Team familiarity: Boon for routines, bane for innovation? A review and future research agenda

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Abstract

Teams play a vital role in achieving an organization's goals, so achieving high levels of team familiarity is regarded as essential to HRM strategies. This paper aims to stimulate the debate on team familiarity: the effectiveness, antecedents, outcomes, and theoretical underpinnings. Our systematic literature review uses a VOSviewer-based bibliometric analysis, combined with qualitative thematic analysis. The current dominant viewpoint is that team familiarity leads to positive performance outputs at work, higher team performance and organizational success. Existing studies also agree that familiarity enhances team cognition and takes time to develop. However, we reveal that existing studies use a limited range of theoretical underpinnings, remain vague on the meaning of "time" and "how long it takes for teams to become familiar", and avoid critical discussions on potential counterproductive outcomes that may lead to a decline in team performance. Based on these gaps, we suggest advancing the team familiarity literature and provide ideas for future research. Overall, we argue that whereas team familiarity is favorable for routine and structured contexts, it might be *less effective for innovative task environments*. Our future research agenda also suggests 1) *advancing the theoretical underpinnings around team relationships, social roles, and team formation*; 2) *engaging in discussion on the key antecedent "time", with longitudinal studies to reveal which moments matter most in devolving team familiarity*; 3) *considering positive social outcomes for individuals and groups; and importantly*, 4) *contributing fresh knowledge on potential counterproductive outcomes and U-shaped developments in innovation work*.

1. Introduction

Teams play a vital role in achieving an organization's goals and contributing to an organization's growth and success (e.g., Hackman, 2011; Hinsz et al., 1997; Ilgen, 1999). To be successful, teams need to share and integrate diverse information into their actions and decisions (Maynard et al., 2019), feel psychologically safe and establish good relationships between members (Bradley et al., 2012). Team performance is influenced by organizational-level drivers, such as leadership (Groves & Feyerherm, 2011), individual-level drivers, such as personality (Prewett et al., 2018; Grijalva et al., 2020), and job-specific skills and cognitive ability (Neuman & Wright, 1999). Importantly, team performance is also influenced by group-level drivers such as team familiarity (Huckman & Staats, 2011; Maynard et al., 2019), the concept of which will be systematically reviewed in this paper.

In the team science literature, familiarity is often defined as the level of knowledge that team members hold about each other (Goodman & Shah, 1992; Huckman & Staats, 2011) and the extent to which team members have worked with one another (Huckman et al., 2009). Team familiarity is distinguished from "team tenure", which quantifies the amount of time a team member has worked within their team (Gonzalez-Mulé et al., 2020). Team familiarity also differs from "perceived proximity" (Wilson et al., 2008), as working nearby might not include interaction, joint experience, or shared knowledge – all aspects that are included in definitions of team familiarity. Instead, team familiarity is defined broadly and includes the members' amount of time of joint shared work experience and, in addition to a time measure, also captures the quality of the team's relationships and team cohesion between members as well as the quality of the team's communication (Gully et al., 1995, Marlow et al., 2018; Rico et al., 2008).

High levels of team familiarity enhance team members' understanding of each other's expertise, strengths, weaknesses, backgrounds, personalities, and habits. Research shows that teams that work on routine, standardized and recurring tasks operate in a context that highly benefits from team familiarity, which is a key driver of team effectiveness, positively stimulating the task and social aspects of individual team members (Espinosa et al., 2007; Huckman et al., 2009). However, there has been very limited debate on the potential negative outcomes of team familiarity and the effectiveness of team familiarity in non-routine tasks, and innovative and creative work. Teams with high levels of familiarity are more likely to rely on existing practices and routines, which can interfere with the team's engagement in innovation, and creative teamwork processes (e.g., Argote & Guo, 2016).

Human Resource Management (HRM) holds a key role in supporting teams, in recruiting, composing, developing, and coaching teams in times of transition (Bell et al., 2018; Bush et al., 2018) and designing flexible and innovative work environments (Biron et al., 2021). Given the extent to which employees work in various teams, it is critical to organizational performance that human resource managers understand the factors impacting team performance and are aware of the positive effects as well as potential negative outcomes.

This paper offers a systematic literature review and synthesizes the literature on the effectiveness, antecedents, outcomes, and theoretical underpinnings of team familiarity. Initially, we perform a bibliometric visual analysis of co-occurrence of key words and use VOSviewer software to visualize the results. Next, we conduct a manual systematic qualitative

literature review to identify gaps in the literature and develop a future research agenda. For future research, we propose 1) to advance theoretical underpinnings around team relationships, and the development of social roles and team formation; 2) to contribute to a deeper understanding of the key antecedent "time", and to identify which types of moments matter most in building team familiarity; 3) to complement the existing focus on positive performance outcomes with potential positive social outcomes for individuals and teams; and importantly 4) to provide knowledge on potential counterproductive outcomes and "U-shaped" developments to advance understanding of how team familiarity interrelates with innovative work contexts and less structured task environments.

We organize the paper as follows. Section 2 explains our research approach. Section 3 presents the findings from our bibliometric analysis using Visualization of Science (VOSviewer) freeware. Section 4 presents our qualitative thematic analysis of the literature. Section 5 proposes avenues for future research to guide future team familiarity research. In Section 6, we discuss implications for HRM practices. Finally, limitations are acknowledged.

