Introduction to the Minitrack on Emerging Issues in Distributed Group Decision-Making: Opportunities and Challenges

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This mini track addresses emerging issues, such as diversity, culture, adaptability, mobility and agility related to teams in distributed group decision-making, as well as the underlying theories of group dynamics, coordination, and communications in both swift and ad-hoc groups. The papers submitted specifically examined the emerging issues related to team configuration, diversity and performance in a distributed environment.

The mini track attracted several papers related to various aspects of distributed decision making. Accepted papers study emerging issues of trust, non-trust, diversity and behavior in distributed group decision-making. In the first paper authors argue that the fastest way for a group of experts to select raw ideas is in parallel. They hypothesize and examine that it is sufficient to build a shared mental model of the criterion in order to achieve consensus on the overall selection result: it is not necessary to discuss the ideas themselves. The second paper looks at swift teams formed with the purpose of recovering from operational emergencies. Authors found that in the evolution from early to later stage, media usage shifts from highly synchronous to asynchronous and the structural characteristics of the teams’ collaboration networks mutate as well. These effects are different when comparing high vs. low performing teams. The third paper discusses obstacles including low participant, distractions and inefficiency, participant often face in collaborative learning. Their experiment found that compared to face to face meetings and other online meetings, CSS will receive high satisfaction in solving low participation, distraction and inefficiency and several factors, which are related to participation, attention (minimize distraction) and efficiency, play crucial roles in collaborative learning.

The fourth study takes a closer look at communication as a team building strategy for global firms with an employee base with both geographical and cultural diversity. They propose that emerging tools form a new paradigm addressing the communication gaps often encountered in managing a global workforce, by facilitating more engagement and proactive participation of an employee who may not typically have a chance to interface with his team members face to face, resulting in more employees that have a more rewarding experience and are have a more productive team output. They also discuss the role of the manager in maintaining effective communication and building trust to maximize the potential of a culturally and geographically diverse workforce is analyzed. The fifth paper synthesizes the group support systems literature (GSS) with a focus on adaptive structuration theory (AST) and media richness theory (MRT). They conclude that the extant literature is narrowly focused with respect to task and that the AST literature is lacking in investigations of the effects of social context cues. The sixth paper examines how the user attributes (age, sex, knowledge, experience) influence the factors of Anshin for online shopping users. They investigate users’ subjective sense of security, which they call Anshin in Japanese. They showed that woman and low experience level group feel Anshin when provided with secure systems and services. Moreover, they argue that other group do not feel Anshin when provided with secure systems and services.

Each of the six papers is timely, as they address emerging issues related to distributed group decision-making. The distributed group decision making area is still emerging and research is conflicting. As long as research produces mixed results, there will be continual need for validation and replication of experiments and development of new underlying theories.