

Gordon Institute of Business Science

University
of Pretoria

Exploring the antecedents of peer accountability in cross functional teams

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A research project submitted to the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration

01 December 2020

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.

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ABSTRACT

Purpose Accountability, deemed necessary for organisations and society alike, is linked to increased levels of individual, group and organisational performance. Although there has been a recent rise of academic literature's attempt to better understand accountability, many gaps remain. This research focuses on one of the under-researched areas of accountability, known as peer accountability, where accountability is necessary on a peer to peer level. This research attempts to understand how this type of accountability is experienced by individuals operating in cross-functional teams, and in so doing, identify the antecedents of accountability of this nature.

Methodology Exploratory in its nature, this research takes form of a qualitative study. The research utilises the Interactive Qualitative Analysis process, which is a structured approach to performing qualitative research. This approach is reliant on the voices and experiences of those closest to the phenomenon and prescribes the collection of data through the use of a focus group. The focus group consisted of 12 individuals who operate in cross-functional teams and lasted 4 hours.

Results the results of the research highlighted five key elements associated with peer accountability. These are, management within the cross-functional team, team culture and dynamics within the cross-functional team, collaborative communication within the cross-functional team and individual accountability within the cross-functional team.

Value Through combination of the results gathered and a review of existing accountability literature, a model highlighting the antecedents of peer accountability within cross-functional teams was proposed.

KEYWORDS

Accountability, Peer Accountability, Formal, Informal.

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1. CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH PROBLEM

1.1 Research Problem

Accountability within organisations is an extremely complex area of research that is seemingly ever-growing (Hall, Frink, & Buckley, 2017; Pearson & Sutherland, 2017). Studies have highlighted the complexity of accountability, such as the types of accountability (Hall et al., 2017; Pearson & Sutherland, 2017), features of an accountability environment (Hall et al., 2017; Kou & Stewart, 2018), drivers of accountability (Pearson & Sutherland, 2017), moderators of accountability (Hall et al., 2017), accountability models and frameworks (Bergsteiner, 2012; Frink & Klimoski, 2004; Hall et al., 2017; Kou & Stewart, 2018; Schlenker, Britt, Pennington, Murphy, & Doherty, 1994; Tetlock, 1992) and the many gaps in literature that offer opportunities to further our understanding of accountability (Hall et al., 2017; Kou & Stewart, 2018; Pearson & Sutherland, 2017). One of the areas within accountability which lacks academic insight is the concept of peer accountability (Hall et al., 2017; Kou & Stewart, 2018; Pearson & Sutherland, 2017).

Peer accountability, also categorised as horizontal accountability, warrants more attention. This is supported by Hall et al., who state that “researchers have not extensively looked at the sources that persons are accountable to in the workplace (co-worker, supervisor, client/customer) and the extent to which individuals prioritize and balance multiple, sometimes competing priorities” (2017, p. 215).

The source of accountability is thought to influence the behaviour of individuals, whom exert more effort explaining and justifying their performance to superiors than they do to their peers (Hall et al., 2017). Moreover, individuals believe harsher punishments are in order for those who are accountable to a higher authority than those accountable to a peer (Hall et al., 2017). Both statements above indicate a perceived weakness in the outcome effects of peer accountability. However, little research has been done to explore how and why individuals may or may not feel accountable to their peers (Hall et al., 2017; Kou & Stewart, 2018; Pearson & Sutherland, 2017).

Many organisations are adopting a matrix organisational design (Burton, Obel, & Håkonsson, 2015; Cummings & Worley, 2015; Lukinaitė & Sondaitė, 2017; Nannoolal, 2015). One of the concepts behind the matrix organisational design is the utilisation of cross-functional teams (CFTs) (Burton et al., 2015; Cummings & Worley, 2015; Lukinaitė & Sondaitė, 2017; Nannoolal, 2015). With the rise of cross-functional teams comes a rise in unconventional working relationships which rely on less top-down direction-setting and more self-management of cross-functional teams (Cummings & Worley, 2015; Nannoolal, 2015). Peer accountability in this type of organisational design is required as organisational structures relying on cross-functional teams rely less on the traditional top-down delegation of tasks and responsibilities, and therefore place less reliance on formal accountability mechanisms (Pearson & Sutherland, 2017). This indicates a need to better understand the antecedents of peer accountability to ensure organisations using cross-functional teams can provide environments that foster effective peer accountability.

There is a lack of peer accountability research (Hall et al., 2017; Kou & Stewart, 2018; Pearson & Sutherland, 2017). There is also a rise in non-traditional organisation structures which rely on peers driving accountability amongst themselves as opposed to the traditional formal accountability approach (Burton et al., 2015; Cummings & Worley, 2015; Lukinaitė & Sondaitė, 2017; Nannoolal, 2015). The lack of peer accountability research coupled with a rise in organisational structures which rely on peer accountability poses a problem for businesses who strive to leverage peer accountability to extract optimum performance from their employees and teams. By understanding the antecedents of peer accountability, organisations which are reliant on the effective functioning of cross-functional teams will be able to provide environments where peer accountability can be effective, and thus, an environment in which performance can be improved.

1.2 Purpose Statement

Many of the studies within the accountability domain have been based on laboratory studies, indicating that there is a need for more field studies within organisations to be conducted (Hall et al., 2017). Research has highlighted that accountability can be either formal or informal, where formal relates to the formal rules within the workplace whereas informal relates to the informal norms in the workplace (Hall et al., 2017). Research has highlighted the features of accountability, which are the accountability source – to whom the individual feels accountable to; accountability focus – the extent to which an individual is responsible for the process or outcome; accountability salience – the extent to which individuals are held accountable for their outcomes; and accountability intensity – the extent to which the individual answers to multiple sources (Hall et al., 2017). Accountability research to date has largely been focused on identifying and understanding the moderators of accountability and has focused on the characteristics of the account givers; the characteristics of the account receivers; the characteristics of the tasks; the context of the environment; affective variables and cultural variables (Hall et al., 2017). Recent research has highlighted the antecedents of an environment that enables accountability (Pearson & Sutherland, 2017).

The focus of most research done to date has been on traditional, or formal, accountability mechanisms. The recent work on the antecedents of accountability focuses on accountability as a whole and no insights into the antecedents of informal accountability specifically, or peer accountability are investigated (Pearson & Sutherland, 2017). There is little insight into how to effectively use informal accountability mechanisms to ensure improved performance of individuals and teams. Scant research has been done to investigate and understand the antecedents of peer accountability (Hall et al., 2017; Kou & Stewart, 2018; Pearson & Sutherland, 2017) and a study of how peer accountability is experienced would add value to the body of literature (Pearson & Sutherland, 2017).

Many organisations are adopting structures which rely on less traditional top-down approaches to direction setting and task assignment through the use of cross-functional teams (Burton et al., 2015; Cummings & Worley, 2015; Lukinaitė & Sondaitė, 2017; Nannoolal, 2015). Performance of employees in this context is more reliant on self-

management of the teams (Cummings & Worley, 2015; Nannoolal, 2015), and therefore more reliant on informal accountability mechanisms, specifically, peer accountability. By understanding the antecedents of peer accountability, organisations which are reliant on the effective functioning of cross-functional teams will be able to provide environments where peer accountability can be effective, and thus, performance can be improved.

Through the use of a field study, this research aims to explore the antecedents of peer accountability, adding to the body of accountability academic literature, with a specific focus on peer accountability, which has received little attention to date. By exploring the antecedents of peer accountability, this research hopes to assist organisations in ensuring they provide the conditions under which cross-functional teams can thrive, thus, extracting the highest possible performance from their individuals and teams.

The section that follows will provide a more in-depth look at the relevant accountability literature that serves as a departure point for this research paper.

2. CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Accountability is defined as “perceived expectation that one’s decisions or actions will be evaluated by a salient audience and that rewards or sanctions are believed to be contingent on this expected evaluation” (Hall et al., 2017 p. 206). Accountability is important to organisations and society alike, as without it individuals could act as they wished with no consequences whilst driving performance of organisations would be difficult to manage (Hall et al., 2017; Kou & Stewart, 2018). An interest in accountability, from an academic point of view, can be traced back to the early 1970’s and has subsequently grown as the importance and need of accountability are realised in the public and private business domain (Hall et al., 2017).

Previous research has highlighted accountability deficits as a key element behind many organisational, national and global failures (Tetlock, Vieider, Patil, & Grant, 2013). This is supported by the UK Department of International Development who identify weak accountability as a key factor leading to corruption (UK Department for International Development, 2015). The global financial crisis; corporate failure poster-children Enron, Arthur Anderson and WorldCom, medical errors; ongoing inequalities in employment decisions and abuses of power in global politics are all examples of a failed accountability system (Tetlock et al., 2013). Accountability has been identified as a factor necessary in business and society alike. Accountability has been highlighted as central to our understanding of organisational coordination and integration, as the root cause of most dysfunctional behaviour and as the most fundamental factor in organisations to ensure achieving sustainable success (Bergsteiner, 2012).

Until quite recently there was a remarkable void in literature about the concept of accountability (Bergsteiner, 2012). Although recent years have seen an increased focus on research in this field, the development of sufficient knowledge within the accountability realm is still in its infancy, and many gaps remain (Hall et al., 2017; Kou & Stewart, 2018; Pearson & Sutherland, 2017). The importance of accountability is recognised by organisations and academics alike, and, “there appears to be a need for greater accountability with increasing expectations being placed on it and further mechanisms

required to support it (Pearson & Sutherland, 2017, p. 1). Accountability research has highlighted that accountability is highly complex whilst being significant to organisations sustainable success (Bergsteiner, 2012).

Accountability is increasingly important to organisations as it has been found to promote favourable attitudes and behaviour, employee performance, alignment to company culture as well as employee job satisfaction (Dewi & Riantoputra, 2019). This is supported by Pearson and Sutherland (2017) who explain that accountability is deemed to be central to performance in organisations. In organisational groups or teams, accountability has been found to optimise resource use, increase group performance, limit selfish behaviour, increase the motivation to acquire and analyse information as well as increase socially responsible behaviour (Kou & Stewart, 2018). Holding people to account is essential to improve individual, group and organisational performance, whilst poorly implemented, misguided and/or no accountability at all has the capacity to destroy organisations (Bergsteiner, 2012).

2.1.1 The Nature of Accountability

With no mechanism to call individuals to answer for their actions, there is no basis for social order, or the maintenance of any social system (Frink & Klimoski, 2004). This is true in organisations alike, where there is a need for organisations to create both formal and informal mechanisms to instil an environment of effective accountability (Frink & Klimoski, 2004). As an effective accountability environment has very tangible business benefits (Kou & Stewart, 2018), it becomes a very important aspect of running a successful business.

Formal mechanisms used to drive an effective accountability system include measures such as formal reporting relationships, performance evaluations, employee contracts, reward systems, disciplinary procedures, supervisory training, personnel manuals and more (Frink & Klimoski, 2004).

Informal mechanisms used to drive an effective accountability system include group norms (and culture), loyalty of employees, and the respect for and an emphasis on one's

outputs (Frink & Klimoski, 2004). Accountability can therefore be explicit in policies and practices whilst also implicit in social normative expectations (Frink & Klimoski, 2004).

Within the organisational context, it is clear that employees are constantly influenced by the potential for scrutiny and evaluation, and are likely to expect to be held accountable when in an environment that utilises effective formal and informal mechanisms to drive accountability (Frink & Klimoski, 2004).

2.1 Sources of Accountability

2.1.1 Framing Accountability

It is suggested that a useful way to frame accountability is to understand four questions which ask *who* is accountable, *to whom* is the individual accountable to, *for what* is the individual accountable and *by which means* is the individual accountable (Joannides, 2012).

When asking *who* is accountable, we identify who the focal actor, responsible for giving account and whose behaviour is subject to the evaluation by another is. In the case of organisational accountability – the focus of this study – the *who* would be known as the agent or employee (Frink & Klimoski, 2004).

When asking *to whom* is the individual accountable, we look to accountability sources. According to Pearson and Sutherland (2017), accountability has two main sources, formal and informal. Formal accountability refers to either accountability to a higher authority or accountability to systems/mechanisms fostering behaviour, such as formal processes, procedures and monitoring mechanisms. Informal accountability refers to accountability to oneself, organisational culture and leadership factors and/or peer accountability.

When asking *for what* is the individual accountable, we look to accountability focus which indicates that an individual can be accountable for a process or an outcome (Tetlock et al., 2013). Accountability focus can be centred on one of two approaches. The first approach, known as process accountability, is an accountability system where employees are evaluated on the means used to achieve results (i.e. processes and procedures), but

not on the actual results of their efforts (Tetlock et al., 2013). The second approach, known as outcome accountability, is an accountability system where employees are evaluated on their achievement of results, but not evaluated on the means they used to achieve these results (Tetlock et al., 2013). In practice, few accountability systems fit either approach perfectly, and we see managers utilising hybrid models of these two extremes (Tetlock et al., 2013).

When asking the *by which means* is the individual accountable, we simply identify the means used to achieve the intended result. This element is closely tied to process accountability, which sees employees justifying efforts and strategies used to generate results (Tetlock et al., 2013).

“The *who, for what, and by which means* questions have largely been addressed in studies” (Joannides, 2012, p. 3) with the author suggesting a need to better understand the *to whom* question of accountability. This is supported by Pearson and Sutherland (2017) who state that the understanding around the various sources of accountability and how they complement or contrast one another is an area that has been identified as a gap in accountability literature.

The nature of accountability, and inherent complexity, often results in individuals being accountable to multiple stakeholders which may include subordinates, superiors, peers, the legal environment and the organisation (Buffardi, 2017; Dewi & Riantoputra, 2019). These accountability relationships can contain a number of formal and informal accountability sources which contain sharp power imbalances (Buffardi, 2017). These imbalances coupled with multiple sources of accountability can give rise to a concept dubbed multiple accountability disorder (Buffardi, 2017) where individuals may over or under-account. What is missing from the accountability literature is how organisations and individuals are to navigate these various sources of accountability, how different contexts influence the different types of accountability as well as how individuals deal with multiple, competing, accountability demands (Buffardi, 2017).

Recent research by Hall et al. (2017) suggests that the individual exerts more effort in justifying their performance to superiors than they do to their peers and that individuals

believe harsher punishments are appropriate for those who fail to deliver when accountable to a higher authority, rather than to a peer. However, little research has been done to explore peer accountability and the antecedents needed to promote effective accountability of this nature (Hall et al., 2017; Kou & Stewart, 2018; Pearson & Sutherland, 2017).

With most of the research to date focusing on formal accountability, informal accountability remains an under researched phenomenon. Within the informal accountability sources, peer accountability has received scant research (Hall et al., 2017; Kou & Stewart, 2018; Pearson & Sutherland, 2017). Given that previous research has highlighted the perceived conflicts in multiple sources of accountability (Buffardi, 2017) as well as the perceived higher level of importance in formal accountability sources (Hall et al., 2017), there is a need to understand how peer accountability is being experienced in practice, with the aim of understanding the antecedents needed for effective accountability of this nature.

2.1.2 Formal and Informal Accountability

An issue associated with accountability is found when answering the question to whom individual's feel accountable to (Frink & Klimoski, 2004). It is noted that formal reporting relationships and responsibilities are ordinarily quite explicit, however, there may be several other stakeholders who have a stake in what an individual does (Frink & Klimoski, 2004). There are customers, peers, subordinates, suppliers and a broader range of stakeholders who are influenced by an individual's behaviour and actions, but not formally involved in holding these individuals accountable (Frink & Klimoski, 2004).

When asking *to whom* is the individual accountable, we consider the sources of accountability. According to Pearson and Sutherland (2017), accountability has two main sources which are classified as either formal or informal. Formal accountability refers to either accountability to a higher authority or accountability to systems/mechanisms fostering behaviour, such as formal processes, procedures and monitoring mechanisms. Informal accountability refers to accountability to oneself, organisational culture and/or peer accountability (Pearson & Sutherland, 2017). Vu & Deffains (2013) offer insights into

some key differences between formal and informal accountability sources. The authors high-level overview is seen in table 1 below.

Table 1 Differences between Formal and Informal Accountability adapted from (Vu & Deffains, 2013)

	Formal Accountability	Informal Accountability
Legally Binding	Yes	No
Control	Direct	Indirect
Mechanisms of Account Giving	Bureaucratic	Responsive and proactive
Incentives	Formal channels of rewards and sanctions	Informal channels of rewards and sanctions
Institutions of Accountability	Bureaucracies	Identity, norms, civil society

The sub sections that follow will further elaborate on the concepts of formal and informal accountability sources.

2.1.3 Formal Accountability

Formal accountability is a result of the administrative or bureaucratic makeup of the organisation, and is mostly focused on a subordinate giving account to a superior (Sinclair, 1995). Formal accountability is linked to the distribution of tasks/objectives by an individual in the organisation to a subordinate with the end goal of monitoring the inputs, outputs and/or outcomes of the subordinates effort and holding them to account for their efforts (Sinclair, 1995). Formal accountability is further elaborated by Vu & Deffains (2013) who state that formal accountability is driven by institutional arrangements which highlight who the account holder and the account giver are and explain that the objectives are formulated and communicated by the account holder to the account giver. The authors go on to explain how this formalised discourse of accountability goes hand in hand with formal incentive mechanisms, which motivate the account giver to oblige (Vu & Deffains, 2013).

Formal accountability is closely linked to formalised channels of rewards and/or consequences, as highlighted by Vu & Deffains (2013). This is supported by Pearson and

Sutherland (2017) who suggests that systems form part of the formal accountability makeup. The author explains that many organisations utilise formalised accountability mechanisms such as individual performance reviews, policies, procedures and/or surveillance mechanisms to better monitor and control the actions, behaviour and performance of individuals within the organisation. These systems allow the organisation to formally hold individuals to account for their areas of responsibility and aim to drive higher levels of accountability.

2.1.4 Informal Accountability

Informal accountability, although not well researched, is less transparent than formal accountability (Pearson & Sutherland, 2017) however, can be formalised over time (Hall et al., 2017). Informal accountability can be understood by explaining that the person accountable is going beyond the expectations of the bureaucratic or top-down formal mechanisms of accountability (Vu & Deffains, 2013). Accountability to oneself or personal accountability is an aspect of informal accountability, which rests on the moral and ethical values of the individual (Sinclair, 1995). Accountability to peers is another aspect of informal accountability, whereby accountability is managed on a peer to peer basis (Pearson & Sutherland, 2017).

2.1.4.1 Self Accountability

The notion of self-accountability is relatively new and has only recently begun to receive attention from research efforts within the accountability domain (Ghanem & Castelli, 2019). Where traditional/formal accountability places a focus on accountability to others, self accountability is a unique dimension whereby accountability is an intrapersonal value, and the individual is accountable to themselves where no one else is present to observe, monitor or evaluate their performance (Ghanem & Castelli, 2019). Self accountability is enforced internally through psychology, rather than through an external mechanism (Ghanem & Castelli, 2019). Moreover, it is noted that personal accountability may be reinforced through shared beliefs and norms, or organisational culture (Sinclair, 1995).

It is suggested that three elements constitute the makeup of self accountability (Ghanem & Castelli, 2019). These three elements are self-identity, performance improvement and personal wisdom (Ghanem & Castelli, 2019). Self-identity, deemed essential to self accountability, involves focusing on oneself rather than the external environment. Individuals experience self accountability more when certain values and norms become salient as self-imposed standards (Ghanem & Castelli, 2019). Performance improvement is deemed an outcome of effective self accountability, as individuals consider what accounts their appearance and behaviour may elicit, and put efforts into ensuring that they uphold to their own values and norms (Ghanem & Castelli, 2019). Personal wisdom speaks to an individual's capability to think through consequences of their decisions, and readjust efforts where necessary (Ghanem & Castelli, 2019).

Practices and behaviours needed to increase self accountability according to Ghanem and Castelli (2019) include a culture of accountability within the organisation, constructive self-criticism, enhanced self-monitoring, practicing self-management, and enhancing self-leadership.

2.1.4.2 Peer Accountability

Peer accountability, also referred to as horizontal accountability introduces the concept of accountability that occurs on a peer to peer level where reciprocal relationships and repeated experiences create informal performance and behaviour expectations between peers (Pearson & Sutherland, 2017). With a shift from traditional top-down organisational structures to structures that rely more on peer to peer influence, there is a growing need for peer accountability within organisations, which, unlike formal accountability, is largely non-quantifiable (Conteh, 2016). Accountability of this type is dependent on organic iterative interactions between stakeholders, which lead to personal investment in the quality of these peer relationships (Conteh, 2016).

Scant research has been done to investigate and understand the antecedents of peer accountability (Hall et al., 2017; Kou & Stewart, 2018; Pearson & Sutherland, 2017) and a study of how peer accountability is experienced by individuals operating in organisations that rely on peer to peer level accountability would add value to the body of literature.

The growing need for peer accountability does not necessitate the need to abolish the tools or environment of traditional formal accountability environments, but does necessitate the need to identify and develop complementary constructs of accountability that promote effective peer accountability, through the recognition of complex multi-actor, horizontal, ever-changing accountability systems (Conteh, 2016). Conteh (2016) further argues that peer accountability is about reciprocity, information sharing, building trust, continuous learning and increased dialogue with compromises between peers when necessary. To foster peer accountability, the author suggests an emphasis on principles of trust, openness and reciprocity rather than mechanical instruments of control which is the main focus of formal accountability (Conteh, 2016).

Although little has been done to understand the antecedents of effective peer accountability, previous research has alluded to the fact that individuals feel formal accountability mechanisms, such as manager to subordinate based accountability, holds more weight than peer to peer accountability mechanisms (Hall et al., 2017). This indicates that organisations may not be fostering effective peer accountability environments, but rather providing environments for the effective implementation of formal accountability rooted in vertical power structures and bureaucratic chains of command (Conteh, 2016). Many organisations are adopting structures which rely on less traditional top-down approaches to direction setting and task assignment through the use of cross-functional teams (Burton et al., 2015; Cummings & Worley, 2015; Lukinaitė & Sondaitė, 2017; Nannoolal, 2015). This poses a need to better understand the antecedents of peer accountability, allowing organisations to ensure they create an environment where peer accountability can thrive, thus improving individual and team performance.

2.1 The Contexts for Peer Accountability

Organisations have historically been rooted in vertical power structures and chains of hierarchy, where subordinates give account to their managers, and their managers can reprimand them for poor performance or reward them for good performance (Conteh, 2016). It is no surprise that accountability efforts in the past have been firmly rooted in the embracement of the formalised, vertical, chain of command to drive effective performance of individuals and teams (Conteh, 2016). This approach is what we refer to as formal

accountability, which includes accountability to managers and to the organisational systems (Vu & Deffains, 2013).

There is a growing shift from bureaucratic organisational structures, to structures that rely on more collaboration by teams through horizontal relationships (Conteh, 2016). Various authors support this view by highlighting the growing popularity of organisational structures which rely less on top-down direction setting, but more on self-functioning cross functional teams (Burton et al., 2015; Cummings & Worley, 2015; Lukinaitė & Sondaitė, 2017; Nannoolal, 2015). The indicators of accountability in this environment are less quantitative than in top-down environments (Conteh, 2016).

2.1.1 The Matrix Structure and Cross-functional Teams

The matrix organisation is an organisational structure which relies less on top-down direction setting (Burton et al., 2015; Cummings & Worley, 2015; Lukinaitė & Sondaitė, 2017; Nannoolal, 2015). The matrix structure is characterised as, “an organization having several managers, competing goals, influence without authority and accountability without control” (Lukinaitė & Sondaitė, 2017, p. 144). Inherently, the matrix structure is compiled of cross-functional teams whereby there is a functional organisation hierarchy and a divisional or project hierarchy for the same organisation (Burton et al., 2015). Importantly, the structure relies on influence without authority and accountability without control (Lukinaitė & Sondaitė, 2017) Formal accountability relies on the use of influence with authority and a very controlled environment for accountability (Sinclair, 1995), both of which are not fostered in the matrix organisational design. Figure 1 below highlights the makeup of a matrix structure.