2.   Research approach

We applied a systematic review approach which is transparent and reproducible (Cerchione & Esposito, 2016; Aguinis et al., 2018; Anand et al., 2021; Dzhengiz & Niesten, 2020). A systematic review aims at comprehensively documenting, evaluating, and synthesizing all relevant research on a specific subject to identify the dominant viewpoints and gaps in the literature (e.g., Petticrew & Roberts, 2006). We extracted articles from Elsevier's "Scopus" database, which accesses articles from numerous indexed journals. Scopus is an appropriate and robust database, due to its sorting and ranking refining features, which is more widely used than alternative databases such as Web of Science (WoS) and Google Scholar (Harzing & Alakangas, 2016). A keyword protocol, shown in Table 1, was adopted to extract articles from the Scopus database.

Table 1: Keyword protocol for material search

Keyword Protocol	Articles Extracted
TITLE-ABS-KEY ("Team* Familiarity" OR "Familiar Team*" OR "Familiar Group*" OR "Group* Familiarity") AND (LIMIT-TO (SRCTYPE , "j")) AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "ar"))	51

Note: An asterisk (*) is applied to specific keywords to expand the words such as team, teams, group, groups etc. TITLE-ABS-KEY: Scopus database will extract the keyword given in the title, abstract of the keyword section of the article. SRCTYPE "j": Only journal articles have been selected. DOCTYPE "ar": Only articles have been selected.

We excluded editorials, book chapters and conference papers from the search results as these are often not subject to rigorous peer review and can lack clarity (Thyer, 2008). Our research resulted in a sample of 51 journal articles. We screened these articles for inclusion or exclusion from our analyses. Three authors read the abstracts of each article, making an initial "include/exclude" decision, with a fourth author verifying the decision. Abstracts help to

consolidate opinions and research ideas and are essential for understanding articles' key arguments (Swales, 1990).

Articles were selected following the abstract review if (i) the phrase "team familiarity" was present, (ii) the concept was explained, (iii) team familiarity was researched from an individual, dyadic, group, or organizational perspective, (iv) team familiarity was addressed from a conceptual, theoretical, or empirical perspective, and (v) team familiarity was linked to an organizational, managerial, or team-related research question. After analysis of our initial sample of 51 articles, 42 were selected for further analysis. We adopted several techniques in the review of the literature and used VOSviewer bibliometric analysis in conjunction with a qualitative systematic literature review.

Initially, we conducted a VOSviewer bibliometric analysis and adopted relational techniques of bibliometrics to reveal the theoretical foundations of team familiarity (Zupic & Čater, 2015). Specifically, we used VOSviewer software to visualize the co-occurrence of keywords, for example, authors' keywords and index keywords, and then performed analysis of textual data, for example, title and abstract. Next, we performed a qualitative thematic analysis of the selected literature sample. All authors read the 42 articles and interpreted the results using "synthesis" (Snilstveit et al., 2012; Thomas et al., 2012). By "synthesis" we mean a systematic approach for reviewing varied literatures through narratives and summaries (Schick-Makaroff et al., 2016). For our thematic analysis we selected common parameters using a table matrix built on an Excel file, recognizing topics in common between authors or articles, definitions, antecedents, outcomes, critical discussion and reported negative effects of team familiarity, as well as the methodological approach context of the work environment, for example, routine vs non-routine work context.

3. VOSviewer Bibliometric Analysis: Research trends and hotspots of team familiarity research

3.1 Development and cross-country collaboration in team familiarity research

Teams have been studied for decades, with early research focusing on various aspects of familiarity and knowledge between team members (Gruenfeld et al., 1996; Mathieu et al., 2000). However, the team familiarity literature has increased significantly over the past decade, specifically from 2009. The data from Scopus indicate that the number of publications on team

familiarity slowly gained momentum from 2012 onwards (see Figure 1). This research has grown across multidisciplinary fields but particularly in the health and management fields.
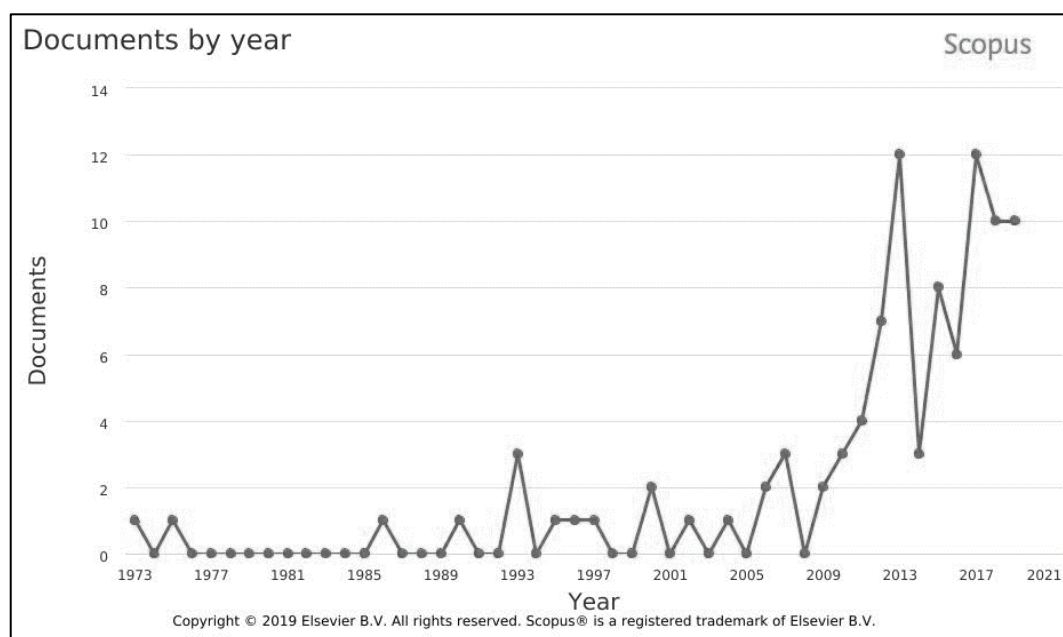
Figure 1: Publications on team familiarity, by year of publishing

