

**The role of accountability in fostering effective team
collaboration**

by

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ABSTRACT

In a post-Covid 19 business environment, the strategic endeavours of senior leaders in organisations to harness team collaboration benefits have been accelerated. The business conversation has progressed from debating the value of collaboration in teams towards how effective team collaboration may be embedded to achieve greater financial performance and organisational resilience. The present research considers the role that accountability may play in embedded collaboration within cross-specialist teams, particularly in a professional services environment. This arises from the limited theoretical understanding which currently exists in relation to the construct of accountability and the construct of effective of effective team collaboration, particularly in relation to accountability within teams. This research study's scope considers the role that different forms and levels of accountability play in relation to driving and embedding effective team collaboration, through a qualitative inductive phenomenology study conducted within a single professional services organisation operating from different offices across Africa. The research findings highlight 11 enabling conditions, collectively, at an individual, team and organisational level which together suggest an Effective Team Collaboration Accountability Framework which contributes to existing theoretical literature relating to formal and informal accountability, as well as peer accountability within a team context, and which provides a framework for organisational management to create and diagnose effective team collaboration accountability ecosystems in pursuit of enhanced effective team collaboration within organisations.

KEY WORDS

Accountability, felt accountability, peer accountability, effective team collaboration, organisational behaviour.

DECLARATION

I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University. I further declare that I have obtained the necessary authorisation and consent to carry out this research.

Natasha Rech

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CHAPTER 1: PROBLEM DEFINITION AND PURPOSE

1.1 Introduction and description of the problem

Organisations around the world have valued the power of collaboration within teams (Haas & Mortensen, 2016) but many organisations have struggled to embed team collaboration behaviour within their structures. The Covid-19 pandemic and remote working has significantly set back team collaboration and organisations are in pursuit of effective mechanism for driving organisational collaborative behaviour (Hoskins, 2021). As a result, solutions for embedding effective team collaboration within large organisations today, as quickly as possible, is in high demand. Global surveys report that chief executive officers (CEOs) wrestling with collaboration endeavours have made improving collaboration a strategic priority to boost the resilience of their organisations (Deloitte Insights, 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic has exponentially created and accelerated “the remote and hybrid workforce” and organisations unaccustomed to remote working are increasingly coming to recognise the value of and challenges of establishing and fostering effective team collaboration in a post-pandemic world of work (World Economic Forum, 2020, p. 16). Large professional service firms continue to be vigorously engaged in the collaboration demand drive, primarily by virtue of their numerous deeply specialised and, for the large part, silo-structured knowledge teams who are often required to advise clients holistically in relation to commercial problems and sector-related issues (Gardner H. K., 2017a). In recent years, experts in the field have indicated that business conversations are moving away from questioning the need for collaboration (looking for evidence of its effectiveness) towards a better understanding of how companies can embed effective collaboration within their organisations (LawVision, 2021). This is particularly the case in large professional service firms (LawVision, 2021), the focus of this research study.

This research study aims to contribute to a better understanding of how teams of specialists who work together towards a common goal experience and perceive accountability to better understand the nuanced role that accountability may play in fostering effective collaboration within large professional firms. Accountability becomes relevant within teams where formal accountability systems and processes

may be limited, or where multiple layers of accountability may interact with each other impacting the behaviour of individuals within the team. From a theoretical perspective, as discussed in greater detail below, effective team collaboration literature dealing with the role of accountability within teams is limited. Turning to accountability literature, although accountability as a construct has been shown to yield both positive and negative outcomes from individuals in organisations (Hall, Frink, & Buckley, 2017), knowledge is limited regarding the precise forms and levels of accountability that optimally drive effective collaboration within teams. Neither accountability nor effective team collaboration literature elucidate what appropriate forms and levels of accountability best foster positive effective team collaboration. This research study pursues this topic to better understand the role that accountability plays in fostering effective team collaboration, given the current business demand for deeper entrenchment of collaboration within organisations globally.

The reason for businesses' intense drive towards collaboration can be found in the clear outcomes of increased collaboration within the workplace which organisations would like to harness, all adding to the resilience of an organisation. This includes enhanced organisational effectiveness (Brown & Duguid, 1991; Richter, Dawson, & West, 2011), enhanced innovation and learning (Brown & Duguid, 1991; Gardner, 2017b), enhanced strategy, political benefits and new knowledge creation (Hardy, Phillips, & Lawrence, 2003), improved client loyalty and retention (Gardner, 2017b) and better organisational transparency and risk management (Gardner, 2017b). In addition, significantly improved organisational financial performance has put collaboration high on the CEO agenda. A relatively recent quantitative longitudinal study by Gardner (2017b, p. 24) provides persuasive empirical evidence that "smart collaboration" between deep subject matter experts within professional services firms (law, consultancy and accounting) provides exponentially increased financial performance (revenue and profit) than that generated in its absence. This builds quantitatively on existing literature relating to the improvement performance benefits of collaboration within teams (Haas & Mortensen, 2016). Given the rich outcomes of collaboration, it is no wonder that greater collaboration is being sought by large professional service firms, particularly in an increasingly complex and competitive business environment. These firms serve a sophisticated and demanding client base who wrestle daily with volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) problems

in their business environment (Millar, Groth, & Mahon, 2018). Accordingly, they in turn demand solutions from their service providers that fit their environment, which can often only be created through the innovation, enhanced strategy, new knowledge creation and organisational effectiveness that specialist team collaboration brings (Gardner, 2017b).

Despite the beneficial outcomes of collaboration for large professional service firms and their clients, many continue to grapple with numerous challenges related to fostering and embedding collaboration in the workplace (LawVision, 2021). Evidence of this can be found commonly in arguments against silo organisational design structures within companies, which are often depicted as blameworthy direct contributors of sub-optimal learning, performance, skills development and overall collaboration (Casciaro, Edmondson, & Jang, 2019). Professional service firms are increasingly turning to specialist consultants for help with better understanding and addressing the daily presence of inter-specialist team apathy in their organisations in order not only to harness collaboration benefits immediately but also to ensure they are geared up for future success (Gardner H. K., 2017a). Numerous leading global legal professional service firms zealously laud useful tools which shed light on the antecedents of ineffective collaboration and provide practical advice for fostering and embedding collaboration, evidencing their appreciation for collaboration enabling mechanisms aimed at overcoming embedding difficulty in the workplace (Gardner, 2017b). The challenges that organisations face in embedding effective collaboration within organisations are far ranging. Huxham and Vangen (2004) identified the phenomenon of collaboration inertia and defined it as collaborative efforts which result in negligible, slow or hard-won outputs. Other researchers, whilst not using this term, have equally noticed these outcomes in relation collaboration attempts, highlighting that leadership across silo structures in organisations need to better foster collaboration to avoid sub-optimal outcomes (Casciaro et al., 2019). Subsequent research attempting to explain some of the difficulties relating to collaboration have cited the collaboration paradoxes alive in governance, leadership and management tensions (Vangen, 2016), issues such as high costs, management struggles, conflicts and cultural diversity (Vangen & Winchester, 2014) (Gardner H. K., 2017a), as well as trust issues (Gardner H. K., 2017a). In the last decade there have been a number of studies exploring multicultural collaboration (Salas & Gelfand, 2013) and team trust (Costa, Fulmer, & Anderson, 2018; Feitosa,

Grossman, Kramer, & Salas, 2020).

Despite the fact that effective team collaboration literature spans numerous domains (Mathieu, Maynard, Rapp, & Gilson, 2008), research has been limited in relation to the role that accountability plays in fostering effective collaboration within teams. Various antecedents and enabling conditions that drive effective team collaboration have been explored by the literature. These include (Mathieu et al., 2008): individual level factors such as individual team members skills and competencies, their personality traits, their diversity, their fault line strengths, their position and status and their network capabilities; team level factors such as task structures, external leader influence, team outcome interdependence, training, leadership, structure and team shared mental models; and organisation and environment level factors such as organisational design, environmental complexity, openness climates, coordination systems, and culture. Stated another way, the enabling conditions of effective team collaboration can be said to be a compelling direction for the team, a strong team structure, a supportive context and a shared mindset (Haas & Mortensen, 2016). A number of moderators of effective team collaboration have also been identified at an individual, team and organisational level, including communication and coordination (Mathieu et al., 2008), perseverance, network creation, team leader fairness, team member reliability and communication, collaborative cultures and appropriate collaboration reward and recognition systems (Gardner, 2015), as well trust (Jong, Dirks, & Gillespie, 2016) and positive leader-leader exchange relationships (Herdman, Yang, & Arthur, 2017).

As can be seen from the synopsis above, from the effective team collaboration literature considered for this report little guidance is offered in relation to the role that accountability (formally or informally) may specifically play in relation to driving effective collaborative efforts in a manner that is appropriate and yields positive collaborative behaviour. Haas and Mortensen (2016) and Gardner (2012) touch on the topic, the former advocating for a supportive team structure which includes positive behaviour promoting norms, and the latter in her research exploring the effect of performance pressure (which included an element of accountability) on collaboration outcomes, finding it can drive both positive outcomes of motivation as well as negative outcomes of sub-optimal team effectiveness in relation to overall performance. However, aside from these authors, little is known about the most

appropriate forms and levels of accountability as a driver of positive behaviour in teams, the behaviour of effective collaboration.

In summary, accountability is to a large degree absent from the effective team collaboration literature, surprising because widely considered an important and effective driver of behaviour within the workplace (Hall et al., 2017). Accordingly, this gap in the literature is worthy of further exploration. This research report aims to add to the effective team collaboration literature discourse by exploring the role that accountability may play in fostering effective team collaboration in the workplace.

1.2 Research purpose

The purpose of this research to better understand what appropriate effective team collaboration accountability looks like - what form does it, or could it or should it take - within the particular context of high-performance cross-specialist collaborative teams? Within accountability literature, numerous forms of accountability have been identified, often overlapping in nature, including formal and informal accountability (Hall et al., 2017), hierarchical and socialising (Roberts, 1991), social (Frey-Heger & Barrett, 2021) and group and peer accountability (Gelfand, Lim, & Raver, 2004; Goodman, Pearson, & Mthombeni, 2021; Kou & Stewart, 2018; Zhang & Goh, 2018). In addition, literature relating to various levels of accountability exist, relating to the degree to which an actor is held either formally or informally accountable by a particular source, and which differs due to the source of accountability experienced or due to moderating factors such as trust (Goodman et al., 2021; Hall, Blass, Ferris, & Massengale, 2004; Hall et al., 2017).

However, Hall et al. (2017) advocate that accountability as a scholarly domain is still young in its development. They highlight that, at a micro-level unit of analysis focusing on felt accountability of an individual within the workplace, accountability is a double-edged sword, which may drive positive outcomes but may also lead to resentment, demotivation and counterproductive behaviour (Hall et al., 2017). Increased accountability may lead to desirable behaviour and outcomes, such as coordinated and efficient teamwork, and can create awareness in an actor that his actions impact others (Roberts, 1991), but it can also lead to ageism, wastefulness, flawed performance evaluation, cognitive biases amplification, heightened negative

employee outcomes, reduction in job satisfaction and increase in job-induced tension (Hall et al., 2017).

Hall et al. (2017, p. 215) propose that a valuable future area of research would be to “address the appropriate forms and levels of accountability organisations should impose to encourage positive outcomes while limiting negative consequences [of accountability] for both the actor and the organization”. This second theoretical gap is worthy of further exploration. This research report aims to add to a growing body of qualitative accountability literature in its exploration of what appropriate forms and levels of accountability foster effective specialist team collaboration.

The scope of this research focuses on collaboration between specialist knowledge experts comprising teams created to achieve a particular goal, within a single professional service firm which operates in six countries in Africa. The research aim to contribute to providing professional service firm leaders and management with a better understanding of the usefulness that different forms and levels of accountability can play in fostering effective collaboration between specialist teams today, taking a step closer to enabling organisations to harness the benefits of effective team collaboration. As CEOs build collaboration into their organisational strategies in a post-Covid world, this will be valuable today and critical in planning for a fast-changing future.

Following the outline of the introduction to the research problem contained in this Chapter 1 of this report, Chapter 2 contains a literature review exploring the constructs of effective collaboration and accountability, to better understand the role that accountability may play in fostering effective collaboration within teams of specialists at professional services firms. In Chapter 3, specific research questions are then posed flowing from the literature review.

The methodology used for this research study follows in Chapter 4 of this report, focusing on a phenomenology-based qualitative research design as the most appropriate method of better understanding the relatively under-explored and dispersed constructs of collaboration and accountability.

Chapter 5 contains an in-depth accounting of the results of the qualitative research study, which are then discussed in Chapter 6 and aligned to the central themes

contained in the research questions. Finally, Chapter 7 of this report contains the conclusions and recommendations flowing from the research, including theoretical implications of the study and practical managerial implications for stakeholders affected by the research. Finally, the study's limitations and suggested future areas of research are also contained in Chapter 7 of this report.

Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The literature considered for this research study first examines collaboration literature found in and amongst the bodies of research relating to team effectiveness, teamwork and psychology of teams. A definition of collaboration is proposed, followed by considerations of what is known about the beneficial effects of collaboration in the workplace, the barriers to collaboration, collaboration antecedents and moderators. This broad understanding of the construct of collaboration aims to identify where accountability may form part of effective team collaboration in terms of current research and where gaps may be. Accountability literature is then considered, particularly in relation to what forms and levels of accountability are known to be experienced in individuals in isolation and within teams. In understanding the form and level of accountability, the effects of these are better understood, particularly within a context and in relation to a particular goal, which enables a better understanding of appropriate forms and levels of accountability for specific contexts and goals, such as that of effective team collaboration.

From the literature it becomes clear that collaboration as a construct does not strongly deal with accountability and the role it may play in motivating effective team collaboration. Similarly, accountability literature does not provide clear guidance on the appropriate form and level of accountability needed to drive the positive behaviours of effective team collaboration. This leads to the research questions proposed in Chapter 3 of this report.

2.2 Collaboration

2.2.1 Introduction: Defining effective team collaboration

In recent years, senior business leaders cognisant of the benefits of collaboration are seeking greater insight into how to embed and foster collaboration within their organisations for future resilience and strategic competitive advantage (Deloitte Insights, 2021; LawVision, 2021).

Collaboration literature spans a variety of contexts including public sector collaboration (Huxham & Vangen, 2000), inter-organisational collaboration (Hardy et al., 2003), intra-organisational collaboration (Sarin & O'Conner, 2009) and collaboration affected by geography (Pallotti & Angeli, 2017). Collaboration within and between teams, also considered as small group research, is largely located within the construct of team effectiveness within the domains of organisational behaviour and science, organisational and strategic management, psychology, and leadership (Mathieu et al., 2008).

The research study in this report considers effective team collaboration. For the purposes of this report, as a useful starting point, the definition of work teams put forward by Kozlowski and Bell (2003, p. 334) provides a link between the notions of teams and collaboration:

“collectives who exist to perform organizationally relevant tasks, share one or more common goals, interact socially, exhibit task interdependencies, maintain and manage boundaries, and are embedded in an organizational context that sets boundaries, constrains the team, and influences exchanges with other units in the broader entity.”

This definition highlights that teams are by nature collectives and interdependent, thereby requiring some degree of collaboration. As such, in addition to the above notion of a work team, this research report applies the definition of effective team collaboration utilised by Gardner (2017b, p. 1), expressed as “smart collaboration” between multi-specialist client or sector focused teams and encompassing the notion of:

“specialists...[who] work together to integrate their separate knowledge bases and skill sets to forge coherent, unified solutions...in efficient and effective ways.”

The pursuit of team effectiveness, including effective team collaboration, has been driven by the significant benefits derived from effective collaboration and in turn team effectiveness generally, which are closely linked.

2.2.2 Benefits and barriers to effective team collaboration

Within the context of teams, studies of team effectiveness including the inputs, processes (or mediators) and beneficial outcomes of effective teams have been pervasive (Mathieu et al., 2008). The outcomes of effective team collaboration may include enhanced performance behaviours or outcomes, in relation to either quality, quantity or both (Mathieu et al., 2008). This may be at an organisational-level, team level or individual level, including members' affective reactions such as their team engagement and the team viability (Mathieu et al., 2008).

Examples of performance outcomes at the various levels include among many others the value that collectives of communities working together create, such enhanced working quality (Brown & Duguid, 1991), enhanced innovation and new knowledge creation quality (Brown & Duguid, 1991; Hardy et al., 2003), enhanced strategy quality and quantity (Hardy et al., 2003) and improved learning and political benefits (Brown & Duguid, 1991; Hardy et al., 2003).

However, the substantial challenges of effective collaboration have been equally recognised across a variety of contexts. Within the public sector context collaborative efforts have struggled with the collaboration paradoxes alive in governance, leadership and management tensions (Vangen, 2016) and issues such as high costs. Conflicts and cultural diversity have equally scuppered collaboration endeavours (Vangen & Winchester, 2014). Within organisations, globalisation and the increasing distance between geographically dispersed teams, coupled with the failure of dispersed teams to maintain mutual knowledge, has been found to be a significant barrier to effective team collaboration (Cramton, 2001). This has impacted effective team outcomes such as learning and reduced team cohesion (Cramton, 2001). Huxham & Vangen (2004) identified the phenomenon of collaboration inertia and defined it as collaborative efforts which result in negligible, slow or extremely hard-won outputs, a phenomenon which professional services firms and teams, who are required to collaborate continuously over indefinite lengths of time may relate to. Gardner (2015) (2017a) highlights a number of factors that get in the way of organisational intra-specialist team collaboration, including: reward and recognition systems which discourage collaboration and the cultural impact of such systems; star performing individuals balking at increased scrutiny collaboration may bring; how

collaboration deepens client loyalty making it more difficult for senior professionals departing to transfer clients to new organisations; cultural difficulties; the lack of collaborative skills in leadership and political dynamics in flat structures.

More recently, despite these challenges the financial benefits (both in relation to revenue and profits) of collaboration within professional service firms at an organisation-level have been quantifiably demonstrated encouraging organisations to develop strategies for overcoming the above challenges given the significant performance benefits at an organisational level that may be reaped (Gardner, 2017b). Gardner's (2017b) long-term in-depth study of eight different global professional service firms (including legal, consulting, engineering and accounting firms) and ten years of data analysis provided robust and objective findings of the extent of partner collaboration and the outcomes of their collaboration. Millions of data points, empirically and statistically analysed, indicated that effective collaboration between specialist teams (service lines) in relation a single client, in particular across borders, exponentially increased organisational revenue and helped the organisation grow profits in the long term (Gardner, 2017b).

Although organisational financial performance benefits have garnered the most attention, the underlying benefits of client loyalty and retention, innovation and transparency and risk management are also noteworthy and have led to recent research seeking to clarify and build on the enabling conditions or antecedents of effective team collaboration within organisations (Gardner, 2017b; Haas & Mortensen, 2016).

2.2.3 Antecedents to effective team collaboration

A meta-analysis of team effectiveness on research studies conducted by Mathieu et al. (2008) between 1997 and 2008 interrogated period-specific team effectiveness research studies and their findings beginning with one of the most common team effectiveness models, the input – processes – outcomes (**IPO**) model. Their evaluation included evolved forms of the IPO framework, namely the input-mediator-outcomes (**IMO**) model, to better distinguish different types of processes and the mediators of team effectiveness (Mathieu et al., 2008). Their analysis summarised what was known about team effectiveness in 2008 and suggested future areas of

research (Mathieu et al., 2008).

The meta-analysis described inputs for team effectiveness as antecedent factors which enable or hinder team processes and ultimately team outcomes. The nested layers of inputs found to be precursors to team effectiveness included (Mathieu et al., 2008): individual team member characteristics (specifically appropriate individual team member skills and competencies; specific personality traits such as conscientiousness; proper diversity of individuals; high faultline strength of the group created by individuals; low individual team member position and status issues; and high network capabilities of individuals within the team); team-level factors (specifically task structure; positive external leader influence; effective team outcome interdependence; as well as proper team training, leadership and team structure); and organisational and environmental factors (specifically appropriate organisational design; environment complexity; appropriate human resource systems; a climate of openness; coordination systems for multi-teams; an optimal top management team (TMT) - environment interface; and finally, organisational cultures which are consistent with cooperation and collective activities). Finally, the meta-analysis highlighted that research studies have demonstrated the valuable role strategic consensus and general collective cognition, specifically in the form of shared mental models relating to the team as opposed to tasks, play as antecedents to team effectiveness (Mathieu et al., 2008).

This echoes sentiments in modern academic discourse. More recently Hass and Mortensen (2016) have built on earlier literature which condensed team collaboration effectiveness antecedents into three enabling conditions and have added a modern and fourth condition that they advocate is necessary for team collaboration effectiveness in today's modern world. Hass and Mortensen (2016) position the four enabling conditions as necessary for the effective collaboration of today's so-called "4-D" teams, given their assumed modern characteristics of being diverse, dispersed, digital and dynamic (Haas & Mortensen, 2016, p. 4). The three original enabling conditions cited as antecedents to effective team collaboration are: a compelling direction, a strong structure and a supportive context (Haas & Mortensen, 2016). The fourth added condition advocated as necessary is a shared mindset.

The condition of compelling direction is cited as foundational of every successful

team, as it energises, orients, engages and inspires team members, provided that challenging, realistic and consequential goals are set. Consequential goals are explained to relate to extrinsic rewards (recognition, pay, promotion) or intrinsic rewards (such as satisfaction or a sense of meaning). A strong structure as a second enabling condition includes the right mix of team members (including personality and skills), optimally designed processes and tasks (i.e. team assignments designed with care), as well as “norms which discourage destructive behaviour and promote positive dynamics” (Haas & Mortensen, 2016, p. 4). Destructive behaviour may include withholding information, pressuring people to conform, avoiding responsibility, casting blame. Finally, the third enabling condition of a supportive context envisages the right reward system (one that reinforces good performance), an information system providing necessary data access, a supportive educational and training system and any other material resources required for job execution.

The second and third enabling conditions put forward by Hass and Mortensen (2016) are similar to and align with input antecedents outlined by Mathieu et al. (2008). Hass and Mortensen’s (2016) fourth enabling condition, a shared mindset of team members aims to counter innate team “us and them” bias which forms in sub-groups within a team, and incomplete information issues that may arise as a result. Fostering a shared mindset is described as fostering a common team identity and understanding, and ensuring all subgroups feel valued for their contribution to overarching team goals.

A number of the enabling conditions for team effectiveness, such as a team shared mindset, also arise in literature and studies relating to moderators of team effectiveness. This is discussed in greater detail below.

2.2.4 Moderators of effective collaboration

Mathieu et al. (2008)’s analysis of team effectiveness studies as at 2008 highlights communication and coordination as a critical role player in strengthening team performance at a team process level. Gardner (2015) advocates that organisations can strengthen collaboration efforts between specialist teams by fostering the following behaviours and skill sets among professional service firm partners. At an individual and team level: developing the skill of collaboration perseverance;

developing the skills of creating and nurturing a network of trusted collaborators within the organisation; ensuring that leaders of collaborative teams treat all team members with fairness, particularly in relation to recognition and client face-time; and encouraging all team members within the collaborative team to have demonstrable reliability and open communication. At an organisational-level: organisations should create a culture of collaboration through leader modelling of collaborative behaviour; organisations should ensure that the organisational reward and recognition measures for the collaborative team measures the outcomes of collaboration first and foremost (as all other aspects can be gamed) but also captures behaviour and collaboration efforts that the organisation would like to foster (such as mentoring, knowledge sharing, advice giving, and both high and low tech intra and inter-team communication).

Adding to Gardner's (2015) findings, a number of team effectiveness studies have sought to bring clarity to the role of trust across a variety of team types and contexts (Jong et al., 2016). Jong et al. (2016) have found, in their meta-analysis of team trust and team effectiveness, that in the intrateam context, trust is positively related to team effectiveness and is a further positive moderator of team effectiveness. Their findings demonstrate that trust is critical for team performance when team members work in a highly independent manner (such as in professional service firms) and with other team members who have unique skills and different levels of authority within a team context (Jong et al., 2016).

In addition to trust, and related to it, most recently Herdman et al. (2017) have found that positive leader-leader exchange relationships affect leader-member exchange disparity positively, and strengthens team effectiveness. This is a result of better group functioning and teamwork created by trust and the structural and efficiency benefits flowing from leader-member exchange differentiation.

2.2.5 Mediators of effective team collaboration

As mentioned above, Mathieu et al. (2008) evaluated team effectiveness studies in 2008. They categorised several studies as detecting the mediators, and explaining why inputs effect team effectiveness. They categorised the mediators as falling into one of three categories, processes mediators (involving team member actions),

emergent state mediators (involving team members' cognitive, motivational or affected states of mind) and blended mediators (involving both action and state of mind) (Mathieu et al., 2008).

Within the processes mediators, studies found these could be categorised further into transition, action and interpersonal mediators as a framework (Mathieu et al., 2008): Transition mediators include the transition actions of team members such as mission analysis, planning, goal specification and strategy formulation. Action mediators include accomplishing tasks, monitoring processes and systems, coordinating team members and monitoring and backing up fellow team members. Finally, interpersonal mediators include conflict management, motivation, confidence building and affect management. Added to these categories is creativity as a driver and mediator of team effectiveness.