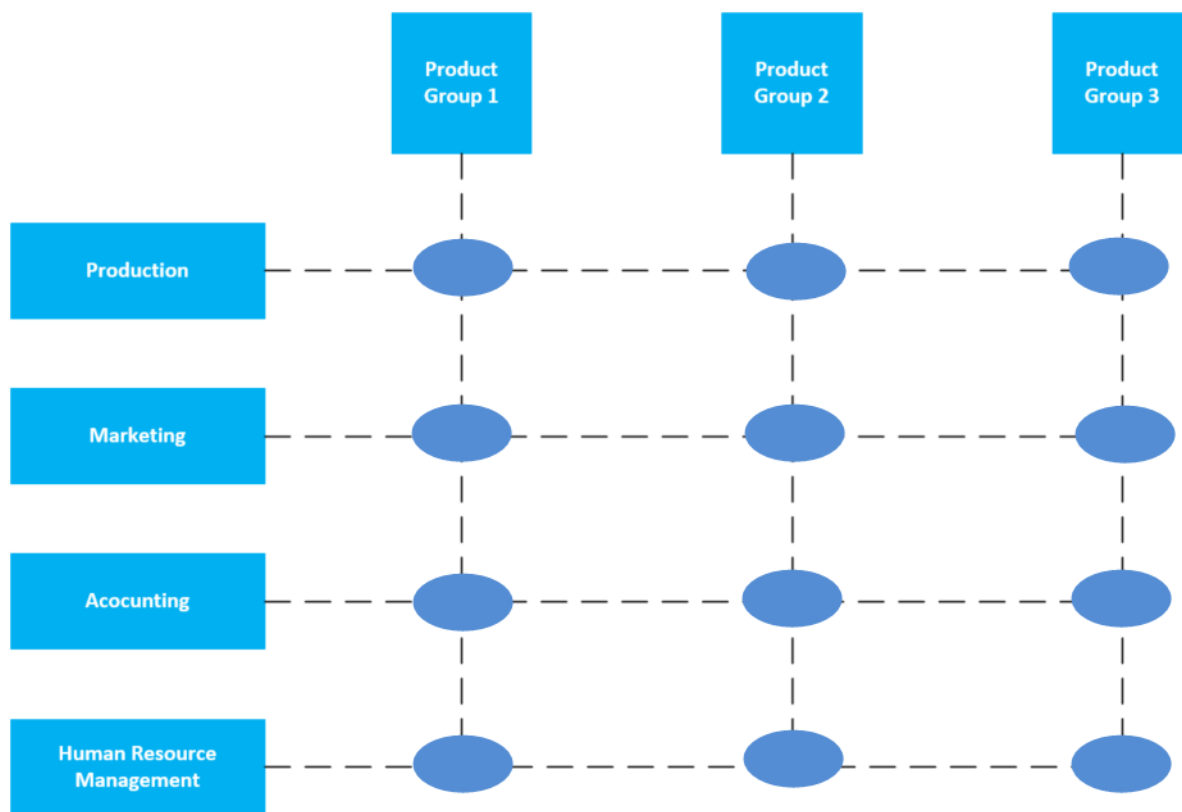


Figure 1 The Matrix Organisation adapted from (Burton et al., 2015)

In the matrix structure is rooted in employees and managers working with multiple managers, competing objectives, high levels of ambiguity, the ability of influence without formal power and the need to drive accountability without the prerequisite of direct control (Lukinaitė & Sondaitė, 2017). This structure relies on the collaboration of cross-functional teams and individuals (Lukinaitė & Sondaitė, 2017). The matrix structure is largely dependent on self-leadership of individuals, and self-management of cross functional teams (Lukinaitė & Sondaitė, 2017). Being accountable to peers and being able to hold peers accountable in this environment is essential (Conteh, 2016).

The formal accountability approaches may have served their purpose somewhat successfully in hierarchical structures, rooted in top-down control (Conteh, 2016) however, the complexity of decentralised organisation structures, such as the matrix structure, highlights a need to better understand the antecedents of peer accountability. Previous research has highlighted that there is no need to displace formal accountability mechanisms, but there is a need to identify complementary constructs (or antecedents) of

informal accountability to support more complex and fluid organisational structures (Conteh, 2016; Hall et al., 2017; Pearson & Sutherland, 2017). By understanding the antecedents of peer accountability, organisations will be able to capitalise in achieving the best possible performance from their individuals and teams in an environment which relies more heavily on informal accountability, as opposed to formal accountability.

2.2 Accountability Models

This section contextualises currently accepted views of accountability by providing a theoretical lens of previous efforts made towards defining a model or framework of accountability. Importantly, as traditional accountability has been closely connected to the traditional vertical power structures and bureaucratic organisations (Conteh, 2016) it is suggested that previous work on the models/frameworks of accountability would align to the traditional mechanisms of accountability, and therefore inherently focus on formal accountability environments over informal ones.

What is apparent in the models and theories that follow, is that the potential of an evaluative reckoning by an audience is a key element that drives behaviour of individuals in the traditional accountability landscape. This audience responsible for evaluative reckoning is akin to the *source* of accountability, as previously elaborated on. If evaluative reckoning is a key driver of accountability in the traditional sense, then peer accountability may produce less reliable/unfavourable outcomes when compared to these traditional accountability models, as it has been indicated that individuals believe harsher punishments are in order for those who are accountable to a higher authority than those accountable to a peer (Hall et al., 2017).

It appears that the traditional models of accountability rely on an environment that leverages formal accountability mechanisms as the main driving force for performance within organisations, and these formal mechanisms may not support the conditions needed for effective peer accountability.

Although previous frameworks may be focused on traditional/formal accountability environments, with scant research being done within the peer accountability field (Hall et

al., 2017; Kou & Stewart, 2018; Pearson & Sutherland, 2017) they serve as a fitting reference point for this research. These traditional models help to conceptualise the current views of accountability and may offer some insights into the elements that feature in the experiences of individuals within peer accountability focused environments.

The models and theories of accountability previously identified serve as a reference point, however, it is suggested that the antecedents of peer accountability may identify the need for a different, and perhaps even contradictory, model of for understanding and driving accountability within a peer accountability landscape.

2.2.1 Social Contingency Theory as a Model for Accountability

The social contingency theory model of accountability is a model developed by Tetlock in 1992 (Tetlock, 1992). This model has been marked as one of the most influential conceptual foundation for existing accountability research (Hall et al., 2017).

In this model, Tetlock (1992) suggests that accountability is the fundamental social contingency driving individual behaviour and decisions (Hall et al., 2017). Individuals are interested in their own images, and due to this are willing to seek the approval of others. Accountability entails an expectation of potential evaluation, and in light of this, individuals position themselves to defend their decisions in the case of an evaluation (Tetlock, 1992).

This individuals positioning to cope with accountability can occur via one of three major strategies according to the authors, which are conformity, complexity and bolstering (Tetlock, Skitka, & Boettger, 1989). The first strategy, conformity, explains that when individuals know the views of their audience and are unconstrained by past commitments, they will revert to low-effort acceptability heuristic whereby they shift their views towards those of the audience (Tetlock et al., 1989). This first strategy of conformity speaks to individuals simply trying to position their performance in alignment with their audiences expectations to avoid the disapproval of their audience and increase the probability of approval (Tetlock et al., 1989). The second strategy, complexity, explains that when individuals do not understand the views of their audience and are unconstrained by past commitments, they will be incentivised to think in flexible/creative ways (Tetlock et al.,

1989). This second strategy of complexity speaks to individuals being motivated to be complex, self-critical information processors who anticipate objections of their potential critics/audience (Tetlock et al., 1989). The third and final strategy for coping with accountability, bolstering, explains that when individuals are accountable for positions to which they feel committed to, they will spend most of their efforts in justifying these positions through defensive bolstering (Tetlock et al., 1989). This third strategy of bolstering speaks to individuals becoming defensive and thinking of ways to justify their performance against original commitments in a way that confirms their position in light of a potentially contrasting set of expectations of the audience responsible for evaluation (Tetlock et al., 1989).

Firstly, this model emphasises the importance of an element of potential evaluation, which will be carried out by a known or unknown audience (Tetlock, 1992). In each of the three strategies explained, the individual is focused on performing in a way that reduces dissatisfaction of the audience and in increasing and/or defending their self-image to this audience (Tetlock et al., 1989). Furthermore, This model emphasises the importance of the intrapersonal characteristics of the individual in terms of the individual's cognitive abilities, psychological makeup and how they employ coping strategies in light of the potential variants of their external environment (Tetlock, 1992). Accountability, in this model, is therefore seen as a state of mind, rather than a state of affairs. In this context, an individual's subjective interpretations of accountability are the primary driver of behaviour, rather than the accountability mechanisms imposed on the individual (Tetlock, 1992). This is due to the fact that the model assumes that an individual's interpretations of accountability is what drives behaviour.

2.2.2 Role Theory as a Framework for Accountability

Using the foundational work of role systems theory previously developed by Katz and Khan, (Katz & Kahn, 1978) Frink and Klimoski (2004) suggest a model of accountability which leverages role systems theory as its foundation. Role theory relies on viewing organisations as social systems, and indicates that the development of shared of role expectations coupled with the *sending* of these role expectations (from the role senders) influences the behaviours of the target audience (focal persons) (Katz & Kahn, 1978).

Role theory is seen as a way to describe how organisations as contrived social systems, manage to produce reliable behaviour from their employees (Frink & Klimoski, 2004).

Frink and Klimoski (2004) contend that this role-making and role-taking notion, captures multiple aspects of accountability and related issues. According to the authors both accountability and role theory alike, place emphasis on interpersonal relationships (Frink & Klimoski, 2004). The model developed by Frink and Klimoski (2004) relies on the premise that accountability takes place in a social context and involves the expectations of at least two people. Additionally, they highlight that the behaviour or outcomes of this model are largely influenced by mutual influence processes between the role sender and role receiver, whereby the expectations are translated through attempts of mutual influence with the result being a mutual understanding of expectations and predictable behaviour.

Key elements of the role theory as a basis of accountability model, according to Frank and Klimoski (2004) include the following:

- 1) The unit of analysis for viewing accountability within this model is the relationship. Implying that expectations within an accountability environment are co-created and not dictated by role senders.
- 2) Continuity of relationships between the role sender and focal person, whereby there is a process of learning between the two individuals which influence the expectations and the consequences for meeting or missing these expectations.
- 3) A wide range of responses to the expectations set by the role sender are to be expected from the focal person within the relationship. These responses range from conformity, negotiation, and selective attention, through to avoidance and rejection.
- 4) Mutual influence between the role sender and the focal person is deemed as a natural phenomenon of this model.
- 5) Individual differences or interpersonal factors of both the role sender and focal person as an element that influences the model.
- 6) Multiple sets of expectations whereby the focal person may have to balance multiple, sometimes conflicting, expectations.

- 7) Alignment of expectations as a key enabler of driving accountability within this model.
- 8) The importance of the role sender and the focal person is highlighted as the driving stakeholder figures of this model. The degree of consensus between the two, the way the role sender behaves when the focal person deviates from expectations and the micro-climate between these two individuals is critical to success. Furthermore, it is noted that organisational policies (formal structures) would not be anywhere near as salient as the work group pressures fostered in the micro-climate between these individuals.
- 9) Internal characteristics and external characteristics both interact and influence the outcome of the focal person.
- 10) Interpersonal relationships as a stronger vehicle to drive accountability as opposed to organisational processes.
- 11) Context dependent results should be expected, whereby intrapersonal, interpersonal, and person-organisation dynamics influence the outcomes of the focal person.

Figure 2 below graphically represents the authors view of accountability through the use of role theory as a foundational theory.

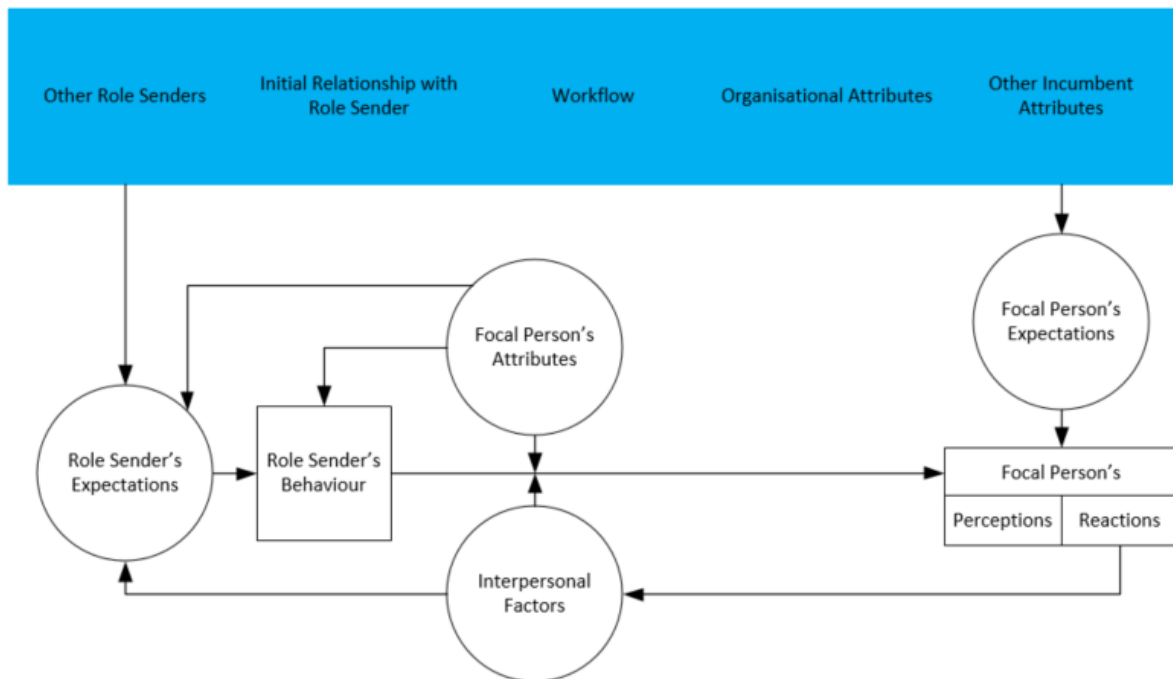


Figure 2 A Framework of Role Theory and Accountability adapted from (Frink & Klimoski, 2004)

2.2.3 The Holistic Accountability Model

Bergsteiner (2012) proposed a model for accountability whereby the actor and audience are central players. The model is divided into two halves where the top half of the model describes the accountant domain, and the bottom of the model describes the accountee domain. The model is theoretical in nature and is yet to be tested in an empirical study (Hall et al., 2017).

The accountant domain relates to factors external to the accountee. These include role responsibility, normative responsibility as a result of tacit rules, causal responsibility, judged responsibility or the extent to which a person is held responsible for an action, and external accountability or the extent to which an accountee is held liable for their behaviour (Bergsteiner, 2012). The accountee domain relates to the internal domain elements that are experienced by the accountee in relation to the accountant domain (Bergsteiner, 2012). Importantly, the judgement of the accountees actions leads to felt responsibility of the accountee and the external accountability, or extent to which the accountee is held liable for their behaviour, leads to self accountability of the accountee.

Figure 3 below graphically represents the authors view of accountability through the use of viewing accountability holistically from both the accountor and accountee perspective.

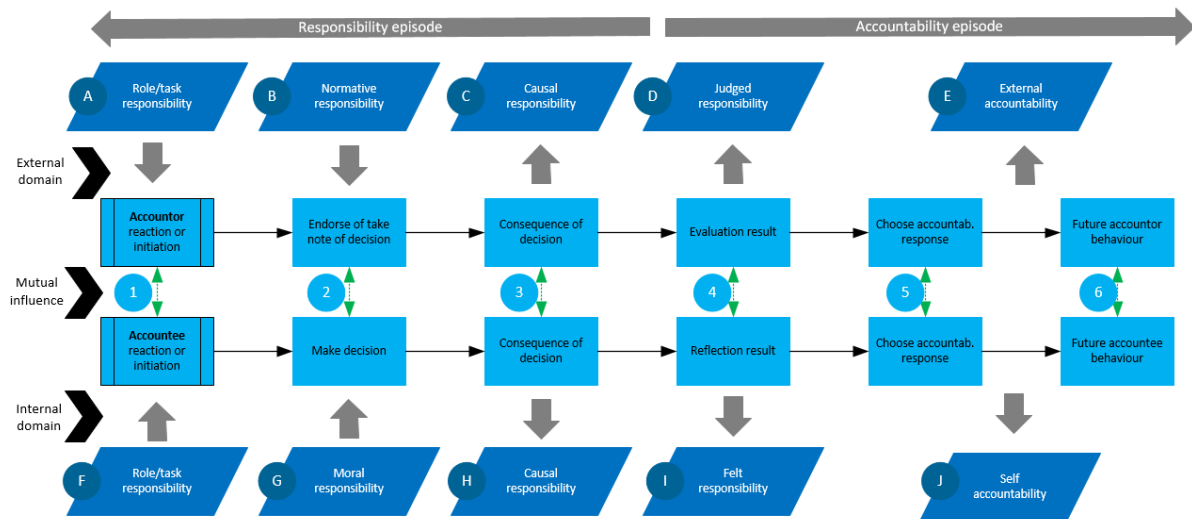


Figure 3 The Holistic Accountability Model adapted from (Bergsteiner, 2012)

2.2.4 The Pyramid Model of Accountability

In the pyramid model of accountability, it is suggested that responsibility is the foundation of accountability (Schlenker et al., 1994). As accountability refers to being answerable to an audience, the audience becomes the primary driver of accountability efforts and outcomes. In this model, the triangle model of responsibility is used as the base, which defines the elements of responsibility. Thereafter the audience is inserted as an overarching element to the model, as the key driver of accountability since the audience is responsible for developing rules and standards, evaluating performance against these rules and standards and thereafter distributing rewards or consequences in line with this evaluation.

The responsibility triangle is made up of three elements. The prescriptions, the event and the identity images. Prescriptions are codes or rules of conduct which include explicit and implicit standards for performance (Schlenker et al., 1994). The event is the unit of action and its consequences that individuals and observers regard as a unified segment for purpose of evaluation (Schlenker et al., 1994). The identify images refer to the individuals

roles, qualities, commitments and pretensions and are the components of the individuals identity (Schlenker et al., 1994). Certain types of identities engage in particular prescriptions for conduct. Responsibility, according to this model, is a direct function of the combined strength of the linkages between the three elements (Schlenker et al., 1994).

Figure 4 below graphically represents the responsibility triangle as explained above.

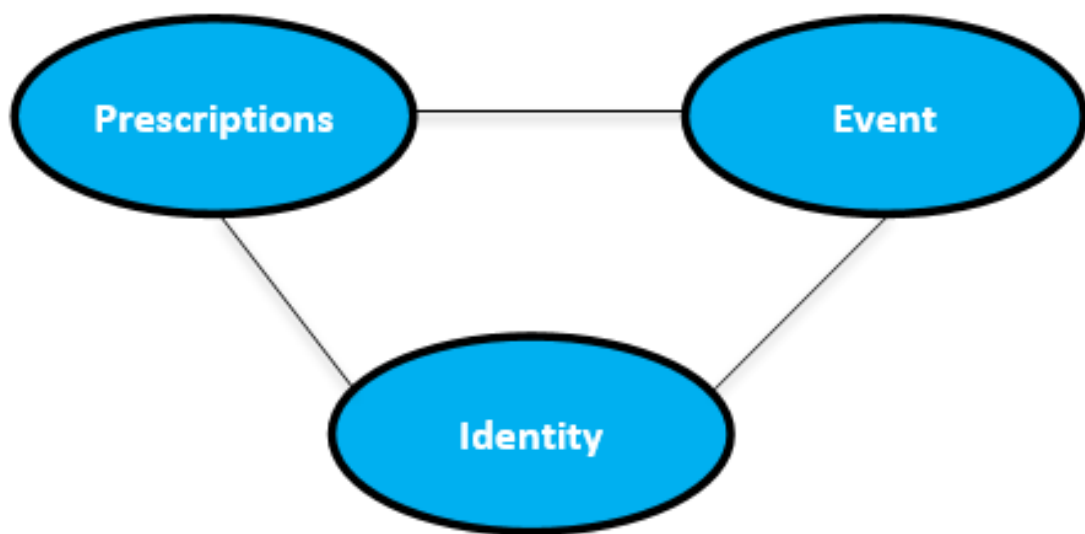


Figure 4 The Responsibility Triangle adapted from (Schlenker et al., 1994)

When we introduce an element responsible for evaluative reckoning of an individual against the elements of responsibility, we derive an accountability pyramid (Schlenker et al., 1994). This element, responsible for evaluation, is referred to as the audience within the accountability pyramid. Importantly, any one of the elements as seen in the responsibility triangle can vary in importance to the actor (or employee) and judge (or audience). The combination of importance across all the elements is known as the potency of the elements in an evaluative reckoning (Schlenker et al., 1994). As potency increases, so does the seriousness of potential consequences.

Figure 5 below graphically represents the accountability pyramid as explained above.

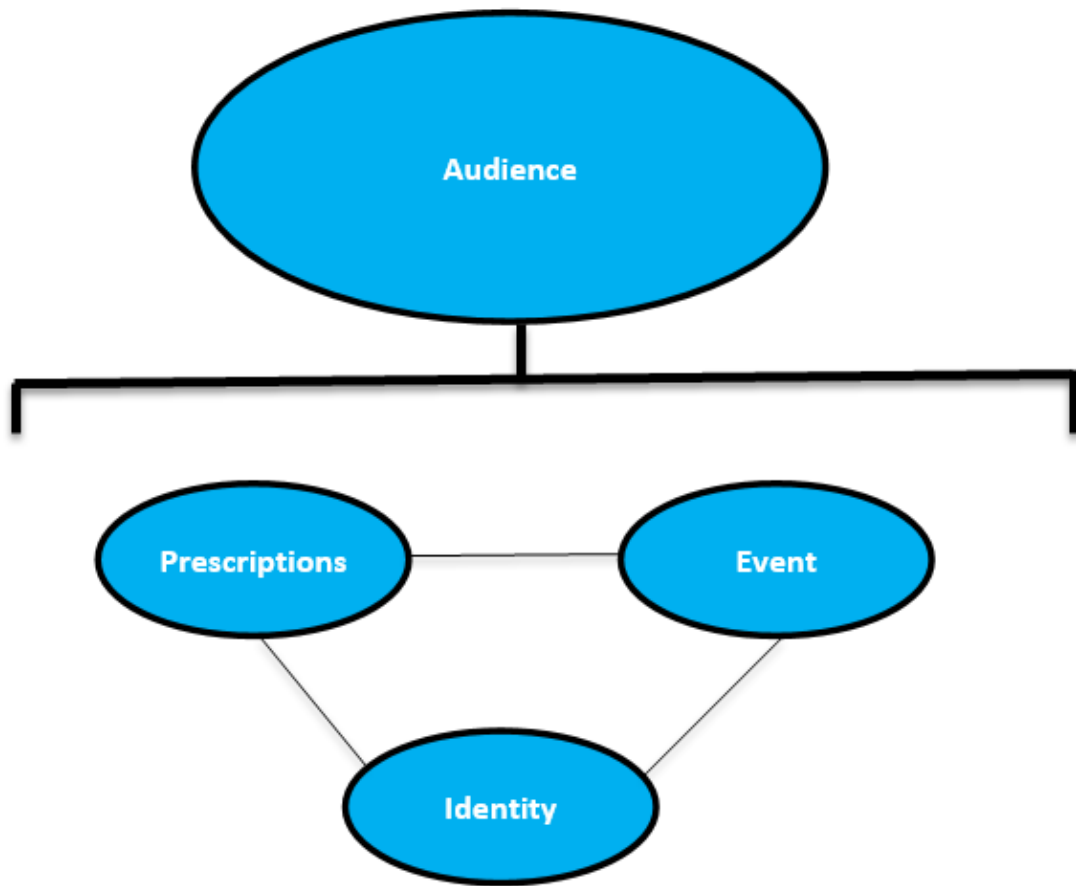


Figure 5 The Accountability Pyramid adapted from (Schlenker et al., 1994)

2.1 Antecedents of Accountability

Recent research by Pearson and Sutherland (2017) has attempted to shed some light on the antecedents of an accountability environment. This research focused on the overall accountability environment, not delving into the nuances between driving formal versus informal accountability.

The authors suggest five key, interrelated antecedents to effectively hold an individual accountable for their performance (Pearson & Sutherland, 2017). The identified antecedents are the culture of the organisation; the leadership of the organisation; the systems in the organisation; the values and recruitment means of the individual or actor; and the clarity of expectations given to the individual or actor (Pearson & Sutherland, 2017).

As traditional accountability has been closely connected to the traditional vertical power structures and bureaucratic organisations (Conteh, 2016) it is suggested that previous work on the antecedents of accountability would align to the traditional mechanisms of accountability, and therefore inherently focus on formal accountability mechanisms more than informal ones.

With the rise in non-traditional organisation structures which utilise cross functional teams, there is also a rise in the necessity of informal mechanisms of accountability driving overall accountability which rely for organisational performance being driven by informal accountability mechanisms, specifically peer accountability (Cummings & Worley, 2015; Nannoolal, 2015). Therefore, it is suggested that a more focused field study is needed, where an understanding of the antecedents of effective peer accountability are pursued. Peer, or horizontal, accountability is anticipated to rely on non-quantitative environmental factors such as reciprocity, information sharing, building trust, continuous learning and increased dialogue with compromises between peers when necessary (Conteh, 2016). Peer accountability does not necessitate the need to abolish the tools or environment of formal accountability, but does necessitate the need to identify and develop complementary constructs of accountability that promote effective peer accountability, through the recognition of complex multi-actor, horizontal, ever-changing accountability systems (Conteh, 2016). The antecedents of accountability previously identified serve as a reference point, however, it is suggested that the antecedents of peer accountability may prove to be different, and perhaps even in contradiction, to the antecedents of accountability previously identified.

2.2 Conclusion

This section has highlighted the complexity of accountability by identifying the four key questions proposed to assist in understanding accountability which are: *who* is accountable, *to whom* is the individual accountable to, *for what* is the individual accountable and *by which means* is the individual accountable. The section provided an overview of the research completed to date and delved into what is known of accountability. This section highlighted what is currently understood of the two sources of

accountability. formal and informal, and exposed the gap that exists with our current understanding of informal accountability, specifically peer accountability.