We note the predominance of research in this period using data from Anglo-Saxon countries, with a disproportionate number of works from the USA and Australia. There is scant evidence from non-Western countries, other than Egypt and India, resulting in the omission of viewpoints that may complement Western views (see Figure 2).
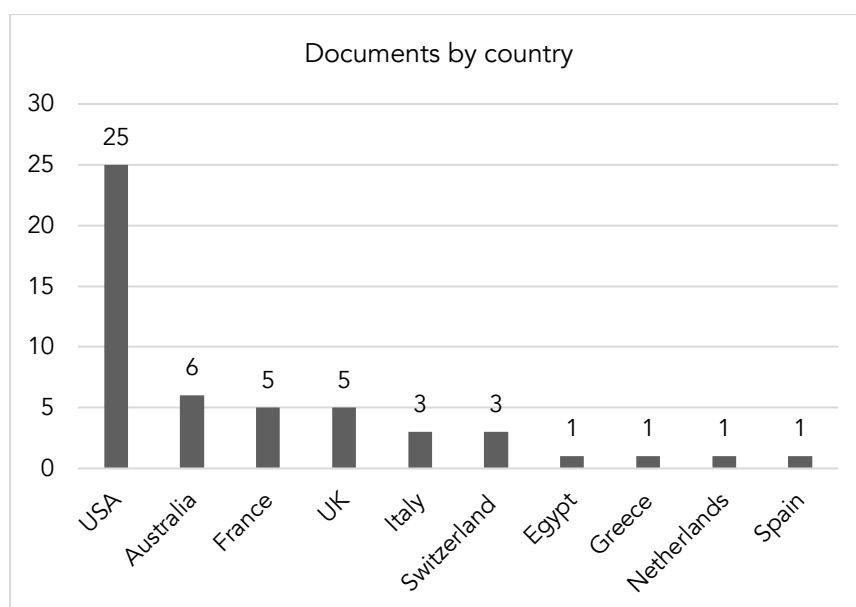

Figure 2: Leading countries publishing on team familiarity

3.2 Hotspots in team familiarity research

Co-occurrence of keywords assists in identifying an article's distinct keywords. Keywords represent the authors' most important terms in their paper and may be used to detect trending research topics over time (Anand et al., 2020). The keyword analysis assists in determining the cognitive structure and key academic topics studied using visual maps, which effectively reflect research hotspots in fields of study. Keywords extracted are nouns or phrases that reflect the core content of a publication. Figure 3 visualizes the keyword co-occurrence map for our sample based on the application of a VOSviewer keyword co-occurrence mapping, with the results presenting in three clusters. The sizes of the nodes and words in Figure 3 reflect their respective weights.

A graphical map based on word or keyword relations enables interpretation of the knowledge structure within the research domain (Chen & Xiao, 2016; Walter & Ribière, 2013). In Figure 3, the *red cluster* groups the keywords based on the role of team familiarity and its current relationships in the literature. The results indicate that team familiarity is studied in conjunction with interpersonal relations, human relations within organizations, and management with retrospective approaches. The *blue cluster* shows how constructs such as interpersonal communication and team familiarity can impact task performance, whereas the *green cluster* keywords group cooperative behavioral aspects related to team familiarity. VOSviewer's functionality allows us to group terms with common relations. For example, the *green cluster* clearly suggests that team familiarity results in strong co-operation between members or that strong co-operation may lead to high levels of familiarity in teams. This analysis enables us to confirm that the literature reveals expected findings and relationships.
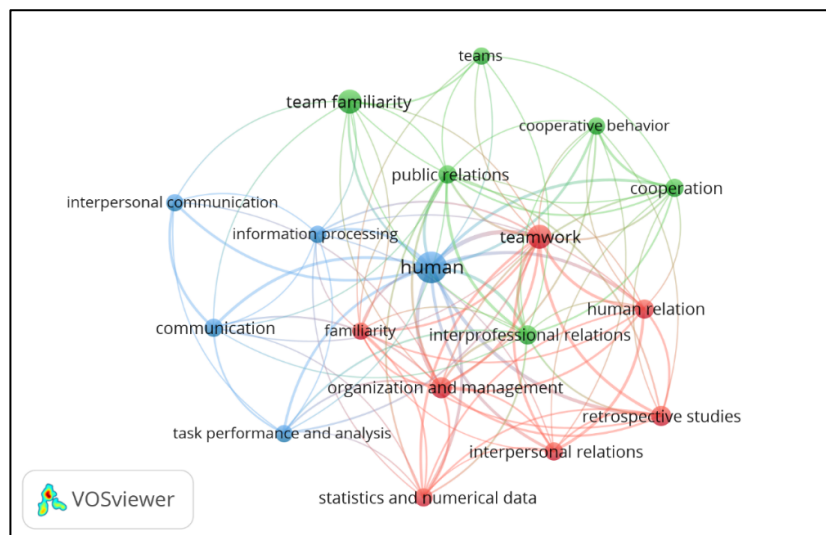