Emergent state mediator studies are described as related to the cognitive, motivational and affective states of a team (Mathieu et al., 2008). Emergent states that have been studied and found to mediate inputs and team effectiveness outcomes include: team confidence, team empowerment, the safety climate of the team, the justice climate and the service climate of the team, trust generally, transactive memory systems, cohesion, team learning, psychological safety, team efficacy, team potency, strategic consensus, individual and team-level autonomy, behavioural integration, task shared mental models and team design-related psychological states (Mathieu et al., 2008). Finally, team shared mental models was highlighted as important mediator, relating to the team's shared understanding about how they will interact with each other (Mathieu et al., 2008).

In summary, **Table 1** below has been created as a summary of the antecedents, mediators and moderators of effective team collaboration, based on the literature reviewed. The construct of accountability, and its relation in literature to effective team collaboration, is explored in greater detail below.

Table 1: Summary of antecedents, moderators and mediators to effective team collaboration

Antecedents (i.e. inputs or enabling conditions)	Moderators	Mediators
Individual level factors	Individual and team level factors	Processes mediators
Skills and competencies <i>Mathieu et al. (2008)</i>	Communication and coordination <i>Mathieu et al. (2008)</i>	Transition mediators (mission analysis, planning, goal specification and strategy formulation) <i>Mathieu et al. (2008)</i>
Personality traits (conscientiousness) <i>Mathieu et al. (2008)</i>	Individual and team level factors	Action mediators (Accomplishing tasks, monitoring processes and systems, coordinating team members, monitoring and backing up fellow team members) <i>Mathieu et al. (2008)</i>
Diversity <i>Mathieu et al. (2008)</i>	Collaboration perseverance <i>Gardner (2015)</i>	Interpersonal mediators (conflict management, motivation, confidence building, affect management) <i>Mathieu et al. (2008)</i>
Fault line strength <i>Mathieu et al. (2008)</i>	Creating and nurturing a network of trusted collaborators <i>Gardner (2015)</i>	Other Creativity <i>Mathieu et al. (2008)</i>
Position and status <i>Mathieu et al. (2008)</i>	Team leader fairness <i>Gardner (2015)</i>	Emergent state mediators

Antecedents (i.e. inputs or enabling conditions)	Moderators	Mediators
Network features/capabilities <i>Mathieu et al. (2008)</i>	Team member reliability and open communication <i>Gardner (2015)</i>	Team confidence <i>Mathieu et al. (2008)</i>
Team-level factors	Organisational level	Team empowerment <i>Mathieu et al. (2008)</i>
Task structure <i>Mathieu et al. (2008)</i>	Cultures of collaboration through leader modelling <i>Gardner (2015)</i>	Safety, justice and service team climates <i>Mathieu et al. (2008)</i>
External leader influence <i>Mathieu et al. (2008)</i>	Reward and recognition systems that measure outcomes but also captures collaborative behaviour information <i>Gardner (2015)</i>	Trust generally <i>Mathieu et al. (2008)</i>
Team outcome interdependence <i>Mathieu et al. (2008)</i>	Intrateam trust <i>Jong et al. (2016)</i>	Transactive memory systems <i>Mathieu et al. (2008)</i>
Training <i>Mathieu et al. (2008)</i>	Positive leader-leader exchange relationships <i>Herdman, Yang and Arther (2017)</i>	Cohesion <i>Mathieu et al. (2008)</i>
Leadership <i>Mathieu et al. (2008)</i>		Team learning <i>Mathieu et al. (2008)</i>
Team structure <i>Mathieu et al. (2008)</i>		Psychological safety <i>Mathieu et al. (2008)</i>

Antecedents (i.e. inputs or enabling conditions)	Moderators	Mediators
Team shared mental models and team general collective cognition <i>Mathieu et al. (2008)</i>		Team efficacy <i>Mathieu et al. (2008)</i>
Organisational and environment level factors		Team potency <i>Mathieu et al. (2008)</i>
Organisational design <i>Mathieu et al. (2008)</i>		Strategic consensus <i>Mathieu et al. (2008)</i>
Environmental complexity <i>Mathieu et al. (2008)</i>		Individual and team-level autonomy <i>Mathieu et al. (2008)</i>
Human resource systems <i>Mathieu et al. (2008)</i>		Behavioural integration <i>Mathieu et al. (2008)</i>
A climate of openness <i>Mathieu et al. (2008)</i>		Task and team shared mental models <i>Mathieu et al. (2008)</i>
Coordination systems for multi-teams <i>Mathieu et al. (2008)</i>		Team design-related psychological states <i>Mathieu et al. (2008)</i>
Optimal top-management-team environment interface <i>Mathieu et al. (2008)</i>		
Organisational culture consistent with		

Antecedents (i.e. inputs or enabling conditions)	Moderators	Mediators
cooperation and collective activities <i>Mathieu et al. (2008)</i>		
A compelling direction (goals, inspiration, energy, inspiration, orientation, challenging but realistic. Goals are rewards, either extrinsic or intrinsic). <i>Hass and Mortensen (2016)</i>		
A strong structure (right mix of team members, personality and skills, optimally designed processes and tasks, and norms of behaviour for the team, promoting good behaviour and discouraging destructive behaviour) <i>Hass and Mortensen (2016)</i>		
A supportive context (right reward system as a reinforcer of good behaviour, information, training and material resource systems) <i>Hass and Mortensen (2016)</i>		

Antecedents (i.e. inputs or enabling conditions)	Moderators	Mediators
A shared mindset (common and unified team identity and understanding, group cohesion and information sharing) <i>Haas and Mortensen (2016)</i>		

Table created from: (Gardner, 2015; Haas & Mortensen, 2016; Herdman et al., 2017; Jong et al., 2016; Mathieu et al., 2008)

2. 3 Accountability

2.3.1 Introduction

The forms or types of accountability present in the workplace, together with their effect, are of interest to the current research study. Of particular interest is the experience individuals have of accountability within a team context, to better understand the effect that accountability has in driving behaviour effective team collaboration.

Accountability can be defined in essence as relational in nature, given the fundamental criteria that in any accountable relationship there are “those required to provide an account (the accountor) and those to whom the account is given (the accountee)” (Grubnic & Cooper, 2019, p. 353). Accountability is a broad construct, albeit young in its academic conceptualisation and understanding (Hall et al., 2017). Accountability literature includes research on the forms of accountability (formal and informal, among others) (Hall et al., 2017; Roberts, 1991; Pearson & Sutherland, 2017), as well as its sources namely felt-accountability (Hall et al., 2017), accountability to peers and to superiors, focus areas (process compared to outcomes) (Hall et al., 2017), its salience (the degree of focus on outcomes), its intensity (multiple source accountability), its antecedents (Pearson & Sutherland, 2017) and its moderators (Hall et al., 2004; Hall et al., 2017).

The effects of accountability in the workplace are linked to one or more of the accountability research areas listed above, and effects of accountability vary depending on the context. Hall et al. (2017) in their meta-analysis of felt-accountability literature highlight that increased accountability in the workplace is a double-edged sword, capable of producing in the workplace both positive and negative effects. For example, increased accountability has been found to be important in relation to its ability to coordinate activities in pursuit of operational efficiency (Hall et al., 2017). However, ageism, wastefulness, flawed performance evaluation, cognitive biases amplification, heightened negative employee outcomes, reduction in job satisfaction and increase in job-induced tension have also been linked to increased workplace accountability (Hall et al., 2017).

As increased accountability in the workplace can produce either optimal or sub-optimal outcomes, depending on the positive or negative effect a particular form of accountability has within a context, it is important for organisations to consider appropriate and optimal forms of accountability which are aligned with their strategic objectives, to ensure optimal organisational outcomes. Roberts' (1991, p. 356) view of the practice of accountability is that accountability has a perennial positive effect because at the very least it "focuses attention within the flow of experiencing: it acknowledges and confirms self, and the fact that one's actions make a difference." However, he puts forward the argument that different forms of accountability within the workplace produce different effects, particularly in relation to his research relating to formal hierarchical accountability forms compared to informal socialising accountability forms, and he strongly advocates that accountability forms and effects should align with organisational objectives (Roberts, 1991).

The literature considered below explores various known forms of accountability, and to a degree their effects, to shed light on what accountability scholars know to be appropriate forms of accountability within different contexts. The literature also considers levels of accountability, understood for the purpose of the current research to be the degree to which an actor is held accountable in any form.

Various forms of accountability identified in literature to date to better understand their positive or negative effects within organisations. This is discussed in greater detail below.

2.3.2 Forms of accountability

Formal and informal accountability are prominent differentiated forms of accountability within the accountability literature (Hall et al., 2017). Formal accountability is used to describe accountability imposed on and felt by an employee within the workplace by virtue of express terms of the employee's contractual engagement with their employer, whereas informal accountability refers to informal norms in the workplace that influences employee motivation and performance (Hall et al., 2017). The source to whom an individual actor may feel accountable may fall within the realm of formal or informal accountability. Known sources of accountability include felt-accountability towards self, the organisation,

superiors or peers (Hall et al., 2017). Hall et al (2017, p. 209) highlight that the extent to which an actor prioritises “accountabilities to different sources has received scant research attention”. Pearson and Sutherland (2017) describe the central forms accountability found in literature to date, organised along the overarching themes of formal and informal accountability.

Formal accountability

From a formal accountability perspective, manager accountability and systems accountability are two central and often interlinked and overlapping themes within accountability literature (Pearson & Sutherland, 2017).

Joannides’ (2021) research investigates formal managerial accountability, and specifically accountability in the form of upwards accountability in a hierarchical structure to a higher-stakeholder, as the ideal form of accountability achieving optimal results. This research contradicted earlier research by Roberts (1991) who associates formal and informal accountability with the notions of hierarchical and socialising accountability, respectively, and who argues that hierarchical and formal accountability by nature produces an individualising effect because an employee experiences him or herself in a manner primarily anchored and situated in relation to his or her obligations to the organisation, at its heart is a solitary and isolated sense of self-accountability which is sub-optimal in collaborative social workplace environments. Formal managerial accountability research has also identified that this form may produce negative or sub-optimal outcomes if the person who is accountable perceives that the accountability being measured will be used positively or negatively against them, where there has been a failure in accountability and where managers are perceived to have excessive control over the accountor (Wikhamn & Hall, 2014). Collectively these three conditions ultimately impacting the account-giver’s satisfaction and feelings of being supported by the organisation (Wikhamn & Hall, 2014).

The efficacy of “systems accountability”, formal mechanisms for holding employees and staff accountable within the workplace such as annual performance appraisal systems and processes, has been acknowledged in literature to achieve mixed accountability results (Pearson & Sutherland, 2017, p. 424). Whilst the significant

impact of formal accountability through systems is known, because they impact how people think and behave relative to the behaviour against which they will be monitored and measured (Patil, Tetlock, & Mellers, 2017), equally it has been found that despite uniformity in the system's measuring and monitoring behaviour (which is intended to provide clarity in relation to performance and reward/punishment) account givers who have similar job functions and performance expectations do not consistently provide the same level or degree of accountability across the board (Laird, Harvey, & Lancaster, 2015).

Within the sphere of marketing, Casenave and Klarmann's (2020) also explore formal and informal accountability in their research aimed at better understanding how the form and source of accountability experienced by an individual impacted behaviour and ultimately effected different organisational objectives. In other words, their more recent research considers whether formal, managerial and/or systems accountability is more effective in achieving organisational goals than informal forms accountability. Their central proposition revolved around the notion that formal and externally imposed accountability promotes self-categorisation aligned with one's professional identity motivating and resulting in an individual prioritising goals that align with that professional identity (as opposed to alignment and identification with organisational goals).

Informal accountability

Accountability to self is one form of informal accountability categorised by Pearson and Sutherland (2017), together with two other forms of informal accountability appearing in accountability literature, specifically accountability to peers and accountability to organisational culture and leadership.

Within the realm of accountability to self, Casenave and Klarmann's (2020) research found that informal internal accountability promotes a superordinate broader identification with the organisation and motivated marketers to prioritise organisational-identity goals. Ultimately, they express the view that external accountability "enhances one's social identity and increases the need to appear competent to salient audiences" (to justify actions to others) and they advocate that a better approach is to allow an individual's internal accountability (the

justification/accountability of action to self) to generate alignment with a firm's short-term strategic objectives if that is the preferred organisational or departmental objective (Casenave & Klarmann, 2020, p. 104). Roberts' (1991) earlier research, comparing formal and informal accountability and organisational imperatives, yielded results along similar lines to the findings of Casenave and Klarmann's (2020). In relation to informal accountability Roberts' (1991, p. 360) advocated that the experience of self-accountability informally, specifically the individual's informal perception of self-accountability in relation to others within the workplace (not as a justification to others), was a "socialising form of accountability" which optimised organisational ethical and strategic imperatives, ultimately preferable to formal hierarchical accountability (which is isolating and self-identity reinforcing). The basis of accountability to self is rooted in a person's individual values, the effect of those values on decision making and how a person's felt-responsibility and felt-accountability intertwines (Pearson & Sutherland, 2017). Pearson and Sutherland (2017) highlight that research into these constructs in relation to each other is limited.

In relation to peer accountability, accountability within groups and teams is experienced in relation to the members of the group, team and organisation at a peer level. Gelfand et al. (2004) approach accountability from a social and cultural perspective highlighting webs of accountability that innately exist within social ecosystems. They situate peer accountability as a force most common among individualistic, loose and egalitarian cultural configurations (Gelfand et al., 2004). Peer accountability has been studied through the lens of reputation and relationships, in particular the investment that account givers and account holders have in their reputations and the degree and intensity to which this drives positive accountability behaviour (Busuioac & Lodge, 2017). At a board level peer accountability has been expressed as an internal environmental control mechanism (Goodman et al., 2021). Strong peer accountability has been found to positively impact collective team performance (Zhang & Goh, 2018). In a recent study set within a multiplayer or team gaming environment, strong transparent accountability in relation to peers who needed to coordinate their actions was found to influence the players cognitive state, focusing player attention for longer durations of time, reducing errors and boosting overall team performance within the game (Zhang & Goh, 2018). Peer accountability was deliberately enhanced in the experimental research study in two ways, by ensuring individual progress in the game was peer

dependent (explicit outcome interdependence) and ensuring peer progress was mutually visible through out the game. An interesting outcome from the experience was that improved performance did not “necessarily translate to a more positive gameplay experience” (Zhang & Goh, 2018, p. 25). This may be important for team settings with senior leaders within a team who have conceivable options of moving away from engaging in the team if the team experience is not positive. Organisations may wish to weigh the pros and cons of improving team effective collaboration and performance against a potential drawback of increased peer accountability which may lead to a less positive team experience and ultimately to valuable team members leaving the organisation.

Relationship driven accountability receives significant attention in relation to group accountability and peer accountability literature. Group accountability has most recently been described by Kou and Steward (2018) as a dynamic interpersonal process emerging from formal external sources of accountability and from group interactions over time. They express the view that the roles played by both individual group members accountable for behaviour and the behaviour of the rest of the group in holding that individual member accountable both elevate individual accountability to group level accountability (Kou & Stewart, 2018). Kou and Steward (2018) highlight that most studies within the group context relate to hierarchical top-down influence of group supervisors within the group and that less is known about peer influence and accountability within small groups.

The concept of social accountability is gaining research prominence in an effort to drive greater responsibility for social issues (Frey-Heger & Barrett, 2021). Social accountability describes accountability that organisations have or take towards societal groups who are in need as a result of socio-economic issue like poverty, political issues (creating refugees) and natural disasters, with both positive and negative effects (Frey-Heger & Barrett, 2021). What is interesting is that this form of accountability by its nature rejects hierarchical accountability (described as requiring formal responsibility towards a distant and powerful source), social accountability is founded on relationships, face-to-face interactions, inclusive conversation between stakeholders and flexible and fluid engagement based on context which creates accountability between two (an organisation and beneficiaries). Frey-Heger and Barrett (2021) highlight further that social accountability is effective because of

enabling tools and practices which underscore and foster the emergent accountability – open meetings, dialogue, reviews, focus groups and other forms of appropriate participation.

Finally, informal accountability literature considers the impact of leadership on accountability, and how leadership creates accountability culture, be it conjunction with formal accountability systems or within informal social ecosystems which create accountability (Pearson & Sutherland, 2017). Cultural forces affecting accountability have been found within organisations at a number of levels, including within group contexts, and at interpersonal and individual levels (Gelfand, Lim, & Raver, 2004). Deeper exploration of the effects of culture within organisations and how it impacts accountability has been called for, as well as deeper research into the role that leadership plays in driving accountability (Pearson & Sutherland, 2017).

2.3.3 Interplay between different forms of accountability

The interplay between different forms of accountability and its ability to promote or hinder organisational goals has received some attention. Within organisations, Pearson and Sutherland (2017) have identified that both formal and informal drivers of accountability found in literature operate in a system. Their research identified five primary constructs (described as antecedents to collaboration) as the main factors driving accountability, and highlighted the importance of the accountable individual's alignment with these factors and in particular an organisation's strategic goals and culture, as an optimal mechanism and system for accountability within an organisational context (Pearson & Sutherland, 2017). The five antecedents identified include organisational culture, leadership, systems within the organisation, values and recruitment of the individual, and role clarity.

Within the public sector, building on forms of accountability, Grubnic and Cooper (2019) provide a list of overlapping and related accountability types or forms relevant to the public sector including political accountability, social or public accountability, legal accountability, administrative accountability, managerial or financial accountability, personal accountability, corporate accountability, collective accountability and individual accountability. To this list of accountability types or forms, they add the notion of democratic accountability, a hybrid accountability

formally in relation to electorate legal processes inherent in election and social accountability felt by an individual to be accountable to the public (Grubnic & Cooper, 2019). The introduction of the notion of democratic accountability was specific to the United Kingdom Health and Wellbeing Boards which were established with the objective of enhancing democratic accountability to the public. Grubnic and Cooper (2019) findings were that the nature of accountability introduced to achieve a specific goal interacts and coexists with explicit and implicit other accountability sources and forms at play. The complex webs of accountability that exist within particular contexts, that tension exists between these forms as a result of their sources, and the interaction between accountability types that change over time must carefully be taken into consideration when crafting optimal accountability structures (Grubnic & Cooper, 2019).

Research conducted by Keddie (2021) in relation to imposed, felt and adaptive accountability processes experienced by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) highlights and reinforces the notion that tensions exist between multiple forms and sources of accountability, and that this must appropriately be managed to achieve optimal performance aligned to a particular goal. Following the clarification regarding the natural tension between the formal and external nature of imposed accountability and the informal internal experiences of felt-accountability from multiple sources, Keddie (2021) describes the processes of managing and balancing this tension as adaptive accountability. Adaptive accountability is conceptualised as a hybrid process which evaluates and measures imposed and felt accountability effectiveness in achieving outcomes, through both quantitative and qualitative means, but which ultimately favours felt-accountability if needed to balance inherent tensions between the two (Keddie, 2021). Keddie (2021) expressed the view in relation to her research that: first, within an NGO setting, with feminist, educational, and culturally and contextually sensitive objectives, imposed accountability actually undermined the organisational goals (as opposed to driving them), due to the often limited ability of imposed accountability processes to evaluate contextually nuanced information; second, felt-accountability evaluation processes were more effective than imposed accountability processes because individual experiences and nuances were taken into account, however significant complexities and additional tensions arose in the above setting given different individual NGO's members subjective views on idealism, ethical considerations, realism and practicality, which made felt-

accountability semi-effective in motivating and fulfilling the organisational objectives; and third, adaptive accountability was viewed as the most effective due to its ability to prioritise values relating to the context but also measure outcomes objectively.

2.3.4 Levels of accountability

Sources of accountability (the source to whom an actor feels accountable) may impact the degree or level to which the actor holds him or herself accountable, as the tendency to feel accountable decreases or increases according to the source (Hall et al., 2017). The intensity of accountability derived from multiple sources is equally important in effecting felt-accountability, as individuals experiencing accountability and determining for themselves how to manage the level or intensity to self-impose in a given situation do so within a complex ecosystem of interrelated relationships and interactions (Pearson & Sutherland, 2017). Two factors which impact on the level of accountability experienced by an individual within their social ecosystem include trust (as a moderator), which affects the degree of formal accountability imposed on the individual (Hall et al., 2004), and the source of accountability perceived by the actor as more important, such as informal peer accountability in the boardroom (Goodman et al., 2021). This is discussed in more detail below.

There is some empirical evidence that leaders who are trusted by virtue of their reputations are held to lower levels of formal accountability (Hall et al., 2004). Hall et al. (2004) investigated how leader reputation and style influenced accountability dynamics and found that leader accountability is largely informal and socio-political in nature, centred significantly around the leader's reputation and trust. Interestingly, charismatic leadership was found to evoke greater follower trust and a dramatically reduced degree or level of formal accountability (Hall et al., 2004). Ultimately, their research contributed to accountability literature in its finding that enhanced positive leader reputation increases the trust of followers in the social context of organisations and reduced formal accountability mechanisms imposed on such leaders. Put differently, perceived trust in leaders based on reputation was found to be a negative moderator of formal accountability.

Despite the purpose of formal accountability aiming to enhance performance through

increased and clear externally imposed responsibility (Hall et al., 2017), there is a view that formal accountability alone does not drive nor increase the level of accountability felt by the individual (Goodman et al., 2021). Recent research has clarified and categorised different sources of accountability to whom senior executives feel accountable, including formal sources (structural) and informal sources (relational) in a framework highlighting the equal importance of relational sources of accountability (board chairpersons, peer board members and the individual self) alongside structural sources (shareholders, management and organisational factors) (Goodman et al. 2021). This is aimed at better equipping organisations to improve levels (degrees of accountability) experienced by non-executive board members and drive improved performance (Goodman et al., 2021).

2.4 Accountability in relation to effective team collaboration

As firms increasingly gear up to set clear collaboration objectives for professionals in their departments as part of their competitiveness strategic agendas (Deloitte Insights, 2021), strategic client initiatives and lead partners are being held accountable for identifying multi-practice opportunities and making sure they are successfully developed (Gardner, 2017b).

What is clear from the antecedents, moderators and mediators of effective team collaboration is that there is some overlap between them. There are also interesting constructs missing from the conversation. Surprisingly, one of the most common motivators of any behaviour within organisations, namely accountability is, at best, loosely encapsulated within collaboration literature - whether as an antecedent, moderator or mediator - and at worst missing entirely.

Hass and Mortensen (2016) come closest to incorporating accountability into their second effective team collaboration enabling condition, namely a strong collaboration structure, by referencing norms which discourage destructive behaviour and promote positive collaborative team dynamics. Accountability takes many forms, as highlighted in the accountability literature below, and is known for its double-sided nature of both motivating positive behaviour but also potentially resulting in counterproductive and destructive behaviour for the actor and the organisation (Hall et al., 2017). Gardner (2012) has found in relation to her effective

team collaboration research that accountability drives both positive and negative behaviour in relation to team overall performance, promoting team motivation but equally leading to a sub-optimal overall team performance. In a multimethod field study of 78 audit and consulting firms from two global professional firms, her research demonstrated that experts with specialist knowledge of their domains succumbed to the performance pressure (a combination of shared outcome accountability, heightened work scrutiny and significant performance consequences) in high stakes projects by failing to use their domain specialist knowledge optimally.

The strong structure enabling condition advocated by Hass and Mortensen (2016) and Gardner's (2012) performance pressure research merely touch on the requirement of some kind of accountability norm for team effectiveness and a single contextual outcome of accountability (as an element of performance pressure), but this research doesn't specify in any detail what appropriate or optimal effective team collaboration accountability may look like, entail and what it may produce.

The antecedent of outcome interdependence at a team level provides a slightly clearer picture of what formal accountability may look like, through the notion that individual feedback and rewards must be linked to group performance as a motivator of group-oriented behaviour, ultimately enhancing team effectiveness (Mathieu et al., 2008). However, again this guidance provides high level features requiring greater insight and exploration.

In relation to the mediator effect of a justice level climate at a team or group level, Mathieu et al. (2008) highlights that this relates to a group-level belief and understanding of how a work group as a whole is treated. Procedural level justice is significantly related to team performance and team-level procedural justice climates have been found to have a positive incremental impact on individual-level organisational commitment (Mathieu et al., 2008). Of interest would be further insight into whether climates of procedural justice that entail accountability for collaborative behaviour positively moderate the climate.

In relation to trust as an important emergent state mediator and construct, it appears that team-level trust and the levels of team monitoring are related, in particular where individual autonomy of team members is high and monitoring is low, team

performance is negative effected (Mathieu et al., 2008). It would be interesting to better understand whether team monitoring may include peer accountability and what impact high individual autonomy and peer accountability have on performance. As mentioned above, Zhang and Goh's (2018) recent work within gaming contexts demonstrates initial findings that the two are positively related.

Finally, the construct of team shared mental models (the team's shared understanding about how they will interact with each other) as a mediator of inputs and outcomes of team effectiveness is interesting, insofar as how team shared mental models relating to peer accountability may be experienced in flat-structured, highly autonomous teams (Mathieu et al., 2008).

The literature review contained in this Chapter 2 of this report explores existing knowledge relating to effective collaboration within teams, felt-accountability literature in relation to the different forms and levels of accountability, their relationship to each other, and the overlap, if any, between effective team collaboration and accountability within teams. From the literature review two research questions were formulated by the researcher, as set out in Chapter 3 below.

2.5 Conclusion

Whilst the felt-accountability literature highlights several forms of accountability, few offer guidance as to what appropriate forms of accountability are within particular contexts. Roberts (1991) research sheds some light on this topic, in his findings that contexts which require individual team member interdependence, and interdependence of team member identification with each other, formal hierarchical and individualising accountability is not appropriate or effective for strategic goals of organisational collaborative performance. Informal, socialising and interactive accountability is more appropriate and effective (Roberts, 1991). This is aligned to contemporary discourse on team effectiveness and collaboration highlighted above, which advocates that team effectiveness requires a shared team mindset in relation to the team identity (Haas & Mortensen, 2016).

