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Soft Skills & Communication Enhancing Virtual Team Collaboration: The Impact of Active Listening Techniques on Communication Efficiency

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Abstract

Virtual space in the current era is developing as an emerging medium to communicate and interact easily. In professional space, virtual teams potentially have benefits to attain easy access to the workplace, but active listening and communication gaps become a pain point. The study explores the way active listening techniques impact communication efficiency and the role virtual team collaboration has in this area. Based on primary data, statistical evidence shows the public opinion of two virtual teams surveyed.

Keywords: Virtual Team Collaboration, digital workplace, communication, active listening, remote work, cyber security, internet, digital dependency.

1. Introduction

A virtual team refers to a specific situation when a group of individuals working as a team but not being present physically in co-locations, and instead have an online communication environment. Due to this gap, among individual team members, a communicational limitation is witnessed. Communication through not presenting physically to each other is very much affecting their collaboration which is a crucial part of ensuring communication and active listening flow [1]. The study explores strategic ways to enhance virtual team collaboration among a group of participants belonging to work-from-home category job backgrounds to determine the way active listing techniques they pose. It further explores the way their active listening techniques impact on communication efficiency level that changes the performance level of the virtual team.

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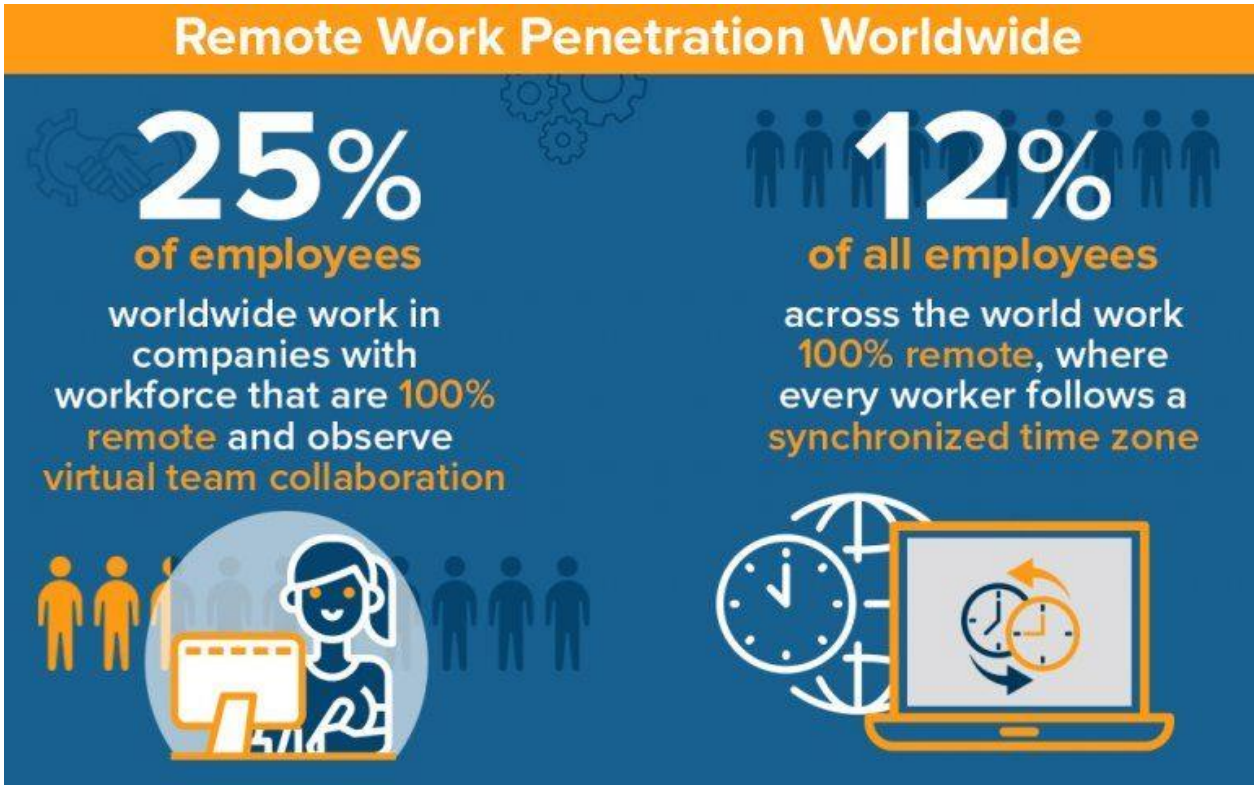