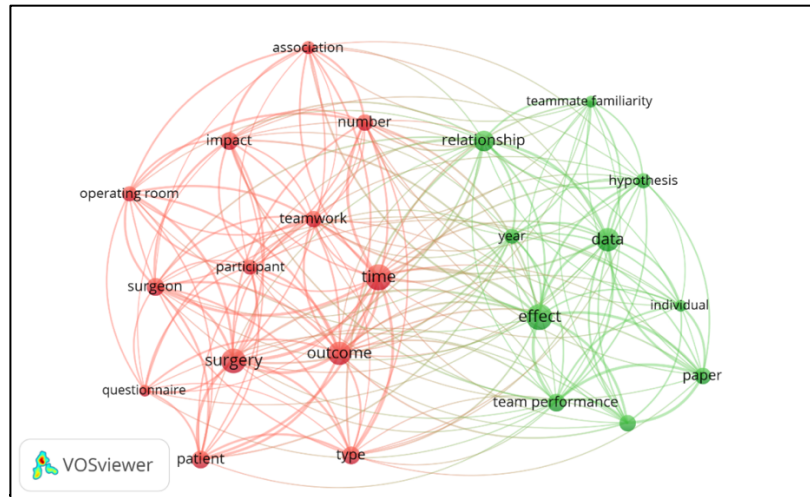*Figure 3: Keyword co-occurrence map*

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Figure 4: Textual VOSviewer analysis map of abstracts

The textual analysis of keywords in abstracts is depicted in Figure 4. The red cluster indicates that the research environment discusses team familiarity in highly standardized contexts, for example operating rooms, patients, and surgical teams, where patient safety does not allow for variations in routine and control. The *green cluster* links team familiarity and team performance but neither context nor antecedents appear to be mentioned in abstracts.

4. Qualitative synthesis of the team familiarity literature

To complement the VOSviewer bibliometric analysis, we undertook an in-depth qualitative review of the literature over the past decade. We individually coded the 42 selected articles using a qualitative theme-generating approach (i.e., Anand et al., 2021; Cerchione & Esposito, 2016). The authors met to discuss the findings to ensure consistency of coding. The coding process led to the creation of conceptual categories through an ongoing iterative process. Initially, we crystallized patterns in the extant literature, which are summarized in this section. Our findings are grouped into 1) theoretical underpinnings; 2) antecedents to team familiarity; 3) outcomes of team familiarity; and 4) context and work environment. We conclude each section with identified research gaps and under-represented research areas, with our findings visualized in Figure 5.

4.1 Theoretical underpinnings

We find that most studies did not draw on any clear theoretical underpinnings. Thus, for most studies, conceptualizations and measures of team familiarity remained vague. Those studies that did offer theoretical underpinnings predominantly drew on social cognitive theories. Social cognition-based theories conclude that shared understanding of who holds specific types of knowledge within a team, as well as the process of social learning, are amongst the positive outcomes of high team familiarity (e.g., Bruneel et al., 2018; Cotard & Michinov, 2018; Singh et al., 2012; Smith-Jentsch et al., 2009; Staats, 2012). For example, many team familiarity studies use Transactive Memory Systems (TMS) theory to conceptualize the processes of knowledge transfer and social learning that lead to positive team outcomes (e.g., Bruneel et al.,

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2018; Cotard & Michinov, 2018; Gillespie et al., 2012; Singh et al., 2012: Zheng, 2012). Studies that typically use TMS draw on Wegner's (1987) seminal work that posits that teams collectively encode, store, and retrieve knowledge.

Other studies use social learning to conceptualize the process of knowledge acquisition and sharing within teams. Within teams, members learn from each other and acquire explicit and tacit knowledge on technical skills, firm culture, and behavioral norms (Dowling, 2009; Singh et al., 2012). Singh et al.'s (2012, 37) study suggested that "contributions to team performance are highest from personal interactions, followed by task observations and interaction observations respectively". This overall heavy reliance on TMS and social cognition reflects a view of teams as collective information processing systems—a view that has dominated team literature over the past two decades (Hinsz et al., 1997). Thus, our key findings are that the reviewed studies only use a few theoretical concepts. What is missing is theoretical advancements that go beyond social cognition theories to explain the connectedness of team familiarity on social aspects and how teams use their time to become familiar.

4.2 Antecedents to team familiarity

Next, we synthesize the key antecedents of team familiarity for our sample. The qualitative literature review analysis reveals that time is typically cited as the key antecedent that allows teams to accumulate shared knowledge. Huckman et al. (2009) use the number of years in a specific role within a team. Avgerinos and Gokpinar (2016) use shared work experience between pairs of individuals (dyads) in the team, while Gillespie et al. (2012) measure team familiarity as the length of time teams have worked together. Cattani et al. (2013) also consider joint experience on work projects as important. In contrast, de Jong and Fodor (2017) find that friendship is an important antecedent.

Avgerinos and Gokpinar (2016) note that most time-based indicators measure a team's familiarity level based on an overall team-level average. As a result, potential dispersion of individual team members' familiarity with other members remains unacknowledged. Some teams may remain relatively constant over time, some may be more fluid, while other teams come together for a short period of time before disbanding. Some contexts require teams with clear hierarchies, roles, and task responsibilities, whereas others do not. In addition, the role of hierarchy may be important, where team members are subject to differential developments of familiarity given their roles within a team. To conclude, we found that time is used as the key antecedent to explain that accumulated shared knowledge leads to team familiarity, including the length of time working together, time of shared experience, time of friendship. However, we also identified that these studies remain unclear in defining "*how long it takes to become familiar*". Moreover, studies rarely debate the meaning of time, "*how time is filled*" and none engage in discussion on the level, depth or types of activities that are needed to create or enhance team familiarity over time.