Nevertheless Hall et al. (2017, p. 215) in their meta-analysis of accountability literature prior to 2017 issue a strong call to action that a valuable future area of research would be to “address the appropriate forms and levels of accountability organisations should impose to encourage positive outcomes while limiting negative consequences [of accountability] for both the actor and the organization”. This call to action, together with the gap in effective team collaboration literature as to the precise role that accountability can play to foster collaboration and promote positive collaboration outcomes within teams is worthy of further research.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In answer to this call to action and the gaps in the literature, having explored the constructs of effective team collaboration and accountability, aimed at better understanding the role that accountability may play as a driver to embed effective inter-team collaboration with professional services firms, two specific research questions were proposed flowing from the literature review.

3.1 Research Questions

Research Question 1: How does the form of accountability experienced by senior legal specialists within a team promote positive or negative collaboration behaviours?

Research question 1 seeks to explore the ways in which the form of accountability experienced by senior legal specialists within a high performing cross-specialist team of legal practitioners impacts the collaboration experienced within the particular team, either negatively or positively.

Research Question 2: How does the level of accountability experienced by senior legal specialists within a team promote positive or negative collaboration behaviours?

Research question 2 seeks to determine whether the level of accountability experienced by senior legal specialist teams within a high performing cross-specialist team of legal practitioners impacts the collaboration experienced in the team, either negatively or positively.

Chapter 4 of this report follows these research questions and sets out the research methodology used to empirically gather data in relation to these research questions. Chapter 5 contains the results of the qualitative methodology used and Chapter 6 contains a discussion of the results in relation to the research questions.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

Set out in this Chapter 4 of the research study report is the choice of methodology adopted by the research in gathering and analysing empirical data for the purposes of the research study, including the research design, the research philosophy, the approach selected, certain methodological choices made by the researcher, methodology strategy and the time horizon related to the research. The proposed research methodology is also set out in this Chapter, including population, unit of analysis used, the sampling method and size of sample adopted, the measurement instrument used, the data gathering process, the analysis approach and quality control measures adopted. Finally, this Chapter also specifies the limitations of the methodology used.

4.2 Research design

The purpose of the research design was exploratory in nature. Research designed to be exploratory seeks to gather greater insights and create meaningful data towards a deeper understanding of a topic (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2016). An exploratory purpose was appropriate because solutions relating to the research problem of embedding effective collaboration within organisations, and the use of appropriate mechanisms to do so, is relatively unknown (as highlighted above). In addition, the purpose of this research study was to explore ways in which organisations can better embed effective collaboration to harness the benefits of collaboration. Finally, the literature reviewed in relation to the research topic, and the research questions then formulated, together directed the nature of the research design towards exploration (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). The constructs of effective collaboration and accountability are still in the early stages of development, as highlighted above. As such, because greater knowledge, understanding and insight is needed in the above areas, research with exploration at the heart of its design was appropriate and was used.

The philosophical viewpoint of the research study was interpretivist in nature. Interpretivism is concerned with subjective and shared meaning, with emphasis on understanding how people or groups interpret and understand the world around them

(Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). An interpretivist approach was appropriate as the aim of the study was to understand the viewpoint of the individual, the participants in the study, and to discover their unique understanding and experiences of effective collaboration and appropriate forms and levels of accountability which may promote and embed effective collaboration within an organisation.

The approach selected for the research study was inductive in nature. An inductive research approach aims to develop theory and capture complexity by drawing from observed cases general claims about other cases that may be similar in kind (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008), and is also flexible in its ability to take account of surprising knowledge that may surface (Saunders et al., 2016). This was appropriate for describing insights around the phenomenon of difficulties relating to embedding effective collaboration within organisations and how this is perceived, and building theory as to how appropriate accountability may promote collaboration, moving from observation of the empirical data to an interpretation of the observations and theories about what has been observed (Cassell, 2019).

The methodological choice for the research study was mono-method qualitative research. This is due to the research study having a single purpose in its design as highlighted above. This was appropriate as the research problem, purpose and literature, as well as the research questions formulated for the research study, are all exploratory and theory building in nature, and do not seek to test existing theory as a second purpose (Saunders et al., 2016).

The time horizon for the research study was cross-sectional. Cross-sectional studies research “a particular phenomenon (or phenomena) at a particular time” (Saunders et al., 2016, p. 200). The research approach was appropriate given the time period in which the researcher was required to complete the study and given that the focus of the research was phenomenology using interviews as an instrument as opposed to the collection and analysis of historical and present data as a focus (Saunders et al., 2016, p. 200). Although this approach did not provide the benefit of being able to monitor developments over time, as longitudinal studies allow (Saunders et al., 2016, p. 200), a longitudinal study was not appropriate given the nature of the research questions proposed in Chapter 2.

4.3 Universe

The population for the research study was all individuals at professional service firms based in Africa, constituting a complete set of group members (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). This was appropriate given the research question relating to effective collaboration within an organisation and accountability within an organisation, as per the research problem and purpose above.

4.4 Sampling

A complete list of population members (senior manager-level staff at professional service firms in Africa) was not known and thus no sample frame existed and a sample could not be selected from the population at random (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). As such, non-probability sampling technique was appropriate and was used by the researcher as a sampling method for collecting data in relation to the research questions (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). Purposive sampling as a form of non-probability sampling was used, which involved the researcher's judgement in selecting the sample members based on several factors (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). The purposive sampling variety was homogenous in nature, in that all interviewees were a sub-group of staff of the organisation, senior manager-level staff. The advantage of this was minimum variation in the data collected which allowed for noticeable features within the sample to be interrogated (Saunders & Lewis, 2018).

The sub-group was diverse in characteristics. Senior manager-level staff within a single firm was used, but diversity in the purposive sampling included senior managers in different areas of expertise specialisation, who participate in different sector collaboration initiatives, who collaborate on different key client accounts, partners of different race and gender, as well as senior managers of different nationalities based in different geographic locations in Africa (the organisation has six offices across the continent, and senior managers from five of the six offices were interviewed). This is appropriate to understand with greater insight perceptions and lived experiences relating to what forms and levels of accountability promotes collaboration within a large professional service organisation in Africa. This is appropriate in relation to the research question and purpose geared towards understanding better how to embed effective collaboration across organisations at

the highest level, starting with a firm's leadership and senior management.

The interviews continued until saturation was reached (or optimally approached within the context), through 16 interviews conducted across the sample. This sample size is academically regarded to be sufficient to approach saturation of data and extract meaning insights from the research (Arwen & Laura, 2006).

4.5 Unit of analysis

The unit of analysis for the study was at an individual level. Units of analysis may take the form of individuals, which is common, but may be groups, organisations, categories or may take other forms (Vogt, 2005). In the present case this unit is appropriate as individuals are responsible for collaboration within organisations, and the purpose of the research is to better understand how to embed collaboration within an organisation. Individuals not only collaborate as individuals but also are the members of groups or teams who collaborate as a collective. Therefore, in understanding an individual's perception of the appropriate forms and levels of accountability in promotion of effective collaboration, an individual unit of analysis was the most useful unit of analysis for the research.

4.6 Measurement instrument

The measurement instrument used for the collection of primary data was a semi-structured interview schedule (please see **Appendix 1** containing the interview guide used). The structure of the interview scheduled was linked to the research problem, the research purpose and, in particular, the research questions. Semi-structured interview schedules with open ended questions encourage the interviewee to expand at length on a topic and actively steer the interview, and in addition theory played a role in manner in which the interview questions were structured, the sequencing of the questions, the short format of the interview guide and the focused questions asked were incorporated into the measurement instrument design (Cassell, 2019). This was appropriate for the exploratory purpose of the study, and the pursuit of theoretical insights in relation to the research problem, and in relation to building literature theory. This was also appropriate based on the formulation of the research questions, which were grounded in the accountability literature as highlighted in

Chapter 2.

4.7 Data collection

In relation to collecting data for the research study, a single professional services firm in the legal industry (the Organisation) provided consent to the researcher to gather data from the purposive sample of 16 senior management-level staff within the Organisation across a variety of contexts. Written consent from each individual who was interviewed was obtained (Jacob & Furgerson, 2021). Permission from the Organisation was provided to the researcher (please see **Appendix 2**), to use the Organisation for research purposes, to store the research data for the period required by the Gordon Institute of Business Science (10 years) using the requisite GIBS Data Storage System, and to use the findings of the research for business science purposes.

In respect of the new data that was gathered from human subjects, Microsoft Teams and Zoom call technology was used to create quiet, semi-private spaces for the interview processes, to enable the interviewees to speak freely and to facilitate the privacy needed (Jacob & Furgerson, 2021). However, the researcher needed to work hard to build rapport and put the interviewees at ease using remote interviewing platforms such as Microsoft teams and Zoom, compared to in-person interview techniques. Care, compassion and active listening techniques were critical in the data gathering process (Jacob & Furgerson, 2021). These elements were appropriate as the value in the exploratory qualitative methodological approach is to gather insightful information about the research problem and research questions to achieve the research purpose.

All data collected as part of the research study was stored in accordance with the storage requirements of the Gordon Institute of Business Science (cited above).

4.8 Data analysis

Inductive processes of data analysis was used for the research study, specifically in relation to the new data gathered from the interview process. This was appropriate as the researcher aimed to build theory and contribute to literature to the

collaboration and accountability and the relationship between the two within large organisations (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). As an initial analytical approach, a conventional approach to content analysis was used (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). This was appropriate as the research purpose and strategy was to explore the phenomenon articulated in the research problem. The researcher avoided using preconceived categories and allowed categories and names to emanate from the data collected. Open-ended questions were used, with open-ended probes specific to the interviewee's comments in pursuit of relevant information not yet covered or unique information being provided by the interviewee (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Following a sequential holistic overview of the data, then detailed coding creation (please see **Appendix 3** for the codes used), categorisation and description processes, relevant results, findings and theories are articulated in Chapters 5 and 6 of this report (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). This approach was appropriate due to its advantages of gaining direct information from the interviewees without any preconceptions being imposed upon them (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005), which aligns with the exploratory, theory building purpose of the research. Phenomenology was used to go beyond the content analysis to develop, if possible, a "nuanced understanding of the lived experience" of the participants in the study (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1281). In terms of process, the interviewee's responses to the questions posed via the Microsoft Teams and Zoom meetings were transcribed into Microsoft Word format to allow for transcription, using online automated transcription services.

As part of the data analysis process, codes were allocated to the interview transcripts using AtlasTi coding software. The more frequently a code was used within and across transcripts, the greater the "frequency" of the code as described in this research report. For example, where a participant highlighted the value of a particular subject, all similar viewpoints on that subject by the participant and by other participants, was coded using the same code. This increased the frequency of the code within a transcript, and across all 16 interview transcripts. Coding that was similar where then accumulated in the data analysis process into categories, and then into themes, demonstrating groundedness in the data that emerged.

4.9 Quality assurance

Validity and reliability are important, all-encompassing constructs that are applicable to qualitative research and which must be used as assurance of the quality of the data collected and the findings (Janice, Michael, Maria, Karin, & Jude, 2002). These constructs can be actively attained in the research process through the application of verification techniques by the researcher for the duration of the research process and not on an ad hoc basis post-data collection (Janice et al., 2002). Verification is “the process of checking, confirming, making sure, and being certain” incrementally throughout the research process (Janice et al., 2002, p. 17) and the researcher incorporated the below verification techniques into the research process.

Enhancing the validity of the qualitative research approach in the research study was a focus area. Maxwell (1992) advocates for the use of four pillars to achieve validity in qualitative research: descriptive, interpretive, theoretical and generalisable validity. From a descriptive perspective, the researcher was as factually accurate as possible in accounts gathered in the 16 interview recordings and transcripts and the researcher strived not to be inaccurate by omission. Avoiding statistical inferences to some kind of universe was also important, and a simple numerical description of the specific object of study was the objective. In addition, the researcher approached saturation of data. From an interpretive validity perspective, the researcher ensured that all language used was grounded in the language of the interview participants. From a theoretical validity perspective, the researcher considered triangulation of data to further reinforce any insights found. Respondent triangulation was used in the research study, gathering data not just at a senior manager-level but at a senior associate (subordinate) and support services level (professional service providers to senior managers) in support of exploring collaboration and accountability and cross-checking by inviting these stakeholders provide their perspective on the research questions (Given, 2008). This was appropriate to corroborate or refute the conclusions or findings from the senior manager-level interviews, and triangulate the data gathered (Given, 2008).

Finally, looking at whether the findings can be generalised beyond the scope of the study (the generalisability element above), the researcher considered in the final stages of the research study whether any findings are generalisable not from sample

to population but rather from data to a theoretical proposition. Janice et al. (2002) further impress upon researchers that verification responsiveness, the researcher's ability to remain open, use sensitivity, creativity and insights during the research is the greatest threat to the research's validity. This was actively considered by the researcher in relation to observer, social desirability and sampling bias, lack of knowledge and/or lack of ability by seeking help at all stages of the research process (Janice et al., 2002).

Enhancing the reliability of the qualitative research approach to be used for the research study was also a priority. Verification strategies were used to this end, strategies aim for rigor and assure reliability and validity of data, namely "methodological coherence, sampling sufficiency, developing a dynamic relationship between sampling, data collection and analysis, thinking theoretically, and theory development" (Janice et al., 2002, p. 18). The researcher ensured methodological coherence between the research problem and methodological choice, as demonstrated in this report, and the appropriate sampling aimed at efficient and effective saturation, also as demonstrated in this report.

4.10 Limitations

Finally, a selection of possible limitations related to the research methodology in this proposal are set out below. Qualitative research methodology has both strengths and weaknesses. The weaknesses include that the findings are not easily replicable unless the study contains all details of all decisions made, and the findings are also not generalisable from sample to population (Saunders et al., 2016). From a data analysis perspective, one of the limitations of the initial analysis using the conventional approach is that the researcher may fail to develop a complete understanding of the context relating to the interviewee and his or her lived experience, and therefore key categories of findings may not be identified or may be categorised, and ultimately findings by the researcher may not accurately reflect the data collected (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

Chapters 5 and 6 of this report follows which detail the data results and analysis, respectively.

Chapter 5: Results

5.1 Introduction

The Research Questions detailed in Chapter 3 guide the presentation of the results set out in this chapter. This chapter presents the analysis of the data collected from 16 semi-structured in-depth interviews with senior management at the organisation studied. **Appendix 1** details the interview guide structure and guiding questions used for the primary data collection. The participant's responses have been mapped against the Research Questions relating to form and levels of accountability, connecting the Research Questions to the literature reviewed, the data collected and the analysis of the data. Inductive analysis technique was applied to the results to create an initial list of 93 unique codes (please see **Appendix 3**), which were grouped into categories and ultimately overarching themes and ultimately grounded. These are used to present the findings of this chapter.

5.2 Description of the sample

Sixteen interviewees were interviewed as part of the primary data collection process. See **Table 2** below containing details of the interview participants. All interviewees were senior management level and higher staff members within the single organisation studied, a legal professional services organisation. The organisation comprises over 120 partners, each legal specialist being responsible for their legal practice growth and development within the organisation, including servicing clients and managing teams of junior lawyers.

Twelve of the interviewees were partners at the organisation, one of the highest senior management or leadership positions held at the organisation outside of additional business management positions such as department heads, practice group heads, office managers, remuneration committee (Remco) members, management board or partnership board members, professional service business unit heads, the group managing partner or the group chairperson. The participant sample of partners ranged in experience, comprising senior partners leading sector groups within the organisation, office managing partners and Remco committee members, to younger partners relatively new to the partnership role within the organisation.

Table 2: Information relating to interviewees from the sample

#	Participant	Position	Country	Gender	Additional Information*
1	Participant 1	Partner	South Africa	Male	Senior partner with significant cross-border expertise, deep sector expertise and a senior leadership position within the organisation (sector group head).
2	Participant 2	Senior Associate	South Africa	Female	Senior associate with over 10 years' experience advising clients in her specialist area, including cross-border transactions and business development initiatives in law.
3	Participant 3	Partner	South Africa	Male	Senior partner and head of a practice group and a sector group within the organisation.
4	Participant 4	Business Services Senior Manager	South Africa	Male	Senior business services manager with over 10 years' experience working with legal and cross-business service specialist teams in support of legal internal organisational and external, client facing initiatives.
5	Participant 5	Partner	South Africa	Female	Junior partner practicing within the firm, with over 10 years' experience advising clients within her area of specialisation.
6	Participant 6	Partner	South Africa	Female	Junior partner practicing within the firm, with over 10 years' experience advising clients within her area of specialisation.
7	Participant 7	Partner	Mauritius	Male	Senior partner with a leadership position within his office, with over 20 years' experience in collaborative initiatives.
8	Participant 8	Partner	Kenya	Female	Junior partner practicing within the firm, with over 10 years' experience advising clients within her area of specialisation.
9	Participant 9	Partner	South Africa	Male	Partner with significant collaboration expertise in his area of expertise, operating with international matters across borders.
10	Participant 10	Business Services Head	South Africa	Female	Head of a Business Service Unit with over 15 years' experience in legal practice and in business service collaboration initiatives.
11	Participant 11	Partner	Zambian	Confidential	Senior partner with expertise in legal and collaborative initiatives.
12	Participant 12	Senior Associate	South African	Female	Senior Associate in a highly specialised and collaborative legal field, with over 10 years' experience advising on legal matters.
13	Participant 13	Partner	Ugandan	Male	Partner with experience in cross-border and domestic legal collaboration.
14	Participant 14	Partner	Ugandan	Male	Partner with experience in cross-border and domestic legal collaboration.
15	Participant 15	Partner	South Africa	Male	Junior partner with multi-jurisdictional expertise, having practice in a number of different countries in Africa, with over 13 years legal expertise and collaboration experience.
16	Participant 16	Partner	Kenya	Female	Senior partner with leadership positions within the organisation, with a highly collaborative specialisation and over 15 years' experience in her field.

**As the research study took place across a single organisation, which has larger and small offices with larger and small compliments of partner-level legal specialists, this table has been created to provide as much background as possible in relation to the participants. However, where additional information would compromise the confidentiality of the participant's identity, less information has been included.*

Two of the interviewees were senior business services leaders within the organisation, specialising in different fields but both highly engaged in cross-specialist collaboration across the organisation. In addition, two of the interviewees were senior managers one level lower than partnership level, namely senior associates, from different areas of legal specialisation. Both are senior in experience and expertise and have engaged in cross-specialist collaboration domestically and across borders in Africa and internationally. Finally, the sample group was mixed in relation to both race and gender, and represented the organisation across five of its offices in Africa, including South Africa, Kenya, Uganda, Zambia and Mauritius.

Judgemental sampling technique was used to select the 16 individuals from whom data was collected, all of whom have significant experience participant in cross-specialist collaborative teams as part of their function within the organisation. All participants have worked in cross-collaboration teams for more than six years and have worked across national borders.

5.3 Results for Research Question 1

Research Question 1: How does the form of accountability experienced by senior legal specialists within a team promote positive or negative collaboration behaviours?

Research question 1 sought to explore the ways in which the form of accountability experienced by senior legal specialists within a high performing cross-specialist team of legal practitioners impacted the collaboration experienced within the particular team, either negatively or positively.

5.3.1 Collaboration within a team context

The first interview question requested that each interviewee provide background information in relation to the types of cross specialist team collaborations that each participant had been involved in during their career, either at the organisation being studied or prior to it. This established that the participants had all been involved in cross-specialist teams, including teams operating across national borders, in a collaborative manner. Four types of cross-specialist team collaboration were

expressed by the participants, as detailed in **Table 3**.

Table 3: Types of cross-specialist team collaboration identified by participants

Rank	Type of cross-specialist team collaboration	Frequency that the code appeared within and across transcripts
1	Transaction specific cross-specialist collaboration	15
2	Client business development-related cross specialist collaboration	9
3	Sector-related cross-specialist collaboration	6
4	Collaboration as a transaction leader	1

Transaction specific collaboration related to collaboration on legal transactions and matters where multi-disciplinary legal teams comprising specialist senior managers, such as partners and senior business service professionals including legal technology, work together to advise a client in relation to a complex legal problem. Participant 1 described this type of collaboration as, “We’re acting on any particular given transaction across specialist areas”. Client business development-related cross-specialist collaboration related to targeting new or existing clients with the aim of winning new work from the client. Participant 8 described working with peer specialists in client development collaboration as, “We’ve pitched together, we have sat down and tried to map clients together”. Sector-related cross-specialist collaboration related to teams of legal specialists collaborating within a particular sector, such as the mining, private equity or healthcare and pharmaceuticals sector, attending events as a team, networking, hosting webinars or carrying out other business development or marketing activities with the aim of winning new clients and work specifically within the targeted sector. Participant 9 described this type of collaboration as “Let’s say, for example, somebody else in my team would be interested in a particular sector, then we get involved in the activities of that sector group or working group”. Finally, collaboration as a transaction leader related to the perspective of leading transaction specific cross-specialist collaboration as the apex leader of the team. Participant 1 described “taking lead on a transaction from an internal perspective”.

The four collaboration types listed above were equally described as applying across

national borders. Participant 13 described cross-border collaboration as “We do work with other specialist lawyers on domestic law, you know, you’ve obviously highlighted the cross-border piece. If you have a national specific deal for example you get called in...”.

5.3.2 Dominant forms of accountability identified within cross-specialist collaboration teams

Having established the collaboration expertise of the participants and the types of cross-specialist teams that the participants engaged in, the next two interview questions sought to broadly establish the different forms of accountability that the participants experienced within the collaboration contexts described above, and whether any form of accountability in particular optimised accountability and collaboration or in particular did not. The two questions that were asked were:

Broad question: Within the cross-specialist collaboration teams that you have experienced, what works from a collaboration and collaboration accountability perspective?

Broad question: Within the cross-specialist collaboration teams that you have experienced, what doesn’t work from a collaboration and collaboration accountability perspective?

Two distinct forms of accountability were identified by the participants, namely formal and informal accountability. Within informal accountability, two central sub-forms of accountability emerged from the data, namely informal accountability related to peers and interestingly, informal accountability towards a sense of a higher purpose for the collaborative team, the particular office, and generally for the organisation as a whole. These forms and sub-forms of accountability are set out in **Table 4: Forms and sub-forms of accountability identified by participants** below.

Table 4: Forms and sub-forms of accountability identified by participants

Rank	Forms of accountability identified by participants	Frequency that the code appeared within and across transcripts
1	Formal accountability – specifically the remuneration committee of the organisation (Remco)	17
2.1	Informal accountability – specifically peer accountability	60
2.2	Informal accountability – specifically accountability to self, manifesting as relating to a higher sense of purpose or success for the organisation, and the individual participant’s role in achieving that higher purpose	21

5.3.3 Formal accountability and impact on collaboration (positive and negative)

5.3.3.1 Formal accountability identified

First, formal accountability for collaboration was felt by most of the participants. Each participant is required, in terms of the organisation’s formal accountability processes, to individually annually submit a motivation to the organisation’s remuneration committee (Remco) detailing the collaboration efforts of the participant during the course of the prior 12-month period. Participants were then rewarded for greater collaborative efforts by increased remuneration. The motivation put forward was provided only to the Remco and not to any other persons within the organisation. Remco’s deliberations in relation to the motivation of each participant were private and not shared with participants. Participant 1 referred to “structural accountability” to describe the organisation’s remuneration committee formal accountability structure, highlighting that different forms of accountability operate together in complex ways in relation to driving collaboration behaviour, and describing that structural accountability is the most overt and obvious form operating at the senior management and leadership level.

The positive, negative and optimal factors impacting formal accountability within the organisation are set out in **Table 5** below, and are discussed in the next sections.

Table 5: Formal accountability themes and sub-themes arising from sample data

Rank	Formal accountability themes and sub-themes arising from data collected	Frequency that the code appeared within and across transcripts
	Formal accountability, expressed as relating to the organisation's Remuneration Committee	
1	Factors positively impacting formal accountability and collaboration	
A	Individual level: Transparency on remuneration benefits of collaboration behaviour	1
B	Individual level: Remuneration reward	2
2	Factors negatively impacting formal accountability and collaboration	
A	Individual level: A firm strategy that is not perceived to be aligned with the individual or his/her team's natural capabilities	3
B	Individual level: Personal value of non-motivation by remuneration reward	2
C	Individual level: Lack of punitive consequences for non-collaborative behaviour	6
C	Optimal mechanisms of impacting formal accountability in pursuit of effective team collaboration	
C1	Individual level: Measurement of an individual or team on appropriate criteria related to the individual or team	1
C2	Team level: 360-degree feedback on individuals for their collaborative behaviour	2
C3	Team level: Repeat and reinforced messaging firm-wide about collaboration benefits	3

5.3.3.2 Formal accountability and positive impact on collaboration

From a positive impact perspective several participants occupying leadership positions within the organisation, in addition to their roles as partners within organisation, expressed the beneficial role that formal accountability plays in motivating collaborative behaviour in teams. Participant 1 expressed that positive collaboration behaviour, and accountability for behaviour, are driven by structural or formal accountability processes. However, the participant expressed the view that the current organisational processes would be more effective in driving positive behaviour if they were more transparent in terms of how collaboration endeavours are weighted and measured, suggesting they take the form of a process which includes a 360-degree review of each partner's collaboration behaviour. This implies that the current remuneration process formally implemented as an accountability mechanism is flawed to a degree. Participant 16 concurred and highlighted that having visibility about the organisation's formal remuneration committee process and deliberations significantly increased collaboration accountability for the participant and this resulted in remuneration committee accountability as featuring highly as a personal driver of collaboration for the participant. Participant 16's view included, "visibility on what the collaboration drivers are in relation to how the Remco process works and seeing how the balancing act plays out at Remco actually enhanced my drive for collaboration". This sentiment was echoed by Participant 3, who expressed the view that "if people could see more clearly the remuneration benefits, it would drive the [collaboration] behaviour, you know, kick it up a gear." Participants 1 and 3 agreed that remuneration does drive collaborative behaviour positively within the organisation to a degree. Participant 1 expressed, "So some will be more motivated purely by remuneration [compared to others]" and Participant 3 expressed, "I think remuneration sort of polices and drives behaviour to a large extent and so the I think they are driving the collaboration".