This section conceptualised some of the currently accepted models of accountability, noting that these models are all reliant on the traditional, or top-down formal approach towards accountability. Therefore these models serve as a reference point for use of exploring commonalities and contradictions between the elements associated with formal accountability and the elements identified as necessary for individuals operating in cross-functional teams reliant on peer to peer accountability, which will be explored in this research.

Furthermore, the section highlighted the changing nature of organisational design, and the move away from traditional, top-down hierarchical organisational designs. Subsequently, the link between the changing organisational designs being employed and the heavier reliance on cross functional teams was identified. Lastly, the implications of these changes was highlighted, which indicate that as organisations move away from traditional top-down approaches, peer accountability becomes a much more prominent aspect for organisational performance.

As little research with a focus of peer accountability exists, a gap has been identified. With the focus of accountability moving from a top-down approach to a self-managed, cross functional team approach, there is a need to better understand the antecedents of an effective peer accountability environment. This research paper aims to begin the identification of the antecedents of peer accountability, allowing organisations whose business design relies on peer accountability to have better insights as to the environments they need to create to drive the best performance from their employees and teams.

The section that follows will highlight the primary research for this research paper.

3. CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH QUESTION

Through the use of a field study, this research aims to explore the antecedents of peer accountability, adding to the body of peer accountability academic literature which has received little attention to date. By exploring the antecedents of peer accountability, this research hopes to assist organisations in ensuring they provide the conditions under which teams can thrive, thus, extracting the highest possible performance from their individuals and teams. To achieve this, the following research question will be explored:

The primary research question is as follows:

1. How is peer accountability experienced by knowledge workers operating in cross-functional teams?

The section that follows will provide the methodology employed to best answer the research question identified.

4. CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Explorative research seeks new answers, asks new questions and attempts to shed light on a topic that little is known about (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). As this study is aimed at exploring the antecedents of peer accountability, a topic which has little prior research on it, the exploratory purpose is the most fitting

There is scant peer accountability literature available to reference (Hall et al., 2017) which suggests that this research is exploratory as it will seek new answers, ask new questions and shed light on a topic that little is known about (Saunders & Lewis, 2018).

An effective route of exploring such a phenomenon is through the views of those closest to it (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). This study utilises the Interactive Qualitative Analysis (IQA) introduced by Northcutt and McCoy (2004), which is a structured approach to qualitative research design leveraging focus groups to develop a systematic representation of a phenomenon, known as a System Influence Diagram (SID) (Bargate, 2014). This approach relies on the voice and experiences of the respondents, with the researcher being largely an agent of facilitation (Bargate, 2014; Lodewyckx, 2005). With the researcher playing a less active role in the research, the outcome is a set of findings that have more rigour, trustworthiness and reliability (Bargate, 2014).

The IQA method is consistent with the social constructivism philosophy as it supports the creation of meaning through respondents who are close to the phenomenon (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). The key factors of a social constructivist theory are reality, knowledge and learning (Lodewyckx, 2005).

Reality cannot be discovered, but rather comes into existence through practice (Lodewyckx, 2005), The IQA methodology leverages individuals who are closest to the phenomenon in practice, and tasks them with co-creating what they regard as real (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004).

Knowledge is a result of individuals with a specific social and cultural setting (Lodewyckx, 2005), The IQA methodology leverages individuals who are closest to a phenomenon to

explore their experiences through the interactions they have had within their cultural setting (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004).

Learning is a social process which takes place when individuals interact with one another (Lodewyckx, 2005), The IQA methodology leverages the learnings experienced by individuals who are closest to the phenomenon through co-creation of a deeper understanding of the phenomenon (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004).

This study therefore relies on the social construction of cross-functional team members view of the antecedents of peer accountability. The experiences of the participants as individuals within a social group were generated and analysed. The outcome is a socially constructed reality of the antecedents of peer accountability in cross functional teams.

The IQA method suggests using both focus groups and semi-structured individual interviews (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004), The authors do suggest that research of this nature can be carried out using the focus group alone (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004) which was the approach used for this study. This study therefore classifies as a mono-method qualitative study (Saunders & Lewis, 2018).

There are a number of design principles which can be leveraged in the focus group construction, ensuring the greatest volume and richest detail of data is produced (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004), thereby reducing the benefit of utilising subsequent interviews. Table 2 below highlights the design considerations for the focus group and highlights the use of the approaches used by this study, which offer the greatest volume and richest detail of data.

Table 2 Focus Group Design Considerations adapted from (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004)

Approach	Shortest Time Required to Produce an IRD	Greatest Volume or Richest Detail of Data Produced
Simple ART	X	
Detailed ART		X
Individual Coding		X
Subgroup Coding	X	
Democratic Composite	X	
Pareto Composite		X

In this study focus groups are used to construct a socially constructed reality of the antecedents of peer accountability. A brief overview of the IQA process that will be followed is illustrated below (Bargate, 2014):

- The research question is developed, in order to guide the selection of the participants
- A focus group is held to identify categories/affinities
- The same focus group identifies the relationships between the categories/affinities
- The researcher analyses the data collected and develops a model of the phenomenon

The IQA method recommends that both an inductive and deductive approach are used (Bargate, 2014) whilst the prescribed process ensures both induction and deduction take place (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). The categorisation efforts that take place in the focus groups is done through induction, the refinement of these categories takes place through deduction and induction and, lastly, the exploration of the relationships between the constructs take place through deduction (Bargate, 2014).

A cross sectional study is a study of a particular topic and a particular time (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). This study was performed over the course of nine months and is therefore most appropriate for the cross-sectional time horizon. As only one focus group was held at a particular date and time, this research takes the shape of a cross-sectional study.

4.1 Population

The population can be defined as the complete set of group members that share some characteristics (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). For this research, the population included any cross-functional team made up of knowledge workers, that operates in the Information Technology (IT) industry.

4.2 Unit of Analysis

The experiences and perceptions of the individuals that make up the cross functional team.

4.3 Sampling Method and Size

When the goal of the research is not to generalise the findings to the population, the researcher may purposefully select the sample to maximise the chances of effectively answering the research question (Collins, Onwuegbuzie, & Jiao, 2007). This research employed the following criteria for selecting the focus group constituents:

- The organisation operates in the IT industry
- The organisation is based in Johannesburg
- The group operates as a cross-functional team within the organisation
- The cross-functional team encompasses members of different seniority levels
- Multiple reporting lines exist for members within the team

The recommended sample size for a focus group research method ranges from six to twelve participants (Collins et al., 2007). According to IQA, a sample size of twelve to twenty is appropriate (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). As this research is qualitative, the goal is to achieve relevant depth and saturation, therefore the minimum requirements of focus group sizing was met, and the focus group consisted of twelve individuals.

4.4 Measurement Instrument

The IQA method proposes a process for collecting and analysing information (Bargate, 2014; Lodewyckx, 2005; Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). Both focus groups and non-mandatory semi-structured interviews are recommended by this approach (Bargate, 2014). As mentioned earlier, the focus group design protocols offering the greatest volume and richness of data were utilised, thereby eradicating the need for subsequent interviews. As focus groups are used for generating collective views, and deemed appropriate as a standalone method for research relating to the defining of group norms, meanings and processes (Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008), the use of focus groups alone was identified as an appropriate method for understanding how peer accountability is experienced by individuals operating in cross-functional teams.

Focus Groups: An issue statement will be given by the researcher and the members of the focus group will be given cue cards to write their thoughts down in isolation. Thereafter all cue cards are placed on the walls and a clarification session ensues. The categorisation of these cue cards subsequently takes place with the guidance of the group, ending in each grouping of similar cue cards to be given a named category. Lastly, relationships between the different categories are constructed by the members of the focus group (Bargate, 2014; Lodewyckx, 2005; Northcutt & McCoy, 2004).

Focus Group Issue Statement: The following issue statement will serve as the departure point for the focus group session: “When you think about your experience of holding cross-functional team members to account, and how you are held to account by them, what comes to mind?”

4.5 Data Gathering Process

As mentioned in previous sections, a focus group was used to collect data – consistent with the IQA method recommendations.

4.6 Analysis Approach

The IQA method proposes a framework for analysing data (Bargate, 2014; Lodewyckx, 2005; Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). The sections that follow detail the end-to-end Interactive Qualitative Analysis steps taken to generate the findings of this research paper.

4.6.1 Creating a Group Reality (Focus Group)

The focus group was selected from a single organisation meeting the following criteria:

- 1) The organisation was an IT organisation, based in Johannesburg, that utilises a matrix structure and depends on cross-functional teams

Individuals were selected based on the following criteria:

- 1) The individual operated in a cross-functional team and have a wealth of experience in the subject of peer accountability
- 2) The individual has multiple reporting lines
- 3) In a way to ensure a mix of different designations and seniority levels would be included

The focus group of twelve participants was made up of five business analysts (across different tiers from junior to senior); two project managers; one project coordinator; one SQL developer; one test analyst and two system design specialists (one senior and one junior).

4.6.1.1 Step 1: The Warm-Up

An effective way of beginning a focus group session is through the use of a warm-up exercise (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). One approach to the warm-up activity suggested by Northcutt & McCoy (2004), is the use of guided imagery. This approach was used for the warm-up during the focus group session and is detailed below:

- 1) Participants were asked to close their eyes and take a deep breath in and out
- 2) Participants were instructed to clear their minds
- 3) Participants were told to imagine themselves in their work environments
- 4) Participants were told to visualise themselves engaging in their cross-functional teams
- 5) Participants were encouraged to notice their surroundings, sights, sounds, and experiences in this environment
- 6) Participants were told to become aware of the environment with all their senses
- 7) The following issue statement was read slowly twice; “When you think about your experience of holding cross-functional team members to account, and how you are held to account by them, what comes to mind?”
- 8) The participants were told to open their eyes and continue to the silent brainstorming activity

4.6.1.2 Step 2: Silent Brainstorming

The next step in conducting the focus group is to have the participants individually, and silently, write down their thoughts and reflections on the subject/issue statement (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). Each participant had been allocated a marker and a stack of A5 pieces of paper (referred here on out as index cards). The group was instructed to write down one thought/experience per index card using words phrases, sentences, or pictures. Participants were given an initial five minutes for this activity. At the end of the five minutes, the issue statement was re-worded to reflect terminologies that the participants may be more familiar with, and they were allowed to continue writing down any additional thoughts they had for an additional few minutes – until ever member had exhausted their ideas.

After the brainstorming exercise, a mass of individual index cards had been created. These were stuck onto a wall, in no logical order, for the group to have sight of the mass of index cards generated by the group.

4.6.1.3 Step 3: Clarification of Meaning

As suggested by Northcutt and McCoy (2004) the next step ensures that each index card is understood by the group and to ensure a socially constructed shared meaning of each index card.

The facilitator of the session read each card out aloud, if there was any member of the group who was unsure of the meaning of that card, a discussion was had by the group to reach a common shared understanding of the index card. As this process was carried out, certain index cards were elaborated on, whilst others were split up into two or more index cards where applicable. Additionally, during this phase, any duplicated ideas/index cards were stuck on top of one another and would later be removed to ensure only one iteration of a specific idea was available on the wall. Once all index cards had been worked through, the group was asked if they had any additional ideas that they would like to place on the wall before continuing to the next step of the process.

4.6.1.4 Step 4: Inductive Coding

Inductive coding is the suggested next step in the process, and involves the identification of affinities (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). It is recommended that this is a silent approach whereby group members cluster index cards into yet-to-be-named groupings or affinities (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004).

The facilitator explained the process to the focus group and asked if any individual would like to go first. After the first participant had performed this activity, other members began following suit, going up in pairs. This process took quite some time as every member was afforded the opportunity to rearrange the index cards as many times as they liked until everyone in the group was satisfied with the grouping. This activity generated five different groupings/affinities which were at this point still unnamed. Once this was done, the next step ensued.

4.6.1.5 Step 5: Axial Coding

Axial coding is the next prescribed step and the activity seeks to name, reorganise, clarify and refine the affinities (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004).

The facilitator read the index cards of a cluster out loud, and the group was asked to verify that all the index cards were related or assigned to the correct cluster. Once an agreement had been reached the group was asked what title they thought fitting for the cluster of index cards. Much like the previous step, this process took quite some time as different individuals often had different views of the name and description of each cluster. Some refinement of the groupings took place through this discussion. Once this was complete, the group had agreed on a group of affinities.

4.6.1.6 Step 6: Affinity Relationship Table (ART) / Theoretical Coding

At this point Northcutt & McCoy (2004) prescribe the process of identifying relationships between the different affinities whereby for any two affinities one of three relationships can be identified (A influences B; B influences A; or no relationship perceived). This activity can be performed by sub-groups within the focus group or by individual members (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). This process can take the shape of a simple Affinity Relationship Table, where participants are asked to just indicate the relationship, or by a detailed Affinity Relationship Table, where participants are asked to indicate the relationship and describe their view (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004).

This paper relied on individual members creating a detailed Affinity Relationship Table as this approach is suggested to offer the greatest volume and richest detail of data from the focus group (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004).

The facilitator explained the process to the participants and handed each individual a worksheet to allow them to complete the activity. As per the brainstorming and inductive coding steps, participants were advised to perform this activity silently and individually. Once this activity was completed, the focus group was concluded, and the participants were dismissed.

4.6.1.7 Step 7: Generating a Group Composite Interrelationship Diagram (IRD)

This step can either be done with the focus group using a simple democratic process whereby the group votes on relationships between affinities or through a Pareto Composite which is done by the researcher without the focus group's participation. The Pareto Composite utilises the tallies of the relationships captured in the Affinity Relationship Table's produced in the previous step and sorts them in descending order of frequency, thereafter the Pareto principle is used to identify relationships to be presented in the System Influence Diagram (SID) (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004).

The Pareto Composite is explained to provide the greatest volume and richness of data (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004), and therefore was the chosen method for this research.

4.6.1.8 Step 8: Creating a Group System Influence Diagram (SID)

The last step in the process is creating a visual representation of the entire system of influences and outcomes (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). The resultant diagram is referred to as a System Influence Diagram (SID) which highlights relationships among affinities that might be responsible for a systems dynamics, allowing for analysis of the system and identification of ways to improve or influence the system (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). The SID allows for the understanding of how the system interrelates and where the system may be influenced to change its outcomes (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004).

4.7 Quality Controls

Credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability are the key components to trustworthiness of qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The IQA process inherently lessens the biases imposed by the researcher in traditional qualitative methods (Bargate, 2014).

Traditional qualitative research, where the researcher actively participates in the process and analyses the data, introduces issues relating to a lack of rigour, trustworthiness and reliability (Bargate, 2014). The use of the IQA process reduces the biases usually

associated with qualitative research, thereby providing greater rigour, trustworthiness, and reliability (Bargate, 2014).

To further promote quality, the researcher performed the following:

- Standardised data collection techniques and protocols through the use of the prescribed IQA methodological approach to data collection. This ensures concepts of validity (credibility and dependability) and reliability (transferability, and confirmability) through public, accessible and accountable procedures (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004)
- The prescribed IQA process flow was followed to ensure Internal and external validity achievement In this context, internal validity refers to the System Influence Diagram being consistent with the individual hypotheses comprising it (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004) and external validity refers to the extent to which the System Influence Diagram constructed by independent samples of the same constituency on the same phenomenon are similar (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004).
- Performed recordings of sessions to promote dependability and confirmability.
- Performed thick description and triangulation. This includes the representation of individual focus group constituents' views and majority views collected from the focus group. Previous literature will be compared and contrasted to the results of this research. This depth and detail of analysis promotes credibility.

5. CHAPTER 5: RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will represent the data collected for the research as well as the steps taken to generate the data. All the steps taken are prescribed by Northcutt and McCoy (2004) in their detailing of the Interactive Qualitative Analysis process.

5.2 Selection of Participants

This is not a comparative study which suggests the use of one focus group is acceptable. The constituency comprised of individuals operating in cross-functional teams with multiple reporting lines. All constituents were selected from a single IT organisation within Johannesburg – which utilises the matrix organisation structure. For an IQA study, it is recommended that the focus group is comprised of 12-20 individuals (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). In line with the prescribed number of constituents, 12 individuals were selected for the focus group sessions.

Members selected for the constituency included five business analysts (across different tiers from junior to senior); two project managers; one project coordinator; one SQL developer; one test analyst and two system design specialists (one senior and one junior).

These twelve individuals were invited to a four-hour focus group session which took place at the company premises on the 10th October 2020. Each constituent was asked to complete an informed consent form, these can be seen in Annexure 5: Informed Consent Forms from the Focus Group Constituents.

5.3 Warm-Up Exercise

The constituents were welcomed to the focus group session and an explanation was given of the process to be followed during the course of the day.

Prior to the warm-up, the concept of accountability, its' types (formal and informal) as well as an overview of peer accountability was explained to the constituents. The explanation

took the form of a short high-level description of the different concepts being explored by the research. It was explained in a way that referenced their own environment, ensuring that they understood the phenomenon in terms familiar to them (as an example I explained that the “streams” used by the company, is an example of a cross-functional team).

The warm-up exercise is designed to clear the mind of all thoughts except the issue at hand and to prime the focus group constituents to think about the issues statement (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). Many variations of the warm-up exercise are offered, with one being a process of guided imagery. Guided imagery. The purpose of guided imagery form of warm-up is to help participants clear their mind and focus on the phenomenon, but not a long lecture on the subject (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004).

Table 3 below highlights the use of guided imagery as a tool used for the warm-up activity with the constituents.

Table 3 Guided Imagery Warm Up Activity

Step	Description
1	Participants were asked to close their eyes and take a deep breath in and out. <i>“I am going to ask everyone to close their eyes”</i>
2	Participants were instructed to clear their minds. <i>“Take a deep breath in, and exhale. Clear your mind”</i>
3	Participants were told to imagine themselves in their work environments. <i>“Now imagine yourself in the work environment, working with your cross-functional team”</i>
4	Participants were told to visualise themselves engaging in their cross-functional teams. <i>“See yourself engaging in the activities of working in this team”</i>
5	Participants were encouraged to notice their surroundings, sights, sounds, and experiences in this environment. <i>“Notice your surroundings. Looking around you, take in the sights and sounds that are associated with being a part of this team.”</i>

6	<p>Participants were told to become aware of the environment with all their senses.</p> <p><i>“Focus on what it feels like to be totally absorbed within this team.”</i></p>
7	<p>The focus group issue statement was read slowly twice.</p> <p><i>“When you think about your experience in holding cross-functional team members to account, and how you are held to account by them, what comes to mind?”</i></p>
8	<p>The participants were told to open their eyes and continue to the silent brainstorming activity.</p> <p><i>“You are welcome to open your eyes and start jotting down the ideas that you have. You may use words, phrases, sentences and/or pictures to jot down what comes to mind. Please write one idea per piece of paper”</i></p>

5.4 Silent Brainstorming

Following the warm-up exercise, the constituents began writing down their own reflection in silence and independently. The silence and privacy reduces the chance of any influence amongst the individuals (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004).

Table 4 below highlights all of the ideas (or index cards) produced through this process – sorted alphabetically.

Table 4 Constituents Experiences of Peer Accountability

#	Description	#	Description
1	Accentuate strengths, embrace unique skills and help team members overcome weaknesses	40	Involvement in discussions
2	Accepting what your role in the team is	41	Issue management (area for improvement)
3	Alignment	42	Lead by example
4	Ask for clarity	43	Listening attentively
5	Ask for help	44	Managing expectations within the team and outside of the team (team - customer e.g.)
6	Avoid grey areas (overlapping and shared accountabilities to be defined)	45	Not trusting someone to do their work
7	Be methodical and structured in how you determine accountability of work items	46	Person giving tasks taking advantage of recipient although no formal reporting line
8	Being polite	47	Person responsible for delivery taking advantage of the lack of a formal reporting line
9	Brainstorming as a group to determine responsibilities	48	Pressure on oneself
10	Break down work tasks between resources evenly in terms of time to complete	49	Producing results
11	Bring ideas	50	Put in as much work effort as needed to meet deliverables to the quality, time and budget expectations
12	Building relationships	51	Realistic mindset of team
13	Collaborating	52	Regulate pressure on oneself

14	Collaboration: knowledge sharing	53	Reliability
15	Communicate roles and responsibilities	54	Realistic mindset of individuals
16	Communication	55	Reputation of individual members and the team as a whole
17	Creativity through collaboration	56	Risk adverse approach when necessary
18	Culture in team to achieve success (performance culture)	57	Risk taking advantage (taking calculated risks)
19	Culture of upliftment	58	Self accountability
20	Define who is accountable and to what (SMART goals)	59	Self-leadership at every level
21	Do the right thing and own your mistakes	60	Stand-ups: accountability can be obtained in stand ups as the roles and responsibility are discussed
22	Doing what you said you would do	61	Support one another
23	Emails	62	Synergy (increased performance towards common goals by well-functioning teams)
24	Empathy to oneself	63	Taking criticism well (leading to better performance)
25	Empathy with team members	64	Taking responsibility for own work
26	Encourage team mates to perform	65	Team taking advantage of business opportunities
27	Equality in team	66	Teamwork
28	Escalations	67	There can often be a misunderstanding of what each team member needs to be held accountable for
29	Evaluate options as a team	68	Time frame (clear deadlines)
30	Evaluating options as an individual	69	Transparency of current team tasks/deadlines (know what peers

			are doing and what the expectations are)
31	Feedback (through any mechanism)	70	Transparency within team
32	Feeling a lack of clear communication	71	Trust
33	Formal approach (putting commitments down on paper) - may be a lack of trust here or a procedural requirement	72	Trusting that everyone will do their job
34	Fun / sense of humour (positive work environment)	73	Ubuntu
35	Gather thoughts together to find a working solution	74	Understand and manage bottlenecks
36	Have a benchmark: how do we measure accountability	75	Understanding of common goals
37	Have a greater understanding of each members role	76	Up-management
38	Honesty on where you need assistance or support	77	Using constructive criticism (not being hurtful to others)
39	Informal approach fuelled by trust (chat/casual handover of tasks)	78	Win together

5.5 Clarification of Meaning

As suggested by Northcutt and McCoy (2004) the next step ensures that each index card is understood by the group and to ensure a socially constructed shared meaning of each index card.

The facilitator of the session read each card out aloud, if there was any member of the group who was unsure of the meaning of that card, a discussion was had by the group to reach a common shared understanding of the index card. As this process was carried out, certain index cards were elaborated on, whilst others were split up into two or more index cards where applicable. Additionally, during this phase, any duplicated ideas/index cards

were stuck on top of one another and would later be removed to ensure only one iteration of a specific idea was available on the wall. Once all index cards had been worked through, the group was asked if they had any additional ideas that they would like to place on the wall before continuing to the next step of the process.

5.6 Affinity Analysis / Inductive Coding

Inductive coding is the suggested next step in the process, and involves the identification of affinities (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). It is recommended that this is a silent approach whereby group members cluster index cards into yet-to-be-named groupings or affinities (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). This process was undertaken and has been graphically captured in Annexure 1: Affinity Analysis / Inductive Coding Images From Focus Group.

5.7 Axial Coding

Axial coding is the next prescribed step and the activity seeks to name, reorganise, clarify and refine the affinities (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004).

