Beekeeper, a digital workplace platform, can facilitate the dissemination of team member resources and group-specific information such as resources, training opportunities, forthcoming events, and positive narratives. Enhancing cultural competency, supporting and welcoming other points of view, providing implicit bias training, advocating the use of mentors, and fostering cultural sensitivity are all effective strategies for increasing diversity.

5. Conclusions

This study examines the development of effective multicultural teams in engineering design and construction. It suggests that successful construction firms embed change through integrated changes to cross-cultural team selection, joint decision-making, communication, teamwork, effective people selection, and project selection. Participants affirmed that multicultural teamwork could be captured at many organizational levels, allowing project teams to reach high-performance levels consistently. These findings have implica-

tions for construction managers committed to improving team productivity and enhancing multicultural integration. The study highlights the challenges the construction project faces due to its multicultural teams. It reveals that cultural diversity significantly impacts project success, causing misunderstandings, delays in decision-making, and communication breakdowns. The study provides insights into managing cultural diversity in multinational construction teams using social theories and practical management techniques. It highlights the negative effects of unmanaged cultural diversity and offers potential solutions to overcome these challenges, clearly responding to the research question.

The findings may not be as broadly applicable as they could be due to the study's limitations, which include a small sample size, possible researcher bias, and construction-project-specific contextual constraints. Future research should examine interventions like cultural competency training and the function of technology in managing cultural diversity in multinational teams in addition to longitudinal studies and larger, more varied sample sizes.

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Data Availability Statement: The interview data collected for the research study are available upon reasonable request. The data comprise transcripts of interviews conducted with participants from various backgrounds on a mega project in Ghana. To ensure the privacy and confidentiality of interviewees, personal identifiers have been removed, and steps have been taken to minimise any risk of re-identification. Researchers interested in accessing the data must submit a request outlining their research intentions and how they plan to use the data. Access will be granted at the discretion of the research team, provided that the proposed use aligns with ethical research standards and respects the confidentiality of the participants.

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