5.3.3.3 Formal accountability and negative impact on collaboration

From a negative impact perspective, a number of participants highlighted the limitations in the formal accountability process experienced at the organisation. These included that formal accountability structure was perceived as a one-size-fits-all-approach, inconsiderate of the potentially unique nature of collaboration within

particular legal specialist fields and offices which ultimately created a negative, and implicitly dissatisfied, experience with accountability for collaboration by the affected participants. This limitation was expressed with the greatest frequency by participants. The second limitation identified in relation to the formal accountability process related to the reward and non-punitive nature of the formal collaboration accountability adopted by the organisation, which was expressed as sub-optimally motivating collaboration. Finally, the third limitation was expressed as formal remuneration not featuring as a personal motivator for collaboration and accountability, compared to other personal motivating factors for participants.

The limitation of a one-size-fits-all-approach was described as relating to specialist teams who are not naturally collaborative in relation to the transactional work undertaken by those specialists or, along a very similar vein, as relating to firm strategy (i.e., collaboration imperatives) which are not perceived to fit with an individual team's natural capabilities from a transactional perspective. Participant 6 indicated that her specialist type of work is not a team that lends itself to being naturally collaborative in seeking collaboration on matters or transactions stemming from her area (compared to matters stemming from more naturally collaborative teams like Mergers and Acquisitions). Participant 6 expressed, "It's not really a team that lends itself to a lot of collaboration" and "here the firm's got this big drive towards where it wants to be, but on a team level and on a day-to-day basis it's not really happening." This was described as a barrier to collaboration and it was implied that this is something that reduces accountability to seek collaborative work with other specialists. Participant 9 highlighted that due to a very country specific type of legal system and law, cross-border collaboration on transactions is not a natural area of collaboration for the participant and can be a barrier to collaboration. Participant 9 expressed, "The sort of problem with my practice area in particular, is that, you know, it is so focused on a particular jurisdiction that, you know, the opportunities for us to work with colleagues in other offices is very rare."

From the perspective that the current formal accountability process is flawed, because it is a reward system rather than a punitive system, participants expressed that there are no consequences to non-collaboration and therefore no motivation formally for specialists to be accountable for their collaboration behaviour. Participant 9 highlighted that the primary focus of professionals within the organisation is to bill

fees, and fee earners are able to use this to delay or to excuse non-delivery in relation to business development initiatives for which they are accountable, rather than pulling in another peer or junior to ensure delivery. He expressed, “And you do see some people are falling away from those [business development] initiatives precisely because, you know, there is no accountability to whether I do this or not, you know, it doesn't really matter, if I'm too busy to get involved, then I'm too busy.” Participant 1 expressed that, “I'm not sure someone who doesn't collaborate well that really that there's a significant impact on them and their life and rem[uneration], because I think they can get away without it.”

Finally, from a personal motivation perspective, very few participants expressed participation in formal accountability processes for collaboration, in the current non-punitive form used by the organisation, as a motivational in relation to their collaborative behaviour. Participant 6 indicated that she felt accountability to Remco because of the formal nature of the process, implying accountability to superiors as a natural accountability which resonated with the participant, compared to the informal nature of peer accountability. However, she indicated the organisation's formal accountability process did not drive or motivate her during the year, or on an ongoing basis, to be more collaborative. The effort applied to the formal annual process was described as something that was considered for the first time when partners were required to complete the necessary documentation once every 12 months. Participant 6 expressed, “I mean, to be quite honest, a lot of the stuff that comes up in the rem co documents I think about for the first time when I'm doing the documents”. Participant 15 concurred and expressed other personal motivating factors as drivers of his felt accountability during the year. He expressed, “I think as long as the focus though is on you delivering a holistic business solution to a client, it will always force you to bring in other people and not because it's a buzzword or because the Remuneration Committee has decided we need to collaborate.”

5.3.3.4 Optimal mechanisms of formal accountability in pursuit of effective collaboration

As a final question posed to interview participants at the end of each interview, interviewees were asked to express any views they had on optimising accountability within cross-specialist collaborative teams within the organisation. In relation to

formal accountability, three suggestions were made by participants as improvements to formal accountability structures or mechanism aiming to enhance effective collaboration within teams.

These suggestions were, first, to ensure 360-degree feedback on senior management and leadership collaboration and accountability behaviour. Participant 1 expressed, "I think you've got to, for example, in an ideal world, I think I would want every partner to go through a 360 review before the end. Have that taken into account on their rem process". Participant 9 agreed, citing that, "you know, I think is quite important is for people to give feedback like partners to give feedback on their partners, whether anonymously or whatever but it's not something that we currently do".

Second, participants indicated that repeat, re-enforced messaging firm-wide about the importance of collaboration would optimise senior management and leadership accountability for collaboration in a positive way. Participant 9 highlighted that this would place collaboration and accountability at the front of partners' minds continuously, "I think what the firm is currently doing, you know, reinforcing the messaging about collaboration I think that's quite important." Participant 16 equally highlighted that continuous and increased communication across the firm about the value of collaboration would maximise collaboration accountability, highlighting that if he would aim to optimise collaboration and accountability, action to take "Maybe would be just to communicate the value of collaboration more".

Finally, Participant 6 highlighted that for optimal collaboration accountability teams should be measured on what appropriate accountability looks like for that particular team, as opposed to a uniform measure of collaboration across the firm. Participant 6 indicated that to be measured otherwise creates the felt or lived experience that the work that a particular team is doing which is not collaborative in the uniform sense is not important or good enough, which is demotivating and alienating in relation to the firm strategy and a shared firm mindset. She expressed, "Like, I had mentioned earlier for me personally it's that there seems to be a, I don't know, if it's a one size fits all, this approach doesn't work for all teams... you need to look at what work that particular team does... and maybe see how we can... tailor it [collaboration]". Participant 6 suggested that the creation of a clear idea of what legitimate appropriate

collaboration looks like for a particular team given the nature and context of their speciality and practice would optimise collaboration motivation and accountability.

5.3.4 Informal accountability and impact on collaboration (positive and negative)

5.3.4.1 Informal accountability identified

The results of the data collected from the current research study support these two broad themes of informal accountability, first specifically peer accountability as an informal accountability and control mechanism within the broad and relatively formally flat structure of the partnership or senior management/leadership base of the organisation and, second, specifically a form of informal accountability to self which is relational to the organisation, expressed by participants as a sense of accountability towards pursuit of higher success or value for the organisation as a whole. This latter form of felt-accountability was expressed relatively strongly in the research results as a form of informal accountability positively driving collaboration, which was surprising as this form of informal accountability did not feature particularly prominently in the literature reviewed in relation to peer groups or teams.

Table 6 below details the overarching themes that arose from the data collected in relation to informal accountability, the frequency of these themes, as well as the sub-themes that arose in relation to each.

Table 6: Informal accountability themes and sub-themes arising from sample data

Rank	Informal accountability themes and sub-themes arising from data collected	Frequency that the code appeared within and across transcripts
	Informal accountability, expressed as relating to peers and the participant's relationship with peers	60
1	Factors positively impacting peer accountability and collaboration	
A	Individual level: Deep relationships	29
B	Individual level: Personal values	17
C	Individual level: A sense of team	13
D	Individual level: Heightened awareness	5
E	Team level: Clear alignment of expectations	25
F	Team level: Strong team leadership	3
2	Factors negatively impacting peer accountability and collaboration	
A	Individual level: Weak personal relationships and cross-border cultural challenges	20
B	Individual level: Fear of overreaching authority	5
C	Individual level: Collaboration fatigue	1
D	Team level: Lack of team alignment	11
E	Team level: Lack of consequences for non-collaboration	6
C	Optimal mechanisms of peer accountability in pursuit of effective team collaboration	
C1	Individual level: Deeper relationship building between peers	3
C2	Team level: Junior team member empowerment in collaborative peer teams	3
C3	Team level: Better ways of communicating between peers operating from different offices	2

5.3.4.2 Informal peer accountability

The current research which focused on felt-accountability of senior managers and leaders within cross-specialist collaborative teams highlighted that informal accountability exists at a relational and horizontal peer level within the collaborative teams. Participants described being held accountable by peers who assessed a participant's collaborative performance and formulated a judgement on the participants performance, or lack therefore, and in relation to the latter impose covert unofficial sanctions on that participant by refusing to work with them in future as a means of holding the participant accountable for poor collaborative behaviour. Participant 1 described "in terms of informal peer accountability, it is the sense you know that all the partners will be looking at you from a performance...perspective". Participant 3 indicated that, "you just kind of shy away from them. I suppose we'll try and avoid working in the same team. It's [poor collaboration is] not really something that's necessarily dealt with and resolved".

5.3.4.3 Informal peer accountability and positive impact on collaboration

At an individual level, four factors were expressed by participants as driving accountability within a collaborative team context. In order of frequency, these were: deep relationships; personal values; a sense of team and heightened awareness about the benefits of collaboration. At a team level, the study's participants expressed two positive drivers of their collaborative behaviour. In order of frequency these were: Clear alignment of team members on expectations (and clear and consistent communication formed part of this as a mechanism of alignment); and strong team leadership.

Individual level: Deeper relationships

Participants in the research study placed high emphasis on deep social relationships as the most important informal factor in relation to effective team or peer accountability and collaboration. This was expressed specifically within the context of the organisation studied which has as a formal accountability mechanism a reward system as opposed to a non-collaboration punitive system. Seven main factors formed the basis of the participants' views on how deeper peer relationships in cross-

specialist teams are enabled and how these enabling conditions boost individual felt-accountability. This appears to be a different and powerful driving factor or antecedent to team and peer accountability compared to those put forward in the literature (Pearson & Sutherland, 2017).

Deeper relationships build accountability and enable collaboration: Participant 4's view was that accountability at a peer level starts with building trust with peers. The participant expressed, "I guess it starts with rapport and relationships and something that you've built with someone else." Participant 5 concurred and highlighted the importance of getting to a peer to enable collaboration and accountability in relation to client matters and other initiatives, including taking a genuine interest in other people's backgrounds, children and lives. The participant expressed, "I love interacting love knowing people. This to me, that's so important for when you do want to cross collaborate, even on a, from a client level." Participant 15 expressed the sentiment that collaboration and accountability rests primarily on relationships, including proactive building of relationships with peers and going out of one's way to do so. It was expressed that this ensures that peers are accountable to the collaboration process because they willingly prioritise your collaboration above other demands and respond to you more quickly.

Deeper relationships create respect for professional boundaries because trust is built, whilst disrespect for professional boundaries damages relationships and accountability: Participant 8 highlighted that the necessary deeper collaboration relationships are built on and enabled when peers recognise that each of them respects the other's boundaries in terms of who should be providing certain specialist services to a client. The participant indicated, "So once you have the trust of the other partners that, you know, you will respect each other in our boundaries then it [the nature of the collaboration] changes". Once those boundaries are respected, deeper trust relationships are built and collaboration is enhanced, including collaboration accountability.

Better communication enables deeper relationships: Participant 9 highlighted that sharing core values with a peer who works across offices is an enabler of repeat collaboration across offices. The participant expressed, "You know, if you found somebody, let's say in another office in another team that you work well with and you

sort of share the same values around work, you know, and generally you tend to go back to that person.” Participant 11 highlighted that personal relationships between peers makes it easier for someone to hold another person accountable, indicating that “I think the better the personal relationship, the easier it is to have an honest conversation about what is supposed to be happening, and whether it's happening at the time it's supposed to happen”. Response times are quicker, according to Participant 11, when peers have met in person, and peers are more proactive and less reactionary.

Deeper relationships stem from collaboration with a core group of people:

Participant 1 expressed that a core cross-specialist team that works together regularly leads to natural collaboration, natural accountability for behaviour and ultimately successful collaboration behaviour and outcomes. Participant 1 expressed, “We operate around almost a core team of Partners who are involved in any given point”. Participant 5 highlighted that she has a core team of people she works with repeatedly, stemming from relationships built with people she likes and has gotten to know at a personal level, which she feels enhances the accountability for deliverables on both sides of the relationship. Participant 6 expressed, “So you start to develop a preference for who you want to work with” and indicated that this contributed to the natural creation of a core team of specialists which whom she collaborates more frequently with than others. Participant 8 highlighted that when a core team of specialists have worked together and found a balance to that relationship in terms of a shared mindset in professional boundaries and product delivery standards, due to the effort it takes to find that balance. She expressed, “And I feel like people find their own balance and then they don't necessarily want to move from the people that they want to work with”. Participant 8 highlighted that finding a rhythm with a core team of specialists that you trust occurs both intra-office and across offices in the group, as an enabling condition necessary for effective collaboration and accountability. Participant 9 attributed shared values and shared ways of treating peers as a reason why peers tend to use or gravitate towards a smaller group or pool of core specialists that they use repeatedly for collaboration and where accountability works well. He highlighted, “I think the reason why, you know, sometimes your pool generally will become small as there are certain instances where you will try to work with other people and you'll get your fingers burnt

and you know it just because some people may not be as enthusiastic about certain things the way that you are”.

Deeper relationships stem from frequent engagement with a core group of people: Participant 7 agreed that the best collaboration and accountability experienced in cross-border work stemmed from working with a peer for several years on different transactions and building an unspoken or informal way of communicating deliverables, standards of working and expectations. He expressed, “I've worked with ... a long long time, too. He sort of knows what he can expect to come from me and I sort of know what it's like”. Participant 11 highlighted that clear communication which happens on a frequent basis between partners and peers in relation to the collaboration objective ensures that collaborative efforts are not neglected, perhaps keeping them front of mind for all peers. She expressed, “I think frequent communication and discussion helps. I think what I've noticed is that if you shelve the accountability, it sort of gets postponed and probably never gets done. I think the more you communicate and the more you report for me is quite key in trying to ensure accountability across partners.”

Deeper relationships are built on relationship reciprocity: Participant 1 described as a condition and a driver for positive collaboration the concept of reciprocity at a peer level, stemming from a close relationship and resulting in a sense of comradery and of the relationship being mutually beneficial. He stated that, “I'm always going to bend over backwards, to help and perhaps at the expense of others because we're kind of quite close. And I know they're relying on me and I rely on them, and it's a mutually beneficial relationship.” This was expressed at enabling invisible accountability barriers being broken down as it is easier for two people in this type of relationship to have an open and frank conversation when deadlines are not met. Participant 5 concurred, expressing that “So if I, if there's been work back from them [a peer], I'm feel more inclined to give them work.” Participant 7 couched relationship reciprocity as building allegiance between team members by being flexible and accommodating towards what individuals need in order to operate optimally, and indicated that this enhanced collaboration and accountability between team members. He indicated that, “...if we do not sort of lead by knowing the other person in the group, and knowing what sort of makes him makes him or her tick and what could be his or her shortcomings, because we all have them and it has to be

reciprocal. That, that would be a hindrance to teamwork.” Participant 12 indicated a deliberate practice to reciprocate providing work to peers and collaborating with peers who have referred work to them as an enabling condition for good collaborative team and accountability process and outcomes. She expressed, “sometimes we do ask who do we owe?...Who gave us something”?

Trust in peer professional ability deepens relationships: Participant 2 made the point that an important enabling condition for peer accountability is a mutual mindset that the peers in the cross-specialist team are working to the same accountability standards. The participant highlighted that, “I think that the reason that the accountability works on that level is because you know that the other person's standard is the same as yours”. This implies that there is an unspoken norm that the standard of work output that you will be accountable for will be an excellent standard. There is a self-accountability not to let peers down by delivering to a lesser individual (and therefore team) standard. Participant 8 similarly highlighted that trust is build and collaboration and accountability enhanced by the trust placed in peers having the same product delivery and turnaround time trust in one another. Participant 15 highlighted that a discouraging factor in relation to peer collaboration and accountability relates to transactional collaboration where there is an absence of trust between peers that they have the same professional standards and will provide the same consistent high-quality service to clients. The participant expressed, “It can be quite discouraging I must say collaborating with people when there isn't that accountability, because your clients know what they used to getting from you. And then you give them over someone else and they're not getting that service”. Participant 15 implied that this trust and professional accountability is important for effective collaboration teams. Participant 16 highlighted that trust that a peer will provide a service to a client with the same care, and to the same standards as the participant would provide, is an important enabling condition of creating an accountable relationship for effective collaboration.

Individual level: Personal values

At an individual level, a factor that was expressed by participants as positively impacting accountability within cross-specialist teams was the personal values of team members and aligned values within collaborative teams. Three central themes

arose from a personal values perspective, as driving factors enabling greater accountability within team contexts. The first relates to the desire and value of leaving a legacy of success or providing greater value or higher success than that at an individual level. This was interesting as it suggests that the informal form of accountability to self in relation to the organisation, as explored by literature (Roberts, 1991; and Casenave & Klarmann, 2020) is nestled within peer accountability within teams operating in pursuit of higher organisational performance. The second relates to the recognition of professional excellence, and the accompanying recognition and reward related to it. Finally, the third expressed value related to fulfilment of duty to the organisation.

Leaving a legacy and a sense of higher value or higher success for the organisation: This particular sub-theme or category driving positive collaboration and accountability behaviour may be considered a form of informal accountability to self for personal values, which is aligned in a peer context in relation to others in a non-hierarchical way, allowing for internal accountability to promote broader organisational strategic objectives such as ethics and strategic goals (Roberts, 1991; and Casenave & Klarmann, 2020). It also suggests the interconnectedness and reinforcing effect and nested nature of two forms of informal accountability, peer and accountability to self, within a social context.

In relation to the data gathered in the present study, Participant 3 highlighted that whilst remuneration and formal accountability to Remco drove collaboration behaviour initially, ultimately this evolved for the participant into a self-evaluation and ultimate driver of pursuit of contributing the greatest success or value possible at a higher level or for a purpose higher than that of the individual. It was expressed as “more accountability to the firm than to a colleague” and “Remco drives the behaviour initially and then it becomes almost where you think, I’m not just doing it because of Remco, I’m doing it because what is regarded as success?” Participant 7 indicated that a driver of accountability includes ensuring that there is day to day accountability which builds longer term success for the firm. He expressed this as “what drives me most to, you know, to sort out matters as soon as possible is because I know it is important for the firm to progress.” Participant 8 highlighted a high felt-accountability towards the personal values of leaving a legacy at the firm, for the future and for the greater good of the firm and the participant personally, stating that “I’d like to think

about it on a bigger picture or [in] a legacy sort of [way], you know, [the] future". The participant described this as an inward drive based on personal values to be successful which was described as increasing the participant's accountability towards others so that the participant ultimately maximised and capitalised on opportunities to thrive. Participant 9 described being interested in the firm's success and expressed it as something that the participant would like to contribute to, which drives collaboration accountability for the participant as a personal value. Participant 9 indicated that "I want to see the firm succeed" and expressed it as something that the participant would like to contribute to, which drives collaboration accountability for the participant as a personal value. Participant 10 indicated that the biggest felt driver for the participant was "my team's success", and "the success of the full organisation". Whilst acknowledging that this was linked to the participant's personal career, the values of preparing the organisation for the future featured at a high level of intensity for the participant.

Recognition of professional excellence: Participant 16 highlighted that a motivating factor for accountability for collaboration stemmed from working at a high professional standard with peers and revelling in the shared high standard of legal advice provided to clients as a team. She stated, "I do quite like just watching other motivated, ambitious people driving their areas of expertise. It's a motivator for me". Linked to this pursuit of excellence was the motivating factor of reward and recognition that would accompany it. Participant 1 highlighted that public recognition of collaboration efforts and outcomes would drive accountability for collaborative behaviour within the organisation. Participant 10 also identified that "and obviously the recognition and reward piece is a key driver", which was expressed in the context of this being a driver or factor motivating collaborative behaviour and accountability for that behaviour.

Duty to the firm: Participant 3 indicated that he felt accountable to the firm as a whole to create effective collaboration and to be accountable within his practice group and as a partner to collaborate with his peers and with other practice groups. He describes this as meeting the firm's expectations. He juxtapositions this against a more personal feeling of accountability to be fair and equitable about what different practice areas need in relation to fee billings on a matter, and balancing that collaboratively as best as possible.

Individual level: A sense of team

At an individual level, a sense of team within collaboration cross-specialist teams was highlighted as an important factor driving collaboration accountability. Interestingly, this was expressed by one participant as a driver of collective or group accountability. It was described as relating to the notion of a shared team or inclusive group mindset and as requiring genuine peer trust in reciprocity. In particular, the second of these elements, a shared team mindset, reiterates the shared mindset antecedent known within effective teamwork literature (Haas & Mortensen, 2016).

Team identity drives individual and collective accountability: Participant 1 highlighted that a core team of people, who work together frequently, develop a shared team mindset, leads to a sense of collective accountability, collective drive and collective motivation which drives positive collaboration behaviour. He expressed, “And I think the more, you work with particular people. I think the more that it's a sense of team, that sense of collective accountability, that sense of collective drive and motivation, it all increases and I honestly think that it seems like it drives behaviour.” This was expressed by other participants as resulting because peers care about each other and don't want to let other team members down. Participant 2 highlighted that trust in professional ability of team members enables effective peer accountability, and it is coupled with a fear of not wanting to disappoint the team or one's peers by providing work below an unspoken but agreed standard of excellence. Participant 2 stated, “it is the deeper human thing where you don't want to disappoint”. Participant 8 agreed with this sentiment and highlighted that the deeper trust build through relationships results in a person not wanting to let a peer down or disappoint them by failing to perform at a level expected in terms of collaboration, and that this ultimately drives accountability.

Inclusiveness: An essential element expressed at an individual level was the notion of feeling included or inclusiveness. A sense of team was described as inclusiveness and feelings of belonging, which were expressed to be closely connected to effective collaboration, trust and accountability. Participant 2 expressed that “I think it's an including people thing”, as a factor enabling collaboration, trust and accountability. Participant 3 highlighted that collaboration works in sector groups because team

members are inclusively able to scope out their role in the collaboration and devise as a group how to work better together towards a common goal.

Genuine benefit to each peer: Participant 3 highlighted that cross-border collaboration works, and peers work better and more accountably with each other, when the collaborative endeavours highlight upfront the mutually beneficial outcomes for the peers involved. In addition, the collaboration must not take advantage of smaller office peers in favour of a larger firm-wide strategic initiative. Participant 3 expressed, “on the cross-border side of things, it comes down very much to the question of whether we can collaborate in a way where we are driving the biggest strategic view of the firm in a way that doesn't negatively affect individual practices”. Participant 8 echoed this sentiment and highlighted that peer respect and trust was fostered when there was reciprocity in work referrals, and this enhanced collaboration and collaborative accountability within the participants office. Participant 8 shared a collaboration anecdote on this point, “Yeah, so interestingly in respect to this specifically, these are words from a partner. He's like, I would have never trusted you before but you've shown me that you give me work and although there was always this mistrust around firm dynamics, you showed me that you do it genuinely and so ever since then our friendship and collaborating has just been different”. The participant implied that collaboration was positive and accountability improved as a result of genuine peer respect and reciprocity.

Individual level: Heightened awareness about the benefits of collaboration

Finally, a last individual level factor highlighted by participants as positively impacting informal accountability related to heightened awareness by an individual of the benefits of collaboration. Participant 6 highlighted that a big driver of collaboration and the motivation to be accountable for collaborative behaviour was having collaboration as a front of mind topic day-to-day. She expressed, “So front of mind [for me] is the need to collaborate, not only within your team, but obviously with the cross team. So I think for me that's a bigger driver than the remuneration committee stuff”. That being said, Participant 6 did indicate that intensity of accountability annually to remuneration committee features highly for her compared to peer accountability. Participant 11 highlighted that clear communication which happens on a frequent basis between partners and peers in relation to the collaboration

objective ensures that collaborative efforts are not neglected, perhaps keeping them front of mind for all peers, stating that “I think frequent communication and discussion help.”

Team level: Clear alignment of team members on expectations

This factor is multifaceted and centres around the notion of accountability alignment for collaboration process and outcomes and is strongly impacted by the efficacy of communication within teams. Participant data highlighted that collaborative team alignment in relation to accountability relies heavily on communication which is clear, courageous, frequent, inclusive and empowering. This driving accountability factor aligns with that identified in accountability literature as clarity of role (Pearson & Sutherland, 2017), but add individual perspectives (such as inclusiveness and empowerment) to this element within a peer or informal accountability context.