Figure 1: Global Remote Work Penetration **[2]**

The problem area, the study is focused on changing work settings and working patterns globally. From the pandemic situations and global digital transformation, workplaces are now changing towards more digital formats and becoming a hybrid form of work setting [3]. Due to this, nearly 25% of global workplaces are now shifting towards a 100% remote or work-from-home system and observing virtual team collaboration (Refer to Figure 1). Therefore, amid the situation where global workplaces are changing towards virtual mediums for team performance, it is important to review the way active listening skills are needed to imply a positive effect on communication and team performance.

2. Literature Review

Virtual team collaboration

The concept of a virtual team is discussed as a general team or group of individuals working collaboratively from their digital space. From a general perspective, virtual teams have become an emerging strategic form of groups that helps to create segmented dedicated teams to work collaboratively [4]. This makes the virtual work easy to access, with less hustle and scope to extend work progress. However, from the COVID pandemic experiences, it is also observed that remote working also leads to loneliness, stress and social isolation [5]. Therefore, collaborative virtual teams are now developing as an alternative grouping method to work remotely.

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Active listening techniques

In group competitiveness, active listening is a crucial part of ensuring the effective flow of interaction and clarification of conversation. It is true that in virtual teams, active listening is far more important just because verbal communication is mostly used as a medium of interaction [6]. In that case, actively listening and understanding the statement becomes a crucial part of engaging in a group-based task. However, due to lack of connectivity, internet dependency, conflict of teams and lack of physical presence make the prices challenging. Following this, techniques like virtual video calling, and meeting in digital platforms become challenging due to network issues and dependency on internet mediums only [7]. Thus, active listening techniques via digital mediums made the team collaboration easy and effective but it needs a stable connectivity to be operated.

Communication efficiency in virtual teams

Virtual team meetings or project development as well as any other type of working progress need communication as key criteria. Due to this, the efficiency level of communication in a virtual team depends on the communicational mediums such as digital platforms, stability and accessibility [8]. However, communication efficiency can be disrupted in a virtual setting just because of a lack of clearance or misunderstanding leading to conflicts. The point of competitiveness in the workplace is presented while lack of communication may have an impact on their behaviour and lead to conflict [9]. In that case, a balance between the operator's or individuals' communication medium or flow is necessary. The theory of communication involves compromising, connection and cooperativeness as key metrics to determine the flow of interaction [10]. Therefore, the overall area of communication and active listening in digital or virtual teams depends on the way mediums are working collaboratively or fluently.

3. Method

The results contained in this study came from a border extent where participants from two different groups in virtual teams were surveyed. Based on the primary quantitative method of data collection, each participant has been selected based on posts via LinkedIn. In that post, details regarding research, survey methods and expected outcomes were instructed. In the developed survey questionnaire, 11 close-ended questions regarding the topic background have been selected to ask, based on the given responses in the post, only 17 candidates have been selected as samples. 8 candidates belong to Team One and the remaining 9 candidates belong to Team Two. Based on the survey results given by the candidates, a statistical analysis method has been chosen to analyse the quantitative set of data from the study.

Further, for the preliminary observations, the study uses a tool for data analysis such as SPSS. The tool has been specifically used to draw out descriptive statistics on the dataset gathered by the survey responses. Based on the analytical results, overall discussion has been taken to address research questions. The study also maintains ethical values during the data collection by not composing any compensated effort to participate, and their anonymity has been maintained to ensure privacy.

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4. Findings

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

The study forwarding the data analysis process to SPSS-based descriptive analysis involves statistical correlation as well. The following Table 1 shows the descriptive statistical values generated from the study. Based on each question, the underlying values of mean and standard deviation need to be significant.