4.3 Outcomes of team familiarity

Most of our reviewed studies report positive team performance outcomes arising from high levels of team familiarity. Studies often point to a positive effect on team cognition related to high team familiarity, leading to higher team learning capabilities, faster learning in

entrepreneurial teams (Bruneel et al., 2018), effective social learning and greater creativity (Singh et al., 2012), and enhanced creative performance (Sosa & Marle, 2013). Enhanced team cognition also enhances team adaptiveness to the environment (Gorman et al., 2010) and improved assimilation of new team members (Salas et al., 2009; Smith-Jentsch et al., 2009).

The reviewed studies also stressed that one of the positive outcomes of highly familiar teams is higher performance as these teams create higher quality task outputs. Huckman et al. (2009) suggest that team familiarity is associated with high-quality "on time" delivery and adherence to budgets. Further, high team familiarity resulted in error reduction in the health sector, higher patient and team member safety, and more rapid processes (Espinosa et al., 2007; Patterson et al., 2016; Doekhie et al., 2017; Espinosa et al., 2007), and importantly reduced the risk of patients dying during operations (Kurmann et al., 2014). Avgerinos and Gokpinar (2016) reported that surgical team productivity increases when pairwise familiarity within the team is high, particularly if the team experience is gained undertaking complex cardiac surgeries. High team familiarity leads to improved communication in hierarchical teams (Henaux et al., 2019) and fosters collaboration in globally dispersed teamwork (Assudani, 2011).

Overall, we found that studies often offered evidence of positive high-level outcomes such as positive team cognition, and higher quality team task performance. They usually discussed these positive outputs of team familiarity at the group and organizational level. Yet, we identify two overall gaps in the literature. First, negative outcomes and potential U-shaped developments in team performance are largely absent. Second, while we found that positive cognitive and performance outcomes have been well documented, insights into how these benefit social outcomes and individual wellbeing are not discussed.

4.4 Context and work environment

When contextualizing the effectiveness of team familiarity, our literature review showed that a high level of team familiarity is of most benefit to team performance in high routine, high risk and standardized work environments. For example, in operations management teams, teamwork occurs in an environment of structured workflows and standardized processes, where high team familiarity leads to enhanced productivity. Avgerinos and Gokpinar (2016) found that team familiarity leads to enhanced productivity when teams are performing complex tasks (Espinosa et al., 2007; Huckman et al., 2009). Moreover, professional competitive sporting teams also perform within specific routines and standardized processes, and studies such as Moore et al. (2017) show how high familiarity leads to greater success in competitive teamwork, such as kicking accuracy and reaction time of professional football players. Sieweke and Zhao (2015), who use basketball teams in their research, report that there is an inverted U-shaped relationship between team familiarity and team coordination efforts, but the leader's team-specific experience moderates this relationship. Our review also shows that higher levels of team familiarity are particularly advantageous for teams that work under pressure, with extreme levels of stress (Sexton et al., 2018) and undertake high-risk and time-sensitive tasks (Hughes et al., 2017). The importance of team familiarity in the performance of highly standardized routine teamwork is evidenced across many domains including emergency rooms (Patterson et al., 2015; Weaver et al., 2015), within surgical teams (Finnesgard et al., 2018;

Grade et al., 2019), and amongst teams performing complex tasks (Avgerinos & Gokpinar, 2016; Henaux et al., 2019; Gillespie et al., 2012).

The benefits of team familiarity are found across a range of medical teams, such as multidisciplinary teams (Joshi et al., 2018), and medical students' learning teams (Hussein et al., 2015). Smith-Jentsch et al. (2009) suggest that higher levels of team familiarity enable enhanced coordination during periods of intense pressure as team members request and accept more support in comparison with teams with low familiarity. Smith-Jentsch et al. (2009) study team behaviors and work task situations with extreme time pressure and severe consequences of errors. They show that shared knowledge within familiar teams enhances collaborative work among members and increases team members' confidence in their collective abilities, knowledge, and skills.

Surprisingly, our findings show very few studies focused on non-routine and non-standardized work environments. However, understanding how familiar teams shape *innovation and creativity* teamwork is highly relevant, as familiarity may have counterproductive outcomes. In our sample, a few studies linked team familiarity research to creative teams' work and design (e.g., Hosio et al., 2018; Sosa & Marle, 2013; Zheng, 2012). Sosa and Marle (2013) found for teams of MBA students that team familiarity can trigger ideas and creativity. However, their focus was on teams in a learning environment rather than work environment, with the goal of testing the collective stimulation of creative ideas through task-related familiarity rather than team familiarity. Their study did not address the question of potential benefits of team familiarity across different tasks. The limited set of innovation and creativity studies investigated a range of organizational settings, for example large and smaller businesses and entrepreneurs. To conclude, our analysis shows that less research exists that investigates the effect of team familiarity in innovation and creative tasks and work contexts. By contrast, most studies have focused on standardized and routine tasks in larger organizational settings. Figure 5 visualizes the findings of our literature review.