Alignment: This factor relates to the concept of aligned accountability, highlighting that this applies to a number of elements within the collaborative team dynamic. Participant 5 highlighted that clear alignment of team members on expectations, deadlines, deliverables, responsibilities and other structural elements of the working relationship in a manner which uses clear and effective communication is key to effective team collaboration and accountability. The participant shared, “So I think I've learned to try, you know in the really early stages to try and manage and structure deadlines and deliverables and things like that”. This was expressed both at a peer-to-peer level in relation to transactional collaboration, but also in relation to accountability alignment in respect of the joint responsibility of peers to nurture and involve junior collaborative team members, “And I feel like the team, the seniors on the team, need to come together and understand the accountability to juniors as a joint responsibility”. Participant 9 reinforced the notion that accountability improves within teams when the leader of the collaboration initiative sets clear tasks for team members with clear expectations which is transparent to the collaborative team, allowing for alignment, “the leader of that matter or initiative will set you know certain tasks for certain team members, and I feel like that works because you then have deadlines, everybody knows what's expected of the other person and if the person is not pulling their weight, it becomes quite clear”. Participant 10 highlighted the need for clear deliverables as a driving force behind collaboration generally and ultimately

accountability alignment. Finally, Participant 13 highlighted that secondments build junior lawyers' understanding of expectations, deliverables and deadlines in a real and practical way, which enhances collaboration and accountability alignment across the organisation.

Clear and courageous communication: Participant 7 highlighted clear communication between peers, particularly across borders, prior to collaborating on a transaction as an enabling factor that fosters good peer to peer collaboration and accountability, sharing that “he would maybe reach out to me first say asking. Saying hey... There's this new matter. I, you know, we have not discussed this before but is this something you're comfortable with?”. Participant 14 highlighted that “It's really about communication” when describing the enabling conditions for good collaboration and ultimately effective accountability for collaboration behaviour. This was cited within the context of a breakdown in clear communication in relation to when a cross-border collaborative matter was to be billed to a client, straining the collaborative relationship between peers across borders. From a different and less general perspective, Participant 3 highlighted that “sometimes I'm not sure that the collaboration accountability isn't about being kind of open about sensitive issues and saying, what's going to work for you”, introducing the concept of courageous communication as an enabler of team alignment and accountability. This may be from a fee perspective, a capacity perspective, a recognition perspective, or otherwise. On the topic of whether remote working has impacted communication within teams and accountability, Participant 3 highlighted that working across borders in Africa appears to have been assisted by remote working practices arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, as professionals are more accessible by Zoom than they were via conference call in the past. The participant expressed, “strangely enough because we're working the way we are now I think we're moving to a point where it doesn't make any difference”. Participant 9 agreed and highlighted that previously team members in a particular country would be huddled together in a conference room for a conference call, and similarly in another country, and this inhibited collaboration and created more of an “us and them” felt experience. Better technology connection through Zoom platforms and the like enable collaboration across distances and enhance a single team feeling and mindset among peers. Participant 10 equally expressed the view that collaboration and accountability as improved as a result of remote working, dispensing with previous barriers of

collaboration stemming from physical proximity.

Frequent communication: Also closely related to communication, Participant 11 highlighted that clear communication which happens on a frequent basis between partners and peers in relation to the collaboration objective ensures that collaborative efforts are not neglected, perhaps keeping them front of mind for all peers. The participant highlighted, "I think frequent communication and discussion help. I think what I've noticed is that if you shelve the accountability, so it sort of gets postponed and probably never gets done." Participant 13 described training as a necessary communication frequency tool which teams should use to clearly confirm the professional standards and expectations existing in relation to a particular collaborative endeavour, highlighting that this will improve accountability through the provision of clear guidance.

Inclusive communication: Participant 4 concurred with the feeling that "massive transparency" in relation to everyone's role on a specific project with very visible responsibilities will be a huge motivator in a social accountability environment like peer accountability. Participant 4 did express reservations as to whether this would be a significant motivator for every team member but it registered highly as an accountability driver for him. This reinforces the view of Participant 14 who highlighted that an enabling condition for effective collaboration and accountability includes visibility and openness within communication between peers across borders. This participant shared, "There is a partner who works well with so many projects. And I think it is his visibility and openness that works." Participant 16 highlighted that reciprocated clear communication about collaborative expectations and shared objectives that benefited both peers was an enabling condition for collaborative accountability. It is implied that transparency, visibility, openness and reciprocity create an atmosphere of team inclusiveness that enables collaboration and accountability.

Empowering communication: Closely related to communication the notion of empowerment within teams arose, as a tool which facilitated team member accountability and action. Participant 10 couched the clear communication needed in teams as clear communication of what team members are empowered to do within the collaboration space without upsetting other team members, overstepping their

authority, level or experience, or being “seen to step on the other’s toes”.

Team level: Strong team leadership

The final factor expressed by participants as positively impacting team collaboration and accountability was expressed as strong team leadership. This aligns with the accountability driver of leadership identified as antecedent to accountability within organisations (Pearson & Sutherland, 2017), and appears to be equally applicable in informal peer collaborative contexts.

Participant 2 highlighted that accountability is successful when a single person takes the lead, expressing that “accountability comes in with one person”. Participant 2 in summary described that single person as successfully driving accountability when they are inclusive, when they bring excitement, when they make the team members feel valued and when they keep everyone on top of the deliverables. Participant 9 was of the view that the strength or type of team leadership personality drives the effectiveness of the collaboration, how peers within the team relate to each other and the team's collaboration accountability. Participant 10 highlighted that in relation to both formal hierarchical team structures and peer-to-peer flatter team structures, strong team leadership is a driver of collaboration and collaboration accountability, “From what I see between both of them is leadership. I think that where there is an active leader that has a true passion it works”.

5.3.4.4 Informal peer accountability and negative impact on collaboration accountability

As highlighted in **Table 6: Informal accountability themes and sub-themes arising from sample data** above, the following individual and team level factors were expressed by participants as negatively impacting on collaboration accountability. In order of frequency, weak personal relationships and related cross-border cultural challenges at an individual level were perceived as negatively impacting collaboration accountability (particularly across national-borders), followed by a lack of team alignment and the lack of punitive consequences for non-collaboration at a team level. In addition, at an individual level fear of overreaching one’s authority and collaboration fatigue were viewed by participants as negatively

impacting collaboration accountability within the context of informal peer accountability.

Individual level: Weak personal relationships and related-cross border cultural challenges

Weak personal relationships between cross-specialist team members were expressed by participants as having a negative impact on collaboration accountability. For example, Participant 1 highlighted that the lack of a personal relationship with a cross-specialist team colleague forces you to rely on each other's professional standards (which vary) without deeper and additional more human accountability drivers which flow from feeling accountable at a relational level. This hinders accountability behaviour and collaboration outcomes. The participant shared that, "I'm relying just on their professional sense of service rather than a personal relationship". This re-enforces the strongest perspective expressed by participants as having a positive impact on collaboration and accountability, namely deep peer relationships.

What arose with particular force and from a number of perspectives within the negative impact feedback from participants was the impact of geographic proximity, remote working (heightened by the Covid-19 pandemic), working across borders generally and the cultural challenges of working across different national borders in Africa. This reinforces the findings in literature relating to accountability antecedents and organisational cultural factors that negatively impact accountability (Gelfand, Lim, & Raver, 2004; Pearson & Sutherland, 2017), which appear to operate not only at an organisational level but also within smaller groups or teams and at a informal peer level across offices within an organisation.

Participant 10 highlighted that barriers to cross-border accountability arise when individuals don't know each other. The participant expressed, "I think opportunities for growth and getting known has often resulted in a fantastic collaborative contribution of people from other offices with each other, right, but I think that there is a hesitancy and a fear linked to individuals that don't necessarily know each other." The participant also highlighted collaboration and accountability success stories tied to inter-office secondments to demonstrate successful specialist team collaboration

across borders, which the participant attributed directly to the personal relationships and familiarity created by in-person engagements between peers. Participant 8 highlighted that across borders working with other offices in the group, a lack of trust and respect between peers results in sub-optimal collaboration and worries about collaboration accountability. The participant stated, “What I worry about is delivery ..., I guess accountability and concern as the trust and respect, that's a bit wobbly”. Participant 7 highlighted that because of Covid-19, a smaller office of the firm noticeably felt that the lack of physical presence of professionals in the office and the lack of regular meetings decreased speed of execution on matters and accountability for speed of execution.

From a different perspective, the notion that physical distance deters difficult conversations arose, and it was implied that it was easier for participants to ignore accountability of their peers. Participant 11 alluded to the fact that it is easier to have difficult conversations in person and expressed as a barrier to accountability the lack of physical proximity which enables that conversation, resulting in peers rather avoiding dealing with the accountability problems all together. She stated, “I think at some point I was resolved to not push it too much and pass it on to someone else. ... Obviously, I think it helps being in person”. As a counter perspective, Participant 13 indicated that working remotely has not impacted peer to peer collaboration and accountability, attributing this to the innate professional accountability felt by senior legal practitioners. He shared, “Okay, so at the peer-to-peer level that's where Covid hasn't changed much. It's been business as usual, and I suppose it's because deep down they have that sense of accountability.”

Participant 15 introduced the notion that remote working impacts accountability access. Participant 15 highlighted that the Covid pandemic and increased remote working has affected the ability to hold peers and juniors accountable for collaboration deliverables because when staff are present in the office it is possible to approach them in person to discuss issues. In the participant's words, “I think that the opposite is true with this covid situation and working online. Accountability is a lot more difficult to enforce because whereas, before I could just walk into your office and be like, dude, and I need this thing done right now, now you've got all the power to whether you grant me access to you or not, right? In terms of whether you are going to answer my call or a Teams call whatever it is. That's entirely within the power

of the person you called. You can do that. That access, they control that.”

Frustrations with the ability to hold peers to account across borders and particularly across different cultures in Africa was expressed by the participants. Participant 6 highlighted that when dealing with peers across borders, in order to be respectful and perhaps because of the particular office culture, a softer approach is taken in terms of communicating with and holding peers in other offices accountable for meeting deadlines. The participant shared, “I think you have to take a sort of softer approach than you would if you were using a correspondent.” Participant 15 expressed the view that peers “are not bold enough” to challenge cultural differences in accountability and collaboration in the manner demanded by a high performing organisation. The Participant went on to explain that this can be done in a respectful manner, mindful of cultural respect norms and hierarchy, but that these issues should not be shied away from when it affects client service. The participant expressed the appreciation that these kinds of conversations are more difficult to have remotely and are best held in person, but that that hurdle cannot be a barrier to holding peers accountable for expected standards of service delivery.

Participant 4 felt that the organisation has not fully understood cultural differences that affect accountability for collaboration across offices operating in different African jurisdictions, including power distance relationships among other things, expressing that “we haven't understood the culture of those offices better”. Participant 10 speculated that better cross border collaboration and accountability outcomes arose in the participant's experience where inter-office secondments had taken place allowing peers to build relationships at a personal level and potentially better understand cultural differences between offices and nationalities in relation to collaboration conditions necessary to enable accountability between peers. Participant 11 highlighted cultural differences in how peers relate to each other and relate to authority in the participant's national and office culture, highlighting that where authority is perceived or exists, culture demands greater respect of that authority which in turn results in less open communication and longer lead times in terms of building close personal relationships will allow open and honest conversations and safe spaces for peers to hold each other accountable for their actions. In the participant's own words, “I think from an office perspective I know, people tend to, first of all, we tend to be quite respectful of authority. And I think in

the presence of authority, you find that people are not as outspoken as they normally are. So people are not very out there until they get to a place where they're comfortable with you. So, that sort of takes the relationship building does take a bit longer, I think, in our sort of culture.”

Participant 13 highlighted concerns regarding cultural differences across offices and different cultural interpretations about collaboration, accountability and hierarchy which impacted in the example given meeting of professional standards and deadlines. Participant 14 highlighted that a lack of understanding regarding different cultures across borders can hinder collaboration and accountability and ultimately results in peers being completely unable to work together. He shared, “those two partners failed to act together. And the main reason was this cultural issue where one felt he was just being told what to do”. Finally, Participant 16 agreed with this take on cross-border accountability and highlighted that cultural approaches which are aggressive and headstrong across borders which don't appreciate the effect that that will have within a different natural culture of collaboration and accountability, ultimately yields suboptimal collaboration and collaboration accountability results.

Team level: Lack of team alignment

As a second strong factor negatively impacting collaboration accountability within cross-specialist peer teams, from the research data arose the notion of the lack of team alignment. This accords with the positive driving factor impacting collaboration accountability discussed above, namely good alignment and clear communication. It also accords with the literature existing on clarity of roles within an organisation as an antecedent to accountability (Pearson & Sutherland, 2017), suggesting that this antecedent applies equally to informal peer accountability.

Participant 4 highlighted that the biggest challenge he has faced in relation to cross-specialist collaboration and accountability relates to "getting people to speak the same language" or put different, getting everyone in the team aligned as to the goals, the deliverables, the expectations and group norms. This was supported by several different perspectives from participants. For example, from timing alignment perspective Participant 7 highlighted that the view that the greatest tension arising in collaboration and accountability in collaboration endeavours is the tension created

by an inadequate “lead time or preparation time” that is required to make the cross-border collaborative projects effective. Participant 16 had similar views and highlighted that not being briefed on a matter or brought into a collaborative transaction matter by a peer at the right time with enough time to provide valuable input on the matter or a pitch, such as accurate fee costing, was a significant barrier to collaboration and a significant problem at a collaboration accountability level as it took peers time to recognise the obligation to bring specialist team members into matters with appropriate timing and preparation. Participant 10 highlighted the view that “The more time people have, the more time they have to strategise and collaborate and think, and I think generally people want to collaborate and time is the biggest constraint”.

From a different perspective than that of time, Participant 8 highlighted that when working across borders with different offices, in some instances a worry arises about professional delivery in relation to a product or a price of work, in terms of standards or in terms of meeting deadlines, ultimately manifesting as a lack of alignment or shared mindset between peers in relation to this element, and that this hinders collaboration and collaboration accountability. Finally, Participant 9 highlighted that collaboration and accountability initiatives fail because “it's sort of up in the air as to what the end goal is”, which results in team members drifting away from the project.

Participant 10 highlighted that one of the largest barriers to cross-border collaboration between bigger and smaller offices is the lack of understanding and alignment between peers as to the capacity and abilities of peers in the smaller offices, and what can reasonably be expected of them. She described, “And so that is a huge piece for across our offices, the size of the capacity, and the space and ability that is created to perform and collaborate”. Participant 13 indicated that failure of peers to align on fee expectations and billing practices leads to a breakdown of collaboration, personal relationships and trust across-offices, ultimately negatively affecting peer to peer buy-in about the benefits of collaboration across offices. Participant 14 agreed and highlighted that a collaboration issue arose in a particular instance where peers failed to set out and prepare ahead of the matter expectations and alignment on the billing arrangements and mechanics for the collaboration across borders, giving rise to unpaid invoices and general frustration from peers across offices. He expressed frustration in sharing, “We didn't set out properly at the

start what is the billing arrangement, how we will send bills, who would be receiving them”.

Finally, the role of team leadership in cross-specialist teams and the role of leadership to bring about team alignment was raised in relation to being a factor that negatively impacts accountability when absent (similarly to this being an enabling factor when it is present). Participant 5 highlighted that a barrier to collaboration and accountability within a collaboration team is leadership, even among "flat" structure teams where all team members are firm partners. The participant expressed confusion often about “Whose role is it to step up and to try keep these teams together and communicate across specialist teams?” Participant 5 highlighted that collaboration diminishes where there is no clear team leader providing cohesion, direction and unity within the team, including clarity on the roles each team member needs to play in relation to both transactional and client development initiative. Participants ultimately implied that from a leadership perspective partner leadership behaviour regarding collaboration around big important clients, and other clients, is generally perceived within the organisation as a more hands off or light touch in approach than otherwise. This speaks to leadership accountability culture and the interplay between them, as discussed in existing accountability literature as a driving force behind effective organisational accountability (Pearson & Sutherland, 2017), and it appears equally within collaborative teams.

Team level: Lack of punitive consequences for non-collaboration

Participant 9 highlighted that the primary focus of professionals within the organisation is to bill fees, and that fee earners are able to use this to delay or to excuse non-delivery in relation to business development initiatives for which they are accountable, rather than pulling in another peer or junior to ensure delivery. Participant 3 view's differed slightly, whilst agreeing with the notion that there are no formal or overt punitive measures against partners for poor collaboration and concurring that the issue in all likelihood will not be confronted directed, at a social level the failing peer is “unofficially sanctioned”. This takes the form of no longer being worked with by peers, and by the failing partners' peers developing a negative reputation for the failing partner. Participant 5 concurred with this view, expressing surprise at the lack of communication from senior partners to other team members

collaborating in relation to a large and important client, including ways of work, roles and responsibilities and other vital communication elements relating to the client matter and the collaboration. Participant 5 added that from a personal perspective people who are not confrontational battle to hold peers accountable for poor collaboration, sharing "I'm not a confrontational person".

Individual level: Fear of overreaching authority

Participant 2 highlights that one of the reasons that peers do not follow through on their business development cross-specialist team initiatives is a fear of not wanting to "step on other people's toes". This concept arose across a number of interviews, across different offices within the organisation, and has been articulated in this section as a fear of not overreaching one's authority.

For example, Participant 2 described this feeling as not wanting to "overstepping" or overreaching, and believing that their peers have a particular collaboration matter in hand (thereby the participant gives self-permission to step back and not chase up on any delayed collaboration deliverables). Participant 2 did share that this fear of overreaching is overcome when a peer provides another peer with the opportunity to step over an invisible line and support his peer in achieving the deliverable, for example by expressly asking for help. Participant 10 reinforced this idea and indicated that team members do not ultimately hold themselves accountable for moving collaboration initiatives forward because they face the hurdle of feeling like they cannot perform an action because they have not been provided with specific authority from the team leader or more senior people in the team to do so. The participant indicated that they have a fear of being "rapped over the knuckles" for doing something "outside of your level or outside of your experience". Participant 11 highlighted that a barrier to peer trust and collaboration which affects relationships is the concept of stepping on the toes of other peers in relation to unduly interfering with how they are managing a process or how they are responding to a situation. The participant provided an example of an unresponsive peer whose lack of response was affecting billing of a client, despite clear prior communication on the issue and what needed to be done, but Participant 11 did not want to upset a peer whom the participant does not know personally very well, and did not want to step on toes and so the participant devised a way of going around the unresponsive peer

to resolve the issue instead of holding the peer to account.

The fear of overreaching or stepping on toes was also described by Participant 2 in a slightly different way, as peers not trying to do the work or “eat the lunch” of another specialist team or peer, and therefore “stepping on toes” in a way that irritates people and breaks relationship trust and respect. It is described as the “tone” of the relationship or collaboration by knowing that a peer respected you and your work by including you on the matter or initiative and not trying to do that work themselves and failing. This contributes to a peer feeling valued, feeling part of a team and the collaboration occurs more swiftly as team members are willingly accountable. Participant 8 highlighted that a major factor that hindered collaboration and collaboration accountability in the past was when peers suspected peers of hoarding work, and not passing the work on to the appropriate deep legal specialist to properly advise the client on that work. This impacted on inter-peer trust and hindered collaboration, in the words of the participant, “He's won the trust that you wouldn't steal the client to do all other work for [that client...that trust factor is a big one.”

Individual level: Collaboration fatigue

As a final negative or inhibiting factor, Participant 10 expressed that remote working brought about a “huge spike in collaboration and then some fatigue, which dropped collaboration”. The participant highlighted the initial positive impact on accountability within teams, but time-induced reduction as peers experienced collaboration fatigue, similar to other big change events.

5.3.4.5 Optimisation of informal peer accountability suggestions

As a final question posed to the participants, interviewees were asked to express any views that they had on optimising accountability within cross-specialist teams in pursuit of optimal effective team collaboration. Three themes emerged that relate to informal peer accountability, namely deeper relationship building efforts between peers, junior team member empowerment within collaborative peer teams and improved communication and engagement between peers from different offices.

In relation to deepening relationships, Participant 7 indicated, “I've never possibly

met the partner who is faced with facing the client... just for people to sort of acknowledge that...and try to find sort of a time where we can prepare and discuss the matter before being sort of confronted I think, you know, would be much more effective” and Participant 12 expressed that it’s about “more opportunities to get to know each other” and “mutual interest” and getting “to know each other better”. In relation to empowerment of juniors, accountability is optimised in the view of Participant 10 by “granting authority to one layer more junior” and in the view of Participant 15, ensuring that the organisation does not “intervene too late” in the abilities of juniors to build collaborative skill and capability. Finally, better communication and engagement between offices was expressed by Participant 13 as trying “to meet each other halfway on culture” and as a “focus on deliverance and competence”. Participant 14 advocated for “better ways of communicating” in pursuit of less difficult collaboration.

5.4 Results for Research Question 2

Research Question 2: How does the level of accountability experienced by senior legal specialists within a team promote positive or negative collaboration behaviours?

Research question 2 sought to determine whether the level of accountability experienced by senior legal specialist teams within a high performing cross-specialist team of legal practitioners impacted the collaboration experienced in the team, either negatively or positively.

5.4.1 Levels of accountability experienced by participants

Interviewees were asked to describe the intensity of the accountability felt towards different sources of accountability in an open-ended manner.

Table 7 below details the sources of accountability expressed by the participants in the sample and the frequency that these sources appeared in the data.

Table 7: Sources to whom participants felt accountable

Rank	Source of accountability identified by participants	Form of accountability	Frequency that the code appeared within and across transcripts
1	Accountability towards junior lawyers in close proximity (specifically related to personal development)	Hybrid formal/informal	10
2	Accountability towards peers	Informal	9
3	Accountability towards the firm greater good or higher success	Informal	7
4	Accountability towards the remuneration committee of the firm	Formal	4

The participants also considered whether non-legal staff within the organisation, specifically business services such as IT, Human Resources, Business Development, Operations, Finance and Knowledge Management were a source to which participants felt accountable towards for improved collaboration behaviour. This source featured negligibly for participants, as discussed in greater detail below.

Proximity of collaborative peers and juniors moderated positively the strength of the accountability felt towards these sources, as discussed in greater detail below. In relation to both peer and remuneration committee sources of accountability, where participants felt that their areas of specialisation were not naturally collaborative and that they didn't fit into the broader strategic collaborative vision of the firm, this negatively moderated the degree of intensity felt towards these sources or forms of accountability.

Ultimately within the context of collaborative teams in which there are multiple sources of accountability, both formal and informal, participants reported experiencing far higher levels of accountability intensity towards informal sources of accountability, particularly in relation to peers, junior staff members and serving a greater good or higher purpose, compared to the level of accountability intensity felt towards the organisation's formal remuneration structure. These themes are discussed in greater detail below.

5.4.1.1 Accountability felt towards junior lawyers

A significant number of the participants expressed feelings of accountability to junior lawyers within their teams, specifically for their professional growth and development which includes the involvement of junior lawyers in collaborative initiatives in relation to transactions, clients and business development. This source of accountability was discussed by the largest number of participants as a resonating source of accountability.

Participant 1, 7, 9 and 15 highlighted a strong felt-accountability to collaborate with junior team members and to nature in particular their strategic thinking towards collaboration and operation at a higher level than their current level in preparation for their future. Participant 15 expressed, "I take personal responsibility and accountability for my team, to make sure that they are fully engaged, that they are learning".

The intensity of accountability experienced was expressed to increase in relation to junior team members who were in close proximity to the participant. For example, Participant 3 described feeling highly accountable to junior lawyers to bring them into collaborative initiatives, to grow and develop them, with a particular intensity for junior lawyers who are in the partner's specific team, have close proximity physically and in time, working with the partner daily. He stated feeling, "A lot of accountability to junior lawyers, very high degree of accountability to junior lawyers, especially the junior lawyers within your own team".

The notion of accountability and responsibility was used interchangeably in relation to this source, with participants acknowledging both a formal obligation to develop junior team members (in other words partners are held accountable by remuneration committee for development of junior talent within the firm) and informally in relation to participant's informal desire to see junior team members succeed professionally. Participant 4 agreed with the accountability felt towards junior team members, ascribing it to the responsibility that is coupled with the title and expectations of a manager or a leader, stating that "I do feel this odd sense of like accountability as, I think, as a manager towards my juniors". Participant 4 expressed the feeling that accountability intrinsically and intimately linked himself as an individual and the

organisation. This is interesting as it suggests accountability to self as an informal form of accountability is at play, driven by the individual's values which include responsibility/accountability vertically across a continuum, junior, collaboration senior manager/leader and upwardly towards the organisation in pursuit of higher purpose. Participant 6 highlighted that the accountability towards juniors takes the form of mentoring them in skills, including collaboration skills, stating, "so definitely accountability in the sense that we're here to mentor."

Reciprocity within the relationship was a notion that a number of participants raised as moderating the intensity of their felt-accountability informally towards junior team members and greater collaboration. Participant 5 commented that the junior team member's enthusiasm, hard work and commitment impacted the participant's felt accountability. Participant 12 highlighted that there is some expectation from a junior level that partners will be accountable for the collaboration within the firm and for bringing in junior lawyers into that collaboration, but there was equally strong a sense that this duty is not one-sided and junior lawyers need to equally lean into the process.

5.4.1.2 Intensity of accountability felt towards peers

Participants equally acknowledged a strong-felt accountability to peers within active collaborative teams. Participant 8 highlighted the point that the felt accountability towards a remuneration process which makes an individual accountable for collaboration by providing greater financial reward for collaboration does not feature at as intense a level as peer accountability. The participant expressed, "the driving factor always is the softer side because that side of me is also stronger in my personality than the financial side of it". Participant 9 concurred, "Absolutely the drive towards accountability is probably stronger on a peer-to-peer level than with Remco because I always knew or I'd get the sense that within a year, you know, there are certain things that you will get involved in and you can put in any number of things there and people don't know how much did you contribute to that effort." This comment touches on reservations that participants had towards the lack of transparency of the formal accountability process within the firm, and how this impacted felt-accountability intensity. Participant 10 reiterated the feeling of being "people driven".