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	**Std. Deviation**	**N**
Q1.	2.69	1.537	16
Q2.	3.44	1.459	16
Q3.	3.19	1.515	16
Q4.	2.69	1.448	16
Q5.	3.19	1.515	16
Q6.	3.44	1.459	16
Q7.	2.69	1.537	16
Q8.	2.69	1.448	16
Q9.	3.19	1.515	16
Q10.	3.44	1.459	16
Q11.	2.69	1.537	16

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

(Source: SPSS)

Analysis

The above table shows the majority of the questions have St. deviation value more than 1.5 units which indicates their underlying significance is present. It is because every variable's 1.5 set value means over 3 that proves their existing significance is presented.

4.2 Correlations

Correlations												
		Q1.	Q2.	Q3.	Q4.	Q5.	Q6.	Q7.	Q8.	Q9.	Q10.	Q11.
Q1.	Pearson Correlation	1	.927**	.943**	.972**	.943**	.927**	1.000**	.972**	.943**	.927**	1.000**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

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	N	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16
Q2.	Pearson Correlation	.927**	1	.955**	.890**	.955**	1.000**	.927**	.890**	.955**	1.000**	.927**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16
Q3.	Pearson Correlation	.943**	.955**	1	.910**	1.000**	.955**	.943**	.910**	1.000**	.955**	.943**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16
Q4.	Pearson Correlation	.972**	.890**	.910**	1	.910**	.890**	.972**	1.000**	.910**	.890**	.972**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16
Q5.	Pearson Correlation	.943**	.955**	1.000**	.910**	1	.955**	.943**	.910**	1.000**	.955**	.943**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16
Q6.	Pearson Correlation	.927**	1.000**	.955**	.890**	.955**	1	.927**	.890**	.955**	1.000**	.927**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

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	N	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16
Q7.	Pearson Correlation	1.000**	.927**	.943**	.972**	.943**	.927**	1	.972**	.943**	.927**	1.000**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16
Q8.	Pearson Correlation	.972**	.890**	.910**	1.000**	.910**	.890**	.972**	1	.910**	.890**	.972**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16
Q9.	Pearson Correlation	.943**	.955**	1.000**	.910**	1.000**	.955**	.943**	.910**	1	.955**	.943**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16
Q10.	Pearson Correlation	.927**	1.000**	.955**	.890**	.955**	1.000**	.927**	.890**	.955**	1	.927**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16
Q11.	Pearson Correlation	1.000**	.927**	.943**	.972**	.943**	.927**	1.000**	.972**	.943**	.927**	1

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	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	16	16	16	16	0116	16	16	16	16	16	16
****. Correlation is significant at the 0. level (2-tailed).**												

Table 2: Correlations (Source: SPSS)

Analysis

In the above table, the correlation has been made based on the variables or questions analysed in the study. As per the results, it can be stated that staff engagement, frequency of communication and active listing impact the performance of a virtual team. It is because every person's correlation value was found less than 1.5 that makes their existing connectivity presented. On the other hand, the end correlation significance level is found at 0. Unit in 2-tier validation, which is less 0.05 value. Thus, the correlation has been significant and proven by the analysis here.

5. Discussion

The context of virtual team performance and collaboration hereby found with a deep connection of staff engagement and communication or active listening techniques influence them. Due to this, the primary data showed the majority of the population consider communication as a more significant factor in a virtual team. On the other hand, it is also true that data breaches, security issues in cyberattacks and lack of connectivity are common issues in digital mediums [11]. Due to this, the overall context seems to be a bit correlated to each factor where communication, active lighting with proper infrastructural development by a virtual team is needed. Thus, the problem associated with home isolation is dependent on the team's collaboration, which is associated with communication flow and active listening scale.

6. Conclusion

Following the overall context, the study concludes that the impact of active listening techniques on communication is positive. Team in virtual mediums attains better scope to interact by these habits. However, due to a lack of physical appearance, communicational misconception is possible and network dependency makes the process challenging. In terms of solutions, more accurate communication and technological advancement are needed to make virtual mediums stable.

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