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From tensions to synergies in diverse teams – the diversity wisdom concept

Od napięć do synergii w zróżnicowanych zespołach – koncepcja mądrości różnorodności

Keywords:

Wisdom, diversity wisdom,
diversity management, diverse
teams

Abstract: This article presents the first stage of a broader research program dedicated to conceptualizing and operationalizing diversity wisdom. The article aims to identify the constituent elements of diversity wisdom and determine the mechanisms of its impact on transforming diversity barriers into organizational synergies. Previous approaches to wisdom were based primarily on rationalist perspectives, such as deep rationality theory, and pragmatic approaches, such as the Berlin wisdom paradigm. In contrast to traditional intercultural competencies focusing on adaptation to differences, diversity wisdom represents a meta-ability for proactively transforming diversity from a potential source of barriers into a strategic resource. This study develops these traditions by proposing an operational definition of diversity wisdom as an individual ability integrating cognitive, emotional, moral-normative, and regulatory dimensions. This construction captures key characteristics of effective functioning under uncertainty and cultural complexity: behavioral flexibility, practical reflection, perspective-taking ability, empathy, and emotional regulation.

The article is based on a systematic literature review comprising 60 scientific publications and qualitative content analysis, which enabled the identification of thematic codes and their association with dimensions of diversity wisdom. Based on this, a taxonomy model of diversity wisdom was developed, providing a systematized framework of its dimensions. Additionally, a conceptual model illustrates how diversity wisdom enables the transformation of barriers into synergies in diversity management contexts.

Słowa kluczowe:

mądrość, mądrość
różnorodności, zarządzanie
różnorodnością, zróżnicowane
zespoły

The critical charge of metaphoricity of this concept is addressed by emphasizing that the central goal of the research is its operationalization, enabling empirical testing in practice. The article thus represents the first step in transitioning from metaphor to a conceptually grounded and measurable construct, preparing the foundation for empirical validation in subsequent research stages. Further stages of the research program will include qualitative validation through case studies and the development of measurement tools.

Streszczenie: Artykuł prezentuje pierwszy etap szerszego programu badawczego poświęconego konceptualizacji i operacjonalizacji *diversity wisdom*. Celem artykułu jest identyfikacja elementów składowych *diversity wisdom* oraz określenie mechanizmów jej oddziaływania na przekształcanie barier różnorodności w synergie organizacyjne. Dotychczasowe ujęcia mądrości opierały się przede wszystkim na perspektywach racjonalistycznych, takich jak teoria głębokiej racjonalności, oraz pragmatycznych, takich jak berliński paradygmat mądrości. W przeciwieństwie do tradycyjnych kompetencji interkulturowych koncentrujących się na adaptacji do różnic, *diversity wisdom* reprezentuje metazdolność proaktywnego przekształcania różnorodności z potencjalnego źródła barier w zasób strategiczny. Niniejsze badanie rozwija te tradycje, proponując operacyjną definicję mądrości różnorodności jako indywidualnej zdolności integrującej wymiary poznawcze, emocjonalne, moralno-normatywne i regulacyjne. Konstrukcja ta pozwala uchwycić kluczowe cechy skutecznego funkcjonowania w warunkach niepewności i złożoności kulturowej: elastyczność działania, refleksję praktyczną, zdolność zmiany perspektywy, empatię oraz regulację emocjonalną. Podstawą artykułu jest systematyczny przegląd literatury obejmujący 60 publikacji naukowych oraz jakościowa analiza treści artykułów, które umożliwiły identyfikację kodów tematycznych i ich powiązanie z wymiarami mądrości różnorodności. Na tej podstawie opracowano model taksonomii mądrości różnorodności, stanowiący usystematyzowaną ramę jej wymiarów. Ponadto przedstawiono model koncepcyjny ilustrujący, w jaki sposób mądrość różnorodności umożliwia przekształcanie barier w synergie w kontekście zarządzania różnorodnością. Krytyczny zarzut metaforyczności tego pojęcia zostaje odparty poprzez podkreślenie, że centralnym celem badań jest jego operacjonalizacja, umożliwiająca empiryczne testowanie w praktyce. Artykuł stanowi zatem pierwszy krok w przejściu od metafory do koncepcyjnie zakorzenionego i mierzalnego konstruktu, przygotowujący grunt pod empiryczną walidację w kolejnych etapach badawczych. Kolejne etapy programu badawczego będą obejmować walidację jakościową poprzez studia przypadków oraz opracowanie narzędzi pomiarowych.