Reciprocity between peers also featured as a moderator of felt-accountability intensity towards peers, strengthening in situations of relationship reciprocity. Participant 3 highlighted that peers build a relationship of reciprocity which at a deeper and more human level drives accountability for collaboration and results in optimal collaboration behaviour and results. In the words of this participant, “I think it's also a case of sort of reciprocity. Is that the right word? You know, if I know that somebody's bailed me out when I left something to the last minute and I needed help. And so it meant that they had to, you know, rush to the rescue on Friday evening. The next the next time that that that they are looking for something. Even if it's not an emergency or you know, I'll be, you know, I'll probably go out of my way to try and to try and accommodate, you know what they require”. Participant 4 concurred that accountability is felt and intense when a deeper rapport, relationship and trust exist, stemming from a working relationship which has in-built an element of reciprocity stemming from a shared mindset that peers have mutual interests.

As a mediating factor explaining the connection between felt-accountability and peer collaboration, Participant 1 highlighted the notion of a shared team mindset as impacting his felt accountability to a greater intensity or level because it is more regular and because it feels "stronger" than the structural accountability driving collaboration behaviour. Participant 4 also felt that felt accountability towards a peer is driven by a “shared vision or mandate”, describing interests that are aligned which allow for a relationship to be built. Participant 10 highlighted that peer-to-peer accountability as a driver of collaboration accountability works when two or more peers have an authentic “joint strategic goal” about the collaboration. The participant highlighted that in the absence of that joint strategic goal or shared mindset, formal accountability is needed to drive collaboration initiatives to ensure that goals are achieved.

5.4.1.3 Intensity of accountability felt towards a greater good or higher purpose

As a source of informal accountability, participants expressed a sense of accountability towards the greater good of the organisation or firm as featuring intensely as a level of accountability. Participant 4 indicated that at a more senior leadership level, felt-accountability intensity towards “the greater good of the

business” increases. Participant 8 and Participant 11 echoed this sentiment and highlighted a high felt-accountability towards leaving “a legacy” at the firm and “preparing the firm for the future”, respectively. Participant 11 also described a high felt-accountability intensity towards achieving success for the participant's office growth. Participant 13 highlighted a strong felt-accountability intensity towards “the system”, implying the team, or office or firm as a whole, and expressed the view that everyone within the organisation should feel accountable to this system.

5.4.1.4 Intensity of accountability felt towards the formal remuneration committee

A number of participants expressed strong felt-accountability to the formal remuneration committee of the organisation to account for their collaboration efforts during the year. Participant 1, in a collaboration leadership position, felt accountability at a formal remuneration committee level had a high level of intensity, driven by a concern about or value placed in peer perceptions, thoughts and comments about his performance. It was described as a “key piece of accountability that I feel on a personal level”. Participant 6 highlighted the view that her felt accountability towards the organisation's formal remuneration committee, who annually determines partner remuneration, featured more intensely than felt accountability towards peers. The reasons given were that the remuneration committee has “a direct impact on your remuneration” and requires an accounting of a year's worth of collaboration to from a holistic perspective, whereas peer accountability is taken “a little bit less seriously” and may be brushed off with excuses and an apology, and regardless of good or bad collaboration behaviour if a specialist is good at their job they will continue to receive work. Participant 11 also indicated a high felt accountability towards the remuneration committee, which was described as being taken seriously and informing the participant's actions and engagements day to day, including collaboration with peers. The participant shared, “I think the remuneration review, I think definitely probably is more intense and I think for me like one of the first things I did was to see in joining the firm what the remuneration review is like”. Participant 16 spoke extensively about the organisation's remuneration process as an important source of felt-accountability, but qualified this by expressing that the remuneration process was also “not the main driver for collaboration” accountability for the participant.

5.4.1.5 Other sources of accountability arising from the data and alignment as a negative moderator of felt-accountability

Participants were asked during their interviews to identify any other sources of felt-accountability in relation to their collaborative efforts, as Remco, peers, junior team members and the firm as a higher value had been identified. Interestingly, the topic of non-legal staff or business services personal was considered by participants and ultimately this category or source of accountability was expressed across all participants to not feature at all as a source of accountability for collaborative behaviour.

Accountability intensity towards non-legal staff was described by Participant 3 as a felt-accountability featuring at a lower level than that felt towards highly qualified professional lawyers. The type of accountability described was more of an accountability to have integrity and do the right thing in terms of protecting jobs and not cutting pay in times of societal upheaval. He expressed, “if you’re losing people, you know, getting rid of people to just to cut down the wage bill, it’s not necessarily the right thing to do. And so I think we do take pride in that. So there’s accountability to those to those employees.” This implies accountability to protect the jobs of an employee rather than accountability to ensure leaders are collaborating to grow the organisation. Participant 4 described accountability towards non-professional staff not as accountability per se, in the felt sense, but rather the use of a “necessary resource” in an ethical project/objective driven way. Participant 6 indicated that the accountability felt towards non-legal staff is rather to “treat everyone with respect”, rather than accountability to collaborate with other specialists to generate more revenue for the firm. Collaboration accountability intensity featured at a low level for Participant 15 indicated that accountability for collaboration towards non-professional staff featured to a limited degree for the participant, except for the IT business service function within the organisation because the participant felt that that business service is the only one that is essential to the enablement of his job. He expressed, “I must say, business services not so much”.

Finally, it is notable that where a participant felt that the strategic objectives of the organisation towards collaboration did not naturally align with the capabilities of the participant’s legal specialist area, the participant was unenthusiastic about the topic

of collaboration and the participant appeared to experience a low felt-accountability for collaboration towards any source, formal or informal. For example, Participant 6 indicated that her specialist type of work is not a team that lends itself to being naturally collaborative in seeking collaboration on matters or transactions stemming from her area (compared to matters stemming from more naturally collaborative teams like Mergers and Acquisitions). This was described as a barrier to collaboration and it was implied that this is something that reduces accountability to seek collaborative work with other specialists. The participant highlighted, “it’s not really a team that lends itself to a lot of collaboration”.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter contains the results from 16 interviews conducted across senior managers within the organisation, across five offices and spanning several different legal specialist areas of expertise. The themes arising from the in-depth interviews held align with existing literature relating to accountability and collaboration in teams, including different forms and levels of accountability experienced within the workplace. New insights emerged within the results bolstering existing constructs such as peer accountability with teams or small groups, the interplay between different forms of accountability within teams and the levels of intensity most prominently related to different sources and forms of accountability within teams. Chapter 6 follows which discusses the results contained in this chapter.

Chapter 6: Discussion of the results

6.1 Introduction

This Chapter 6 discusses the research results and findings with particular reference and comparison of the results and findings to the accountability and team collaboration literature discussed in Chapter 2. The extent to which the research findings confirm, extend, or contradict the literature is discussed. The research questions posed in Chapter 3 are also answered, providing greater insights into and an improved understanding about how the forms and levels of accountability experienced by senior legal specialists within cross-specialist teams promote positive or negative collaboration behaviours.

6.2 Research Question 1: Results discussion

RESEARCH QUESTION 1: How does the form of accountability experienced by senior legal specialists within a team promote positive or negative collaboration behaviours?

Research question 1 aimed to gather deeper insights into the way in which the form of accountability experienced by senior legal specialist team members promotes positive or negative collaboration behaviours. This stemmed from the current position within accountability literature that accountability can be a double-edged sword, both motivating positive behaviours and outcomes within the workplace but also potentially resulting in negative behaviours and outcomes (Hall et al., 2017), and the proposal that greater depth of understanding is needed into the different forms and levels of accountability (Hall et al., 2017).

Within the context of the four types of collaborative teams identified by the research set out in Table 3 above (which aligned with the definition in existing research regarding the nature of collaborative teams (Gardner, 2017b, p. 1)), two broad categorisations of forms of accountability were present, namely formal and informal accountability. This aligns and confirms the forms of accountability widely understood and accepted within accountability literature (Busuioac & Lodge, 2017; Casenave & Klarmann, 2020; Gelfand et al., 2004; Goodman et al., 2021; Hall et al., 2017; Joannides, 2021; Pearson & Sutherland, 2017; Roberts, 1991; Zhang & Goh, 2018).

In pursuit of a better understanding of different forms of accountability, the positive and negative factors driving accountability within formal and informal accountability were explored and illuminated by the research, as well as the optimal factors or drivers of accountability within the relevant form. These positive, negative and optimal factors are discussed in relation to formal and informal forms of accountability, and on a unit of analysis basis, in the sections that follow.

6.2.1 Formal accountability and its drivers: Positive, negative and optimal

Formal accountability was considered within the research study from the perspective of what positive, negative and optimal factors were of this particular form of accountability and the role that they played within team collaboration within the context of the organisation being studied. These positive, negative and optimal factors of formal accountability were listed in **Table 5** in Chapter 5.

From a positive impact perspective, the research results highlighted that formal accountability systems which are *transparent* on remuneration benefits and which do in fact offer the *reward* of greater remuneration do drive positive collaboration behaviour to a degree. This confirms existing accountability literature which highlights the motivating effect that accountability mechanism can have within the workplace (Hall et al., 2017) and in particular formal accountability benefits in terms of hierarchy and systems (Joannides, 2021; Patil, Tetlock, & Mellers, 2017). It also confirms that within teams, structure including accepted norms and standards for behaviour, including reward and punishment accountability mechanisms, are necessary for effective teamwork (Haas & Mortensen, 2016). This element implies a need for system fairness, stemming from transparency, as a positive driver of formal accountability mechanisms.

However, within the realm of the formal accountability experienced by participants in the study, a number of negative factors which relate to formal accountability were highlighted in the research, including accountability towards the organisation's strategy that is not perceived to fit or be aligned to an individual's team's natural capabilities (again implying an unfairness of expectation or measurement); reward systems focused on monetary reward which are not motivational for all types of

individuals; and finally reward systems which are not perceived as particularly motivational because there are no punitive consequences related to the accountability behaviour. These negatively perceived elements of the organisation's formal accountability system are particular to the organisation and this study's context. However, they too confirm existing research from Wikhamn and Hall (2014) who found suboptimum results if the accountability being measured is perceived by someone to be used negatively against them. This reflects the first felt-accountability negativity expressed by participants in the research study which highlighted that the result for which participants were expected to formally account for (namely collaboration) was not aligned to their speciality and was being used negatively against them, in an unfair manner.

It is to be noted that none of the research findings indicated that these negative elements of the organisation's formal reward system led participants towards deliberately negative collaborative behaviours (as suggested by existing literature as possible in certain organisational contexts), but rather these elements were expressed by participants as detracting from personal motivation for collaboration in teams and detracting from their personal felt-accountability towards this formal source of accountability at the organisation.

Finally, the research study's findings highlight three factors which in the views of the research participants optimise formal accountability structures within organisations. The first is the view that measurement of individuals and teams should be on collaboration standards which are appropriate to the individual and the team's context. This suggests a tailored or personalised approach to accountability, aligned with the organisation, as an optimal driving factor of accountability for individuals within organisations who are expected to collaborate in cross-specialist teams. The second view raised is that optimal formal accountability systems must be 360-degree review systems in relation to collaboration, due to the complex nature of collaboration and the intricate peer relationships involved in teamwork. This implies that formal accountability systems which do not apply a holistic evaluation of the collaboration behaviour are *not transparent and ultimately result in unfairness* within the evaluation process. Finally, the third view or factor arising from the study in relation to what optimises accountability within collaborative teams relates to the notion that for individuals to consistently feel accountability toward the formal accountability system,

the organisation is required to reinforce its messaging consistently over time about the collaborative behaviours or outcomes that the organisation desires. This implies that individuals will optimally feel accountability towards a particular organisational goal if they are reminded consistently about that goal.

In summary, if the positive, negative and optimal factors are considered in totality it can be surmised that in relation to formal accountability structures four factors optimise the behaviours of individuals who operate within a team context towards the organisational goal of accountability. System fairness is used as a catch all phrase to encompass the positive and negative sentiments expressed relating to transparency and fairness in the formal accountability systems used by the organisation.

Figure 1: Formal accountability optimisation factors, which drive effective team collaboration

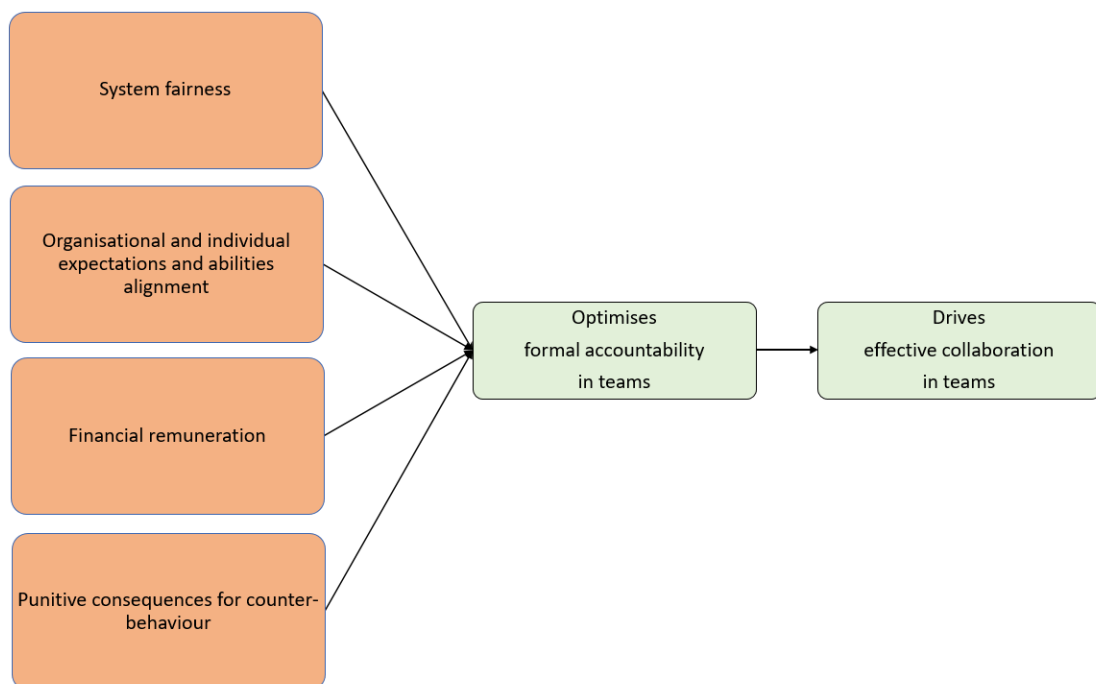


Figure 1 illustrates the four factors of system fairness, individual and organisational alignment, financial remuneration, and punitive consequences for counter-behaviour as factors which form part of formal accountability which can be used to achieve positive and optimal collaborative behaviours in teams. System fairness requires transparency and fairness in formal accountability structures. This stems strongly from the results encompassing the views that greater transparency into how the

formal remuneration structures measure collaboration behaviour will spur on greater collaboration behaviour, and from the views that a holistic review of a person's behaviours (such as by way of a 360-degree review process) will spur on greater collaboration. Financial remuneration was also seen as a positive motivator of behaviour, but it must be coupled with other drivers of behaviour that speak to other values that individuals hold to be optimally effective. The results also consistently indicated that there must also be alignment of the organisation's expectations (collaborative behaviour) and the individual's perception of their ability to meet those expectations. This must be reflected in the appropriate measurement criteria used by the organisation which is personalised to the individual's abilities. In other words, what does collaboration realistically mean or look like for the particular individual within the context of their area of specialisation, and that is appropriate to measure. Finally, there must be some kind of punitive consequence for acting contrary to the organisation's required behaviour standards.

These four factors represent different pieces that are required to optimise formal accountability for team collaborative behaviour. These findings deepen academic insight into and literature relating to the optimal factors which must exist within formal accountability systems and processes particularly in relation to team contexts, to ensure that this form of accountability optimally drives the organisation's desired behaviours and outcomes, such as collaboration.

6.2.2 Informal accountability and its drivers: Positive, negative and optimal

Within informal accountability, two forms of informal accountability featured most prominently in the research, namely *peer accountability* within the team context and *accountability to self*. The former featured most frequently and with greatest intensity of all forms of accountability experienced by the participants, implying that this form of accountability resonated the most with participants in terms of value and impact. The latter was found nestled within an individual level element of peer accountability, specifically the individual personal values of many of the participants who expressed as a personal driver the desire to, within a team context, contribute and hold themselves accountable for achieving a higher success for the future of the organisation.

The informal forms of accountability which arose from the research stemmed from an exploration of the *positive* and *optimal factors* which participants considered necessary in relation to effective team collaboration, as well as *negative factors* which participants considered to be at times present in team collaboration which were considered barriers to effective team collaboration. These factors are set out in **Table 6** in Chapter 5 above.

6.2.2.1 Informal accountability: Positive drivers

The *positive factors* driving peer accountability within teams which arose can be categorised into *individual level factors* and *team level factors*. At an individual level these were *deeper relationships, personal values, a sense of team and a heightened awareness of the team objectives* (collaboration). At a team level, these were *clear alignment of team members on expectations and strong team leadership*.

Deeper relationships, individual level factor one, was the strongest and most frequently appearing factor from the results. It is comprised of a number of elements: Fundamentally the research results highlighted that deeper relationships are based in trust. Rapport, genuine peer interest and proactively built relationships nurtured connections between peers, fostered accountability responsiveness and resulted in effective collaboration experiences. Good communication was fundamental to the trust being built, and it was repeatedly found from the research results that core groups of peers who worked frequently with each other built the deepest team relationship ecosystems and the strongest accountability between peers. A fundamental element of that was described to be reciprocity between peers and mutual benefit between peers. Ultimately respect for personal boundaries were created, conflicts avoided and trust in peers' professional abilities deepened. These were all elements that operated in effective teams with effective accountability with deep relationships at the root of the effective team performance. This element of deep peer relationships is recognised within team collaboration literature (Gardner, 2017b). Within team collaboration literature, it is not expressly indicated that the deep peer relationships affect accountability, but rather that deep peer relationships drive generally effective team collaboration in many ways, as described by Gardner (2017b) and by Haas and Mortensen (2016). Within in peer accountability literature little is known about the role that informal peer accountability plays within teams (Kou

& Stewart, 2019). This finding extends academic understanding and insights into the role of deep peer relationships both within team collaboration from an accountability perspective specifically, and within accountability literature in relation to peer accountability optimal effectiveness drivers.

Personal values featured highly as a factor that impacted individual's felt-accountability within a team. This confirms existing literature which has identified personal values as an antecedent to felt-accountability generally within the workplace (Pearson & Sutherland, 2017). The form of this accountability was expressed as an accountability to self in terms of each individual's driving values, but was also strongly related to how they experienced peer accountability, being felt-accountability to peers. As such, it is a new insight from this research study that accountability to self as a form of informal accountability (Pearson & Sutherland, 2017) may be nested within peer accountability ecosystems and drive peer accountability. In relation to personal values, three elements emerged as the key drivers of peer accountability, the individual's desire to leave a legacy, in other words to contribute to a higher purpose, higher value or to higher success of the organisation in the present but also in the future. This featured strongly in the results. The second personal value that emerged in relation to peer accountability was desire for recognition of the individual's professional excellence by peers. This aligns and confirms existing literature relating to peer accountability and the impact of reputation as a driver of behaviour (Busuioac & Lodge, 2017). Finally, the third element related the individual's values of duty, specifically duty towards the organisation to act in the best interests of the organisation including in relation to strategic objectives like enhanced collaboration. These three elements relating to the role that personal values play within an individual and their relationship to peer accountability build extend on peer accountability within teams.

Continuing at an individual level, **a sense of team** was a strong motivating factor for effective accountability and collaboration. The research results found that group accountability improved as a result of better individual accountability, and a sense of team developed more strongly. This appears to confirm existing research within literature suggesting that the behaviour of the rest of the group in holding that individual member accountable elevates individual accountability to group level accountability (Kou & Stewart, 2018). In the present research results, there was little

indication as to how participants in core groups held other individuals accountable. Rather, the impression given by the research data was that as individual accountability improved, it organically improved accountability of other members of the team. The *sense of team factor* was found to be created by individual efforts within peer groups towards inclusiveness of all team members. Feelings of reciprocity at a team level, that there were genuine benefits to team members resulting from their participant in the team, also contributed to and heightened the element of *a sense of team* and was found to positively affect team accountability and team collaboration behaviour. Deeper insights into this element provided by the current research study expands existing academic understanding of informal peer accountability within teams.

The final individual level positive factor found to impact accountability was **individuals' heightened awareness about the benefits of collaboration** (i.e., the organisation's strategic goal). This extends existing peer accountability literature.

At a team level, **clear alignment of team members on expectations and their role within the team** was fundamental to the research findings, appearing with strong frequency and impact in the research results. This finding confirms existing literature describing the clarity of an individual's role within an organisation as an important antecedent to accountability (Pearson & Sutherland, 2017). This factor is informed by five elements: alignment on expectations, deliverables, responsibilities and structural elements of the team relationship; clear and courageous communication on issues; frequent communication and discussion; inclusive communication to all team members, particularly across borders; and empowering communication (which enables team members to feel they are not overstepping boundaries and can take accountable or collaborative action where necessary). The findings of this research confirm existing literature, particularly social accountability literature which advocates open communication, dialogue, and inclusive, flexible and fluid engagement between social groups (Frey-Heger & Barrett, 2021). The findings of this research expand current accountability literature and the antecedents of accountability within teams along the lines of the nuances of these five elements described above.

Finally, at a team level, **strong leadership** as the final factor identified in the research results as positively contributing towards accountability in teams and

ultimately effective team collaboration. Leadership has been identified as an antecedent to accountability (Pearson & Sutherland, 2017) and as an enabling condition of effective teamwork (Haas & Mortensen, 2016; Gardner, 2017b). The findings of this research confirm the existing literature and extend it by providing insight in relation to team leadership required for peer accountability, specifically inspiring, inclusive, value creating leadership which holds team members accountable for deliverables.

6.2.2.1 Informal accountability: Negative drivers

The research results identified five factors within teams which negatively impact peer accountability and effective team collaboration. At an individual level these were: weak personal relationships; lack of punitive consequences for counter-collaborative behaviours; fear of overstepping of authority or professional boundaries; and collaboration fatigue. At a team level, lack of team member alignment on goals, expectations, norms, timelines and structures was identified, and a particular point was made of the role of leadership in relation to bringing about this alignment.

These factors to a large degree mirror the most significant positive factors identified as enabling peer accountability and collaboration (specifically deep relationships and proper alignment of team members on expectations). The differences between the results of the negative and positive factors are discussed below.

Particularly strong references arose from the research results relating to how weak personal relationships across borders and through remote working generally, i.e. through distant geographic proximity, because of three behaviours or lack of skills displayed by individuals. These behaviours or lacking skills are, first, the unwillingness to hold difficult accountability conversations with peers through online meeting software. The participants in the research described how difficult conversations are more easily held in person and so are shied away from across borders and in remote working relationships. Second, the notion of “accountability access” was raised to describe how remote working and working across borders enables individuals to control access to them, by refusing to answer calls, emails or Teams meeting calls, which individuals could not do in person. This weakens personal relationships on several levels. Finally, it was raised repeatedly by

participants that differences in cultures across borders in Africa gives rise to different approaches and behaviours in relation to hierarchy and respectfulness of peers who are regarded as more senior. This was described as leading to less open conversations, longer lead times, and mounting personal frustrations, ultimately weakening personal relationships. These behaviours may be summarised as poor geographic sensitivity skills (or enhanced geographic sensitivity skills if framed in the positive), and the research findings suggest that this plays a significant role in preventing personal relationships from deepening. Current accountability literature acknowledges that cultural forces affect accountability within organisations at a number of levels, including within group or team contexts, and at interpersonal and individual levels (Gelfand, Lim, & Raver, 2004). Collaboration literature acknowledges that trust plays a fundamental role in team dynamics and effectiveness, including “us versus them” mindsets (Costa, Fulmer & Anderson, 2018; Feitosa et al., 2020; Haas & Mortensen, 2016). The current research findings confirm the existing literature and expand it by adding greater insight regarding cross-border collaboration. It specifically offers new insights into the damaging role that a lack of courageous conversations skill, a lack of remote working access management skill and a lack of cultural understanding skills plays in relation to personal relationships. Collectively these three elements are described in this research as poor geographic sensitive skills. This is a new element worthy of inclusion in the expanding understanding of deeper personal relationships as a factor impacting peer accountability and effective team collaboration.

The negative factors relating to lack of punitive consequences for counter-behaviour and collaboration fatigue at an individual level are also new concepts which rationally have been demonstrated by the research results to detract from peer accountability within teams. This confirms peer accountability literature which indicates that accountability in teams may improve performance but detract from an individual satisfaction with the team environment (Zhang & Goh, 2018). Accordingly, forms of punitive accountability are recognised in literature to be double edged swords, motivating improved performance but equally potentially yielding negative effects (Hall et al., 2017).

