The impact of team diversity on team outcomes in a Korean context: a case of a public enterprise*

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I. Introduction

Diversity management has been a popular topic among academics and practitioners over the last several decades, and a number of writers have presented their own definition of managing diversity (e.g., Harvey & Allard, 2009; Kandola, 1995; Kossek & Lobel, 1996; Shen et al., 2009; Mor Barak, 2014). These definitions include various key features. The first feature is that diversity and differences between people can contribute to organizational success if they are effectively managed. The second feature is that diversity includes not only the traditionally referred to categories such as gender, ethnicity, and disability, but more broadly defined ways in which people are different. The final feature is that managing diversity deals with the issues of organizational culture and the working environment. One of the major reasons for the importance given to diversity management is the demographic changes taking place particularly in the United States and Western Europe. That is, ethnic minorities and women have been increasingly entering the workplace (Kandola, 1995; Mor Barak, 2014; Tsui & Gutek, 1999). Reflecting these demographic changes, research in managing diversity has been mainly conducted in the Western countries (e.g., Bell, 2012; Cox et al., 1991; Fitzsimmons, 2013; Harvey & Allard, 2009; Nemeth, 1986; Saavedra, 1990; Tapia, 2009). In fact, these countries have been relatively diverse societies due to continuous migration from other countries. Thus, managing diversity in the workplace may be appealing and needed under the context of changing demographics. However, it can be questioned whether diversity produces high performance, even if it is effectively managed, in countries where differences of people are not accepted and people such as women and the disabled are not included in the mainstream and, in fact, may be actively discriminated against.