In summary, the most obvious finding to emerge from the above is that team familiarity is an important predictor of team effectiveness, performance, and productivity in contexts of routine and standardized tasks. Thus, team familiarity is seen to be critical to teams that have a structured workflow in terms of inputs required to perform collective tasks. Presumably, this occurs as teamwork in this environment usually has a clear division of labor, roles and responsibilities, and high familiarity in teams equates with knowing each other well.
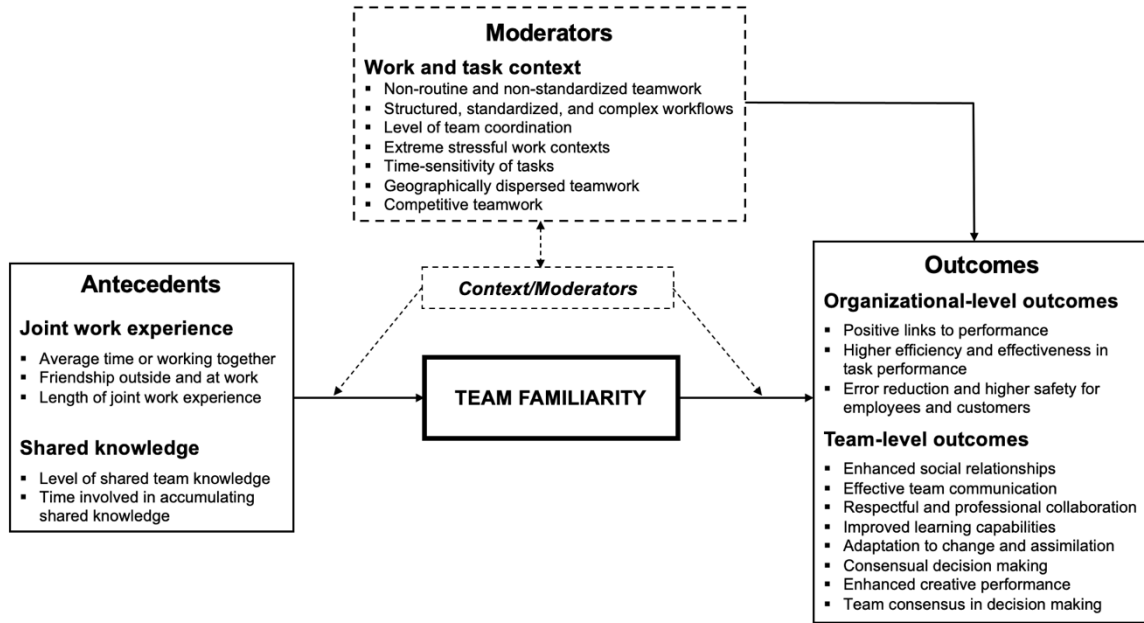
Figure 5: Team familiarity research: antecedents, work context and outcomes of in the extant literature

5. Future Research

5.1. Advancing the theoretical underpinnings of team familiarity research

In the existing team familiarity literature, there is a void of theoretical conceptualizations on team familiarity. Where studies offer theoretical underpinnings, they use social-cognition theories. Thus, we posit several avenues future research may take to theoretically frame team familiarity regarding social and behavioral developments in teams. We propose that future studies could contribute with theoretical underpinnings on team relationships, and the development of social roles and how these may interrelate with team familiarity. To explore team relationships, we suggest that future studies might draw on *social role theory*, to understand how social roles shape team familiarity. Social role theory posits that employees, based on gender, may adopt certain roles, and specific job characteristics. Social role theory could be used to deepen understanding of gendered behaviors and the development of negative relationships in teams (Bradley et al., 2021). For instance, future team familiarity research could offer insights into whether high team familiarity is affected by or contributes to social role bias. Gendered social roles can explain different job experiences and outcomes (Muskat & Reitsamer, 2019). It is known that within-team social roles and relationships can be gendered and biased (Doering & Thébaud, 2017) and lead to an over-emergence of male leaders (Lanaj & Hollenbeck, 2015).

Researchers could also relate team familiarity to the *evolution of teamwork* (Yong et al., 2021) and study whether team familiarity moderates uncertainty when team composition changes (Jin et al., 2017), for example when new members join (Min et al., 2021), when robots join the team (Savela et al., 2021) or in fast-paced work contexts, where teams need to unlearn

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existing knowledge that has become obsolete in order to stay relevant (Kim & Park, 2021). Moreover, *uncertainty reduction theory* (Berger, 1988) could be utilized to investigate how team familiarity influences uncertainty when new members join a team and when team context changes (e.g. Goodman & Leyden, 1991). Through interactions, team members gain information about relationships, allowing them to better predict behavior and reduce risk. Berger (1988) posited that forming relationships is part of an information exchange system and helps reduce uncertainty, suggesting that high team familiarity may play a role in uncertainty management.

Another important aspect is to investigate the impact of team characteristics in the early stages of team formation. To theorize these early processes, we propose Lazarsfeld and Merton's (1954) theory of *homophily*, positing that people tend to be attracted to others with similar attitudes, beliefs, and personal characteristics (e.g. McPherson et al., 2001). Although a large body of team science literature has studied theories of homophily, social role theory and longitudinal studies in the team or group dynamics literature, these theories have not been explored in the recent team familiarity literature. Thus, in combination with TMS theory, we argue that inclusion of the proposed theories will enrich conversations amongst team familiarity scholars and contribute to deeper knowledge of the underlying antecedents and outcomes related to innovation, team performance, etc. These theories may also enable evaluation of whether team members with similar beliefs and attitudes present different outcomes to diverse teams (e.g. Watson et al., 1993). At present, the literature surrounding team familiarity is limited and rather at a nascent stage, is not multidimensional, and would benefit from the use of additional theoretical lenses.