The facilitator read the index cards of a cluster out loud, and the group was asked to verify that all the index cards were related or assigned to the correct cluster. Once agreement had been reached the group was asked what title they thought fitting for the cluster of index cards. Much like the previous step, this process took quite some time as different individuals often had different views of the name and description of each cluster. Some refinement of the groupings took place through this discussion. Once this was complete, the group had agreed on four affinities as follows:

- 1) Individual Accountability (Self-Management)**
- 2) Collaborative Communication**
- 3) Management (Plan, Lead, Organise, Control)**
- 4) Team Dynamics and Culture**

Annexure 2 Axial Coding Images from Focus Group graphically highlights the outcome of this process. The related index cards of each affinity as well as the description derived for each affinity are highlighted in the tables 5 and 6 below:

Table 5 Affinities by Index Cards

Affinity	Name	Index Cards Grouped Within
1	Individual Accountability (Self- Management)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulate pressure on oneself • Self-leadership at every level • Pressure on oneself • Do the right thing and own your mistakes • Being polite • Realistic mindset of individuals • Evaluating options as an individual • Empathy to oneself • Trusting that everyone will do their job • Lead by example • Taking responsibility for own work • Doing what you said you would do • Reliability • Accepting what your role in the team is • Self accountability • Honesty on where you need assistance or support • Put in as much work effort as needed to meet deliverables to the quality, time and budget expectations
2	Collaborative Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid grey areas (overlapping and shared accountabilities to be defined) • Communication • Brainstorming as a group to determine responsibilities

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather thoughts together to find a working solution • Stand-ups: accountability can be obtained in stand ups as the roles and responsibility are discussed • Involvement in discussions • Ask for help • There can often be a misunderstanding of what each team member needs to be held accountable for • Ask for clarity • Listening attentively • Collaboration: knowledge sharing • Collaborating • Creativity through collaboration • Evaluate options as a team • Communicate roles and responsibilities • Feeling a lack of clear communication • Emails • Feedback (through any mechanism) • Bring ideas
3	Management (Plan, Lead, Organise, Control)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alignment • Define who is accountable and to what (SMART goals) • Formal approach (putting commitments down on paper) - may be a lack of trust here or a procedural requirement • Have a benchmark: how do we measure accountability • Producing results • Person responsible for delivery taking advantage of the lack of a formal reporting line

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Break down work tasks between resources evenly in terms of time to complete • Person giving tasks taking advantage of recipient although no formal reporting line • Transparency of current team tasks/deadlines (know what peers are doing and what the expectations are) • Taking criticism well (leading to better performance) • Time frame (clear deadlines) • Managing expectations within the team and outside of the team (team - customer e.g.) • Escalations • Understand and manage bottlenecks • Issue management (area for improvement) • Up-management • Risk taking advantage (taking calculated risks) • Risk adverse approach when necessary • Be methodical and structured in how you determine accountability of work items • Have a greater understanding of each members role
4	Team Dynamics and Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Synergy (increased performance towards common goals by well-functioning teams) • Transparency within team • Building relationships • Culture in team to achieve success (performance culture) • Trust • Teamwork • Ubuntu

		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fun / sense of humour (positive work environment)• Empathy with team members• Equality in team• Culture of upliftment• Win together• Informal approach fuelled by trust (chat/casual handover of tasks)• Not trusting someone to do their work• Using constructive criticism (not being hurtful to others)• Realistic mindset of team• Understanding of common goals• Team taking advantage of business opportunities• Support one another• Reputation of individual members and the team as a whole• Encourage team mates to perform• Accentuate strengths, embrace unique skills and help team members overcome weaknesses
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Table 6 Affinities Identified

Affinity	Name	Description
1	Individual Accountability (Self-Management)	<p>This affinity relates to the effective self management of each team member on an individual level, within a cross-functional team.</p> <p>Individuals should be able to put pressure on themselves, without external stimulus, in order to deliver expected results. The individual should be accepting of the responsibilities assigned to him/her and be realistic in their estimations, so as to set the broader team up for success. This individual should be trusting of other team members, not attempt to micromanage them, whilst being polite towards the team and showing empathy to others when necessary. Lastly, the individual should put in whatever it takes to meet expectations that have been agreed on (reliability).</p>
2	Collaborative Communication	<p>This affinity relates to the effective communication and collaboration within a cross functional team.</p> <p>Communication must occur on a frequent enough basis (through any combination of mechanisms) so as to ensure no grey areas in terms of accountabilities are experienced and that everyone is aware of what they are responsible for, as well as what others in the team are responsible for. The frequent communication should cater to any necessary clarification, as well as the ability for the individuals within the team to raise suggestions, successes and/or impediments.</p> <p>The cross-functional team should collaborate and brainstorm together to drive the identification of</p>

		creative best approaches. The team should share knowledge with one another and listen attentively to each other.
3	Management (Plan, Lead, Organise, Control)	<p>This affinity relates to the effective self-management of the cross-functional team as a unit.</p> <p>Specific, Measurable, Realistic and Timely goals are to be defined within the team as well as assigned to accountable individuals. Bottlenecks are to be identified and managed within the team to ensure delivery. The mechanisms for measuring performance are to be clear to all team members. The team should be aware and understand what each member is responsible for in the broader team. The team should be able to decide on when to take risks as well as when to adopt a risk adverse approach.</p> <p>The cross-functional team should have a shared understanding of each members responsibility within the team whilst being abreast with what each team member is currently working towards and their progress thereof.</p> <p>The team should have a defined, methodical approach to assigning accountability within it. Any ongoing issues within the team are to be managed through an agreed upon approach and/or escalations to formal authorities.</p> <p>Each team member should be able to up-manage where applicable - and by up-manage we refer to offering suggestions to other team members outside of their own designation whilst having the ability to</p>

		raise concerns against other team members where needed.
4	Team Dynamics and Culture	<p>This affinity relates to the team experience of individuals comprising the cross-functional team.</p> <p>The team should strive for synergy, whereby the efforts of the group towards a common goal outweigh the efforts of isolated team members. There should be full transparency within the team and a culture of upliftment and performance. In this environment, team members capitalise on their strengths, and assist their peers with eradicating their weaknesses. The team should have realistic expectations of the whole, whilst using constructive criticism within the team when needed.</p> <p>Trust within the team and its encompassing members is a vital aspect of a well-functioning team. This trust allows for an informal approach to direction setting and holding others to account, whilst also allowing the team to take advantage of opportunities as a unit. Additionally, the trust allows for the formation of personal and professional relationships in the team. This environment is enjoyable for the team members and allows for each individual to experience a positive work environment.</p> <p>Lastly, equality within the cross-functional team is crucial - whereby individuals of different designations and seniority have the same rights and responsibilities within the team.</p>

5.8 Detailed Affinity Relationship Table (ART)

At this point, the IQA process prescribes the identification of relationships between the different affinities whereby for any two affinities one of three relationships can be identified (A influences B; B influences A; or no relationship perceived) (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). This activity can be performed by sub-groups within the focus group or by individual members (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). This process can take the shape of a simple Affinity Relationship Table, where participants are asked to just indicate the relationship, or by a detailed Affinity Relationship Table, where participants are asked to indicate the relationship and describe their view (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004).

This paper relied on individual members creating a detailed Affinity Relationship Table as this approach is suggested to offer the greatest volume and richest detail of data from the focus group (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004).

Annexure 3 Detailed Affinity Relationship Table (ART) Worksheet Sample presents the worksheet sample presented to each constituent. Annexure 4: Detailed Affinity Relationship Table (ART) Completed Worksheets provides all completed worksheets obtained from the constituents.

5.9 Group Composite Creation

The Pareto Principle is a powerful technique for achieving and documenting the degree of consensus of the relationships captured by a focus group (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). The principle is that twenty percent of the variables in a system will account for eighty percent of the total variation in outcomes (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). The Pareto Principle requires an exact count of each relationship captured in the aforementioned step (the detailed relationship table output from the focus group constituents) and sort them in descending order of frequency. Thereafter, using the Pareto Principle, cumulative percentages are calculated for each relationship and certain relationships can then be excluded based on certain criteria.

As a quick reference, the affinities and their numbers are seen below, with table 7 thereafter highlighting the affinity relationships captured by the focus group, sorted in descending order.

- 1) **Individual Accountability (Self-Management)**
- 2) **Collaborative Communication**
- 3) **Management (Plan, Lead, Organise, Control)**
- 4) **Team Dynamics and Culture**

Table 7 Affinities in Descending Order of Frequency with Pareto and Power Analysis

Affinity Pair Relationship	Frequency Sorted (Descending)	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent (Relation)	Cumulative Percent (Frequency)	Power
4->2	8	8	8.33%	11.43%	3.10%
1->3	7	15	16.66%	21.43%	4.77%
4->1	7	22	24.99%	31.43%	6.44%
3->2	7	29	33.32%	41.43%	8.11%
2->1	6	35	41.65%	50.00%	8.35%
3->4	6	41	49.98%	58.57%	8.59%
1->2	5	46	58.31%	65.71%	7.40%
3->1	5	51	66.64%	72.86%	6.22%
1->4	5	56	74.97%	80.00%	5.03%
2->3	5	61	83.30%	87.14%	3.84%
4->3	5	66	91.63%	94.29%	2.66%
2->4	4	70	99.96%	100.00%	0.04%

***Cumulative Frequency** these entries contain the running total. Each entry is the frequency of votes cast for an affinity pair added to the previous total.

***Cumulative Percent (Relation)** these entries are a cumulative percentage based on the number of total possible relationships.

***Cumulative Percent (Frequency)** these entries contain a cumulative percent based on the number of votes cast. Each entry is the percentage of votes cast for an affinity pair, added to the previous total.

***Power** these entries give an overview of the degree of optimisation of the system and is simply the difference between Cumulative Percent (Frequency) and Cumulative Percent (Relation).

5.9.1 MinMax Criterion

The last two columns of the Pareto table are the keys to deciding which relationships should be included in the group Interrelationship diagram (IRD) (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). The MinMax criteria details how to decide on a cut-off of relationships to be used in the IRD. Essentially the decision is centred around accounting for the maximum variation in the system (cumulative percent based upon frequency) while minimising the number of relationships in the interest of parsimony (cumulative percent based on relations) (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). In other words, we want to include relationships until such time that the power of the relationships begins to lessen. Table 8 below highlights this approach with the relationship information generated from this study.

Table 8 MinMax Criteria Application

Affinity Pair Relationship	Frequency Sorted (Descending)	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent (Relation)	Cumulative Percent (Frequency)	Power
4->2	8	8	8.33%	11.43%	3.10%
1->3	7	15	16.66%	21.43%	4.77%
4->1	7	22	24.99%	31.43%	6.44%
3->2	7	29	33.32%	41.43%	8.11%
2->1	6	35	41.65%	50.00%	8.35%
3->4	6	41	49.98%	58.57%	8.59%
1->2	5	46	58.31%	65.71%	7.40%
3->1	5	51	66.64%	72.86%	6.22%
1->4	5	56	74.97%	80.00%	5.03%
2->3	5	61	83.30%	87.14%	3.84%
4->3	5	66	91.63%	94.29%	2.66%
2->4	4	70	99.96%	100.00%	0.04%

As illustrated above, the cut-off point is determined to be where the “Power” figure begins to lessen. The first six relationships in the table are therefore used in the creation of the IRD as seen in the next step.

5.10 Interrelationship Diagram (IRD) Creation

Creating an interrelationship diagram (IRD) is the first step in a process called rationalising the system (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). The arrows displayed in the IRD show whether each affinity in a pair is perceived as a cause or an effect/outcome. Arrows point to the left or up, with each relationship being captured twice with logic as follows: An arrow pointing from A to B (A->B) indicates that A is the cause or influencing affinity and that B is the effect or influenced affinity (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004).

Thereafter, in an effort to determine which of the affinities drive the system an exercise is done where an upward arrow is seen as an “out”, a leftward arrow is seen as an “In” and the delta of these two is (“Out” minus “In”) is used to determine these drivers of the system. Affinities with positive deltas are relative drivers or causes, those with negative deltas are relative effects or outcomes (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004).

In the example where there are two affinities, A & B, and the relationship identified is that A influences B, the IRD would be captured as illustrated in table 9 below.

Table 9 Example of Showing Relationships in an IRD Where “A” Influences “B”

	A	B	Out	In	Delta
A		↑	1	0	1
B	←		0	1	-1

As a quick reference, the affinities and their numbers are seen below, this is followed by table 10 which highlights the IRD produced from the focus group.

- 1) Individual Accountability (Self-Management)
- 2) Collaborative Communication
- 3) Management (Plan, Lead, Organise, Control)
- 4) Team Dynamics and Culture

Table 10 Tabular IRD

	1	2	3	4
1		←	↑	←
2	↑		←	←
3	←	↑		↑
4	↑	↑	←	

Table 11 below applies the calculating of the delta, coupled with the sorting the affinities in descending order of the delta.

Table 11 Tabular IRD Sorted in Descending Order of Delta

	1	2	3	4	Out	In	Delta
3	←	↑		↑	2	1	1
4	↑	↑	←		2	1	1
2	↑		←	←	1	2	-1
1		←	↑	←	1	2	-1

5.10.1 An Overview of the Relationships Identified in the IRD

The IRD has effectively captured the group composite of relationships deemed relevant for the construction of the System Influence Diagram (SID). To summarise the findings highlighted by the IRD the following is noted:

- 1) Individual Accountability (Self-Management) is a relative *effect* or *outcome* of the system
- 2) Collaborative Communication is a relative *effect* or *outcome* of the system
- 3) Management (Plan, Lead, Organise, Control) is a relative *driver* or *cause* of the system
- 4) Team Dynamics and Culture is a relative *driver* or *cause* of the system

Before compiling the SID, it is necessary for this paper to highlight the relationships identified for each affinity graphically, starting with the drivers and ending with the outcomes of the system. Additionally, supporting evidence from the participants explaining the relationships in their own words will be documented. The sections that follow will serve this function.

5.10.1.1 Affinity 3: Management (Plan, Lead, Organise, Control)

This affinity is deemed a driver of the system due to the delta being +1. The relationships between “Management (Plan, Lead, Organise and Control)” and the other affinities are highlighted in figure 6 below.

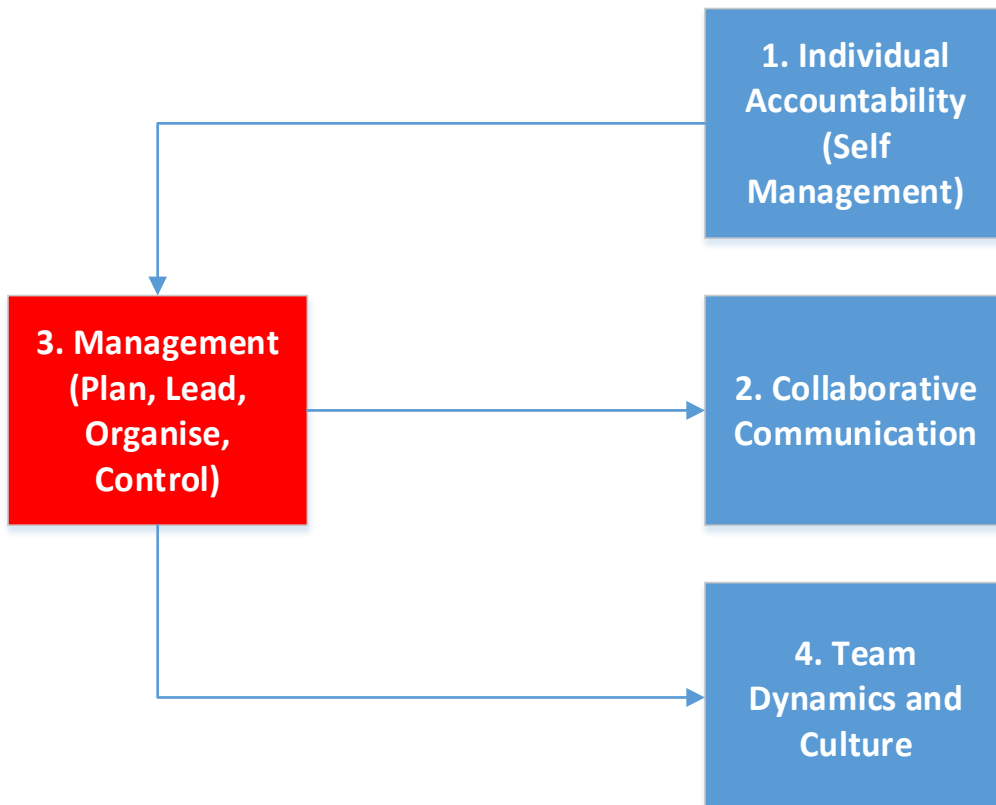


Figure 6 Management Affinity Relationships

The sections that follow will highlight the perceived relationships and supporting comments between this and the other affinities.

Relationship with Affinity 1: Individual Accountability (Self Management)

Affinity 1. Individual accountability influences affinity 3. Management. Although Management has been identified as a relative driver of the system, it has one *in* relationship, whereby individual accountability influences it.

The majority of the focus group, seven constituents, supported this relationship. The minority of the focus group, five constituents, believed the relationship worked inversely with affinity 3. Management influencing affinity 1. Individual accountability.

Some comments from the constituents supporting this relationship were, “If individual accountability levels are high, the need for formal and controlled management by the team as a whole is reduced”; “Individual maturity and accountability dictates how to manage individuals/peers”; “My idea is that it starts with you, and holding yourself accountable to the management (mechanisms) of work/projects”; “In order to have good management skills, you first have to start with yourself”; “It is difficult to manage accountability if you cannot assign accountability to peers”.

Some comments from the constituents supporting the inverse of this relationship were, “The only way you can do something well, is if it is clearly defined and measurable”, “The leadership, processes and management within the team could affect the individuals willingness to take accountability”, “Team management style and involvement impacts individual accountability”.

Relationship with Affinity 2: Collaborative Communication

Affinity 2. Collaborative communication is influenced by affinity 3. Management. As this is one of the two affinities influenced by management, it reaffirms the positioning of management as a driver of the system.

The majority of the focus group, seven constituents, supported this relationship. The minority of the focus group, five constituents, believed the relationship worked inversely with affinity 2. Collaborative communication influencing affinity 3. Management.

Some comments from the constituents supporting this relationship were, “Management can enforce collaborative communication”; “The management measures will dictate collaboration and communication”; “Effective management (PLOC) will encourage collaborative communication”; We can collaboratively communicate if we know what is

required”; “Management rules/structures determine if collaborative communication can happen”.

Some comments from the constituents supporting the inverse of this relationship were, “When communication is good, then management becomes easy”, “without communicating and assigning accountability, you cannot manage accountability”, “Communication leads to being on the same page and being aligned”.

Relationship with Affinity 4: Team Dynamics and Culture

Affinity 4. Team dynamics and culture is influenced by affinity 3. Management. As this is one of the two affinities influenced by management, it reaffirms the positioning of management as a driver of the system.

The majority of the focus group, six constituents, supported this relationship. The minority of the focus group, five constituents, believed the relationship worked inversely with affinity 4. Team dynamics and culture influencing affinity 3. Management. One member believed that no relationship existed between the two affinities.

Some comments from the constituents supporting this relationship were, “Management sets the tone to create team culture”; “If there is no proper management, or process, - the team will not work well together”; “Clear and concise structure induces better teamwork, culture and dynamics”; “Management structures/rules determines if teams can perform and how the culture is experienced”; “When management is good, then the entire team (culture and dynamics) becomes warm (a home)”.

Some comments from the constituents supporting the inverse of this relationship were, “Team culture influences *how* and the level of management required by the team. Team spirit and dynamics will determine the formality of the management needed”, “Supporting each other produces results in a team”, “Team culture can influence style of management and procedures”.

5.10.1.2 Affinity 4: Team Dynamics and Culture

This affinity is deemed a driver of the system due to the delta being +1. The relationships between “Team Dynamics and Culture” and the other affinities are highlighted in figure 7 below.

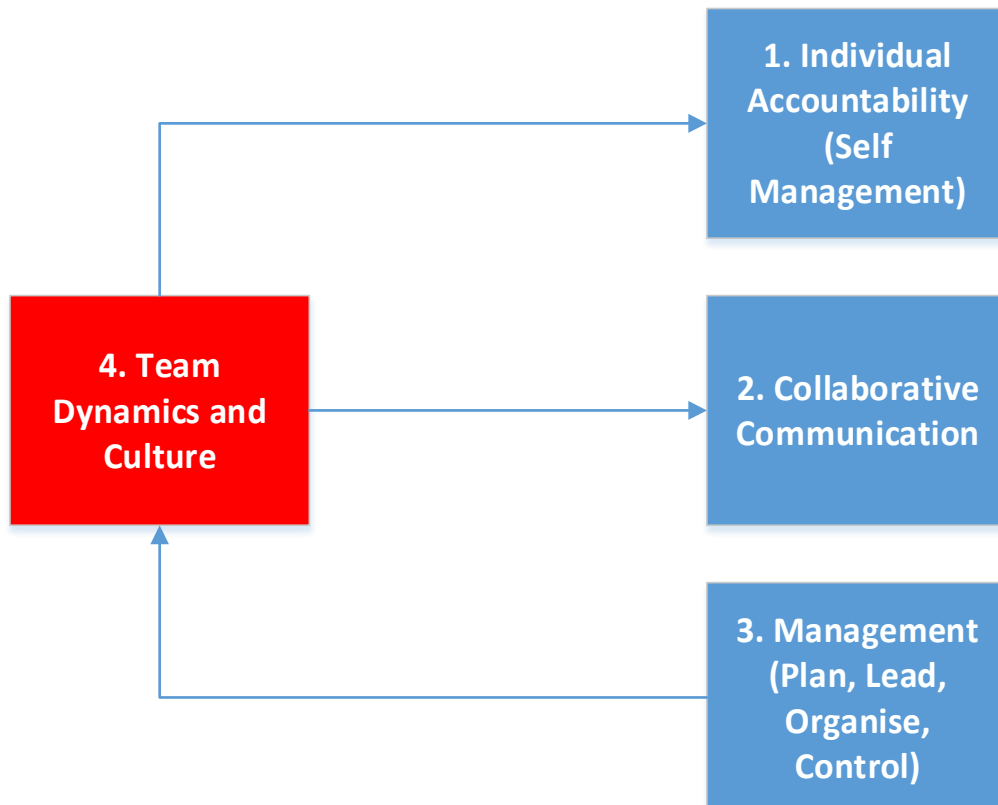


Figure 7 Team Dynamics and Culture Affinity Relationships

The sections that follow will highlight the perceived relationships and supporting comments between this and the other affinities.

Relationship with Affinity 1: Individual Accountability (Self Management)

Affinity 1. Individual accountability is influenced by affinity 4. Team dynamics and culture. As this is one of the two affinities influenced by team dynamics and culture, it reaffirms the positioning of team dynamics and culture as a driver of the system.

The majority of the focus group, seven constituents, supported this relationship. The minority of the focus group, five constituents, believed the relationship worked inversely with affinity 1. Individual accountability influencing affinity 4. Team dynamics and culture.

Some comments from the constituents supporting this relationship were, “Strong team culture influences individual behaviour”; “Team culture shapes individual performance and accountability”; “When you work in a team that is supportive, you are set up for success”; “Team dynamics impact individual accountability”; “The right culture in the team drives effective individual accountability”.

Some comments from the constituents supporting the inverse of this relationship were, “As a team, you are only as strong as your weakest link”, “If team members are not individually accountable, it can affect the teams’ dynamics”, “High levels of individual accountability will positively impact team culture and dynamics”.

Relationship with Affinity 2: Collaborative Communication

Affinity 2. Collaborative communication is influenced by affinity 4. Team dynamics and culture. As this is one of the two affinities influenced by team dynamics and culture, it reaffirms the positioning of team dynamics and culture as a driver of the system.

The majority of the focus group, eight constituents, supported this relationship. The minority of the focus group, four constituents, believed the relationship worked inversely with affinity 2. Collaborative communication influencing affinity 4. Team dynamics and culture.

Some comments from the constituents supporting this relationship were, “A team with good relationships has better communication around work”; “A good team culture encourages collaborative communication”; “Team culture can create the right environment for communication”; “Team culture can encourage collaborative communication”; “Team dynamics influences/determines if collaborative communication can take place”; “Good team dynamics with a positive culture will improve levels of collaborative communication”.

Some comments from the constituents supporting the inverse of this relationship were, “Communication within the team builds team relationships within the team”, “if team members are not properly communicating, it could affect the teams dynamics”, “When good collaborative communication is achieved, team culture and dynamics can be understood”.

Relationship with Affinity 3: Management (Plan, Lead, Organise, Control)

Explanation of relationship provided in previous section “Affinity 3: Management (Plan, Lead, Organise, Control”.

5.10.1.3 Affinity 2: Collaborative Communication

This affinity is deemed an outcome of the system due to the delta being -1. The relationships between “Collaborative Communication” and the other affinities are highlighted in figure 8 below.

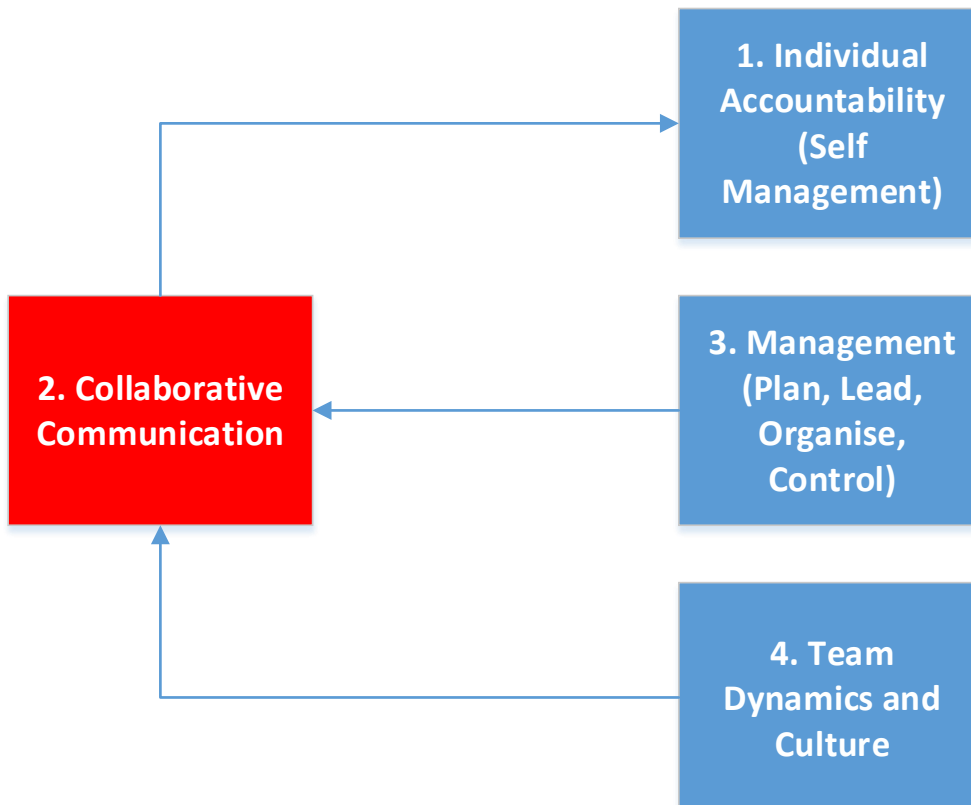


Figure 8 Collaborative Communication Affinity Relationships

The sections that follow will highlight the perceived relationships and supporting comments between this and the other affinities.

