Reflection-Induced Monitoring in Efficacious Short-Term Project Teams

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This study explored the link between team efficacy and team monitoring, focusing on the role of team reflection in short-term teams. Data was gathered purposely from 75 teams participating in a three-month project through survey questionnaires. Results revealed how team reflection enhanced the perceived efficacy of teams to improve the monitoring behavior of short-term project teams. Building on the social cognitive theory, this study contributes to the debate concerning how emergent states enhance team processes in modern, time-limited teams by examining the hitherto unexplored linkages. Addressing this critical issue will enable teams and change leaders to effectively channel team efficacy to enhance reflection-induced team monitoring.

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Introduction

Modern organizations maintain competitiveness, responsiveness, and adaptability by forming self-managed functional sub-units or teams that operate in an interdependent structure, and share accountability to attain a common goal (Gupta & Karve, 2020). A team's response is influenced by the members' collective perception of their capacity to accomplish any task(s), often referred to as team efficacy (Rapp et al., 2014). Gully et al. (2002) distinguished between team and collective efficacy, but many researchers have discussed collective efficacy in team settings (Elms et al., 2023; Rapp et al., 2014). Although we focus on team efficacy in line with Gully and colleagues' (2002) definition, we employ both of these terms interchangeably in the present research. Elms et al. (2023) stated that collective efficacy has an implied effect on group functioning. However, too much efficacy results in overconfidence hurting team performance (Audia et al. 2000). Monitor can attenuate these adverse effects by en-

hancing coordination within teams (Marks & Panzer, 2004). However, excessive monitoring erodes trust, instills insecurity, and diminishes member autonomy, threatening positive team dynamics (Magpili & Pazos, 2017). Despite advancements in team interventions, underperforming teams persist in organizations (Burns & Sorensen, 2024), with eight in ten teams underperforming due to collective dysfunctions (Behbahani, 2024).

Team reflection enhances efficacy beliefs by promoting better knowledge transfer, information processing, cohesion, and adaptation (Schmutz et al., 2018). It creates a positive atmosphere, increases resilience, enhances control, and improves problem-focused strategies (Konradt et al., 2021; Talat & Riaz, 2020). It also encourages hopelessness and evaluates critical resources qualitatively and quantitatively (Wang et al., 2022; Otte et al., 2018). According to Gupta et al. (2022), reflection enables teams to anticipate possibilities for action in high-pressure work environments. Considering the short turnaround times of short-term teams, monitoring behaviors need to be reinforced by team reflection as they progress toward goal achievement. Although team dynamics research recognizes that team efficacy and monitoring improve performance, little is known about how reflection affects monitoring in efficacious short-term teams.

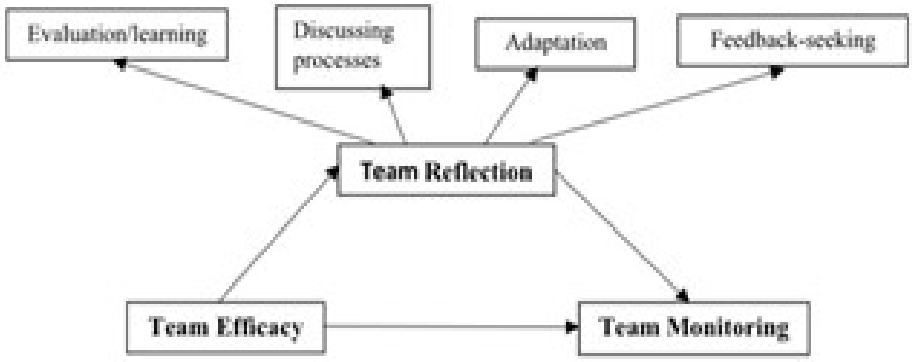
Theory Building & Hypothesis Specification

The present research explains the proposed conceptual model (Fig. 1) on the assumptions of social cognitive theory (SCT). SCT, when applied to a group level, helps teams develop shared beliefs about their task goals (Elms et al., 2023). This research empirically demonstrates that cognitive development occurs during reflection in short-term teams, regulating their efficacy and orienting towards tangible behaviors such as monitoring. This research adds to the knowledge of team efficacy's functional value by measuring its manifestation in the form of team monitoring, which occurs when teams are in action mode. It suggests team reflection as a prerequisite for team monitoring in short-term project teams, bridging the gap between team efficacy and monitoring.