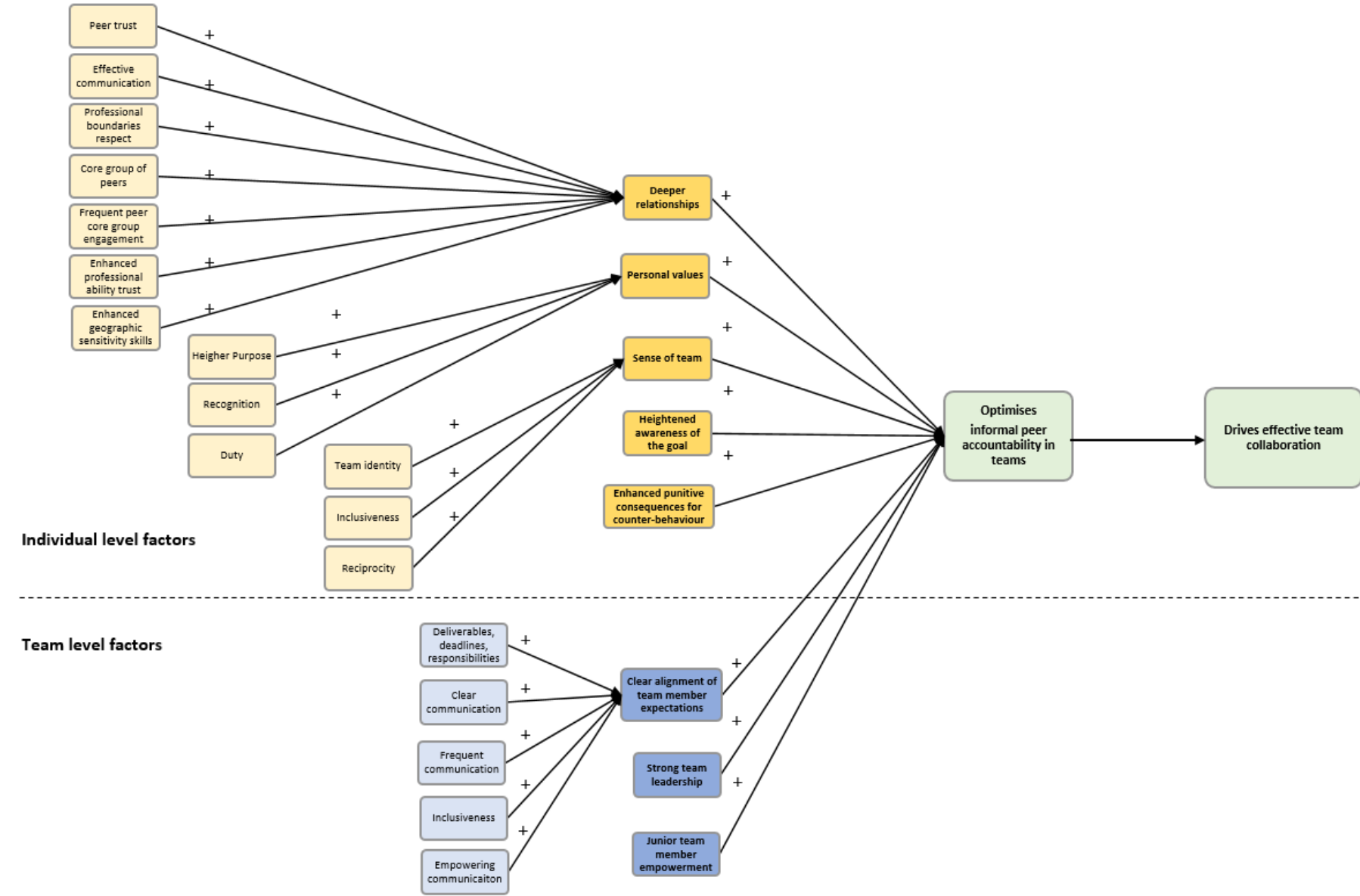
The factors of enhanced geographic sensitivity skills (framed in the positive), enhanced punitive consequences for counter-behaviour (also framed in the positive)

and collaboration fatigue are included in an expanded illustration of the factors impacting peer accountability in teams, and ultimately effective team collaboration, in **Figure 2** below.

6.2.2.2 Informal accountability: Optimal drivers

Finally, the research results indicated three factors as critical to optimisation of accountability between peers. These included deeper relationship building efforts, improved communication and engagement between peers, particularly across borders and junior team member empowerment. The first two factors reflect the positive and negative themes discussed above relating to deeper relationships/weak personal relationships and alignment/lack of alignment between peers. These have been discussed above. The third element relates to involvement of enabling actors within team structures, such as junior team members, and formally empowering them to assist with the collaborative efforts within teams. It was expressed in the research results that this will foster greater accountability as junior team members will be able to alleviate the time pressure faced by senior team members, and ultimately move deliverables forward. This is a new element not expressed in existing literature, and expands on the current understanding developed in this research study regarding the enabling factors and drivers of peer accountability within teams. This element has also been added to **Figure 2** below which represents an illustrative depiction of the positive and negative factors which enable or drive informal peer accountability within teams (both at an individual and organisational level) and ultimately optimises effective team collaboration in cross specialist legal teams.

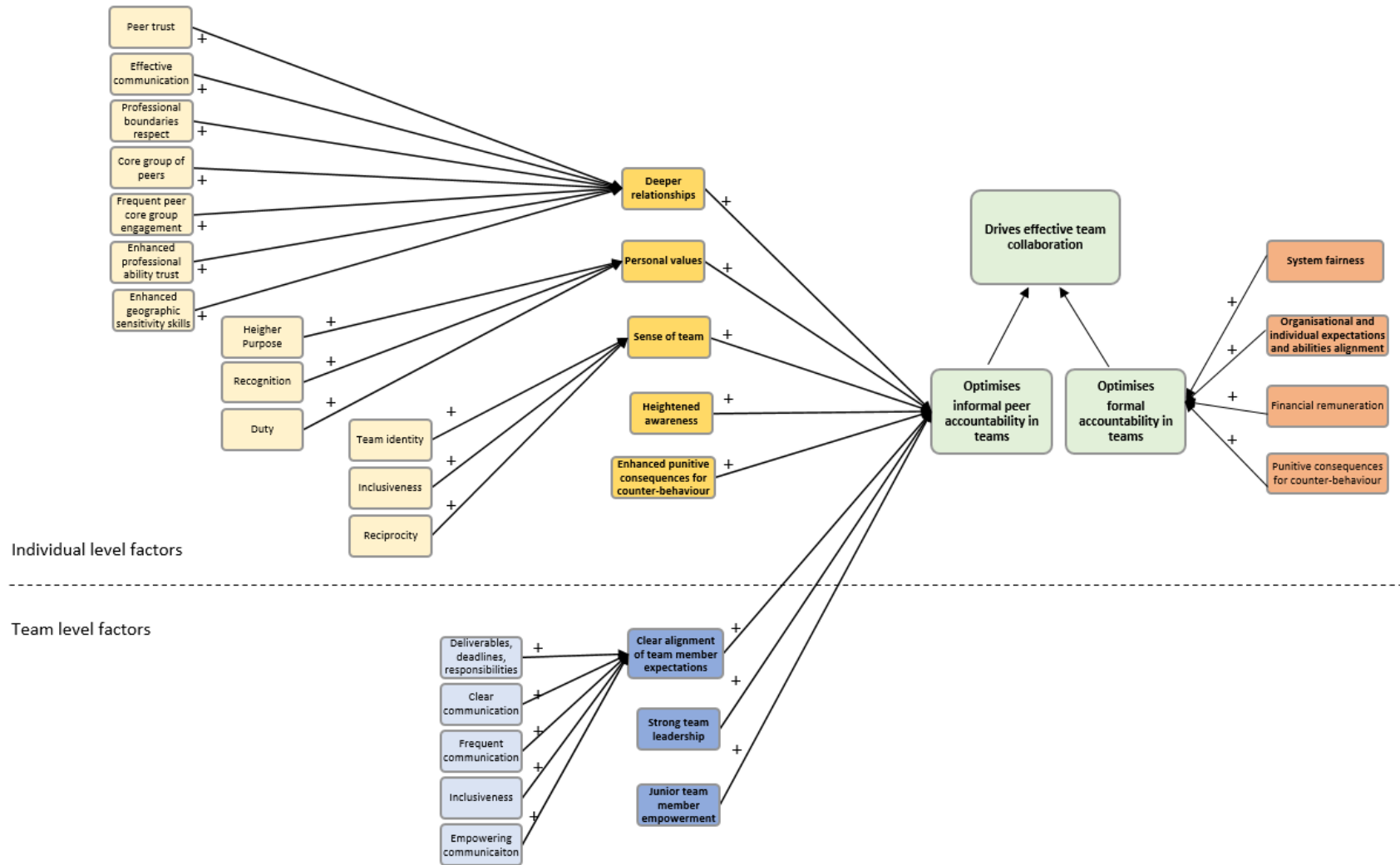
Figure 2: Informal peer accountability optimisation factors, which drive effective team collaboration



6.2.2.3 Research Question 1 conclusions

In answering Research Question 1, specifically “How does the form of accountability experienced by senior legal specialists within a team promote positive or negative collaboration behaviours?” it is the findings of this research study that both formal and informal accountability play a role promoting both negative and positive collaboration behaviours in cross-specialist collaborative legal teams. This confirms existing literature which describes different forms of accountability as holistic in nature, existing within overlapping ecosystems within organisations and acting as internal control mechanism formally and informally in relation to modification of behaviour within the organisation (Gelfand, 2004; Goodman et al., 2021; Grubnic & Cooper, 2019; Pearson & Sutherland, 2017). This research study and the findings to Research Question 1 highlight that within team contexts, informal accountability in the forms of peer accountability and accountability to self plays a significant positive role in promoting positive collaboration behaviours in cross-specialist legal teams. The current research recommends the enabling and detracting factors that impact both formal and informal accountability in achieving the most optimal effective team collaboration within organisations. These recommended factors are depicted in **Figure 3** below.

Figure 3: Formal and informal accountability optimisation factors, which drive effective team collaboration



6.3 Research Question 2: Results discussion

RESEARCH QUESTION 2: How does the level of accountability experienced by senior legal specialists within a team promote positive or negative collaboration behaviours?

Research Question 2 aimed to determine how the different levels of accountability experienced by senior legal specialists within teams promotes positive or negative collaboration behaviour. As discussed in Chapter 2 above, current literature relating to accountability levels and intensity suggests that the sources of accountability (the source to whom an actor feels accountable) may impact the degree or level to which the actor holds him or herself accountable, as the tendency to feel accountable decreases or increases according to the source (Hall et al., 2017). It was anticipated that certain sources of accountability (found within either formal or informal forms of accountability) would promote greater or lesser intensities of accountability. It was also anticipated that formal accountability would be the greatest driver of behaviour within the organisation, evoking the highest intensity of felt-accountability within individuals, even in team settings. The role of peer accountability intensity was anticipated to reveal new insights into informal accountability forms and sources, in driving positive or negative collaboration in teams.

6.3.1 Sources and different levels of felt-accountability experienced in teams

6.3.1.1 Accountability to junior lawyers

The research results identified accountability to junior lawyers in close proximity to the participants as a source of accountability. This source featured in the results strongly as participants expressed feelings of both formal and informal accountability and responsibility towards this group of stakeholders within their teams.

6.3.1.2 Accountability towards peers

The research results also identified peers as a source of felt-accountability for the participants. This was also featured strongly in the research results as a powerful

driver of felt-accountability within teams. This confirms existing literature in relation to performance in teams, which related to peer accountability (Zhang & Goh, 2018).

6.3.1.3 Accountability towards the firm greater good and higher success

The research results identified that within the particular organisation's teams, a strong source of accountability for the participants was a sense of accountability towards the success of the firm as a whole. This was driven by the personal values of many of the participants, who expressed striving for a higher purpose or the firm greater good. This is essentially a form of accountability to self which was expressed as a driver of greater individual accountability within teams and towards peers. This extends existing literature relating to peer accountability as a source of accountability, and the nuances of felt-accountability of individuals within teams towards peers and towards themselves.

6.3.1.4 Accountability towards the remuneration committee of the organisation

Finally, a fourth source of accountability that resonated with several participants and which arose from the research results was accountability felt towards the remuneration committee of the organisation. The research results highlighted that this source of accountability did drive positively collaboration behaviour of the participants, confirming existing literature (Hall et al., 2017). However, the research results highlight that this source of accountability featured less strongly than other sources of accountability within the organisation and within the collaborative team contexts of the participants.

6.3.2 Discussion of the levels of felt-accountability towards the different sources identified

Within the context of collaborative teams in which there are multiple sources of accountability, both formal and informal, participants reported experiencing far higher levels of accountability intensity towards informal sources of accountability, particularly in relation to peers, junior staff members and serving a greater good or higher purpose, compared to the level of accountability intensity felt towards the organisation's formal remuneration structure. This is interesting, as it confirms the

view expressed by Goodman et al. (2021). Despite the purpose of formal accountability aiming to enhance performance through increased and clear externally imposed responsibility (Hall et al., 2017), there is a view that formal accountability alone does not drive nor increase the level of accountability felt by the individual. This view appears to apply equally to team contexts where formal and informal accountability forms interact and overlap. The current research findings may arguably be as a result of the particular research organisation's non-punitive formal accountability system for collaboration, which encourages collaboration rather than demanding it. It would be interesting to determine whether the levels of intensity of accountability increase in collaborative teams where more formal accountability structures impose greater demands for collaboration on team members.

From a felt-accountability perspective, and within the context of the research study, the level of accountability felt by senior managers within the cross-specialist teams studied was significantly higher towards peers than towards the organisation's formal accountability structure, a remuneration committee which evaluated senior manager and leadership's contribution towards collaboration. This indicates that within the context of this study, informal peer accountability within teams featured more powerfully as a positive driver for effective collaboration than formal Remco accountability at an individual level. This is a new insight not yet explored in relation to peer accountability literature. It suggests that the form of accountability most effective in small group or team contexts in optimally driving collaboration behaviours is relational informal accountability structures and ecosystems.

The views of advocates of the benefits of informal accountability, specifically Roberts (1991) and Casenave and Klarmann's (2020), are corroborated through the current research. As is the existing literature advocating that ecosystems and webs of relational accountability exist informally between peers which play a significant role in accountability behaviours within those ecosystems (Gelfand et al., 2004; Goodman et al., 2021; Grubnic & Cooper, 2019). Peer accountability literature does illustrate the value of relational accountability in pursuit of organisational objectives Casenave and Klarmann's (2020) and in pursuit of higher team performance objectives (Zhang & Goh, 2018) but has not yet contrasted the effect of formal accountability with informal accountability as a driving factor of effectiveness or performance.

6.3.2 Research question 2 conclusions

In answering the research question, “How does the level of accountability experienced by senior legal specialists within a team promote positive or negative collaboration behaviours?” the research finding confirms existing literature advocating that different levels of accountability exist within organisations, and extends insights in relation to levels of accountability existing within teams, as discussed below.

Existing literature also acknowledges a natural tension between formal external accountability and informal internal accountability to different sources, and Keddie (2021) advocates that within ecosystems a careful balance of these two forms of accountability, their sources and the levels of intensity within a particular environment. Accordingly, the present research extends current literature in relation to both accountability and collaboration within teams. In relation to accountability, the form and level accountability felt within a team context, where two forms of accountability coexist and compete within an individual is better understood as a result of the current research, within the context and limitations of the research. In relation to effective team collaboration literature, although formal team structures are acknowledged as one of four antecedents to effective teamwork (Hass and Mortensen, 2016), the precise role that accountability places within those structures as a motivating factor for individuals within the team and what forms of accountability should be optimised by an organisation in pursuit of optimal team collaboration is better understood.

The model depicted in **Figure 3**, which demonstrates the different forms of accountability and visibly represents the numerous nuanced and multifaceted factors impacting peer accountability equally demonstrates the balance between formal and informal accountability and sources within those forms, and reinforces Goodman et al., 2021’s views that frameworks should highlight the equal importance of relational sources of accountability alongside structural sources, even within team contexts, in order to best equip organisations to improve felt-accountability experienced by individuals and improve performance. The current research advocates that this balance at an individual and team level is necessary for improved effective team collaboration within cross-specialist legal teams.

Chapter 7: Conclusions and recommendations

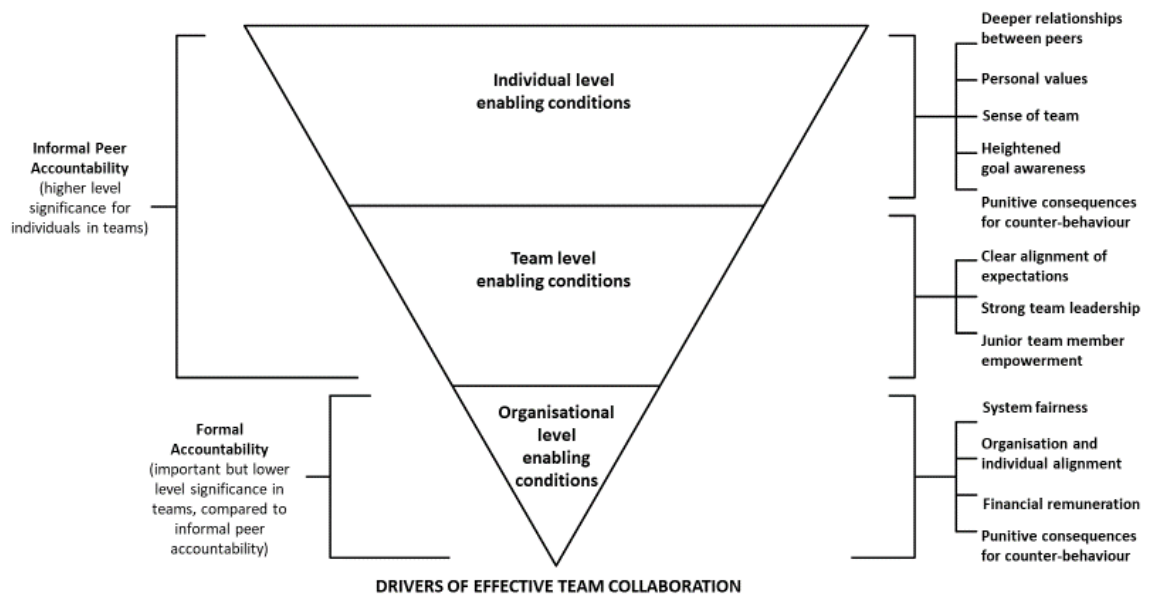
7.1 Principle conclusions

The present research sought to determine the role that accountability plays in embedding effective collaboration within teams. Accountability was selected as a construct relevant to effective team collaboration as a driver of behaviour, and given the limited research existing in relation to the role that accountability as a construct plays within effective team collaboration. The present research's narrowed scope towards the different forms and levels of accountability within organisations, and the role that those forms and levels play in optimising positive behaviour within teams was also a relatively under-explored area of research and one which the present research sought to contribute towards.

The main findings of the research study suggest that accountability within teams is optimised at three key levels. The different levels of accountability impacting team collaboration in what is referred to in this document as the **Effective Team Collaboration Accountability Framework** and is depicted graphically in

Figure 4 below. This model highlights three levels of enabling conditions which drive informal and formal felt-accountability in teams. At the highest level, which weighs most significantly for individuals making up teams, are five individual-level enabling conditions which optimise accountability and drive effective team collaboration. This is followed by three team-level enabling conditions and four-organisational level-enabling conditions.

Figure 4: The Effective Team Collaboration Accountability Framework



As demonstrated in the model, there is a particular interplay of these enabling conditions with each other. Ultimately all of the levels build on each other and all are necessary in order to drive effective team collaboration. However, the research results demonstrate that peer accountability, a form of informal accountability, features at a significantly higher level of priority within team settings than does formal accountability mechanisms. This implies greater weight attributed to this element of the accountability ecosystem, compared to other sources of accountability, which has particular implications for practical endeavours by management to create effective team collaboration structures and ecosystems, and in the diagnostics of existing ecosystems, as discussed in greater detail below.

7.2 Theoretical contribution

A number of the enabling conditions identified confirm existing literature in relation to drivers of accountability, as discussed in Chapter 6 above. The research study does however provide greater insight into a number of these enabling conditions and expand on existing literature particularly in the realm of better understanding enabling conditions for peer accountability within teams.

The current research contributes to existing theoretical literature relating to formal accountability as a form of felt-accountability in the following ways. First, it confirms

existing literature advocating that formal and hierarchical accountability systems can be motivating and beneficial (Hall et al., 2017; Joannides, 2021; Patil, Tetlock, & Mellers, 2017). The current study confirms this as the case particularly if the formal systems are transparent and reward individuals financially. The current research also confirms that effective team structures require norms relating to reward and punishment accountability mechanisms (Haas & Mortensen, 2016). In addition, it confirms that suboptimal results will arise from accountability if it is perceived by individuals to be used negatively against them (Wikhamn & Hall, 2014). For example, in the current study if individuals feel that the expectations of them by an organisation are not aligned with their individual and team expectations and abilities, limited collaboration behaviours arose. The present research study therefore contributes to formal accountability as a construct by confirming existing literature, set within the context of effective team collaboration as a new area of focus centered on the way formal accountability is experienced by individuals and what conditions are felt to enable positive behaviours particularly in relation to team collaboration. The four enabling conditions identified as optimising formal accountability within teams contextually expands current insights into formal accountability as a construct.

The current research contributes to existing theoretical literature relating to informal accountability as a form of felt-accountability in the following ways. First, within team contexts peer accountability and accountability to self were identified as dominant sources of felt-accountability for individuals within cross-specialist teams. This contributes to existing theoretical understandings of peer accountability as a source of accountability, a relatively under researched and little understood construct within the broader construct of accountability in organisations (Kou & Steward, 2019). Accountability to self arose as a source of accountability nested within peer accountability, contributing new insights into the existing theoretical understanding of peer accountability, which existing literature acknowledges as ecosystemic in nature, as well as confirming the view of existing literature that various forms of accountability are interconnected and related (Gelfand, 2004; Goodman et al., 2021; Grubnic & Cooper, 2019; Pearson & Sutherland, 2017).

From an informal accountability and peer accountability perspective, the current research contributes new insights as to the enabling conditions which optimise these forms and sources of accountability particularly within cross-specialist team contexts,

highlighting five individual-level and three team-level enabling conditions as fundamental drivers of the accountability that individuals in the team feel, which ultimately drives their positive collaboration behaviours in teams. Some of these enabling conditions appear in existing literature. For example, the idea that deep peer relationships as a driver of teamwork is known (Gardner, 2017), and the need and value of clarity as to role and expectations in teams and within accountability is known (Maas & Mortensen, 2016; Pearson & Sutherland, 2017), as is the value of effective leadership (Pearson & Sutherland, 2017) all of which is confirmed by the current research. However, several new insights also emerged, contributing to the theoretical understanding of the constructs of accountability and effective team collaboration. These include that deeper peer relationships, the need to create a sense of team, the need for heightened goal awareness, the value that enhanced geographic sensitivities within teams in optimising accountability and the value of empowerment of junior team members are all significant enabling conditions which optimise peer accountability and drive more effective team collaboration. This adds to the theoretical understanding of the role of peer accountability in teams, considered to be an under-research area of focus (Kou & Steward, 2019) as well as to the construct of effective team collaboration particularly in relation to the role that accountability plays in driving more effective collaboration.

Finally, the current research also contributes to the theoretical understanding of different levels of accountability within teams in an organisational context. Within a cross-specialist team context, both formal and informal accountability sources contribute to the felt accountability experienced by individuals. In particular, peer accountability within team contexts features more significantly for individuals, and this source of accountability, together with accountability to self (particularly in relation to personal values to contribute to higher success of organisations or towards a higher purpose) are felt more significantly or to a higher level for senior managers and leaders than formal accountability sources such as remuneration committees within an organisation. This contributes towards existing literature which advocates for the positive and powerful role that informal accountability mechanisms within organisations play towards achieving higher performance (Casenave & Klarmann, 2020; Roberts, 1991; Zhang & Goh, 2018). It also contributes greater insights into the contrasting effects and significance of formal and informal accountability systems within team structures, expanding theoretical knowledge on this subject.

The Effective Team Collaboration Accountability Framework developed by the current research provides a theoretical systematic understanding of the interplay between different forms of accountability within teams, underlying enabling conditions for these drivers (some known and some newly understood) and ultimately depicts the interplay of all of the relevant forms and levels of accountability in a holistic format towards a better understanding of the role that they play in driving and embedding effective collaboration within teams.

7.3 Implications for management and other relevant stakeholders

As CEOs within organisations strategically recognise the value of collaboration, and grapple with its challenges, business conversation continues in relation to how to best embed collaboration within organisations to enhance organisational performance and resilience (Deloitte Insights, 2021; Gardner, 2017b; LawVision, 2021). In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, organisations more urgently than before are seeking drivers for collaboration within teams which motivate desired behaviour (Hoskins, 2021). Accountability has long been understood as a driving force behind behaviour, however its application within the workplace must be context appropriate in order to optimally drive desired behaviour, and avoid negative counter-productive behaviour by staff (Hall et al., 2017).

The current research study explores the role that accountability plays in fostering effective team collaboration with professional service organisations, expanding existing literature through the provision of useful insights into the way management may perceive the different accountability structures impacting on team collaboration. The “Effective Team Collaboration Accountability” framework developed by the current research provides managers with three organisational improvement lenses through which to view and diagnose their current accountability frameworks in pursuit of enhancing any individual, team or organisational enabling conditions which may be lacking or limited within their team structures, in pursuit of greater team performance objectives.