Relationship with Affinity 1: Individual Accountability (Self Management)

Affinity 1. Individual accountability is influenced by affinity 2. Collaborative communication. Although collaborative communication has been identified as a relative outcome of the system, it has one *out* relationship, whereby it is said to influence individual accountability.

The majority of the focus group, six constituents, supported this relationship. The minority of the focus group, five constituents, believed the relationship worked inversely with affinity 1. Individual accountability influencing affinity 2. Collaborative communication. One member believed that no relationship existed between the two affinities.

Some comments from the constituents supporting this relationship were, “individual accountability can increase with effective communication”; One needs to have a clear understanding of what to do (via communication), before effective individual accountability can take place”; “Levels and effectiveness of collaborative communication influences individual accountability and responsibility within the team”; Individual accountability cannot be obtained if you are unsure of what you need to be accountable for”; “Communication will drive and influence accountability within the team”.

Some comments from the constituents supporting the inverse of this relationship were, “The individuals view of accountability could affect the way in which they communicate”, “Leading by example means you are the change that you want and you influence your external environment”, “Take your part and participate and get clarity and transparency through communication”.

Relationship with Affinity 3: Management (Plan, Lead, Organise, Control)

Explanation of relationship provided in previous section “Affinity 3: Management (Plan, Lead, Organise, Control”.

Relationship with Affinity 4: Team Dynamics and Culture

Explanation of relationship provided in previous section “Affinity 4: Team Dynamics and Culture”.

5.10.1.4 Affinity 1: Individual Accountability (Self-Management)

This affinity is deemed an outcome of the system due to the delta being -1. The relationships between “Individual Accountability (Self-Management)” and the other affinities are highlighted in figure 9 below.

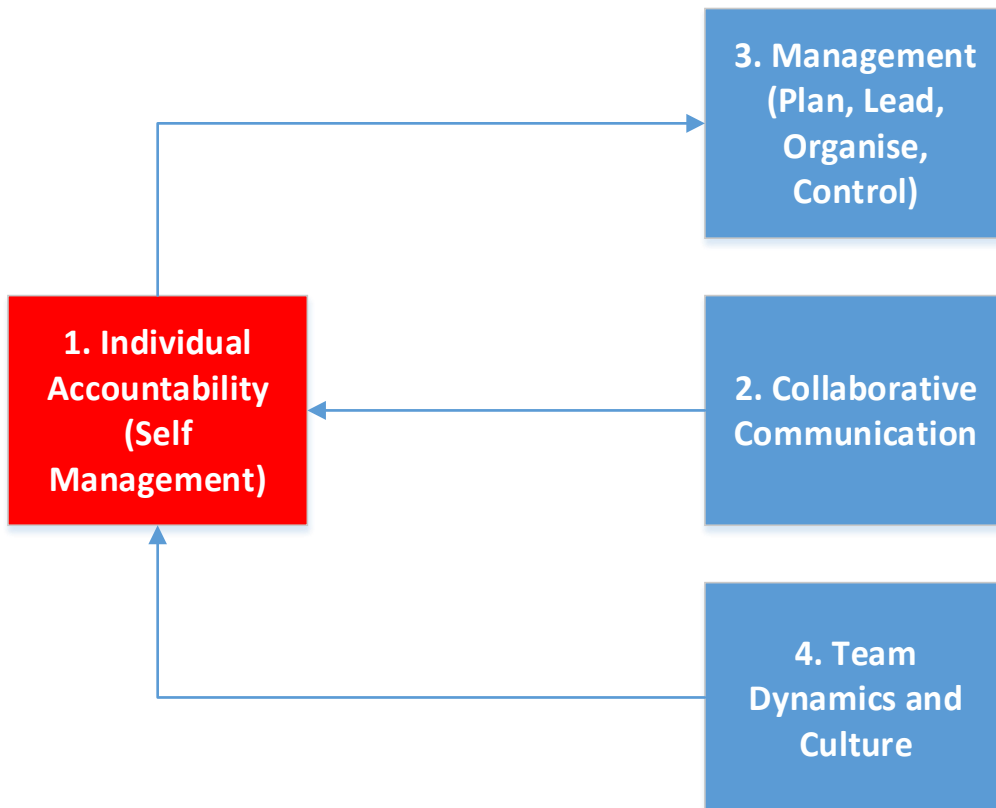


Figure 9 Individual Accountability Affinity Relationships

The sections that follow will highlight the perceived relationships and supporting comments between this and the other affinities.

Relationship with Affinity 2: Collaborative Communication

Explanation of relationship provided in previous section “Affinity 2: Collaborative Communication”.

Relationship with Affinity 3: Management (Plan, Lead, Organise, Control)

Explanation of relationship provided in previous section “Affinity 3: Management (Plan, Lead, Organise, Control”.

Relationship with Affinity 4: Team Dynamics and Culture

Explanation of relationship provided in previous section “Affinity 4: Team Dynamics and Culture”.

5.11 System Influence Diagram (SID) Creation

The System Influence Diagram (SID) is a visual representation of an entire system of influences and outcomes and is created by representing the information present in the IRD as a system of affinities and relationships between them (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). This graphical representation serves the purpose of a vivid graphical demonstration of how a system works, and where it might be influenced to change its outcomes. The SID invites analysis of how to improve and/or influence the system (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004).

5.11.1 Cluttered SID

The first step is to create a SID that contains each link present in the IRD (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). Figure 10 below highlights the cluttered SID developed from the focus group data. This cluttered SID highlights the perceived affinities, and relationships among them, associated with peer accountability.

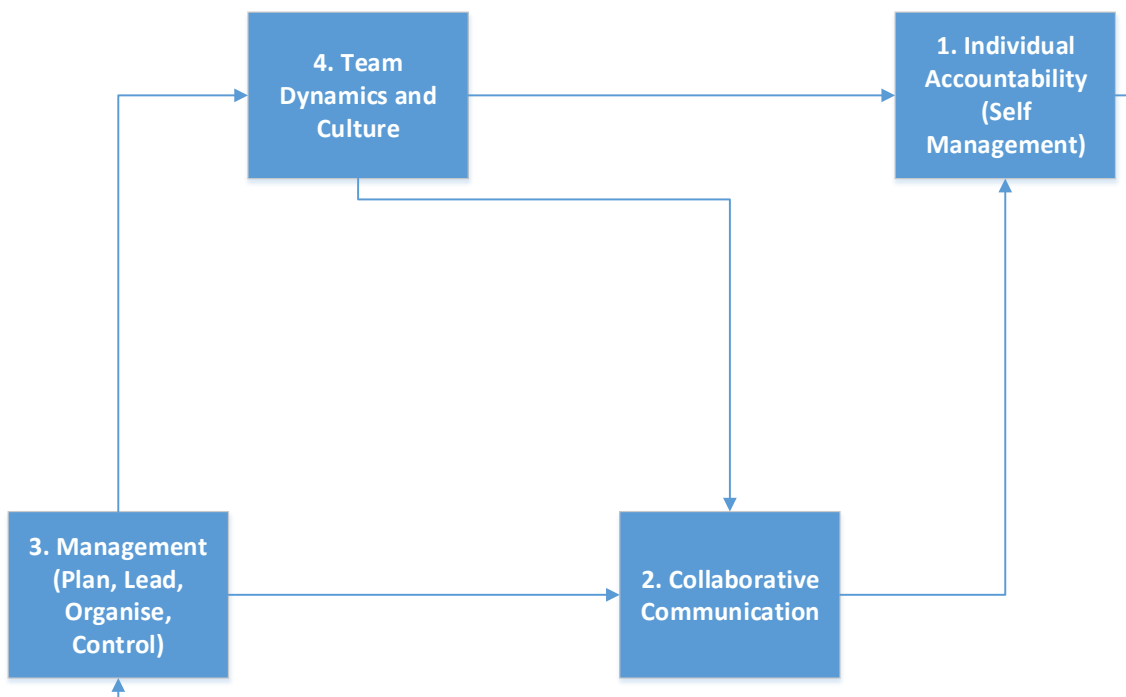


Figure 10 Cluttered SID Depicting the Peer Accountability System

The cluttered SID contains all relationships identified in the Interrelationship Diagram presented in the previous sections. This graphical model allows us to see all of the relationships present across the four identified affinities.

This diagram shows us the four elements (or affinities) of peer accountability according to the experiences of the cross-functional team included in the focus group. The perceived relationships between these elements is also highlighted.

The cluttered SID offers us a view of the system saturated with links (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004), which can prove quite difficult to interpret. This is our base system view for creating the uncluttered SID which offers a more palatable graphical analysis of the system.

5.11.3 Uncluttered SID

The cluttered SID may be difficult to interpret (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). A way to reconcile the richness of the data is to prepare an uncluttered SID, where redundant links are removed (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004).

Every system has a unique and simplest representation, and through a rearrangement of the affinities in a way that no relationships are broken, but redundant links are removed, we can achieve an uncluttered SID (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). An example of this process is highlighted in figure 11 below.

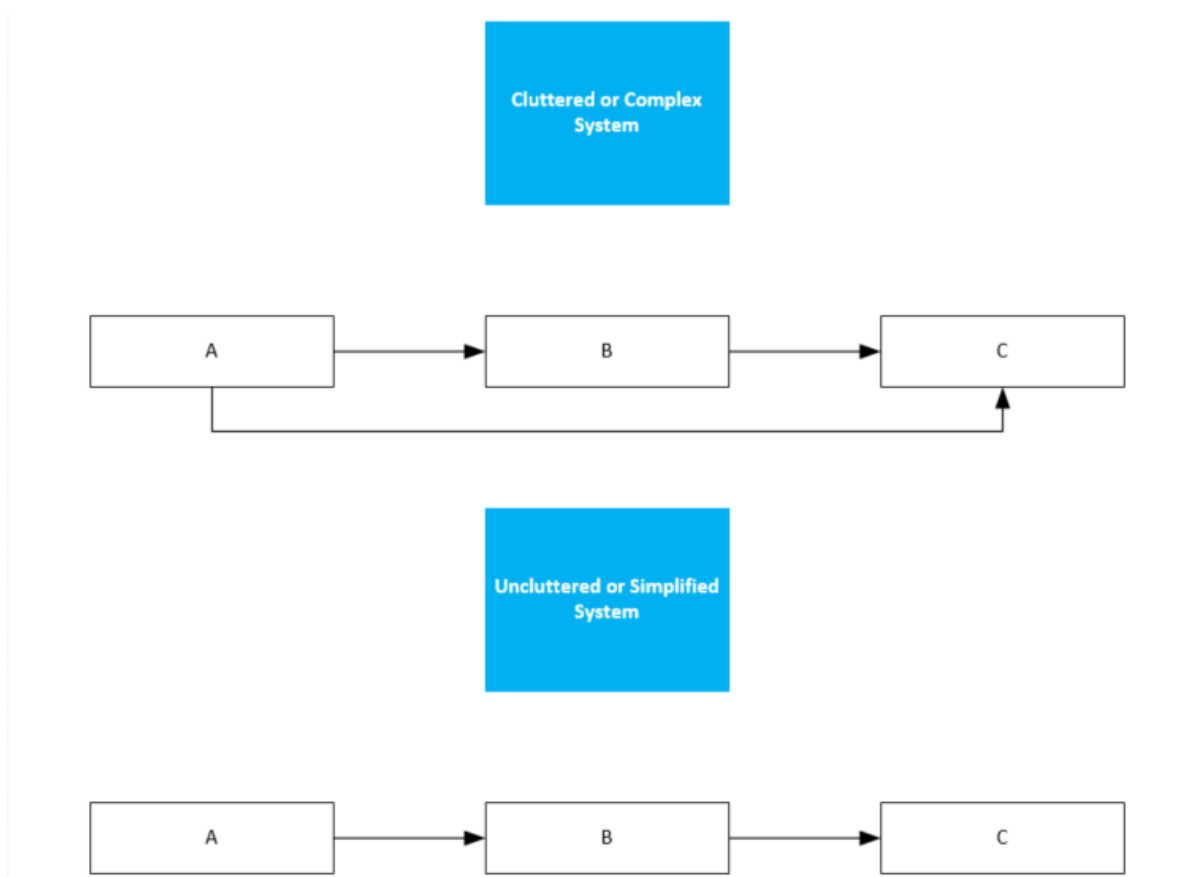


Figure 11 Navigating from a Cluttered SID to an Uncluttered SID adapted from (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004)

Figure 12 below highlights the uncluttered SID developed from the focus group data collected in this research. This represents the system view of peer accountability, dictated by the focus group members' experience of peer accountability.

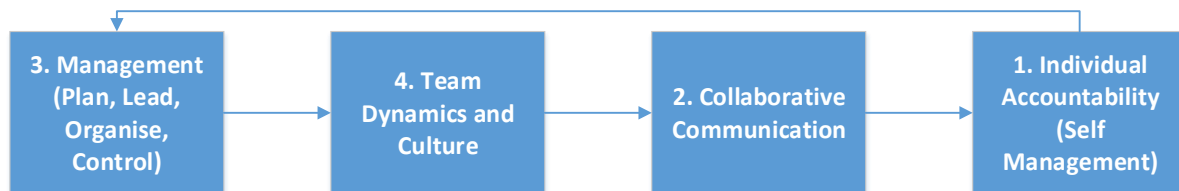


Figure 12 Uncluttered SID Depicting the Peer Accountability System

5.11.3.1 Interpretation of the Overall System

At this point the relevant drivers and effects of the system should be easily identified through the uncluttered SID graphic. Interestingly though, the feedback from the focus group (as apparent in the IRD) does not support the notion that one clear driver exists within the system of peer accountability. Both management and team dynamics and culture were identified as relevant drivers, whereby collaborative communication and individual accountability were identified as relevant effects/outcomes. As individual accountability was determined to influence management, we see a feedback loop from the end of the system back to the beginning, which introduces the notion that peer accountability is not achieved through a linear process, but rather through an interactive cycle whereby elements of the system are continuously impacting the peer accountability environment. As an example, the system view highlights that if collaborative communication declines, it would lead to a potential decline in individual accountability, the decline in individual accountability could negatively affect the management of the team, which in turn could negatively affect the team dynamics and culture.

According to this we can view peer accountability as an integrated system of influencing and influenced elements, where a change in any element has the potential to affect the overall outcome of the peer accountability environment.

5.11.3.2 Interpretation of the System Element: Management (Plan, Lead, Organise, Control)

Described as the effective self-management of the cross-functional team as a whole, this affinity is identified as the first element of the peer accountability system. Management of the team, in the context of the cross-functional team, relates specifically to the self-regulation and self-management of the unit through the exchanges and input of the affiliated individual members. With this context in mind, it suggests a reasoning why individual accountability is perceived to influence the management of the team as a whole. As individuals hold themselves more accountable, the overall management of the cross-functional team benefits.

Management is deemed critical to influencing the other elements of the peer accountability system, and therefore critical to ensuring an effective peer accountability environment. As individual accountability influences management, it seems evident that the effective management of a cross-functional team, depends heavily on the individuals within the team and their ability to hold themselves accountable.

5.11.3.3 Interpretation of the System Element: Team Dynamics and Culture

Described as the team experience of individuals comprising the cross-functional team, this affinity is identified as the second element of the peer accountability system. Team dynamics and culture, in the context of the cross-functional team, relates to the micro-culture of the team itself, and does not necessarily reflect the company-wide culture. Team dynamics and culture is depicted to be influenced by the management of the cross-functional team. This suggests that the mechanisms used by the team to ensure responsibilities are assigned and to measure the achievement against these responsibilities has the ability to shape the team dynamics and culture of the cross-functional team.

5.11.3.4 Interpretation of the System Element: Collaborative Communication

Described as the effective communication and collaboration within a cross-functional team, this affinity is identified as the third element of the peer accountability system. Collaborative communication is depicted to be influenced by team dynamics and culture. This indicates that the health of the team dynamics and culture within the cross-functional team will influence the likelihood of individuals within the team being willing to communicate and collaborate effectively.

Collaborative communication is also depicted to be influenced by the management of the cross functional team. This suggests that the mechanisms used by the team to ensure responsibilities are assigned and to measure the achievement against these responsibilities has the ability to shape the communication and collaboration practices and style within the cross-functional team.

5.11.3.5 Interpretation of the System Element: Individual Accountability (Self Management)

Described as the effective self management of each team member on an individual level, within a cross-functional team, this affinity is identified as the fourth element of the peer accountability system. Individual accountability or self-management is depicted to be influenced by collaborative communication. This indicates that the mechanisms and frequency of communication within the cross-functional team, coupled with the efforts towards collaboration within the team will influence individual's likelihood to hold themselves accountable. In other words, if individuals have a clear understanding of what is expected of them, have the ability to question and/or negotiate these expectations, and feel that they are supported by their team through a collaborative environment, they will be more likely to hold themselves accountable to the goals they are responsible for.

Individual accountability or self-management is also depicted to be influenced by team dynamics and culture. This indicates that the health of the team dynamics and culture within the cross-functional team will influence the likelihood of individuals within the team being willing to hold themselves accountable to the goals they are responsible for.

5.12 Conclusion

This chapter highlighted the process used to generate and analyse data by the constituents/research participants. All data generated from this process, such as the individual index cards, the affinities identified, and the relationships perceived between these affinities was highlighted. Lastly, a System Influence Diagram (SID), which is a visual representation of the system, was created. The chapter that follows discusses the results as highlighted in this chapter.

6. CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an analysis of the results of this research paper. The analysis leverages the results produced by the study on peer accountability as well as the current literature available on accountability in order to identify where commonalities exist, as well as where differences or even contradictions exist.

The purpose of this chapter is twofold. Firstly, this chapter will establish if and/or how accountability literature to date is deemed appropriate and useful in the context of peer accountability. Secondly, this chapter will strive to develop a model/framework of peer accountability that can be leveraged by organisations who wish to provide environments where peer accountability focused operations may flourish.

6.2 Peer Accountability as a System

As highlighted in the results section, the peer accountability system is depicted to comprised of four interrelated elements within the cross-functional team. These elements are the management of the cross functional team; the team dynamics and culture of the cross-functional team, the collaborative communication practices within the team and the individual accountability or self management aspects of the individuals within the team. The relationships between these elements were identified and the resultant product was a peer accountability system, as seen in figure 13 below.

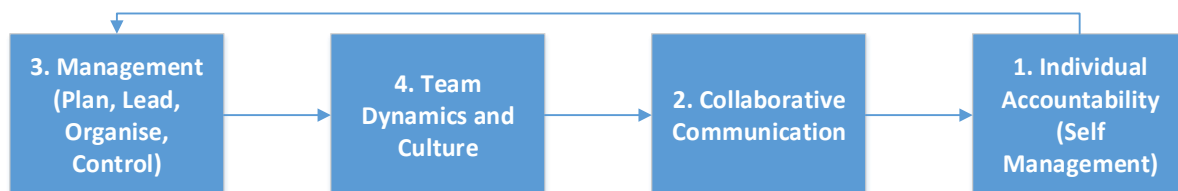


Figure 13 The Peer Accountability System (As Introduced in the Results Chapter)

The next sections will take a look at each of the four elements above, to identify if these elements have been elaborated on in any previous accountability literature, theories and/or models. This will assist in identifying if they are all known elements of accountability

or if any of the elements identified necessary for peer accountability are unique and have not yet been identified by previous accountability research.

6.2.1 Management of the Cross-functional Team as an Element of Peer Accountability

As a departure point, it is deemed necessary to highlight the description of this element as defined by the focus group and presented in the results section of the study. The description of this element is as follows, “This affinity relates to the effective self-management of the cross-functional team as a unit. Specific, Measurable, Realistic and Timely goals are to be defined within the team as well as assigned to accountable individuals. Bottlenecks are to be identified and managed within the team to ensure delivery. The mechanisms for measuring performance are to be clear to all team members. The team should be aware and understand what each member is responsible for in the broader team. The team should be able to decide on when to take risks as well as when to adopt a risk adverse approach. The cross-functional team should have a shared understanding of each members responsibility within the team whilst being abreast with what each team member is currently working towards and their progress thereof. The team should have a defined, methodical approach to assigning accountability within it. Any ongoing issues within the team are to be managed through an agreed upon approach and/or escalations to formal authorities. Each team member should be able to up-manage where applicable - and by up-manage we refer to offering suggestions to other team members outside of their own designation whilst having the ability to raise concerns against other team members where needed.”

To summarise the above, a few key aspects emerge. The setting and agreement of goals between the cross-functional team is an important process for holding peers accountable. The mechanisms for assigning accountability, measuring performance and issue management are all importance aspects that should be defined, understood, and agreed within the cross-functional team. Any cross-functional team member should be able to offer suggestions and/or raise issues to any other team member, regardless of rank and role (in other words each individual within the team should be able to hold any other member accountable).

Goal setting is discussed in the foundational work of role systems theory (Katz & Kahn, 1978) and further elaborated on in Frink and Klimoski's (2004) role theory as a framework for accountability. In this framework, the authors explain that the role sender (or role maker) distribute expectations to the role receiver (or role taker). Although in the traditional sense of formal accountability, the role sender and role receiver are implied to be two individuals, a manager and his/her subordinate, the theory seems relevant within the context of peer accountability. The difference however, comes in where peer accountability leverages a cross-functional team which is responsible for the distribution and agreement of expectations within itself – as a cross-functional team is deemed a self-managing unit responsible for a common goal (Burton et al., 2015; Cummings & Worley, 2015; Lukinaitė & Sondaitė, 2017; Nannoolal, 2015). The essence of setting goals and agreeing on where the responsibility of achieving these goals sits, as seen in Frink and Klimoski's role theory (2004), is applicable to cross functional teams and therefore applicable and necessary to drive effective peer accountability.

Mechanisms. used for measuring performance and issue management within an accountability environment are discussed by Pearson and Sutherland (2017) who identify systems as an antecedent of accountability. These systems include individual performance reviews, policies, procedures and or surveillance mechanisms. Although the research done by the authors was not aimed at peer accountability specifically, it seems a necessary aspect within cross-functional teams to ensure effective peer accountability is fostered. What this means is that the cross-functional team should have agreed approaches to measuring performance of individual members against expectations, and the achievements against these expectations should hold some weight in the sense that they offer incentives and/or repercussions for adequate/inadequate performance. At present, literature tells us that individuals exert more effort in justifying their performance to superiors than they do to their peers and that individuals believe harsher punishments are appropriate for those who fail to deliver when accountable to a higher authority, rather than to a peer (Hall et al., 2017). In organisations where peer accountability is essential to the performance of the organisation, we can identify an opportunity for improvement towards effective peer accountability, whereby the mechanisms used to measure performance of individuals should be more closely tied to the feedback of the cross-functional team members (or peers) working alongside them. This would result in

assigning more *weight* to the evaluative reckoning power of the cross-functional team and changing the perception that only superiors are able to hold one accountable. It is argued that if the cross-functional team holds most (or all) of the power to measure performance of its members and provide input to the issuing of rewards or sanctions for its' members, the individuals within the team would become more committed to ensuring that they perform to the expectations of their peers. This notion of feeling responsible to the audience that will evaluate one's efforts is supported in the pyramid model of accountability (Schlenker et al., 1994).

To conclude, it seems that the concepts of role sending and role taking are not unique to peer accountability (Frink & Klimoski, 2004). However, peer accountability requires a unique lens to this notion, whereby the role sender is not necessarily an individual, but rather a cross-functional team (or peers), and the relationship between the role sender and role receiver is not necessarily dictated by the formal reporting relationships identified in the organisational structure, but rather dictated by the cross-functional team structure to which an individual operates in.

Systems to monitor and measure performance of individuals is deemed critical to drive accountability (Pearson & Sutherland, 2017). This aspect is not unique to peer accountability, however, peer accountability demands a change to these systems whereby the policies, procedures and mechanisms used by an organisation allow the cross-functional team (peers) to hold more weight when it comes to evaluating the individuals within its' team. This is a distinct move away from current formal mechanisms which are solely rooted in formal reporting relationships and top-down approaches to measurement and subsequent rewards and sanctions (Conteh, 2016).

6.2.2 Team Dynamics and Culture within the Cross-functional Team as an Element of Peer Accountability

As a departure point, it is deemed necessary to highlight the description of this element as defined by the focus group and presented in the results section of the study. The description of this element is as follows, "This affinity relates to the team experience of individuals comprising the cross-functional team. The team should strive for synergy,

whereby the efforts of the group towards a common goal outweigh the efforts of isolated team members. There should be full transparency within the team and a culture of upliftment and performance. In this environment, team members capitalise on their strengths, and assist their peers with eradicating their weaknesses. The team should have realistic expectations of the whole, whilst using constructive criticism within the team when needed. Trust within the team and its encompassing members is a vital aspect of a well-functioning team. This trust allows for an informal approach to direction setting and holding others to account, whilst also allowing the team to take advantage of opportunities as a unit. Additionally, the trust allows for the formation of personal and professional relationships in the team. This environment is enjoyable for the team members and allows for each individual to experience a positive work environment. Lastly, equality within the cross-functional team is crucial - whereby individuals of different designations and seniority have the same rights and responsibilities within the team.”