Team Efficacy & Team Monitoring

Team efficacy is a shared confidence of a team in completing a task (Gully et al., 2002). High team efficacy coordinates better and outperforms those with poor efficacy (Myers, 2004). Monitoring behavior is critical for improving bonding, minimizing errors, and facilitating coordination (De Jong & Elfring, 2010). Li et al. (2017) found that monitoring behaviors such as tracking member actions and providing backups improves performance. Teams with low collective efficacy often struggle to monitor behaviors due to reduced trust and bonding (Elms et al., 2023). This lack of trust leads to inadequate communication, coordination, and oversight, resulting in flaws and a failure to adjust to evolving situations (Maynard et al., 2021; Hollenbeck et al., 2012). It implies that teams with high perceived collective efficacy are expected to moni-

Fig. 1 Conceptual Model



Source: Authors' conception

tor the performance behavior of members to ensure the team's success. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis (H_1): Team efficacy positively impacts team monitoring.

Team Efficacy & Team Reflection

High levels of collective efficacy foster collective reflection among members and take conscious steps towards improvement, proving to be a stronger predictor of their performance than individual member efficacy (Stajkoviæ et al., 2009). Team reflection, a component of team process improvement, has also been linked to higher team performance (Weidow & Konradt, 2010). The belief in the team's potential may encourage members to set more challenging goals, which in turn creates a continuous cycle of goal setting, reflection, and revision that improves performance and helps them to identify areas for improvement. Thus, reflective practices within the team are positively impacted by perceptions of collective efficacy. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis (H_{2a}): Team efficacy positively impacts team reflection.

Team Reflection & Team Monitoring

During reflection, members assess and adjust their short-term objectives, aspirations, methods, and work styles. (Schmutz et al., 2018). Such an assessment approach might serve as a precursor to effective monitoring as it supplies the necessary shared understandings for tracking growth and making informed choices (Ginkel et al., 2009; Marks & Panzer, 2004). Reflective assessment of earlier performance episodes serves as the foundation for assessing current performance (Rapp et al., 2014). For example, Li et al. (2017) observed that

If teams fail to engage in regular reflective practices, then they may become disoriented, confused, and inefficient, consequently, downgrading their performance.

when teams engage in regular reflective sessions, they are more inclined to increase their regulatory efforts, especially in situations where past performance levels have been lower. Thus, team reflection and monitoring are critical processes for team improvement (Lenka et al., 2016) and overall, these arguments imply that team reflection can encourage more monitoring behaviors in response to performance issues, which may increase the team's effectiveness. Thus, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis (H_{2b}): Team reflection positively impacts team monitoring.

Mediating Role of Team Reflection

Team reflection is needed to achieve effectiveness as it allows members to create a shared mental model of goals, tasks, and strategies (Tasca, 2021; Ginkel et al., 2009). If teams fail to engage in regular reflective practices, then they may become disoriented, confused, and inefficient, consequently, downgrading their performance. Schippers et al. (2014) noted that poor reflection results in lost opportunities for critical assessment, identifying areas for improvement and strategy modification.

In group behavior research, the social cognitive theory states that team reflection encourages self-control, interpersonal development, collective mindset, and flexibility among members (Bandura, 2020). It also facilitates the team in evaluating prior performance, making necessary modifications, and internalizing lessons learned so that experiences may be transformed into productive actions. For effective monitoring behaviors, the team has to be aware of its potential, opportunities and limitations. Reflection contributes to this cognition by orienting the team's efficacy beliefs with actuality and allowing them to critically evaluate its performance and build strategies for continuous monitoring. Thus, the mediational effect of reflection might demonstrate that the team's efficacy will lead to successful monitoring behaviors, principally through the process of reflection. This process can act as the self-control mechanism required to channel the team's confidence into actionable steps. Thus, when a team's efficacy is strong, reflection will encourage the team to examine its actions which can foster effective monitoring in short-term teams (Fig. 1). Therefore, we posit that:

Hypothesis (H_3): Team reflection positively mediates the relationship between team efficacy and team monitoring.

Sample Profile

This section describes the profile of valid samples acquired after data cleaning. The data cleaning procedure has been described in the Data Analysis section. A large number of samples (n=324) represented males (57%) compared to females (43%). All students were in the age cluster of 20-26 years (100%). The majority of them were fresh graduates (68%) while some of them had prior work experience (32%) of 1 to 2 years. Every team consisted of a minimum one female

member. Teams were formed with diverse expertise in each team.