Organisations, such as professional service firms, who depend significantly on effective cross-specialist team collaboration, are likely unable or unwilling to engage

consultants to support them with every team collaboration failure. The current research provides a practical tool for management and other stakeholders within an organisation to diagnose collaboration issues within teams, with a focus on drivers of positive collaborative behaviour. Individual level factors are aimed at identifying the enabling conditions for individual team members, and team leaders, which will result in optimal accountability for collaborative actions of the team members and leaders. Team level factors are aimed at identifying the team – related factors present in team dynamics which must be present as fundamental building blocks of optimal accountability for team members and teams as a whole, if effective team collaboration is to be achieved. Finally, organisational level enabling conditions must be present in order to provide adequate formal accountability mechanisms to reward and punish desirable and undesirable behaviour, respectively, in support of teams and ultimately individuals. All three levels of driving factors are necessary to ensure that individual team members feel accountable for their behaviour.

The Effective Team Collaboration Accountability framework developed by the current research enables management to move from individual level granularity in both team members and in relation to team leaders, to broader organisational macro factors in identification of the structures that need to be put in place to achieve and embed optimal accountability for collaboration, and to diagnose any issues with existing teams.

7.4 Limitations of the research

The research study was qualitative in nature which as an empirical method of research has particular strengths and limitations (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). The limitations of the current research include the following.

From a data collection perspective, the interviewer lacks expert interview skills which may impact the primary data collected and the research results, and interviewer bias, although guarded against, cannot be ruled out as impacting an accurate accounting of the interviewees' experiences, views and opinions (Janice et al., 2002). The research study was cross-sectional in timeframe thus disallowing assessment of credibility of the results over a prolonged period of time (Saunders et al., 2016).

From a data analysis perspective, a complete understanding of the context relating to each interviewee may not have been developed sufficiently by the limited nature of the research questions and research topic, and therefore key categories of findings by not have been identified in this study (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

The findings of this study are not easily replicable as this study does not contain the details of all decisions made (Saunders et al., 2016). The research study was conducted in relation to a single knowledge-based professional services organisation, and the findings cannot be generalised from the study's sample to the population (Saunders et al., 2016). A limitation of this study taking place within a single organisation gives rise to group think mentality towards accountability and collaboration within the organisation, arising over time, which may have impacted the interviewees' opinions in relation to the research topic and questions.

Finally, the study contained the experiences, opinions and views of senior managers within the organisation, with a primary focus on partner-level senior managers. Although the experiences, views and opinions of a number of slightly more junior senior managers were included in data collected and research results, these views formed the minority of the sample and there was no attempt to obtain views from other people within the organisation who were not senior management level employees or staff members.

7.5 Suggestions for future research

Further areas of research include how collective accountability arises in teams. Haas and Mortensen's (2016) research into shared team mindset as an enabling condition for higher performance teamwork is echoed in the findings of the current research, in that shared team mindset enables felt-accountability of individuals within teams. It was also expressed in the research results that a sense of team results in a collective sense of accountability. Deeper insights would be worthwhile into collective accountability within teams, how it arises and the degree to which it is impacted by felt-accountability of individual team members which elevates the team to higher collective accountability and performance.

The current research was conducted within an organisation with a non-punitive formal accountability system in relation to collaboration behaviour within teams. Further research is recommended which juxtaposes formal and informal sources of accountability within teams, specifically punitive formal accountability systems and peer accountability ecosystems. Further research in this area would be useful in better understanding the interplay between these two forms of accountability, and these sources of felt-accountability within team settings to better understand the balance that needs to be struck between the two in order to optimally foster, through accountability, more effective collaboration within teams.

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Appendix 1: Interview guide

Research questions:

1. How does the form of accountability experienced by senior legal specialists within a team promote positive or negative collaboration behaviours?
2. How does the level of accountability experienced by senior legal specialists within a team promote positive or negative collaboration behaviours?

Interview Questions:

1. Interviewee background question: Tell me about any experience do you have working in cross-specialist teams within the organisation.
2. Team collaboration and accountability-related questions:
 1. **Broad question:** Describe the types of cross specialist teams that you have been involved in either at the organisation or elsewhere in your career.
 2. **Broad question:** Within the cross-specialist collaboration teams that you have experienced, what works from a collaboration and collaboration accountability perspective?
 3. **Broad question:** Within the cross-specialist collaboration teams that you have experienced, what doesn't work from a collaboration and collaboration accountability perspective?
 4. **Other questions:**
 - What are your views on different forms of accountability, such as formal structural remuneration committee accountability and how effective that is, compared to peer accountability?
 - What different levels of accountability do you experience, for example do you feel accountable more to formal remuneration committee processes, peer accountability, or any other forms or sources of accountability (juniors, non-legal staff, anything else?)
 - What is the biggest driver for you personally in terms of collaboration accountability?
 - How does cross-border collaboration accountability differ from accountability within your office?
 - Has remote working impacted your experience of collaboration accountability in any way?
 5. **Broad question:** If you could optimise collaboration accountability within the organisation in any way, how would you do that?

Appendix 2: Permission letters



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Reference: Natasha Rech
 Date: 21 July 2021

Natasha Rech
 natasha.rech@bowmanslaw.com

RESEARCH PERMISSION LETTER

I am currently a student at the University of Pretoria's Gordon Institute of Business Science and completing my research in partial fulfillment of an MBA. I am conducting research on effective collaboration in teams and am trying to find out more about the influence that appropriate forms and levels of accountability have on individual team members at a senior leadership level.

Permission to conduct the research within the organisation

The organisation has permitted me to conduct my research within the organisation, using two methods. First, by interviewing 12 – 16 (in total) senior level managers and/or such other staff members (such as senior associates, associates, or professional services managers). Second, by using pre-existing data that the organisation has regarding collaboration (see below). The organisation agrees to allow the researcher to use the data collected and analysed for business science purposes, and to store it in accordance with the data storage requirements of the Gordon Institute of Business Science.

Permission to use Type A Data (pre-existing records)

The organisation has agreed to provide me with aggregated, pre-existing survey question answers completed at a senior management level within the organisation in 2021, relating to effective collaboration, to use in the proposed research. **The organisation's participation is voluntary, and it may withdraw from the research at any time without penalty.** All data will be reported without identifiers. If you have any concerns, please contact my supervisor or me. Our details are provided below.

Researcher	Natasha Rech	Research Supervisor Signature (Hayley Pearson)	<i>H. Pearson</i>
Email address	19385112@mvaibs.co.za	Email address	Peggyah@gibs.co.za
Phone number	0713603657	Phone number	0769302170

Duly authorised representative of
 the organisation
 Signature

[Signature] (Alan Keep, Managing Partner)

Date:

25 July 2021

Signature of researcher
 Date: 21 July 2021

Natasha Rech

Bowmans Gilfillan Inc. Reg. No. 1998/021406/21 Attorneys Notaries Conveyancers

Chaberska RA Lepp (Chairman) MEC Daniels (Deputy Chairman) AJ Keep (Managing Partner) AG Anderson DP Anderson LJ Anderson JS Andropoulos H Angamuthoo MD Anderson JJ Augustin L Ayal AM Barnes Webb TL Bels JM Bellaw KJ Beretta L Brink RM Carr K Chisako CN Cunningham L Dalrymple-Duncan G Demont RA Deyver JH de Hutton D de Klerk TC Dini CR Douglas HD Duffey L Dyer S Eddy J Pekar KA Fulton SJ Garven TH Goolbsae DJ Goral XG Goma T Gordon-Grant AR Graham S Gordon-Woodley A Hale AS Harle J Park-Davies JV Harford PA Hatch JHW Heine CB Jackson JR Janke J Kikoku H Keep CP Kennedy KM Kern D Killman RDW Kooze P Korbes JG Kruger JP Kruger MR Kyle Rie Grange R Labuschagne T Lauterbach DA Lotter L Lutzke J Lurie LT Mabasa-Kane KS Makopane M Malole N M Henders HL Marston A McKelvie TP McCoull JH McEneaney BC Misa MC Mose R Modisa TL Mungile L Mungile K Naidoo G Naudts X Nyell NT Ntsho MAJ Oopenheim DM Phillips AJ Pile P Riley JD Rieck DM Rooden J Rower F YA Ruzhansky LV Saphulu CL Sekely JB Riley-Sims CCS Roggen HSB Russ G Rauben S Sefcy JW Sahl U Saleem-Khan MY Seo CG Schaller RZ Sheln BT Sibya CEC Smith SC Swan LR Swinton M Swetland H Taylor L Thabane SF Tibane CPN Tsoa G Tucker G Van Heerden A van Nieuw MR van Velden RJ van Vliet MB Vermaak DS Webb DCJ Wessels RS Wessels JVL Wedgata EPW Wicra WJ Wiersch SA Wood KB Wright DD Yull
 English Translated: CN Bower RM Carter RA Cohen PH Maduna JH Schlesberg RE Whelan
 Group CEO R. Smith Group CFO H Harding Group Registrar N. van Vuuren

KENYA MAURITIUS SOUTH AFRICA TANZANIA UGANDA ZAMBIA

ALLIANCE FIRMS: ETHIOPIA | NIGERIA

Appendix 3: Initial list of codes generated

	#	Code	Grounded	Code Groups
●	1	Type of collaboration - transaction	15	Type of collaboration
●	2	Antecedent of accountability - clear communication	11	Antecedent of Accountability Informal accountability - peer accountability
●	3	Type of collaboration - client business development	9	Type of collaboration
●	4	Barrier to accountability - cultural understanding of differences in accountability	8	Barrier to accountability Across borders Informal accountability - peer accountability
●	5	Accountability intensity - to junior lawyers in close proximity	8	Levels of Accountability Accountability to Junior Staff Remote working
●	6	Antecedent of successful acc collaboration - core team of specialists	7	Antecedent of Accountability Informal accountability - peer accountability
●	7	Barrier to accountability - lack of alignment	7	Barrier to accountability Informal accountability - peer accountability
●	8	Antecedent to accountability - deeper relationships	7	Antecedent of Accountability Informal accountability - peer accountability
●	9	Antecedent of successful acc collaboration - frequent core team engagement	6	Antecedent of Accountability Informal accountability - peer accountability
●	10	Driver of positive accountability - peer respect	6	Drivers of Accountability Informal accountability - peer accountability
●	11	Type of collaboration - sector specific collaboration	6	Type of collaboration
●	12	Accountability intensity - non-legal staff low	5	Levels of Accountability Accountability to Junior Staff
●	13	Barrier to accountability - lack of personal relationship	5	Barrier to accountability Informal accountability - peer accountability
●	14	Accountability intensity - felt towards the firm greater good	4	Levels of Accountability Informal accountability - Self and Higher Purpose Relationship

•	15	Driver of accountability - personal values	4	Drivers of Accountability Informal accountability - peer accountability Informal accountability - Self and Higher Purpose Relationship
•	16	Barrier to accountability - lack of direct confrontation/communication of issues	4	Barrier to accountability Across borders Informal accountability - peer accountability
•	17	Driver of accountability - defined, explicit and transparent deliverables	4	Drivers of Accountability Formal accountability- Remco Informal accountability - peer accountability
•	18	Driver of accountability - pursuit of higher success	4	Drivers of Accountability Informal accountability - Self and Higher Purpose Relationship
•	19	Antecedent of successful acc collaboration - relationship reciprocity	4	Antecedent of Accountability Informal accountability - peer accountability
•	20	Barrier to cross border accountability - lack of preparation time	3	Barrier to accountability Across borders Informal accountability - peer accountability
•	21	Antecedent of accountability - better technological connection across distances	3	Antecedent of Accountability Across borders Informal accountability - peer accountability Remote working
•	22	Accountability intensity - greater in relation to peers and relationships than Remco	3	Levels of Accountability Formal accountability- Remco Informal accountability - peer accountability
•	23	Driver of accountability - Professional obligation and pride	3	Drivers of Accountability Informal accountability - Self and Higher Purpose Relationship
•	24	Driver of accountability - strong team leadership	3	Drivers of Accountability Informal accountability - peer accountability
•	25	Accountability intensity - increases with reciprocity of interest	3	Levels of Accountability Informal accountability - peer accountability
•	26	Barrier to accountability - physical distance deters difficult conversations	3	Barrier to accountability Across borders Informal accountability - peer accountability Remote working
•	27	Barrier to accountability - not wanting to step on toes	3	Barrier to accountability Informal accountability - peer accountability

●	28	Antecedent accountability - same peer standards	3	Antecedent of Accountability Informal accountability - peer accountability
●	29	Accountability intensity - high towards remco	3	Levels of Accountability Formal accountability- Remco
●	30	Driver of accountability - formal accountability transparency	3	Drivers of Accountability Formal accountability- Remco
●	31	Driver of cross border accountability - regularity of engagement with cross-border team	3	Drivers of Accountability Across borders Informal accountability - peer accountability
●	32	Collaboration intensity - peer level team shared mindset	3	Levels of Accountability Informal accountability - peer accountability
●	33	Driver of accountability - collaboration being front of mind	2	Drivers of Accountability Informal accountability - peer accountability Informal accountability - Self and Higher Purpose Relationship
●	34	Barrier to accountability - a specialist team which is not naturally collaborative	2	Barrier to accountability Formal accountability- Remco Informal accountability - peer accountability Informal accountability - Self and Higher Purpose Relationship
●	35	Barrier to accountability across borders - having to take a soft approach to holding colleagues accountable	2	Barrier to accountability Across borders Informal accountability - peer accountability
●	36	Type of Acc - Felt acc	2	Types of Accountability
●	37	Driver of accountability - explicit hierarchical structure	2	Drivers of Accountability Informal accountability - Self and Higher Purpose Relationship
●	38	Optimal Accountability - deep relationship building	2	Optimal Accountability Informal accountability - peer accountability
●	39	Collaboration intensity - junior lawyer development	2	Levels of Accountability Accountability to Junior Staff
●	40	Optimal accountability - repeat reenforced messaging firm-wide about collaboration	2	Optimal Accountability Formal accountability- Remco Informal accountability - peer accountability
●	41	Optimal accountability - 360 anonymous feedback	2	Optimal Accountability Formal accountability- Remco Informal accountability - peer accountability
●	42	Driver of collaboration behaviour - Remuneration	2	Drivers of Accountability Formal accountability- Remco

•	43	Driver of accountability - professional self respect	2	Drivers of Accountability Informal accountability - Self and Higher Purpose Relationship
•	44	Barrier to accountability - no consequences to non-collaboration	2	Barrier to accountability Formal accountability- Remco Informal accountability - peer accountability Informal accountability - Self and Higher Purpose Relationship
•	45	Antecedent to accountability - trust in peer professional ability	2	Antecedent of Accountability Informal accountability - peer accountability
•	46	Driver of accountability - fear of letting a peer down	2	Drivers of Accountability Informal accountability - peer accountability
•	47	Type of peer accountability - unspoken informal saction	2	Types of Accountability Informal accountability - peer accountability
•	48	Optimal accountability - junior team member empowerment	2	Optimal Accountability Informal accountability - peer accountability Accountability to Junior Staff
•	49	Barrier to accountability - stepping on toes by taking specialist work	2	Barrier to accountability Informal accountability - peer accountability
•	50	Type of Acc - Informal peer accountability	2	Types of Accountability Informal accountability - peer accountability
•	51	Driver of accountability - Public recognition of collaboration	2	Drivers of Accountability Informal accountability - peer accountability Informal accountability - Self and Higher Purpose Relationship
•	52	Accountability non-driver - Remco does not motivate collaboration	2	Drivers of Accountability Other ideas Formal accountability- Remco
•	53	Barrier to accountability - visual accountability driving juniors	1	Barrier to accountability Accountability to Junior Staff Remote working
•	54	Optimal accountability - better ways of communicating between offices.	1	Optimal Accountability Informal accountability - peer accountability
•	55	Barrier to accountability - time	1	Barrier to accountability Informal accountability - peer accountability Informal accountability - Self and Higher Purpose Relationship
•	56	Optimal Accountability - proper collaboration preparation	1	Optimal Accountability Informal accountability - peer accountability

●	57	Optimal accountability - measurement on team appropriate criteria	1	Optimal Accountability Formal accountability- Remco Informal accountability - Self and Higher Purpose Relationship
●	58	Optimal accountability - greater engagement with ambivalent collaborators to increase their collaboration efforts	1	Optimal Accountability Informal accountability - peer accountability
●	59	Covid affect on accountability - no difference	1	Other ideas Informal accountability - peer accountability Remote working
●	60	Optimal accountability - larger offices letting go of matters for smaller offices	1	Optimal Accountability Across borders Informal accountability - peer accountability
●	61	Optimal accountability - engaging on cultural issues with a common objective towards product delivery	1	Optimal Accountability Across borders Informal accountability - peer accountability
●	62	Accountability disconnect - Firm strategy that is not perceived to fit with an individual team's natural capabilities	1	Other ideas Formal accountability- Remco Informal accountability - Self and Higher Purpose Relationship
●	63	Barrier to accountability - collaboration fatigue	1	Barrier to accountability Informal accountability - peer accountability
●	64	Accountability intensity - low in teams perceiving themselves to be not naturally collaborative	1	Levels of Accountability Formal accountability- Remco Informal accountability - peer accountability
●	65	Antecedent of accountability - an accountability or collaboration structure	1	Antecedent of Accountability Formal accountability- Remco Informal accountability - peer accountability
●	66	Accountability Driver - strong junior support and autonomy	1	Drivers of Accountability Accountability to Junior Staff
●	67	Barrier to accountability - social formality	1	Barrier to accountability Informal accountability - peer accountability
●	68	Antecedent of accountability - moral support of junior team members	1	Antecedent of Accountability Accountability to Junior Staff Remote working
○	69	Collaboration intensity - business services low	1	Accountability to Junior Staff

•	70	Driver of accountability - Self accountability drives team accountability	1	Drivers of Accountability Informal accountability - peer accountability Informal accountability - Self and Higher Purpose Relationship
•	71	Nature of acc in teams - team specific acc norms	1	Other ideas Informal accountability - peer accountability
•	72	Self Accountability intensity - increases with organisational seniority	1	Levels of Accountability Informal accountability - Self and Higher Purpose Relationship Accountability to Junior Staff
•	73	Accountability intensity - for process and not outcome	1	Levels of Accountability Informal accountability - Self and Higher Purpose Relationship
•	74	Driver of accountability - a sense of team	1	Drivers of Accountability Informal accountability - peer accountability
•	75	Driver of accountability - inclusiveness	1	Drivers of Accountability Informal accountability - peer accountability
•	76	Antecedent of accountability across-borders - managing partner pressure	1	Antecedent of Accountability Across borders Informal accountability - peer accountability
•	77	Type of accountability - client imposed sanction	1	Informal accountability - Self and Higher Purpose Relationship
•	78	Driver of accountability - duty to the firm	1	Drivers of Accountability Informal accountability - Self and Higher Purpose Relationship
•	79	Barrier to accountability - remote working control of access to peers and juniors	1	Barrier to accountability Informal accountability - peer accountability Remote working
•	80	Collaboration intensity - Rem committee (driven by peer respect)	1	Levels of Accountability Formal accountability- Remco
•	81	Driver of cross-border accountability - genuine benefit to each peer	1	Drivers of Accountability Across borders Informal accountability - peer accountability
•	82	Barrier to accountability - geographic proximity hinders building relationships and reciprocity	1	Barrier to accountability Across borders Informal accountability - peer accountability Remote working
•	83	Driver of accountability - transparency on rem benefits of collaboration	1	Drivers of Accountability Formal accountability- Remco
•	84	Driver of collaboration - sector group initiatives	1	Drivers of Accountability Informal accountability - peer accountability

•	85	Driver of accountability - open communication about sensitive issues	1	Drivers of Accountability Informal accountability - peer accountability
•	86	Driver of cross border accountability - strength of social relationship	1	Drivers of Accountability Across borders Informal accountability - peer accountability
•	87	Type of Acc - External judgement	1	Types of Accountability Informal accountability - Self and Higher Purpose Relationship
•	88	Type of Acc - Structural Acc	1	Types of Accountability Formal accountability- Remco
•	89	Type of collaboration - transaction leader	1	Type of collaboration
•	90	Type of acc - accountability to clients	1	Types of Accountability Informal accountability - Self and Higher Purpose Relationship
•	91	Barrier to accountability - lack of leadership of the collaboration team	1	Barrier to accountability Informal accountability - peer accountability
•	92	Driver of accountability - aligned accountability	1	Drivers of Accountability Informal accountability - peer accountability
•	93	Optimal accountability - remuneration committee process measurement of collaboration transparency	1	Optimal Accountability Informal accountability - Self and Higher Purpose Relationship

Additional: Extract if recent journals used and related ABS ranking

Note: For the literature review elements of this thesis which relate to the constructs of accountability and collaboration (i.e., excluding sources used for methodology and as citations of business issues) a total of 41 sources were used. A total of 24 of these were published in the last five years (approximately 60%, a predominant resource percentage).

#	Article	Journal ranking (ABS 2018)
1	Busuioc, M., & Lodge, M. (2017). Reputation and accountability relationships: Managing accountability expectations through reputation. <i>Public Administration Review</i> , 77(1), 91-100.	4*
2	Casciaro, T., Edmondson, A. C., & Jan8g, S. (2019). Cross-silo leadership. <i>Harvard Business Review</i> , 7(3), 130-43.	3
3	Casenave, E., & Klarmann, M. (2020). The accountability paradox: How holding marketers accountable hinders alignment with short-term marketing goals. <i>Journal of Business Research</i> , 112, 95-108.	3
4	Costa, A. C., Fulmer, C. A., & Anderson, N. R. (2018). Trust in work teams: An integrative review, multilevel model, and future directions. <i>Journal of Organizational Behavior</i> , 39, 169-184.	4
5	Feitosa, J., Grossman, R., Kramer, W. S., & Salas, E. (2020). Measuring team trust: A critical and meta-analytical review. <i>Journal of Organizational Behavior</i> , 41, 479-501.	4
6	Frey-Heger, C., & Barrett, M. (2021). Possibilities and limits of social accountability: The consequences of visibility as recognition and exposure in refugee crises. <i>Accounting, Organizations and Society</i> , 89, 101197.	4*
7	Gardner, H. K. (2017a). Getting your stars to collaborate. <i>Harvard Business Review</i> , 2017, (January-February).	3
8	Gardner, H. K. (2017b). <i>Smart collaboration: How professionals and their firms succeed by breaking down silos</i> . Boston, Massachusetts: Harvard Business Review Press.	3

#	Article	Journal ranking (ABS 2018)
9	Goodman, J., Pearson, H., & Mthombeni, M. (2021). Sources of accountability inside the boardroom. <i>European Business Review Ahead-of-print (Ahead-of-print)</i> . doi:DOI 10.1108/EBR-05-2020-0119	3
10	Grubnic, S., & Cooper, S. (2019). Enhancing democratic accountability in health and social care: The role of reform and performance in Health and Wellbeing Boards. <i>Financial Accounting & Management</i> , 35, 353-372.	-
11	Haas, M., & Mortensen, M. (2016). The secrets of great teamwork. <i>Harvard Business Review</i> , 94(6), 70-76.	3
12	Hall, A. T., Frink, D. D., & Buckley, M. R. (2017). An accountability account: A review and synthesis of the theoretical and empirical research on felt accountability. <i>Journal of Organizational Behavior</i> , 38(2), 204-224.	4
13	Herdman, A. O., Yang, J., & Arthur, J. B. (2017). How does leader-member-exchange disparity affect teamwork behavior and effectiveness in work groups? The moderating role of leader-leader exchange. <i>Journal of Management</i> , 43(5), 1498-1523.	4*
14	Joannides, V. (2021). Accounterability and the problematics of accountability. <i>Critical Perspective on Accounting</i> , 23(3), 244-257.	3
15	Jong, d. A., Dirks, K. T., & Gillespie, N. (2016). Trust and team performance: a meta-analysis of main effects, moderators and covariates. <i>Journal of Applied Psychology</i> , 101(8), 1134-1150.	4*
16	Keddie, A. (2021). NGOs working for gender justice with boys and men: Exploring challenges of accountability. <i>Gender, Work and Organization</i> , 1-14.	3
17	Kou, C., & Stewart, V. (2018). Group accountability: A review and extension of existing research. <i>Small Group Research</i> , 49(1), 34-61.	3

#	Article	Journal ranking (ABS 2018)
18	Laird, M. D., Harvey, P., & Lancaster, J. (2015). Accountability, entitlement, tenure and satisfaction in Generation Y. <i>Journal of Managerial Psychology</i> , 30(1), 87-100.	3
19	Millar, C. C., Groth, O., & Mahon, J. F. (2018). Management innovation in a VUCA world: Challenges and recommendations. <i>California Management Review</i> , 61(1), 5-14.	3
20	Pallotti, F., & Angeli, F. (2017). Don't stand so close to me: Competitive pressures, proximity and interorganisational collaboration. <i>Regional Studies</i> , 51(9), 1348-1361.	3
21	Patil, S. V., Tetlock, P. E., & Mellers, B. A. (2017). Accountability systems and group norms: Balancing the risks of mindless conformity and reckless deviation. <i>Journal of Behavioural Decision Making</i> , 30(2), 282-303.	-
22	Pearson, H., & Sutherland, M. (2017). The complexity of the antecedents influencing accountability in organisations. <i>European Business Review</i> , 29(4), 419-439	3
23	Vangen, S. (2016). Developing practice-oriented theory on collaboration: A paradox lens. <i>Public Administration Review</i> , 77(2), 263-272.	4*
24	Zhang, Y., & Goh, W. B. (2018). The influence of peer accountability on attention during gameplay. <i>Computers in Human Behavior</i> , 84, 18-28.	3