To summarise the above, a few key aspects emerge. Having a common goal is the foundation of an effective cross-functional team. An emphasis on uplifting other members and performing to an agreed standard is another important aspect. Realistic expectations should be fostered within the team as a unit, and for each individual therein. Trust and equality are deemed critical to success of the cross-functional team.

In their role theory framework for accountability, Frink and Klimoski (2004) identify organisational attributes, such as organisational culture, as an element which influences the accountability environment. Additionally, Ghanem & Castelli (2019) identify the culture of the organisation as an element that influences self accountability. In support of this, we find that the culture of the organisation has previously been identified as an antecedent of accountability (Pearson & Sutherland, 2017). Within the contexts of peer accountability within cross-functional teams, it appears that culture is also identified as a key element., The difference, however, within the peer accountability landscape, is that the focus is on the micro-culture which exists within the cross-functional team, rather than the culture of the organisation itself. One could argue that the culture of the organisation may filter through and impact the culture of the team, however, according to the results of this research it appears that the most effective way of ensuring a healthy culture within the

cross-functional team would be by ensuring the management of the cross-functional team is supportive of a culture that allows for the promotion of performance and trust.

Peer accountability has been explained in previous work to have a reliance on an environment of reciprocity, information sharing, building trust, continuous learning, and increased dialogue between peers (Conteh, 2016). These proposed aspects relate quite well to the results of this research, whereby the importance of trust, equality and performance are deemed necessary as enablers of an effective team dynamic and culture.

To conclude, previous research has highlighted organisational culture as an important element within the accountability environment (Frink & Klimoski, 2004; Pearson & Sutherland, 2017), however, within the context of peer accountability we require a shift to a more focused view on the micro-culture of the cross-functional team as an enabler of peer accountability. Additionally, the aspects necessary for the correct team dynamics and culture within a peer accountability environment have been quite adequately described before (Conteh, 2016), however the results of this research now guide us in terms of how to achieve this, with the peer accountability system diagram highlighting that the management of the cross-functional team influences the team dynamics and culture experienced in said team.

6.2.3 Collaborative Communication within the Cross-functional Team as an Element of Peer Accountability

As a departure point, it is deemed necessary to highlight the description of this element as defined by the focus group and presented in the results section of the study. The description of this element is as follows, "This affinity relates to the effective communication and collaboration within a cross functional team. Communication must occur on a frequent enough basis (through any combination of mechanisms) so as to ensure no grey areas in terms of accountabilities are experienced and that everyone is aware of what they are responsible for, as well as what others in the team are responsible for. The frequent communication should cater to any necessary clarification, as well as the ability for the individuals within the team to raise suggestions, successes and/or impediments. The cross-functional team should collaborate and brainstorm together to

drive the identification of creative best approaches. The team should share knowledge with one another and listen attentively to each other.”

To summarise the above, a few key aspects emerge. Frequent communication to ensure responsibilities are well understood within the cross-functional team is necessary. The team should be able to negotiate these responsibilities between themselves, as well as offer suggestions and raise risks against them. Lastly, the cross-functional team should foster a collaborative approach whereby each member can influence the overall team approach, and where knowledge sharing takes place within the team.

In their role theory framework for accountability, Frink and Klimoski (2004) cite the alignment of expectations between the role sender and the role receiver as a key enabler of driving accountability. Furthermore, the authors make mention of mutual influence between the role sender and role receiver (Frink & Klimoski, 2004). Although the words “communication” or “collaboration” are not mentioned in the role theory framework for accountability, both aspects are inferred, as ensuring alignment of expectations requires communication, and mutual influence infers some form of collaboration is necessary.

Similarly, the holistic accountability model infers communication whereby it suggests that the accountant is responsible for guiding and monitoring the accountee (Bergsteiner, 2012), Supporting this notion of communication, there is mention of the accountee explaining and defending their results to the accountant (Bergsteiner, 2012). This model additionally identifies the need for guidance between the accountant and accountee (Bergsteiner, 2012), indicating a need for knowledge sharing between the actors. The entire model is pinned on the basis that the accountant and accountee are mutually influencing one another (Bergsteiner, 2012), which can only take place through communication and collaboration.

Pearson and Sutherland (2017) identify the clarity of expectations given to the individual as an antecedent of accountability, which again infers that communication between the person giving expectations and the person being held accountable for achieving the results against these expectations needs to take place.

It is clear that the aspects related to communication and collaboration, as identified in this research as necessary for driving peer accountability, have previously been identified in literature (Bergsteiner, 2012; Frink & Klimoski, 2004; Pearson & Sutherland, 2017). However, previous research is focused on the traditional sense of formal accountability, where this communication and collaboration is perceived to be predominantly between two individuals, the individual delegating the expectations and the individual responsible for performance against these expectations.

To conclude, it seems communication and collaboration are necessary for driving accountability in the traditional top-down, or formal, approach (Bergsteiner, 2012; Frink & Klimoski, 2004; Pearson & Sutherland, 2017). Communication and collaboration are also identified as necessary for driving accountability within a peer accountability context, according to the findings of this research. The difference with peer accountability, however, comes in where peer accountability leverages a cross-functional team which is responsible for the distribution and agreement of expectations within itself – as a cross-functional team is deemed a self-managing unit responsible for a common goal (Burton et al., 2015; Cummings & Worley, 2015; Lukinaitė & Sondaitė, 2017; Nannoolal, 2015). Communication and collaboration in this context is not necessarily constricted to two individuals or governed predominantly by formal reporting relationships, but rather refers to the communication and collaboration necessary between the cross-functional team members or peers. When focusing on peer accountability, communication and collaboration, according to the peer accountability system diagram, is influenced by the management of the cross-functional team coupled with the team dynamics and culture within the team.

6.2.4 Individual Accountability of Members within the Cross-functional Team as an Element of Peer Accountability

As a departure point, it is deemed necessary to highlight the description of this element as defined by the focus group and presented in the results section of the study. The description of this element is as follows, “This affinity relates to the effective self management of each team member on an individual level, within a cross-functional team. Individuals should be able to put pressure on themselves, without external stimulus, in

order to deliver expected results. The individual should be accepting of the responsibilities assigned to him/her and be realistic in their estimations, so as to set the broader team up for success. This individual should be trusting of other team members, not attempt to micromanage them, whilst being polite towards the team and showing empathy to others when necessary. Lastly, the individual should put in whatever it takes to meet expectations that have been agreed on (reliability).”

To summarise the above, a few key aspects emerge. The individuals within the team should all be able to perform well against the responsibilities they have agreed to, in a way that sets the broader team up for success. Respect to other team members is identified as another important trait of the individual. Although the findings of this research identified this element as “Individual Accountability” or “Self Management”, it is synonymous with self accountability.

The notion of self accountability, introduces accountability as an interpersonal value, where the individual is accountable to themselves where no one else is present to observe, monitor or evaluate their performance (Ghanem & Castelli, 2019). The three elements that comprise self accountability are proposed as self-identity, performance improvement and personal wisdom (Ghanem & Castelli, 2019). Self-identity, deemed essential to self accountability, involves focusing on oneself rather than the external environment. Individuals experience self accountability more when certain values and norms become salient as self-imposed standards (Ghanem & Castelli, 2019). Performance improvement is deemed an outcome of effective self accountability, as individuals consider what accounts their appearance and behaviour may elicit, and put efforts into ensuring that they uphold to their own values and norms (Ghanem & Castelli, 2019). Personal wisdom speaks to an individual's capability to think through consequences of their decisions, and readjust efforts where necessary (Ghanem & Castelli, 2019). The authors propose that practices and values to improve self accountability levels include a culture of accountability within the organisation, self-criticism, enhanced self-monitoring, practicing self-management, and enhancing self-leadership (Ghanem & Castelli, 2019).

In the social contingency theory as a model for accountability, Tetlock (1992) highlights the importance of intrapersonal characteristics of the individual, and states that the model views accountability as a state of mind rather than a state of affairs. According to the author, the individuals subjective interpretations of accountability is the primary driver of accountability, over the accountability mechanisms imposed on the individual (Tetlock, 1992). In the role theory as a framework for accountability, Frink and Klimoski (2004) support this view by indicating that the attributes of an individual is an important element that influences the accountability environment. Pearson & Sutherland (2017) further support the notion that intrapersonal characteristics are important in driving accountability where they identify that the values of the individual as one of the antecedents of effective accountability. Lastly, self accountability is referenced in the holistic accountability model (Bergsteiner, 2012), and indicated to be an outcome of felt responsibility.

It appears that previous accountability literature has identified the psychological makeup and thus the ability of an individual to hold themselves accountable as an important element influencing the accountability environment (Bergsteiner, 2012; Frink & Klimoski, 2004; Ghanem & Castelli, 2019; Pearson & Sutherland, 2017; Tetlock, 1992). Within the peer accountability environment, the element of self accountability has been identified as an important element for driving effective accountability of this nature.

According to the, the peer accountability system diagram we can see that team dynamics and culture influence individual accountability. This seems to be supported by Ghanem & Castelli (2019) who propose that the culture of the organisation influences self accountability levels. In the context of peer accountability though, we refer to the micro-culture of the cross-functional team as the influencing factor, and not necessarily the organisational-wide culture. The peer accountability system diagram additionally highlights that collaborative communication influences individual accountability levels, this view is not echoed by Ghanem and Castelli (2019) in their proposal of the factors that influence self accountability, however, it may be inferred that to hold oneself accountable, and individual should have a clear understanding of the expectations to which one is accountable to.

To conclude, intrapersonal attributes of the individuals within the accountability environment and the ability for those responsible for performance to hold themselves accountable is an area that has been identified as important in previous research within the accountability domain (Bergsteiner, 2012; Frink & Klimoski, 2004; Pearson & Sutherland, 2017; Tetlock, 1992). The results as seen in the peer accountability system diagram support this view of self accountability as an important aspect of an effective accountability environment. Importantly, the peer accountability system diagram has confirmed the view of Ghanem and Castelli (2019) that culture influences self accountability levels, but a slight change of the definition is required within the peer accountability environment whereby we refer to the culture of the cross-functional team as the influencing element, and not the organisational-wide culture. The peer accountability system diagram highlights an additional element that influences self accountability levels, which is the collaborative communication within the cross-functional team.

6.3 Toward the Antecedents of Effective Peer Accountability

The previous section has highlighted the four identified elements necessary for effective peer accountability, as found in the results of this research. All of these elements have been identified in previous accountability literature, albeit across a number of different accountability models and theories. When comparing the results of this research and the available accountability literature, it is evident that some of the elements require a different lens to make them applicable within the peer accountability environment.

As organisations have historically been rooted in vertical power structures that are fuelled by formal accountability mechanisms (Conteh, 2016), the nature of previous accountability literature has been firmly rooted in the formal accountability environment whereby vertical, formalised, chains of command are deemed most relevant to driving accountability results (Conteh, 2016).

There is a shift from bureaucratic organisational structures, to structures that rely on more collaboration by teams through horizontal relationships (Burton et al., 2015; Cummings & Worley, 2015; Lukinaitė & Sondaitė, 2017; Nannoolal, 2015). With the rise in non-

traditional organisation structures which utilise cross functional teams, there is also a rise in the necessity of organisations better understanding and better utilising informal mechanisms of accountability, specifically peer accountability (Cummings & Worley, 2015; Nannoolal, 2015).

Where previous literature has referred to organisational culture as an element of accountability (Frink & Klimoski, 2004; Ghanem & Castelli, 2019; Pearson & Sutherland, 2017), peer accountability requires us to look at culture from a micro-level, specifically the culture of the cross-functional team itself. Where previous literature has referred to the distribution and agreement of expectations through formal reporting relationships (Frink & Klimoski, 2004), peer accountability requires us to expand this view and include the distribution and agreement of expectations within the cross-functional team where the team self-manages itself and collectively agrees to expectations and responsibilities within it, with little to no reliance on formal reporting lines. Where previous literature has identified the need for communication between the accountor/role sender and the accountee/role receiver (Bergsteiner, 2012; Frink & Klimoski, 2004), peer accountability requires communication within the cross-functional team, comprising of peers without formal reporting relationships. Where previous literature has associated the person responsible for evaluating performance as the manager and the person responsible for performing as the subordinate (Bergsteiner, 2012; Frink & Klimoski, 2004; Hall et al., 2017; Tetlock, 1992; Vu & Deffains, 2013), peer accountability requires us to expand this view and see the person(s) responsible for evaluation and performance as the members of the cross-functional team. Where previous literature has tied the responsibility for providing rewards and/or sanctions against performance to a formal chain of command (Bergsteiner, 2012; Frink & Klimoski, 2004; Schlenker et al., 1994; Tetlock, 1992; Vu & Deffains, 2013), peer accountability requires us to give the cross-functional team members more weight in this process, thereby allowing informal relationships (between peers) to shape the performance reviews within the cross-functional.

The four identified elements of an effective peer accountability environment, coupled with the notion that previous literature has not focused on peer accountability specifically, allow the development of a model illustrating the antecedents of peer accountability within cross-functional teams. This model utilises the peer accountability system, as identified

through the IQA process and presented in the results of this research, and elaborates on each element based on the nuances found between previous accountability literature and peer accountability, based on the findings of this research. The model highlighting the antecedents of effective peer accountability within cross-functional teams is depicted in figure 14 below.



Figure 14 The Antecedents of Effective Peer Accountability

6.3.1 The Antecedents of Effective Peer Accountability Model Overview

This model uses the findings, generated from this research, based on the experiences of individuals operating in cross-functional teams, to generate the elements associated with driving an effective peer accountability system. These elements are deemed to be the antecedents of effective peer accountability. The model depicts four primary elements, namely:

- 1) Management within cross functional team
- 2) Team dynamics and culture within cross-functional team
- 3) Collaborative communication within cross-functional team
- 4) Self accountability of cross-functional team members

Each element is both influenced and influencing. With this in mind, an improvement of any one element is deemed to have the potential to improve the overall peer accountability environment and associated results within this environment.

Each element has been broken down into the key aspects associated with it. The key aspects associated with each element are highlighted below:

- 1) Management within cross functional team
 - a. Setting and agreement of goals
 - b. Measuring performance
 - c. Responsible for assigning rewards and sanctions
- 2) Team dynamics and culture within cross-functional team
 - a. Trust
 - b. Equality
 - c. Performance
- 3) Collaborative communication within cross-functional team
 - a. Frequency
 - b. Mutual influence
 - c. Knowledge sharing
- 4) Self accountability of cross-functional team members

- a. Self-identity
- b. Performance improvement
- c. Personal wisdom

These key aspects are guided from both the results of this research as well as previous accountability literature. This model proposes that these aspects provide insight into the levers that can be manipulated, by organisations and teams alike, to ensure favourable results of a cross-functional team operating within a peer accountability landscape.

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter has analysed the results of this research by presenting the identified elements of peer accountability (as presented in the results section of this research) and comparing these findings to previous accountability literature.

Thereafter, based on the analysis, a model of the antecedents of effective peer accountability was proposed. This model proposes the primary elements and their related key aspects which have been identified as necessary for peer accountability to flourish.

The chapter that follows will present the principal conclusions of this research, highlight the implications for organisational leaders, reflect on the limitations of this research and lastly, offer suggestions for future research.

7. CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Introduction

Chapter 1 introduced an apparent gap within accountability literature, whereby peer accountability was highlighted as an under-researched area (Hall et al., 2017; Kou & Stewart, 2018; Pearson & Sutherland, 2017). This chapter also explained how the use of non-traditional organisational structures, which rely less on top-down chains of command and delegation, has given rise to the use of cross-functional teams which necessitate effective peer to peer level accountability (Burton et al., 2015; Cummings & Worley, 2015; Lukinaitė & Sondaitė, 2017; Nannoolal, 2015).

With this identified gap in mind, the research set out to explore “How peer accountability is experienced by knowledge workers operating in cross-functional teams”. The aim of understanding the experiences of these individuals, was to create a system diagram depicting the various elements that are present in the peer accountability landscape, as experienced by individuals operating within this landscape.

The research used the Interactive Qualitative Analysis methodology to attain an understanding of these individuals’ experiences of peer accountability within cross-functional teams. The focus group constituents, comprising of twelve individuals, all operate in cross-functional teams and held various roles and seniority levels.

The intended result was achieved, with the development of a System Influence Diagram indicative of the elements associated with peer accountability according to the experiences of the constituents within the focus group.

Thereafter, this research discussed the findings of this process and compared and contrasted the key elements with previous literature within the accountability domain. Finally, a proposed model of the antecedents of peer accountability was developed.

The sections that follow will offer a conclusion of the key findings of this research, outline the implications of these findings, reflect on the limitations of this research and lastly, provide recommendations for future research.

7.2 Principal Conclusions

As only one exploratory research question was used, this section will be comprised solely of the findings against it. The research question, as seen in Chapter 3, is:

1. How is peer accountability experienced by knowledge workers operating in cross-functional teams?

This research identified four primary affinities (or elements) associated with peer accountability which are represented in table 12 below.

Table 12 Affinities (or Elements) of Peer Accountability

Affinity	Name	Description
1	Individual Accountability (Self-Management)	<p>This affinity relates to the effective self management of each team member on an individual level, within a cross-functional team.</p> <p>Individuals should be able to put pressure on themselves, without external stimulus, in order to deliver expected results. The individual should be accepting of the responsibilities assigned to him/her and be realistic in their estimations, so as to set the broader team up for success. This individual should be trusting of other team members, not attempt to micromanage them, whilst being polite towards the team and showing empathy to others when necessary. Lastly, the individual should put in whatever it takes to meet expectations that have been agreed on (reliability).</p>
2	Collaborative Communication	<p>This affinity relates to the effective communication and collaboration within a cross functional team.</p> <p>Communication must occur on a frequent enough basis (through any combination of mechanisms) so as to ensure no grey areas in terms of accountabilities are experienced and that everyone is aware of what they are responsible for, as well as what others in the team are responsible for. The frequent communication should cater to any necessary clarification, as well as the ability for the individuals within the team to raise suggestions, successes and/or impediments.</p> <p>The cross-functional team should collaborate and brainstorm together to drive the identification of</p>

		creative best approaches. The team should share knowledge with one another and listen attentively to each other.
3	Management (Plan, Lead, Organise, Control)	<p>This affinity relates to the effective self-management of the cross-functional team as a unit.</p> <p>Specific, Measurable, Realistic and Timely goals are to be defined within the team as well as assigned to accountable individuals. Bottlenecks are to be identified and managed within the team to ensure delivery. The mechanisms for measuring performance are to be clear to all team members. The team should be aware and understand what each member is responsible for in the broader team. The team should be able to decide on when to take risks as well as when to adopt a risk adverse approach.</p> <p>The cross-functional team should have a shared understanding of each members responsibility within the team whilst being abreast with what each team member is currently working towards and their progress thereof.</p> <p>The team should have a defined, methodical approach to assigning accountability within it. Any ongoing issues within the team are to be managed through an agreed upon approach and/or escalations to formal authorities.</p> <p>Each team member should be able to up-manage where applicable - and by up-manage we refer to offering suggestions to other team members outside of their own designation whilst having the ability to</p>

		raise concerns against other team members where needed.
4	Team Dynamics and Culture	<p>This affinity relates to the team experience of individuals comprising the cross-functional team.</p> <p>The team should strive for synergy, whereby the efforts of the group towards a common goal outweigh the efforts of isolated team members. There should be full transparency within the team and a culture of upliftment and performance. In this environment, team members capitalise on their strengths, and assist their peers with eradicating their weaknesses. The team should have realistic expectations of the whole, whilst using constructive criticism within the team when needed.</p> <p>Trust within the team and its encompassing members is a vital aspect of a well-functioning team. This trust allows for an informal approach to direction setting and holding others to account, whilst also allowing the team to take advantage of opportunities as a unit. Additionally, the trust allows for the formation of personal and professional relationships in the team. This environment is enjoyable for the team members and allows for each individual to experience a positive work environment.</p> <p>Lastly, equality within the cross-functional team is crucial - whereby individuals of different designations and seniority have the same rights and responsibilities within the team.</p>

Subsequently, the relationships between these affinities (or elements) were identified through the use of a group composite creation and application of the MinMax criterion. This resulted in a system diagram highlighting influencing and influenced elements of peer accountability. The simple or uncluttered view of this system is highlighted in figure 15 below.

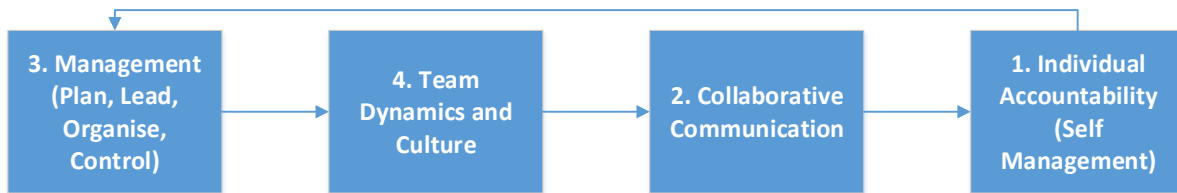


Figure 15 A Simple System View of Peer Accountability

Each element present in the system view above, was interrogated against current literature. It was identified that each element as experienced in the peer accountability system had appeared in previous accountability literature in some form (Bergsteiner, 2012; Conteh, 2016; Frink & Klimoski, 2004; Ghanem & Castelli, 2019; Pearson & Sutherland, 2017; Tetlock, 1992).

The similarities and differences between the elements identified in previous literature and the nuances necessary to make the elements applicable within a peer accountability landscape were identified and discussed. Subsequent to this analysis, a proposed model was developed which highlights the antecedents of effective peer accountability through the identification of the primary elements and their key aspects. The proposed model is seen is highlighted in figure 16 below.



Figure 16 The Antecedents of Effective Peer Accountability

The model offers a unique lens to accountability, which is focused specifically on enabling effective peer accountability within a cross-functional team. In this model, each primary element necessary for driving effective peer accountability within a cross-functional team has been identified. Subsequently, each primary element is elaborated on through the identification of key aspects related to it. These key aspects are viewed as levers available to alter the state of each primary element.

The model proposes that an improvement of any element, has the ability to promote the peer accountability environment as experienced by the cross-functional team. Furthermore, as accountability is linked with improved performance of individuals and teams (Bergsteiner, 2012; Dewi & Riantoputra, 2019; Kou & Stewart, 2018; Pearson & Sutherland, 2017) an improvement of the environment as experienced by the cross-functional team has the ability to subsequently improve the performance and outcomes of the cross-functional team as a unit, within the context of a peer accountability environment.

7.3 Implications for Management and other Relevant Stakeholders

Organisational leaders need to be mindful that traditional accountability approaches and mechanisms are firmly rooted in traditional top-down organisational structures (Conteh, 2016). Where organisations are shifting, or have shifted, to the use of self-functioning cross-functional teams, which is identified as a common trend (Burton et al., 2015; Cummings & Worley, 2015; Lukinaitė & Sondaitė, 2017; Nannoolal, 2015), the leaders need to be mindful that the traditional accountability approaches which rely on influence with authority may prove less effective (Lukinaitė & Sondaitė, 2017). In organisations where self-functioning, cross-functional teams are the primary driver of organisational results, it is important to note that accountability within this environment relies on influence without authority and accountability without control (Lukinaitė & Sondaitė, 2017), and in this sense, peer to peer level accountability becomes prominent. In this scenario, there is no need to displace the formal accountability mechanisms in place (Conteh, 2016), but it is necessary to identify complementary constructs to support a more complex and fluid organisational structure (Conteh, 2016).

The sections that follow will provide insights into the proposed considerations for leaders who strive to ensure effective peer accountability within their cross-functional teams.

7.3.1 Considerations for Hiring and Training of Individuals

Self accountability is deemed a critical component for driving effective peer accountability within cross-functional teams. When hiring individuals who will be operating in cross-functional teams, efforts should be placed on ensuring the individuals show the three elements associated with high levels of self accountability. These elements are self-identity, performance improvement and personal wisdom (Ghanem & Castelli, 2019). In essence, self accountability infers that individuals are capable of developing a sense of self accountability for their behaviour with no presence of others, these individuals evaluate their own performance before justifying their performance to others, these self-evaluations are performed against a set of self-imposed values and beliefs. (Ghanem & Castelli, 2019)

Self-accountability can be learned (Ghanem & Castelli, 2019), and therefore existing employees can be upskilled to show higher levels of self accountability. It is proposed that training initiatives highlighting the effectiveness of practicing constructive self-criticism, enhanced self-monitoring, self-management and self-leadership can all assist in heightening levels of self accountability within individuals (Ghanem & Castelli, 2019)

7.3.2 Considerations for Evaluating Individual Performance

Traditional mechanisms for employee evaluations are rooted in vertical chains of command, whereby managers are responsible for evaluating the performance of their subordinates (Conteh, 2016; Frink & Klimoski, 2004). This approach ensures that the current view of individuals where they exert more effort in justifying their performance to superiors than they do to their peers and believe harsher punishments are appropriate for those who fail to deliver when accountable to a higher authority, rather than to a peer (Hall et al., 2017) remains unchanged.

Within an organisation where self-managing cross-functional teams are utilised as the predominant approach for achieving results, there appears to be mismatch with the evaluation approaches used to ascertain employee performance. It is suggested that the cross-functional team members should be the primary audience responsible for the agreement of expectations, measurement of progress and evaluation of individual team members performance against the agreed expectations. Therefore, leaders within these types of organisations should consider changing the performance evaluation approach utilised, whereby the policies, procedures and mechanisms used by an organisation should allow the cross-functional team (peers) to hold more weight when it comes to setting of goals and evaluating the individuals performance towards these goals within their cross-functional teams.