Task

Teams were tasked with creating a training calendar for a fictional film production company, with the goal of presenting their proposal to top management for budget approval after three months. The first month's work involved conducting a training need analysis and identifying the organization's future business plans and training requirements for various levels. In the next month, a detailed training schedule and programs were discussed, including the target audience, potential trainers, methodologies, learning styles, evaluation strategies, budget, return on investment, and implementation costs. The closing month involved multiple reflection meetings to ensure the calendar's comprehensiveness and alignment with the organization's requirements. Consequently, teams presented their projects to the strategic leadership team, who provided feedback on processes, dynamics, challenges, and lessons learned, and announced the reward.

Task constraints included daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, semi-annual, and annual planning, designing detailed training modules, exercises, evaluation plans, and budgets for various levels, roles and competencies which later had a bearing on the company's expansion plans. Once a member joins the team, they cannot change or leave until the project's completion (this ensures uniformity in the proportion of manpower resources across all teams). Teams were required to submit reports by a specified deadline, and any member could be summoned to defend the proposal, thereby increasing pressure and reducing social loafing. It was announced that the best calendar award would be offered in the form of points that would place the team in the top band.

Data Collection

Data was gathered in three waves to shrink the impact of common method bias (CMB) (Podsakoff et al., 2024). 108 teams were formed by 432 students registered in the fourth trimester of a master's in management program at 2-tier Indian business school that specialized in executive and postgraduate program. Student teams reduce the risk of inconsistent results (Eddy et al., 2013). The efficacy of each team was measured one week following the project, team reflection at the end of the second phase and team monitoring at the conclusion of the project. It was assumed that the team's mental model (TMM) will develop during the interaction phase which will keep evolving till the end of the project. The survey involved two online forms with two sections, with the main research variables concealed to avoid priming. Respondents' demographics included name, email address, age, gender, work experience, and team name. Team efficacy items were in the second section of the first form. The second form included team reflection and monitoring items. Online surveys were utilized to minimize missing data and blank spaces, offering ease of data collection (Evans & Mathur, 2005), preservation, and sustainability

compared to paper pencil methods. Respondents provided their consent for an online survey, which was voluntary and not tied to any incentives.

Measures

The study used standardized psychometric scales to measure constructs, with all 43 items assessed on a Likert scale of 1 to 6, with 1 = strongly disagree and 6 = strongly agree. Team efficacy, the independent variable, was computed using Salanova et al.'s 4-item (2003) perceived collective efficacy scale. An example item was, "I feel confident about the capability of my group to perform the tasks very well", with Cronbach's alpha of 0.77. They standardized the measures on teams working on intense deadlines. Team reflection, mediator, was assessed through Schipper et al.'s (2007) 34-item scale because the items capture deep levels of team reflection and were approved by the organizational psychologists and industry experts. The measure had 4 negatively oriented items. An example item was, "The methods used by the team to get the job done are often discussed", with Cronbach's alpha of 0.81. Team monitoring, the dependent variable, was assessed using De Jong and Elfring's (2010) 5-item scale. An example item was "In this team we check whether everyone meets their obligations to the team" with Cronbach's alpha of 0.78. Team size, structure, age and gender diversity were controlled as they can influence the dynamics of the team (Dimotakis et al., 2012; Jehn et al., 2010; Zenger & Lawrence, 1989).

Data Analysis

The data analysis involved screening for invalid responses. Fourteen flawed team-level responses from the first wave and eighteen from the second wave were eliminated from the study. The third wave received usable 75 team responses with team sizes ranging from 3 to 6 members per team achieving 70% response rate. Four negatively orientated items were reverse-coded. Descriptive statistics, factor loadings of each item (Appendix 1) and internal consistency of the measures were calculated using IBM SPSS version 26. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to compute the model's fitness, construct reliability and validity and path coefficients of the hypothesized relationships were estimated using structural equation modelling (SEM) applying analysis of moment structures (AMOS) with version 21 software. The statistical impact of the hypotheses was confirmed through bootstrap estimates.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 displays descriptive statistics including mean values of responses for each construct, standard deviation and Pearson's correlation coefficient. The correlation between the constructs was significant (0.01 level,2-tailed).

Level of Analysis

The study used within-group and intra-class correlations to estimate data for team level analysis. Results showed r_{wg}

values above 0.70, ICC1 values between 0.23 and 0.30 and ICC2 between 0.75 to 0.86 indicating data appropriateness for team-level analysis (Bliese, 2000)

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Mean	Standard deviation	TE	RF	MN
TE	5.17	0.45	**0.77**		
RF	5.08	0.34	0.67**	**0.81**	
MN	5.07	0.51	0.46**	0.62**	**0.78**

Note: TE = Team efficacy; RF = Team reflection; MN = Team monitoring; N=324; **Correlation was significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed); Diagonal bold values represent Cronbach's alpha.t

Common Method Bias (CMB)

The study addressed CMB using precautionary measures, optimizing scale length and item intermixing. The confirmatory factor analysis based on the unmeasured latent variable technique (CFA-UMLV) assessed its impact, revealing no significant difference in fit between the original measurement model and the UMLV model, and no multicollinearity issues (O'Brien, 2007).