5.2. Advancing team familiarity research by deepening the understanding of the meaning of time

We show that "time" is the key antecedent to team familiarity. Time spent at work and with friends from work builds shared knowledge and increases team familiarity. Yet, we also find that the extant literature remains open on the meaning and duration of "time". For example, it is unclear what kinds of activities increase team familiarity over time and how these activities might be interpreted by team members. It remains unclear "*how long it takes to get familiar*", or "*how time needs to be filled to become familiar*". Therefore, we propose that future research contribute to a deeper understanding of the meaning of time. Specifically, we propose that studies explore what types of activities determine how team time is filled, and which activities and aspects enhance and diminish team familiarity. Clearly, team familiarity develops over time, together with adjustment of needs, expectations, and individuals' improvement (Huckman et al., 2009; Sieweke & Zhao, 2015).

Thus, researchers might study the potential underlying phenomena that influence, foster, or hinder the development of team familiarity. Teams might unexpectedly develop high levels of team familiarity within a very short time, presumably due to intensive and meaningful activities and shared moments. These "memorable moments" or touchpoints could include joint success, peak points of collective emotions (e.g. De Dreu et al., 2001: Muskat, 2020) and might shape the intensity and temporal development of team familiarity. As suggested in earlier management research (e.g. Katz, 1982; Janis, 1972), there are indications of an inverted U-

shaped relationship between team familiarity and team effectiveness. To explore this further, future research should engage in longitudinal studies. Here, there might be an inverted U-shaped relationship between team familiarity and team effectiveness, which would draw attention to the limitations and negative consequences of overly high levels of team familiarity (e.g., Sieweke & Zhao, 2015). We suggest that quality of experience may impact whether a U-shaped relationship exists and its shape—the quality of experience might be the essence of team familiarity and explain key distinguishing aspects between team familiarity and team tenure, the latter being a construct that solely quantifies the length of time worked (i.e., Gonzalez-Mulé et al., 2020).

Future research also could use longitudinal data and engage qualitative research designs, such as ethnographies, interviews, or action research, to provide insights into these aspects of team familiarity. Longitudinal studies can identify the moments that matter most and have either positive or negative influence on the development of team familiarity. Longitudinal studies might also reveal why highly familiar teams are not always highly cohesive teams and why negative experiences may lead to low team cohesion despite long ongoing teamwork.

5.3. Advancing team familiarity research by focusing on positive social and potential counterproductive outcomes

Our findings show that positive outcomes of team familiarity prevail. Higher team cognition, increased output quality and team productivity are mostly agreed. Potential counterproductive outcomes, and potential positive social outcomes and effects of high team familiarity on individual wellbeing have been considered less. Thus, we propose that future studies could focus on potential positive social outcomes of team familiarity. Since existing team familiarity studies have focused on employment and professional relationships, future research could consider insights from small world network theory (Uzzi & Spiro 2005) to theorize how positive social outcomes could have significant effects on social wellbeing at work. It is known that private relationships and connections also lead to familiarity between team members in the workplace (Uzzi & Spiro, 2005). Team members' personal relationships can be antecedents to team familiarity, thus increasing team co-operation and co-ordination (Maynard et al., 2019; Jehn & Shah, 1997). It follows therefore that future research targeting whether team familiarity influences individual wellbeing at work would be of interest.

Additionally, more studies could be carried out to understand *negative outcomes* and the limitations of the team familiarity phenomenon. For example, studies could extend initial findings that point to an inverted U-shaped relationship between team familiarity and performance; negative outcomes might only be identified by longitudinal studies (Sieweke & Zhao, 2015). Prior research indicates that other negative effects can arise in over-familiar teams. These teams may be less likely to self-interrupt or explore new possibilities, negatively impacting their ability to handle dynamic tasks (Wiersema & Bantel, 1993). "Too much" team familiarity may lead to rigid patterns of communication and team routines, leading to coordination errors (Cotard & Michinov, 2018). When team members work together regularly, they develop habitual routines (Gersick & Hackman, 1990) that work well when dealing with routine tasks but are less effective for dynamic tasks or turbulent and ambiguous environments.

Studies could explore the factors which trigger negative team performance outcomes over time. A relevant context to study the effectiveness of team familiarity would be entrepreneurial teams (Xing et al., 2020: Van Lancker et al., 2021) as they rely on alternating explore-exploit task sequences which are uncommon in most teams. There are also initial suggestions that the effects of team familiarity might be negative in dynamic task environments when teams are called upon to handle unpredictable and novel contingencies (Sieweke & Zhao, 2015) which warrant further investigation.

5.4. Advancing team familiarity research by exploring innovative and creative, non-standardized and ambiguous work contexts

Our analysis revealed that most existing studies discuss team familiarity and positive outcomes in high routine, high risk and standardized work environments. What is missing, though, is a detailed understanding of the processes and outcomes of high team familiarity in non-routine and non-standardized contexts. Based on these gaps, future research could contribute new knowledge on the operations of familiar teams in highly innovative and creative, non-standardized and ambiguous work contexts. Studies could compare and contrast the effects of team familiarity in routine task environments with the effects in innovative and less structured task environments.

Future research could explore how greater ambiguity in work environments influences teamwork processes. For example, it is known that team familiarity aids "coordination and co-operation among team members but may limit the diversity of the team's knowledge and experience, which can be detrimental to creative performance" (Sosa & Marles, 2013, 14). Once teams lock in their teamwork processes through a high level of team familiarity, they may not be able to see an alternative, more innovative way of managing their collaborative processes. Yet, other highly familiar teams might be routinely producing creative solutions in a structured way, for example in performing arts and tourism events. Therefore, studies could investigate this puzzle. However, it must be considered that any benefits might be more or less salient depending on team tasks.