7.3.3 Considerations for Issuing of Rewards and Sanctions

Traditional accountability environments give the vertical power structure (formal reporting line managers) the decision making authority for the issuing of incentives and sanctions against employee performance (Conteh, 2016; Vu & Deffains, 2013). Within an organisation where self-managing cross-functional teams are utilised as the predominant approach for achieving results, a shift in approach is suggested.

In line with the previous consideration of involving the cross-functional team members more closely in the setting of individual goals and the evaluation against them, this section raises a consideration that leaders within these organisations should enable and empower these same cross-functional team members to be collectively responsible for the decisions around the issuing of individual rewards and/or sanctions against each of their team members.

7.3.4 Considerations for Team Culture

Organisational culture has been identified in previous literature as an important element in driving accountability efforts (Frink & Klimoski, 2004; Pearson & Sutherland, 2017). Within the peer accountability landscape, we find that the necessary focus for driving accountability efforts within this environment is on the micro-culture of the cross-functional

team. Team culture and dynamics is the product of the individual members within the cross-functional team coupled with the management approaches used by the cross-functional team. This research indicates that characteristics of a healthy cross-functional team culture include trust between the team members, equality within the team and a focus on performance by each individual team members as well as the team as a whole.

By adhering to the prior considerations of this section, we will have stronger individuals within the cross-functional teams and will enable the cross-functional team to have the appropriate authority and responsibility to manage themselves effectively, whereby they have the authority to co-create expectations and hold one another accountable to these expectations. It is suggested that these changes alone would lead to a healthier cross-functional team culture and team dynamic.

For organisational leaders, a further consideration would be to formalise certain aspects of the cross-functional team management and communication practices to support the enablement of a micro-culture that is focused on performance whilst fuelled by equality and trust. Policies, procedures, and work instructions could be researched and implemented to ensure that the necessary formal mechanisms are in place to further enable the desired culture within the cross-functional team.

7.3.5 Considerations for Communication and Collaboration

The importance of collaboration and communication has been identified as an element in driving accountability efforts in previous literature, albeit focused on the traditional sense of accountability leveraging top-down communication and collaboration predominantly between two individuals (Bergsteiner, 2012; Frink & Klimoski, 2004; Pearson & Sutherland, 2017). Within the peer accountability landscape, we see a needed shift in focus of the communication and collaboration to include the practices necessary to promote this element within the cross-functional team. This research indicates that collaborative communication within cross-functional teams requires the correct frequency of communication within the team, mutual influence amongst the team members and a team-wide adoption of knowledge sharing.

The considerations noted previously in this section will, as proposed, promote organisations chances of having stronger individuals within the cross-functional teams and will enable the cross-functional team to have the appropriate authority and responsibility to manage themselves effectively, whereby they have the authority to co-create expectations and hold one another accountable to these expectations.

By effectively enabling these cross-functional teams to self-manage, with the necessary responsibility and authority, it is suggested that these changes alone would lead a self-determined and fit-for-purpose approach to communication within the cross-functional team. Knowledge sharing and mutual influence are aspects that organisational leaders could put efforts in to formalise, ensuring that they are considered as behavioural expectations which the cross-functional team should consider when performing evaluations of their team members and determining subsequent rewards and/or sanctions.

7.4 Limitations of the Research

As this study takes a qualitative nature, the limitations of qualitative research apply. The research is not quantifiable. Objectivity may be difficult to ensure and/or prove and the research is not generalisable to the population (Saunders & Lewis, 2018).

Only one focus group from one organisation was used. This limits the scope of the research and does not allow an understanding of how different industries and/or organisational cultures may influence the perception of the antecedents of peer accountability as experienced by individuals operating therein.

This research was cross sectional, and as such only allows for a snapshot of the peer accountability perceptions of cross-functional team members at a particular point in time. This study does not cater to potential changing perceptions over time, which limits the reliability of the results (Saunders & Lewis, 2018).

The mono-method of data collection through focus groups, may have influenced individuals and allowed them to be susceptible to peer pressure (although the IQA process

prescribes silent and individual contributions at an attempt to defend against this (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). As semi-structured interviews were not used in addition to the focus group, the results do not cater to an in-depth discussion of potential individual differences amongst the focus group constituents (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004).

7.5 Suggestions for Future Research

This research has proposed a model of antecedents of effective peer accountability within cross-functional teams. As only one organisation was used, no insight into how different organisational cultures and/or different industries may experience peer accountability within cross-functional teams. A suggestion for future research would be to replicate the approach of this study at other organisations, allowing for the similarities and/or differences of the proposed model of antecedents of effective peer accountability to be highlighted.

This research offered implications for management when striving to ensure an environment allowing for effective peer accountability. A suggestion for future research would be a longitudinal study whereby these recommendations are put in place, and the effects on the peer accountability outcomes are measured over time. This would either validate and/or contradict the suggestions of this research.

Self accountability was identified as a necessary element for effective peer accountability. Self accountability is an under-research area in itself. A suggestion for future research would be to explore this notion of self accountability in a way that ascertains how to identify this trait during the recruitment of personnel as well as how to foster an environment that encourages self accountability of individuals.

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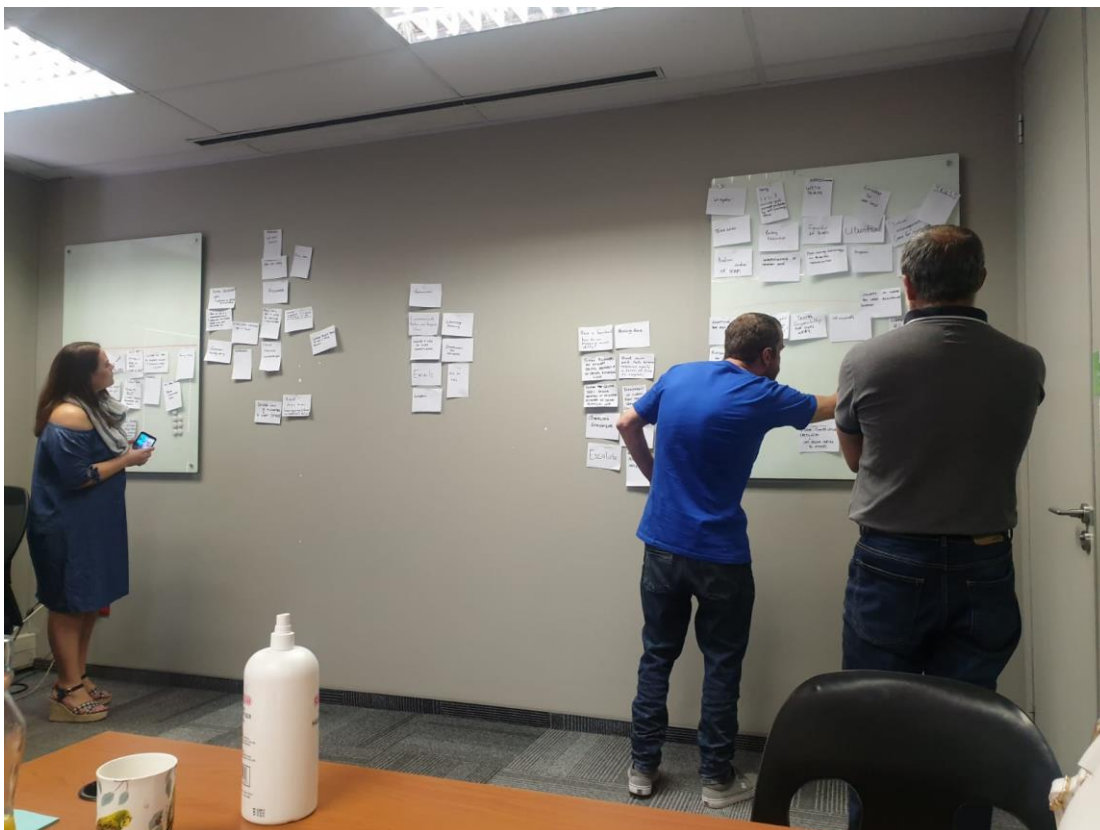
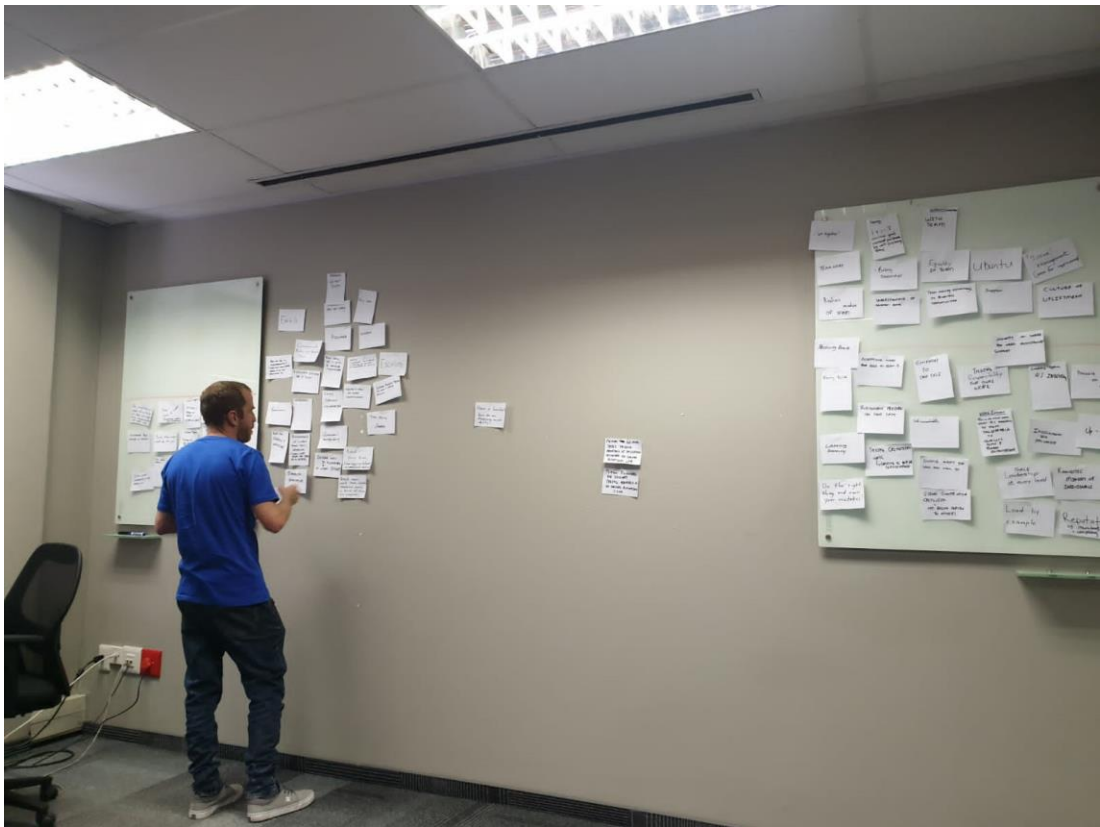
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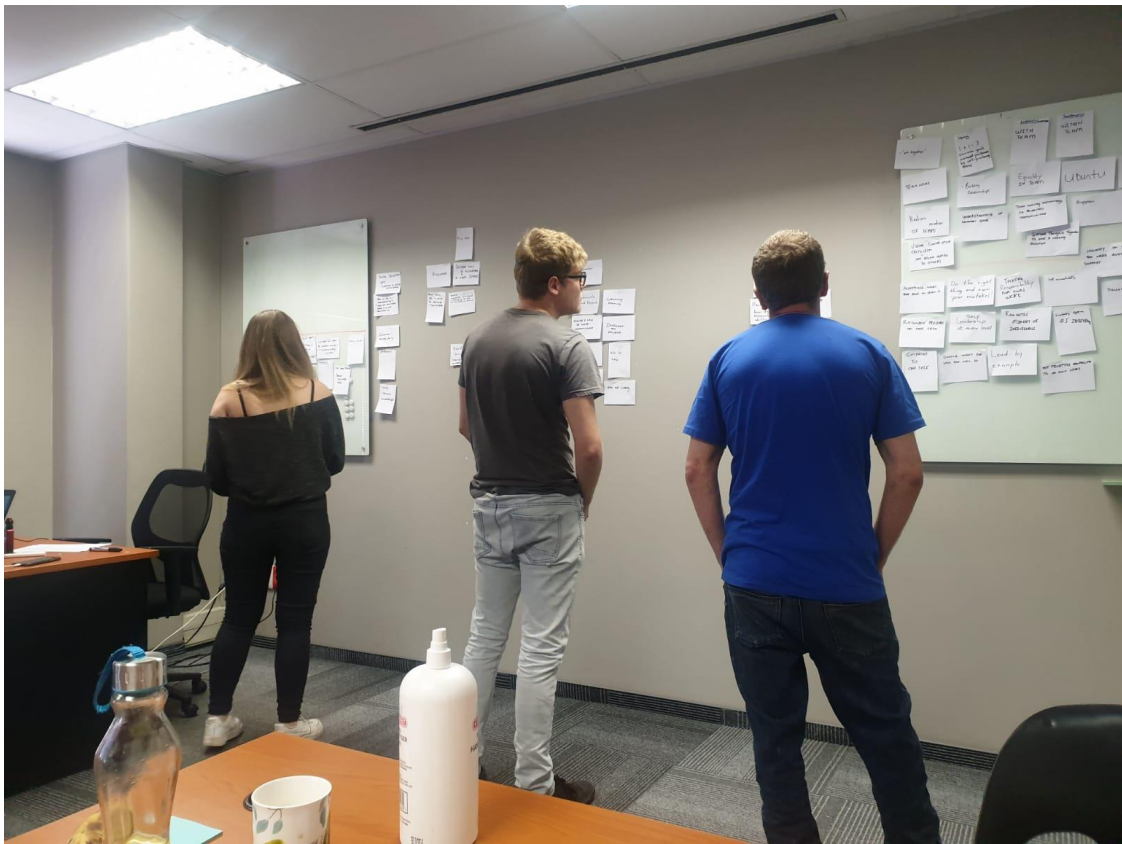
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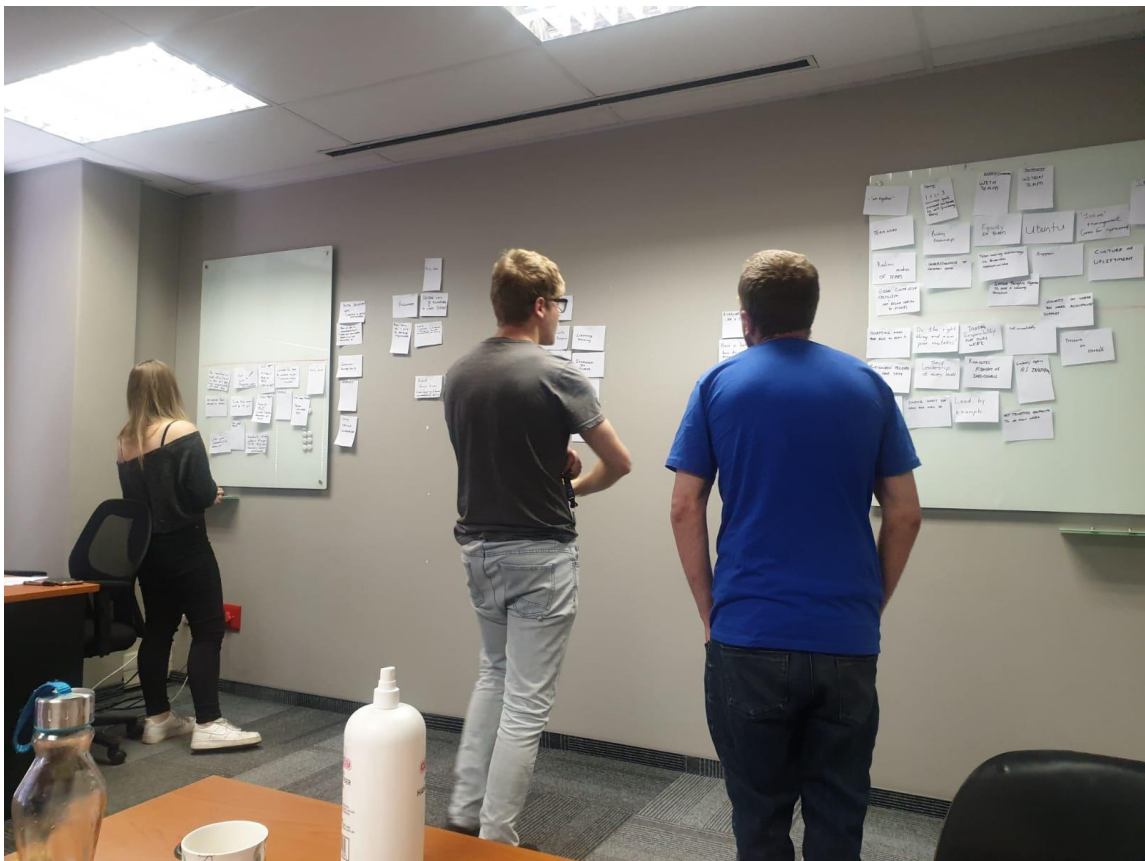
ANNEXURE 1: AFFINITY ANALYSIS / INDUCTIVE CODING IMAGES FROM FOCUS GROUP

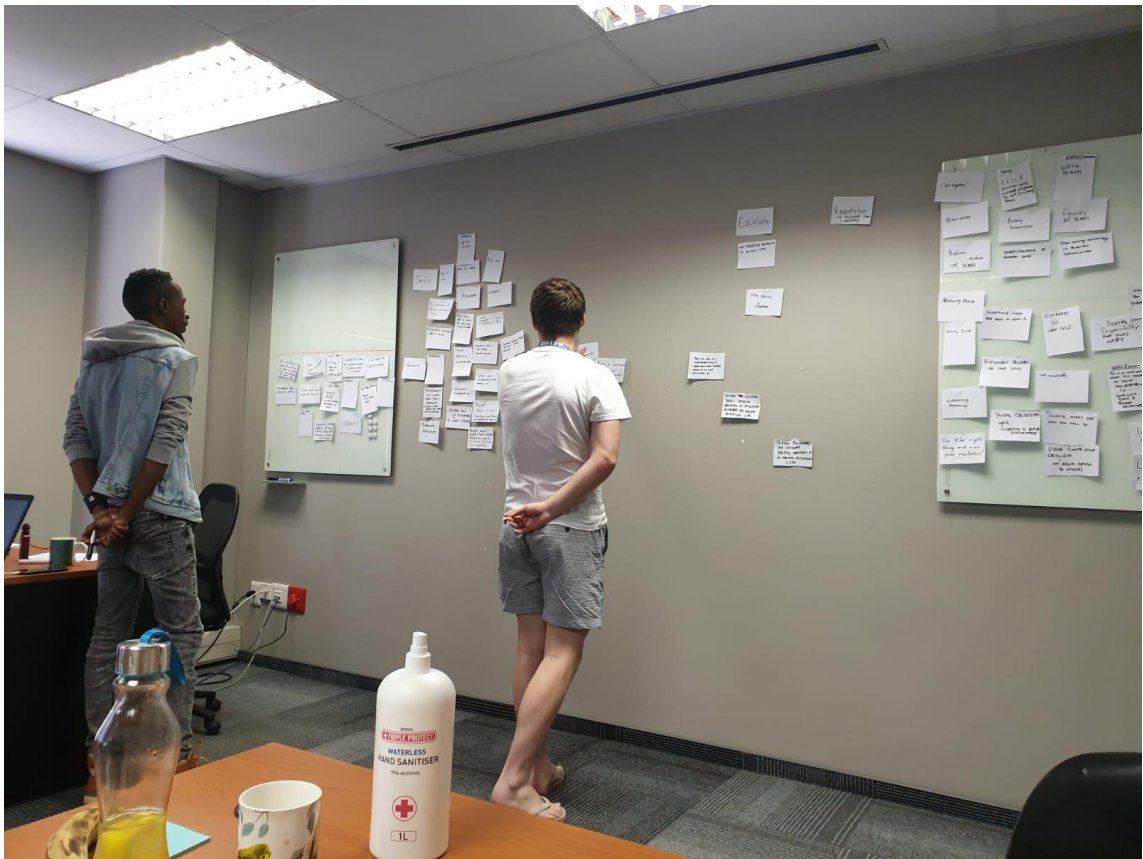








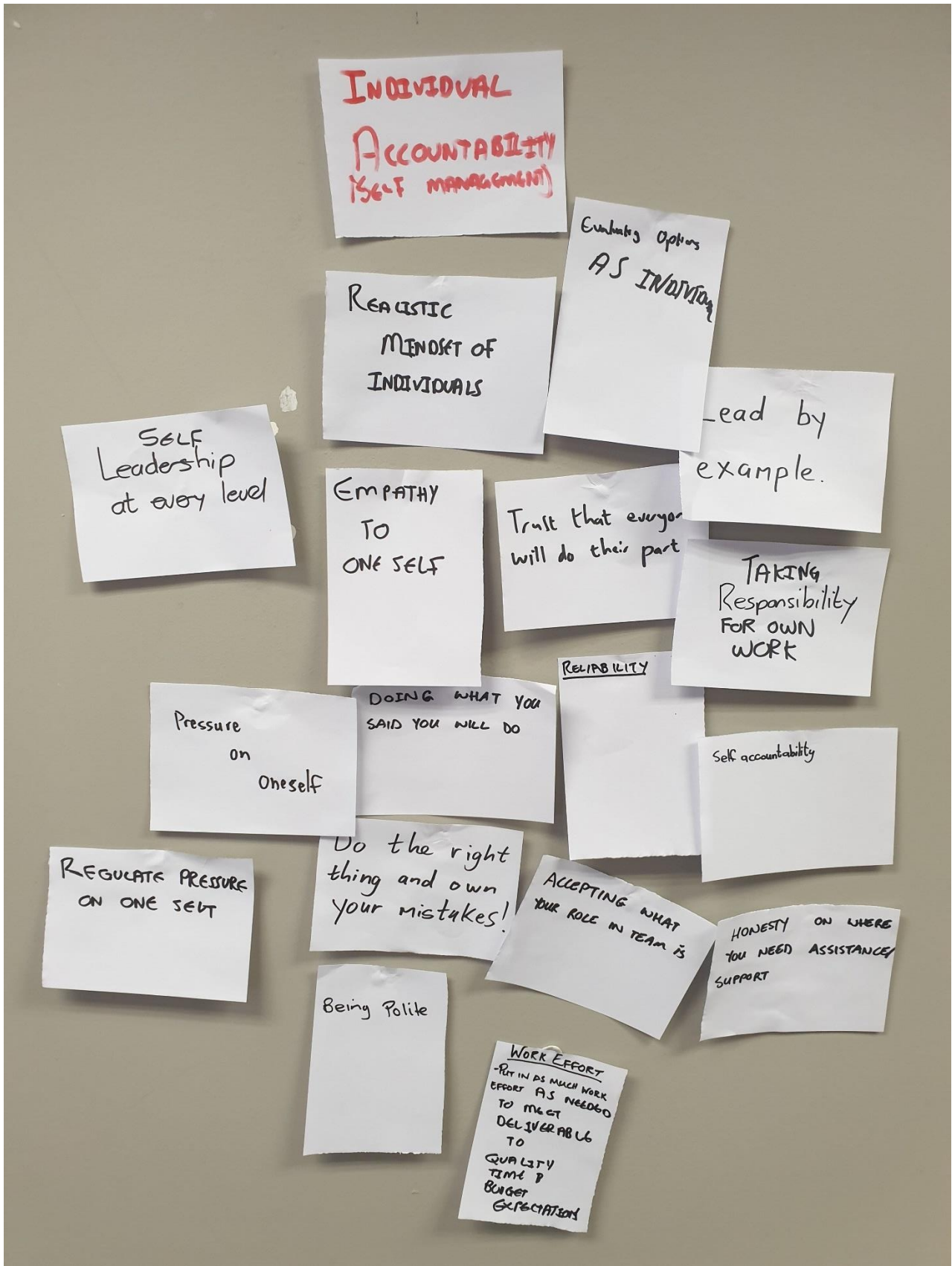






ANNEXURE 2: AXIAL CODING IMAGES FROM FOCUS GROUP





Collaborative Communication

Stand up:
Accountability can be obtained in stand ups as the roles and responsibility are discussed.

Avoid Grey Areas.
(overlapping/shared accountabilities defined)

EVALUATE OPTIONS AS A TEAM

Communication

Brain Storming as a group to determine responsibilities

GATHER THOUGHTS TOGETHER TO FIND A WORKING SOLUTION

Communicate Roles and Responsibilities

LISTENING ATTENTIVELY

FEELING A LACK OF CLEAR COMMUNICATION

INVOLVEMENT IN DISCUSSIONS

Emails

Ask for help

There can often be a misunderstanding of what each team member needs to be held accountable for.

FEEDBACK

ASK FOR CLARITY

Bring ideas

Collaboration: Knowledge sharing

ON WHERE ASSISTANCE

Creativity THROUGH COLLABORATION

COLLABORATION

MANAGEMENT (PLOC)

ALIGNMENT

DEFINE WHO IS ACCOUNTABLE TO WHAT SMART

Formal Approach

PUTTING IT DOWN ON PAPER (LACK OF TRUST?)