JEL:

M12, M14

Introduction

Globalization, dynamic technological development, increasing human mobility, and market openness cause diversity in workplaces and immediate environments to become increasingly common and visible [Bogilović et al., 2021; Kumar, Saxena, 2025]. This encompasses not only cultural differences arising from geographical or ethnic origins, but also axiological, identity-based, religious, cognitive, and thinking-style diversification [Harrison, Klein, 2007; van Knippenberg, Mell, 2016]. This multidimensionality of diversity is increasingly present in professional environments.

The literature indicates that team diversity can generate two types of collaboration dynamics. In the first case, it is a source of barriers [Rachmad, 2022]. It leads to relational dysfunctions such as lack of trust, interpersonal conflicts, decreased engagement [Reinert et al., 2024], or difficulties achieving consensus [Joshi, Roh, 2009]. In the second, it constitutes creative capital, fostering innovation, solution quality, and team learning [Page, 2007], which translates into relational efficiency, high levels of engagement, and the initiation of innovative solutions.

Existing research focuses on adaptive competencies, namely skills for dealing with differences and minimizing their negative effects [Reinert et al., 2024]. However, they do not explain the mechanisms that transform differences into competitive advantages. Understanding these mechanisms is crucial from both theoretical and practical perspectives. The identified research gap concerns the lack of models explaining how to transform diversity from a potential source of dysfunction into a strategic organizational resource.

Within the presented study, the author proposes that the ability to transform diversity from a source of barriers into creative potential can be conceptualized as an element of a broader construct termed Diversity Wisdom (DW). In contrast to traditional intercultural competencies that focus on adaptation to differences, DW represents a meta-ability integrating cognitive, emotional, and behavioral processes to enable proactive utilization of diversity potential. The key difference lies in the orientation toward creating synergies instead of reducing conflicts. Where intercultural competencies help “cope with” diversity, DW allows organizations to “utilize” it as a source of innovation, creativity, and organizational resilience.

The research problem, therefore, concerns the lack of knowledge about the constituent elements of DW and the mechanisms of its impact that allow the transformation of barriers arising from diversity into collaboration capital.

This study constitutes the first stage of a broader research program aimed at developing and validating the concept of DW as a meta-ability for transforming diversity from a potential source of barriers into a strategic organizational resource. In this initial, exploratory stage, the author focuses on defining DW and revealing its constituent

elements and mechanisms of action. Subsequent program stages include empirical validation of the construct using case study methodology, development of measurement tools, and testing the effectiveness of developmental interventions in practice.

The presented research aims to conceptualize DW by identifying its constituent elements and explaining the mechanisms through which it transforms diversity-related barriers into collaboration synergies in teams characterized by cultural, axiological, and cognitive diversification.

The main objective is operationalized through two specific objectives:

- Descriptive – Identification and definition of DW constituent elements,
- Explanatory – Development of a conceptual model illustrating the role of DW in the process of transforming collaboration barriers into organizational synergies.

Research questions:

1. What elements constitute the Diversity Wisdom construct?
2. What does the conceptual model of relationships between Diversity Wisdom, collaboration barriers, and team outcomes look like, considering the influence of moderators such as degree of diversity and contact quality?