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Convergent validity was achieved through acceptable factor loadings (Appendix 1) and average variance extracted (AVE) above 0.5 and composite reliability (CR) above 0.7 (Hair et al., 2019). Construct reliability was confirmed acceptable CR and Cronbach's alpha scores (Table 1) above 0.70 (Hair et al., 2019). Construct validity was established by confirming convergent validity and discriminant validity. Table 2 shows CR and AVE values and sufficient discriminant validity between the three constructs displaying the correlation matrix of constructs' correlations, with diagonal values representing the square root of AVE.

Measurement model's (3-factor structure) fit showed that minimum discrepancy function by degrees of freedom (CMIN/df) = 2.5, goodness-of-fit (GFI) = 0.93, comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.96, and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.05, whereas when the model was altered to two-factor structure, the fit was distorted as CMIN/df increased to 6.9, GFI decreased to 0.72, CFI shrank to 0.78, and RMSEA increased to 0.11 (Table 3). This demonstrated that the indices complied with Hair et al. (2019) and Hu and Bentler (1999) recommendations. Thus, the proposed conceptual model was sufficiently valid and reliable.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypotheses were tested by examining the beta coefficients and significance level of each path in SEM (Table 4). It was found that team efficacy did not directly impact team monitoring ($\beta = 0.07$, $p>0.05$), rejecting hypothesis H_1. Yet, team efficacy had a direct positive impact on team reflection ($\beta= 0.67$, $p<0.05$), supporting H_{2a}. Team reflection had a direct positive impact on team monitoring ($\beta = 0.57$, $p<0.05$), supporting H_{2b}. Further, team

Table 2 Measurement Model Validity Results

Constructs	CR	AVE	Discriminant validity		
			TE	RF	MN
TE	0.77	0.59	0.768		
RF	0.92	0.54	0.686	0.734	
MN	0.81	0.61	0.573	0.510	0.781

Note: TE = Team efficacy; RF = Team reflection; MN = Team monitoring; CR = Composite reliability;
AVE = Average variance.

Table 3 Measurement Model Fit Indices

Measurement models	CMIN	df	GFI	CFI	RMSEA
Study's measurement model3-factor structure (TE→RF→TM)	2297.877	900	93	96	0.05
Alternate measurement model2-factor structure (TE→RF)	2486.42	360	72	78	0.11

Note: Chi-square or minimum discrepancy function by degrees of freedom = CMIN/df, Goodness-of-fit = GFI, Comparative fit index = CFI, Root mean square error of approximation = RMSEA, TE = Team efficacy, RF = Team reflection, MN = Team monitoring.

efficacy exerted a positive indirect effect on team monitoring through the mediating effect of team reflection ($\beta = 0.38$, $p<0.05$) supporting H_3.

Table 4. Hypotheses Test Results

Hypotheses	B	SE	t-statistic	Bootstrap estimates				Results
				Boot_Std. coefficient	Boot _SE	Boot _LBCI	Boot _UBCI	
H_1 (TE→TM)	0.07 (p=0.5800)	0.141	0.56	0.078	0.144	-0.222	0.350	Not supported
H_{2a} (TE→RF)	0.672***	0.064	7.77	0.501	0.100	0.355	0.721	Supported
H_{2b} (RF→TM)	0.573***	0.190	4.596	0.875	0.206	0.428	1.243	Supported
Total effect	0.517***	0.118	4.365					
Indirect effect H_3 (TE→RF→TM)		-		0.385	0.090	0.203	0.562	Supported

Note: ***p<0.05; TE = Team efficacy; RF = Team reflection; MN = Team monitoring.

Discussion

Findings reveal that team reflection is a crucial mediator to consider when an organization seeks to improve the effectiveness of team monitoring. Hypothesis H_1 results implied that team efficacy does not directly impact team monitoring, despite the fact that both are prerequisites for team performance (Porter, 2005; Gully et al., 2002). DeRue et al. (2010) emphasize the importance of aligning team efficacy beliefs to ensure effective monitoring practices and improve team functioning.