• Have a greater understanding of each member's role.

Have a benchmark how do we measure accountability?

Producing Results

PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR DELIVERY TAKING ADVANTAGE OF NO FORMAL REPORTING LINE

Break down work tasks between resources evenly in terms of time to complete.

PERSON TASK GIVING TASKS TAKING ADVANTAGE OF RECEIPT ALTHOUGH NO FORMAL REPORTING LINE

TRANSPARENCY OF CURRENT TEAM TASKS / DEADLINES (KNOW WHAT PEERS ARE DOING / EXPECTATIONS)

MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

TAKING CRITICISM WELL
↳ LEADING TO BETTER PERFORMANCE

TIME FRAME

Deadlines

Escalate

Bottle neck
MANAGE & UNDERSTAND

Up - management

'Issue' Management (area for improvement)

Risk taking activities

TAKING CALCULATED RISKS

Risk adverse approach

Be methodical and structured in how you delegating accountability of work items.

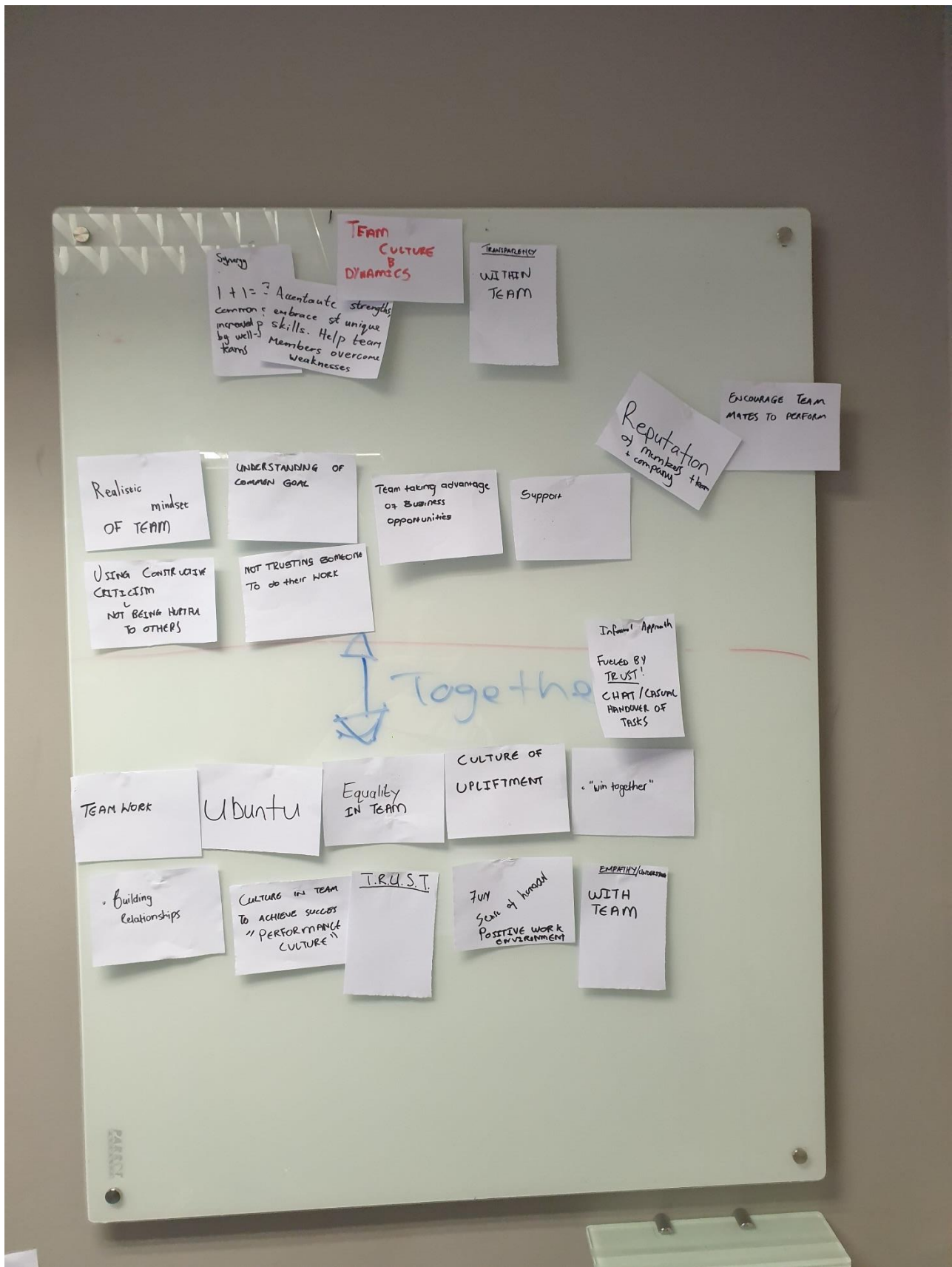
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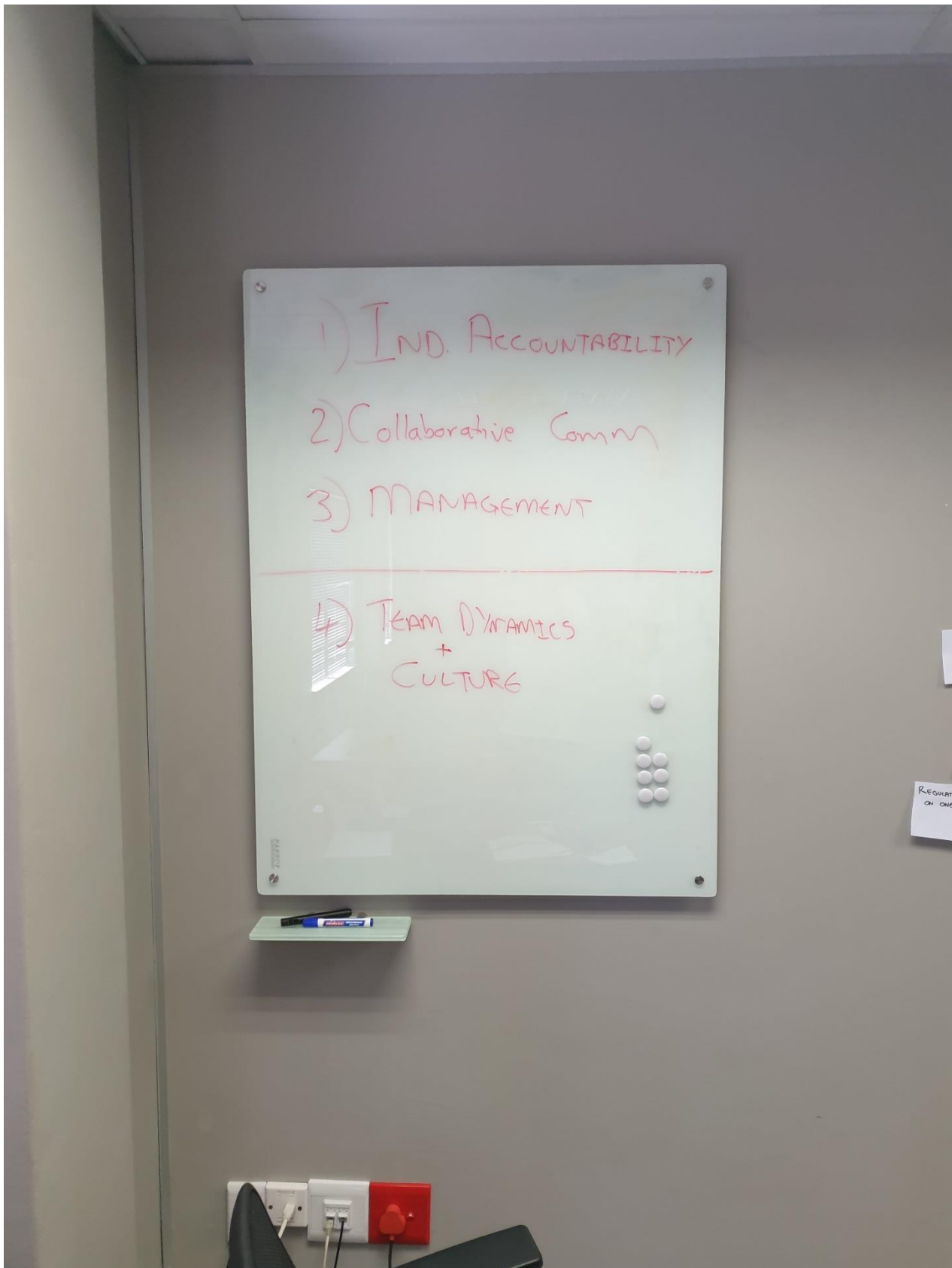
Using
CATE
NOT

TEAM WORK

• Building Relationships

PAPER





1) IND. ACCOUNTABILITY

2) Collaborative Comm

3) MANAGEMENT

4) TEAM DYNAMICS
+
CULTURE

ANNEXURE 3: DETAILED AFFINITY RELATIONSHIP TABLE (ART) WORKSHEET SAMPLE

For any 2 affinities A and B, either

- A → B (A influences B)
- A ← B (B influences A)
- A ↔ B (No relationship)

Affinity Names:

- | | |
|----|----|
| 1. | 5. |
| 2. | 6. |
| 3. | 7. |
| 4. | 8. |

Affinity Pair Relationship		Example of relationship – make a hypothesis where possible
1	2	
1	3	
1	4	
1	5	
1	6	

1	7	
1	8	
2	3	
2	4	
2	5	
2	6	
2	7	
2	8	
3	4	
3	5	
3	6	
3	7	
3	8	

4	5	
4	6	
4	7	
4	8	
5	6	
5	7	
5	8	
6	7	
6	8	
7	8	

ANNEXURE 4: DETAILED AFFINITY RELATIONSHIP TABLE (ART) COMPLETED WORKSHEETS

Annelize Kriep

For any 2 affinities A and B, either

- A → B (A influences B)
- A ← B (B influences A)
- A ↔ B (No relationship)

Affinity Names:

- 1. IND ACC
- 2. COL COMM
- 3. MANAGEMENT (PLC)
- 4. TEAM DYNAMICS & CULTURE
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

Affinity Pair Relationship	Example of relationship – make a hypothesis where possible
1 ← 2	Levels & effectiveness of collaborative comms influences ind. accountability & responsibility within
1 → 3	If ind. acc is high, formal the need for formal & controlled management (positive/negative) is reduced.
1 → 4	Ind acc with High levels of ind acc with positively impact impact team culture & dynamics.
1 / 5	
1 / 6	
1 / 7	
1 / 8	
2 ← 3	Effective management (plc) will encourage collaborative communication
2 ← 4	Good team dynamics with a positive culture will improve levels of collaborative comms.
2 / 5	
2 / 6	

2	7	
2	8	
3 ←	4	Team culture influences how the level of marginal required by the team
3	5	Team spirit & dynamics will determine the formality of the (PLCC).
3	6	
3	7	
3	8	
4	5	
4	6	
4	7	
4	8	
5	6	
5	7	
5	8	
6	7	
6	8	
7	8	

Francis van der Meer

For any 2 affinities A and B, either

- A → B (A influences B)
- A ← B (B influences A)
- A ↔ B (No relationship)

Affinity Names:

1. Individual Accountability
2. Collaborative
3. Management
4. Team Dynamics and Culture
- 5.
6. Communication
- 7.

Affinity Pair Relationship	Example of relationship – make a hypothesis where possible
1 ↔ 2	There is no relationship
1 ← 3	Management Rules/Structure influences individual Accountability
1 ← 4	Team Dynamics influences/creates/modifies individual Accountability
1 — 5	
1 — 6	
1 — 7	
1 — 8	
2 ← 3	Management Rules/structure determine if Collaborative Communication can happen
2 ← 4	Team Dynamics influences/determines if Collaborative communication can happen
2 — 5	
2 — 6	

2	7	
2	8	
3	→ 4	Management structure/Rules determines if Terms can perform
3	5	& how the company culture is defined.
3	6	
3	7	
3	8	
4	5	
4	6	
4	7	
4	8	
5	6	
5	7	
5	8	
6	7	
6	8	
7	8	

For any 2 affinities A and B, either

- A → B (A influences B)
- A ← B (B influences A)
- A ↔ B (No relationship)

Affinity Names:

Francois Fouché

1. Individual Accountability
2. Collaborative Communication
3. Management
4. Team Dynamics + Culture

Affinity Pair Relationship	Example of relationship – make a hypothesis where possible
1 ← 2	The communication will drive + influence accountability.
1 → 3	Individual maturity and accountability dictates how to manage individuals.
1 ← 4	Team culture shapes individual performance + accountability.
1 5	
1 6	
1 7	
1 8	
2 ← 3	The management (measures) will dictate collaboration and communication.
2 ← 4	The team culture will impact on communication + collaboration.
2 5	
2 6	

2	7	
2	8	
3	4	Team culture will drive the measures, and management.
3	5	
3	6	
3	7	
3	8	
4	5	
4	6	
4	7	
4	8	
5	6	
5	7	
5	8	
6	7	
6	8	
7	8	

Jerrid

For any 2 affinities A and B, either

- A → B (A influences B)
- A ← B (B influences A)
- A ↔ B (No relationship)

Affinity Names:

- 1. Individual Accountability 5.
- 2. Collaborative Comm. 6.
- 3. Management 7.
- 4. Team Dynamics + Culture 8.

Affinity Pair Relationship	Example of relationship – make a hypothesis where possible
1 → 2	If individual's view on accountability could affect the way in which they communicate.
1 ← 3	If leadership, processes and management could affect the individual's willingness to take accountability.
1 → 4	If team members are not individually accountable, it can affect the team's dynamics.
1 5	
1 6	
1 7	
1 8	
2 → 3	If there is no communication, it can affect the process and methodology of work being done.
2 → 4	If team members are not properly communicative, it could affect the team's dynamic.
2 5	
2 6	

2	7	
2	8	
3	4	<i>If there is no proper management, or process - the team will not work well together.</i>
3	5	
3	6	
3	7	
3	8	
4	5	
4	6	
4	7	
4	8	
5	6	
5	7	
5	8	
6	7	
6	8	
7	8	

Justin James Harris

For any 2 affinities A and B, either

- A → B (A influences B)
- A ← B (B influences A)
- A ↔ B (No relationship)

Affinity Names:

- 1. Ind Accountability
- 2. Collaborative Comm
- 3. Management
- 4. Team Dynamics & Culture
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

Affinity Pair Relationship	Example of relationship – make a hypothesis where possible
1 → 2	Take your part and participate and get clarity and transparency on communication
1 → 3	My idea is that it starts with you and holding yourself to the management of work/proj
1 → 4	Work and uplift the team and take initiative to working well as a team
1 5	
1 6	
1 7	
1 8	
2 ← 3	Decisively working on tasks and projects followed by communication forms.
2 ← 4	A team with good relationships has a better communication around work.
2 5	
2 6	

2	7	
2	8	
3	<> 4	One is management of projects and tasks while the other is more of a team relat
3	5	
3	6	
3	7	
3	8	
4	5	
4	6	
4	7	
4	8	
5	6	
5	7	
5	8	
6	7	
6	8	
7	8	

Kyle

For any 2 affinities A and B, either

- A → B (A influences B)
- A ← B (B influences A)
- A ↔ B (No relationship)

Affinity Names:

- 1. End Accountability 5.
- 2. Collaborative Comm. 6.
- 3. Management (PLOC) 7.
- 4. Team Dynamics + Culture 8.

Affinity Pair Relationship	Example of relationship – make a hypothesis where possible
1 ← 2	Individual accountability can't be obtain if you are not sure what you need to be accountable for.
1 → 3	It is difficult to manage accountability if you can't assign accountability to peers.
1 → 4	An individual influences a team, but individual values are not dependant on team values (accountability)
1 5	
1 6	
1 7	
1 8	
2 → 3	Whithout communicating and assigning accountability, you can't manage accountability.
2 → 4	A team consistre of a group of individuals and this can't happen without collaborative communication
2 5	
2 6	

2	7	
2	8	
3	4	Managing accountability is easy
3	5	Working in a team with the same values are easy to Manage and this a team
3	6	influences the management of accountability.
3	7	
3	8	
4	5	
4	6	
4	7	
4	8	
5	6	
5	7	
5	8	
6	7	
6	8	
7	8	

Lean Soko

For any 2 affinities A and B, either

- A → B (A influences B)
- A ← B (B influences A)
- A ↔ B (No relationship)

Affinity Names:

1. Individual Accountability
2. Collaborative Communication
3. Management
4. Team Culture and Dynamics
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

Affinity Pair Relationship	Example of relationship – make a hypothesis where possible
1 → 2	In order to communicate effectively, the individual must take responsibility for their actions.
1 → 3	Indiv. cannot influence management or team procedures.
1 ← 4	Strong team culture influences individual behaviour.
1 5	
1 6	
1 7	
1 8	
2 ← 3	Management can enforce collaborative communication.
2 ↔ 4	Team culture can encourage collaborative communication.
2 5	
2 6	

2	7	
2	8	
3	← 4	Team culture can influence style of management and procedures
3	5	
3	6	
3	7	
3	8	
4	5	
4	6	
4	7	
4	8	
5	6	
5	7	
5	8	
6	7	
6	8	
7	8	

Marthinus

For any 2 affinities A and B, either

- A → B (A influences B)
- A ← B (B influences A)
- A ↔ B (No relationship)

Affinity Names:

- 1. Ind. Accountability
- 2. Collaborative Comm
- 3. Management
- 4. Team Dynamics + Culture

Affinity Pair Relationship	Example of relationship – make a hypothesis where possible
1 ← 2	Individual Accountability can increase with effective Collaborative comms.
1 ← 3	Managing well can help individuals become more accountable.
1 ← 4	The right culture in a team drives effective indi accountability.
1 — 5	
1 — 6	
1 — 7	
1 — 8	
2 → 3	Collaborative comms improves management outcomes.
2 ← 4	Team culture can create the right environment for comms.
2 — 5	
2 — 6	

2	7	
2	8	
3	→ 4	Management sets the tone to create Team culture
3	5	
3	6	
3	7	
3	8	
4	5	
4	6	
4	7	
4	8	
5	6	
5	7	
5	8	
6	7	
6	8	
7	8	

MZWAKHE Jim

For any 2 affinities A and B, either

- A → B (A influences B)
- A ← B (B influences A)
- A ↔ B (No relationship)

Affinity Names:

- 1. Individual Accountability 5.
- 2. Collaborative Comm 6.
- 3. MANAGEMENT (PLOC) 7.
- 4. TEAM DYNAMICS & CULTURE 8.

Affinity Pair Relationship	Example of relationship – make a hypothesis where possible
1 → 2	Leading by example means you're change that you want and influence your external environment
1 ← 3	The only way you can do something well, is if it is clearly defined and measurable
1 → 4	You are only as strong as a team, you're only as strong as your weakest link.
1 5	
1 6	
1 7	
1 8	
2 ← 3	We can collaboratively communicate if we know what's required
2 → 4	When good collaborative communication is achieved, team culture and dynamics can be understood.
2 5	
2 6	

2	7	
2	8	
3	→ 4	Clear and concise structure induces better team work, culture and culture.
3	5	
3	6	
3	7	
3	8	
4	5	
4	6	
4	7	
4	8	
5	6	
5	7	
5	8	
6	7	
6	8	
7	8	

Otilia

For any 2 affinities A and B, either

- A → B (A influences B)
- A ← B (B influences A)
- A ↔ B (No relationship)

Affinity Names:

- 1. Individual Accountability
- 2. Collaborative Comm
- 3. Management
- 4. Team Dynamics & Culture
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

Affinity Pair Relationship	Example of relationship – make a hypothesis where possible
1 → 2	Taking responsibility for own work – through communication of roles & responsibilities
1 → 3	Self accountability by setting a benchmark on how to measure your accountability
1 ← 4	Understanding of common goals leads to clear individual accountability
1 5	
1 6	
1 7	
1 8	
2 → 3	Communication leads to being on the same page & being aligned
2 → 4	Communication within the team builds team relationships within the team
2 5	
2 6	

2	7	
2	8	
3	← 4	Supporting each other produces results in a team
3	5	
3	6	
3	7	
3	8	
4	5	
4	6	
4	7	
4	8	
5	6	
5	7	
5	8	
6	7	
6	8	
7	8	

Roland Würsch

For any 2 affinities A and B, either

- A → B (A influences B)
- A ← B (B influences A)
- A ↔ B (No relationship)

Affinity Names:

- | | |
|----|----|
| 1. | 5. |
| 2. | 6. |
| 3. | 7. |
| 4. | 8. |

Affinity Pair Relationship	Example of relationship – make a hypothesis where possible
1 ← 2	Collaborative Comm influences Ind Accountability
1 ← 3	Management Style & Involvement impacts Ind accountability
1 ← 4	Team dynamics impact Ind accountability
1 5	
1 6	
1 7	
1 8	
2 ← 3	Management can determine the level of Collaborative Comm
2 ← 4	Team dynamics impact the levels of Collaborative Comm
2 5	
2 6	

2	7	
2	8	
3	→ 4	Team dynamics on impact collaborative comm
3	5	
3	6	
3	7	
3	8	
4	5	
4	6	
4	7	
4	8	
5	6	
5	7	
5	8	
6	7	
6	8	
7	8	

Topic

For any 2 affinities A and B, either

A → B (A influences B)
 A ← B (B influences A)
 A ↔ B (No relationship)

- Affinity Names:**
1. Individual Accountability
 2. Collaborative Comm
 3. Management
 4. Team Dynamics
 - 5.
 - 6.
 - 7.
 - 8.

Affinity Pair Relationship	Example of relationship – make a hypothesis where possible
1 ← 2	One needs to be have a clear understanding ^{of what to do} (via communication) before setting Individual Acc
1 → 3	In order to have good management skills, you just have to start with yourself.
1 ← 4	In order to be a team player When you work in a team that is supportive, you get to be set up for success
1 5	
1 6	
1 7	
1 8	
2 → 3	When communication is good, then managing becomes easy.
2 ← 4	A good team culture encourages collaboration communication
2 5	
2 6	

2	7	
2	8	
3	→ 4	When management is good, then the entire team (culture & Dynamics) becomes a team team
3	5	
3	6	
3	7	
3	8	
4	5	
4	6	
4	7	
4	8	
5	6	
5	7	
5	8	
6	7	
6	8	
7	8	

ANNEXURE 5: INFORMED CONSENT FORMS FROM THE FOCUS GROUP CONSTITUENTS

Focus Group Participation - Informed Consent Letter:

I am currently a student at the University of Pretoria's Gordon Institute of Business Science and completing my research in partial fulfilment of an MBA.

I am conducting research on peer accountability to find out more about how this phenomenon is experienced by individuals operating in cross-functional teams.

*Our focus group is expected to last about four hours and will help me understand more about your experiences and perceptions of peer accountability. **Your participation is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time without penalty.** All data will be reported without identifiers. If you have any concerns, please contact my supervisor or a me. Our details are provided below.*

Researcher Name: Duncan Wernberg

Email: 29076171@mygibs.co.za

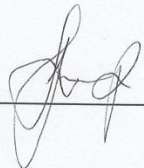
Phone: 0832621239

Research Supervisor: Hayley Pearson

Email: Pearsonh@gibs.co.za

Phone: 0769302170

Signature of participant: _____



Date: 10/10/2020

Signature of researcher: _____

Date: _____

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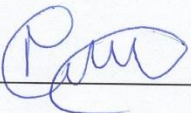
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Signature of researcher: _____

Date: _____

Focus Group Participation - Informed Consent Letter:

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*Our focus group is expected to last about four hours and will help me understand more about your experiences and perceptions of peer accountability. **Your participation is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time without penalty.** All data will be reported without identifiers. If you have any concerns, please contact my supervisor or a me. Our details are provided below.*

Researcher Name: Duncan Wernberg

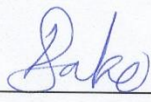
Email: 29076171@mygibs.co.za

Phone: 0832621239

Research Supervisor: Hayley Pearson

Email: Pearsonh@gibs.co.za

Phone: 0769302170

Signature of participant: _____ 

Date: 10/10/2020

Signature of researcher: _____

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Date: 2020-10-10

Signature of researcher: _____

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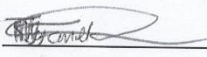
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Phone: 0769302170

Signature of participant: 

Date: 16/10/20

Signature of researcher: _____

Date: _____

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Phone: 0832621239

Research Supervisor: Hayley Pearson

Email: Pearsonh@gibs.co.za

Phone: 0769302170

Signature of participant: *n.a. Junisen*

Date: 19/10/2020

Signature of researcher: _____

Date: _____

ANNEXURE 6: ETHICAL CLEARANCE APPROVAL

**Gordon Institute
of Business Science**
University of Pretoria

**Ethical Clearance
Approved**

Dear Duncan Wernberg,

Please be advised that your application for Ethical Clearance has been approved.

You are therefore allowed to continue collecting your data.

We wish you everything of the best for the rest of the project.

[Ethical Clearance Form](#)

Kind Regards

This email has been sent from an unmonitored email account. If you have any comments or concerns, please contact the GIBS Research Admin team.