Moreover, future research could advance understanding of negative and counterproductive effects of team familiarity in certain contexts. A potential counterproductive effect of highly familiar teams in innovation and creative task environments might be that teams might converge to *groupthink*; that is, team members tend to conform, resulting in reduced discussion and an unwillingness to challenge existing ideas and knowledge (Janis, 1972). In creative teams with high levels of team familiarity, this can lead to the generation of a lower number of innovative ideas as team members' knowledge tends to homogenize—in contrast, more diverse ideas and innovative perspectives may be likely to evolve when creative teams have lower levels of familiarity (Guimera et al., 2005).

6.   Conclusion and implications for HRM practices

This paper reviewed the literature on team familiarity using a mixed-method literature review with a combination of data extraction, VOSviewer synthesis of key hotspots and qualitative thematic analysis. The team familiarity literature has increased significantly over the past

decade, gaining momentum from 2012 across multidisciplinary fields, particularly in health and management research. The findings of our qualitative literature review are as follows:

First, we show that the existing team familiarity literature lack of theoretical conceptualizations. If studies draw on theoretical underpinnings, they use social-cognition theories, predominantly TMS theory and social learning. To advance the theoretical underpinnings of the team familiarity phenomenon, studies could theorize on team relationships, and the development of social roles and team formation. In addition, the use of homophily theory and uncertainty reduction theory may provide additional insights into the influence of team familiarity.

Second, we find that "time" is the key antecedent to team familiarity. Yet, we also show that existing studies remain vague in defining "*how long it takes to get familiar*" and scarcely discuss "*how time is filled*". Thus, we propose that future research could enhance conceptualizations on "time" in the context of team familiarity.

Third, our analysis shows that existing studies focus on reporting positive performance-related outcomes of team familiarity, whereas outcomes that enhance relations and wellbeing are not considered. Thus, we propose advancing knowledge on positive social outcomes at both group and individual levels. Further, in terms of outcomes, we propose that future research could engage in critical discussions on *negative outcomes* and potential U-shaped developments.

Fourth, we show that team familiarity enhances team effectiveness, performance, and productivity in routine and standardized task work environments. Surprisingly, we also reveal a gap in understanding whether team familiarity leads to the same positive outcomes in less structured and more ambiguous environments. Thus, we propose advancing understanding of how team familiarity interrelates with innovative work contexts and less structured task environments. Our proposed agenda suggests a need for a more holistic review of team familiarity, perhaps by using longitudinal and qualitative studies to enable consideration of both positive and negative outcomes associated with team familiarity and whether a curvilinear relationship exists.

HRM practice recognizes the importance of team work to organizational success, thus a we propose for future research to focus on the factors that enhance team performance. Managers are encouraged to allocate staff to teams in a manner that optimizes team effectiveness and efficiency for the context in which the team works. In addition, HRM practitioners may benefit from the knowledge that research on team familiarity is replete with positive outcomes in situations of routine, stability, and standardized tasks. However, when recruiting or coaching teams towards innovation, teams with high team familiarity might be less desirable. Hence, we suggest that HR managers should be alert to the possibility that there may be a tipping point where the positive effects of team familiarity diminish.

We suggest that different results may be reported in diverse work contexts. For example, performance outcomes might vary for routine versus innovative tasks and team familiarity might even be a "boon for routines and bane for innovation". Even in the context of crisis management, while team familiarity is commonly accepted as one of the important criteria for achieving positive outcomes (King, 2002), prolonged team familiarity can affect the ability of

teams to make and undertake creative and innovative actions (Sieweke & Zhao, 2015). Our study highlighted the importance of contextual and cultural knowledge to manage team familiarity for better and more sustainable team effectiveness and performance. Organizations with familiar teams can gain numerous benefits such as enhanced team success, enhanced team coordination and management, enhanced patient safety, task efficiencies, and reduced errors (Sieweke & Zhao, 2015). In changing team memberships, HR managers should consider the impact on team familiarity and on the effectiveness and efficiency of team performance.

The main purpose of our review is to provide an overview of how the concept of team familiarity has been examined in management and team literature. In our description of findings, we tried to stay as objective as possible and communicate the key research themes of team familiarity studies. Accordingly, this paper is both informed and limited by the previous studies of team familiarity. For example, given the diagnostic nature of review work, the findings and recommendations might be largely consistent with what the broad team literature has suggested. In a related matter, what is needed in the future direction are generally similar in terms of issues that team scholars have long suggested, such as understanding complexities involving time (McGrath, 1991), task characteristics (Mathieu et al., 2017), and curvilinear dynamics (De Dreu, 2006; Rapp et al., 2014).

The limitations in this study offer research opportunities. To sample our literature data, we chose keywords including dyad familiarity, triad familiarity, employee familiarity, small world networks, and co-worker familiarity. Given the purpose of our review, this restriction on the keywords was necessary to provide a clear reflection of the team familiarity literature. However, this might have neglected other related and interesting concepts discussed in the team literature such as team development, team entrainment, and team tenure. Using a more diverse set of keywords may have extended the present study and might have provided additional insights into the literature. In a related matter, our understanding of the evolution of the term "team familiarity" may not be clear as we did not use co-citation analysis to explicitly understand the conceptualization or origins of team familiarity (e.g., Huckman et al., 2009).

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