Team efficacy does not directly impact team monitoring, despite the fact that both are prerequisites for team performance.

The H_{2a} results confirmed that team efficacy directly impacts team reflection, indicating that confidence in competence encourages interaction, discussions, and participation in reflective meetings (Staples & Webster, 2007). Li et al (2021) noted that team reflection involves goal assessment, cooperation tracking, and performance pattern identification, indicating the direct influence of team reflection on team monitoring, supporting H_{2b}.

H_3 suggests that team reflection mediates the link between team efficacy and team monitoring. The training calendar task, involving reward announcements, motivated teams to compete objectively and qualitatively for goal achievement through reflection meetings. Participation in reflection increased their shared understanding of tasks, facilitated tracking task progress, noting members' style of work, effective coordination, influenced team mental model and promoted identity development. It also enables detailed analysis of areas of concern or improvement zones and future performance planning (Eddy et al., 2013), supporting the idea that team efficacy indirectly impacts monitoring success. Highly efficacious teams who neglect to reflect on their own performance are disoriented and, consequently, are less likely to see the value of team monitoring, which limits the opportunities for adjustments or improvements. Such teams jeopardize the team's success by destroying their interpersonal bonds and using monitoring only as a fault-finding tool.

Highly efficacious teams who neglect to reflect on their own performance are disoriented and, consequently, are less likely to see the value of team monitoring.

Consistent with social cognitive theory reflection translated the team's collective beliefs into effective actions ensuring conformity to team objectives. Thus, reflection emerged as an essential link in the chain that transformed team efficacy into vigilant performance monitoring and ultimately enhanced short-term team effectiveness. This process-focused finding widens the scope of SCT by implying that efficacy requires team reflection to be entirely manifested behaviorally in team scenarios.

Theoretical Implications

As a team matures, in-group monitoring may decline as members gain confidence in their collective success, leading to increased team efficacy. Regular team reflection can improve team functioning by converting efficacy into productive actions such as effective team monitoring. However, determining optimal conditions for reflection is crucial, as overemphasizing reflection can hinder action and underemphasizing it can retard effectiveness. Balancing reflection and action are essential for maintaining equilibrium.

Practical Implications

To counteract the negative effects of excessive efficacy and monitoring and achieve a balance between the two within a team, it is essential that teams engage in regular reflection. Regular reflection reduces work-related stress (Chen, 2018) and fosters continuous improvement. A culture of reflection and monitoring can boost productivity and foster a learning organization. It can enhance conflict resolution, team engagement, and satisfaction. Therefore, leaders, negotiators, diffusers, and dispute settlers can moderate intra-team reflection for optimal team functioning.

Limitations & Future Research Opportunities

This research limits itself due to random team formation and a self-reported design, suggesting future scholars should consider multi-source studies to better understand the interplay of competencies and project value in time-constrained, volatile and evolving team environment.

Conclusion

The study reveals a complicated link between team efficacy and monitoring, with reflection playing a crucial mediator role in drawing on the assumptions of social cognitive theory. This enhances knowledge of how a short-term team ought to function.

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Appendix 1 Factor Loadings and Model Fit Indices

Constructs	Item Code	Factor loadings	CMIN	Df	GFI	CFI	RMSEA
Team efficacy (TE)	TE1	0.62	2.767	2	0.95	0.97	0.03
	TE2	0.68					
	TE3	0.67					
	TE4	0.72					
Team reflection (RF)	RF1	0.68	1723.461	627	0.90	0.93	0.04
	RF2	0.63					
	RF3	0.60					
	RF4	0.64					
	RF5	0.68					
	RF6	0.66					
	RF7	0.71					
	RF8	0.65					
	RF9	0.63					
	RF10	0.69					
	RF11	0.68					
	RF12	0.54					
	RF13	0.66					
	RF14	0.62					
	RF15	0.64					
	RF16	0.61					
	RF17	0.67					
	RF18	0.64					
	RF19	0.62					
	RF20	0.66					
	RF21	0.63					
	RF22	0.69					
	RF23	0.66					
	RF24	0.65					
	RF25	0.62					
	RF26	0.68					
	RF27	0.63					
	RF28	0.65					
	RF29	0.68					
	RF30	0.58					
	RF31	0.62					
	RF32	0.64					
	RF33	0.66					
	RF34	0.61					
Team monitoring (MN)	TM1	0.64	7.633	5	0.94	0.95	0.04
	TM2	0.81					
	TM3	0.58					
	TM4	0.75					
	TM5	0.61					