Given the novelty of the Diversity Wisdom construct and the limited integration of related concepts in the existing literature, the study adopts an exploratory-conceptual research design. The structure of this article reflects the logical progression from problem to method to findings. The identified research gap, the absence of operational models explaining how diversity is transformed into organizational synergies, directly generates both research questions. The first question, concerning the constituent elements of DW, is addressed through systematic literature review, which maps concepts across theoretical traditions. The second question, concerning the mechanisms linking DW to team outcomes, is addressed through thematic analysis and axial coding, which synthesize these elements into a conceptual model. The findings are subsequently presented in two corresponding sections: the Diversity Wisdom Taxonomy, which answers the first research question, and the Diversity Wisdom Impact Model, which answers the second.

Literature Review

The Two Faces of Diversity

Diversity constitutes a permanent feature of contemporary organizations, encompassing demographic, cultural, linguistic, professional, competency-based, cognitive, and axiological diversification [Roberson, 2019; Kumar, Saxena, 2025]. Its intensification

results from global migration, transnational flows of work and knowledge, digitalization, and the increasing visibility of previously marginalized groups [Mor Barak, 2022].

The impact of diversity in organizations is fundamentally ambivalent [van Dijk et al., 2012]. On one hand, diversification can generate barriers to cooperation and innovation [Bogilović et al., 2021], raising coordination costs. Heterogeneity of communication codes increases the probability of misinterpretations [Stahl et al., 2010], while identity differences and prejudices weaken organizational social capital, leading to slowed decision-making processes and increased risk of conflicts [Knippenberg, Schippers, 2007].

On the other hand, diversity represents a significant strategic resource. It expands the pool of available information, enriches interpretive repertoires, and supports innovation and solution quality [Hapsari et al., 2019; Gomez, Berner, 2019]. Diverse teams possess a broader spectrum of heuristics and experiences, fostering risk identification and increasing resilience under uncertain conditions [Phillips et al., 2018]. The key to utilizing diversity potential is not passive acceptance but active management of its ambivalence through practices that reduce coordination costs and maximize value from different perspectives.

Wisdom: Philosophical Foundations and Conceptual Evolution

Wisdom has occupied a central place in philosophical reflection for centuries, undergoing significant evolution in understanding approaches. In ancient tradition, Socrates associated it with epistemic humility, that is, the awareness of ignorance and rejection of cognitive arrogance [Ryan, 1996; Whitcomb, 2010]. Other classical approaches emphasized epistemic accuracy, meaning adequacy of beliefs relative to what we actually know [Lehrer, Smith, 1996], or identified wisdom with extensive factual knowledge about the world and humanity [Nozick, 1989; Kekes, 1983]. Aristotle introduced the fundamental distinction between theoretical wisdom (*sophia*), which is related to understanding reality's principles, and practical wisdom (*phronesis*), which is understood as the ability to make sound judgments and live according to the good.

Contemporary approaches combine these traditions, emphasizing that none of the individual approaches is sufficient. The key discovery is recognizing that knowledge does not guarantee wisdom, just as awareness of ignorance alone does not exhaust its essence. Therefore, hybrid theories are being developed in which wisdom is perceived as a complex combination of reflectiveness, knowledge, ability for sound action, and moral attitude [Zagzebski, 1996; Tiberius, 2008].

Although general theories of wisdom provide solid philosophical foundations, the context of organizational diversity poses specific challenges requiring dedicated conceptualization. Traditional wisdom theories focus on individual cognitive processes and do not account for group dynamics characteristic of diverse teams. They do not

provide tools for integrating different but simultaneously justified perspectives (arising from different cultural contexts). Existing research on adaptive competencies in diverse environments such as intercultural competence [Deardorff, 2006], cultural intelligence [Earley, Ang, 2003], or global leadership [Mendenhall et al., 2018], focuses mainly on minimizing conflicts and adapting to differences. Approaches focusing on proactive transformation of diversity into organizational value are lacking. Finally, existing concepts do not explain the transition mechanisms from perceiving diversity as a source of barriers to utilizing it as a strategic resource.

DW represents a fundamentally different paradigm from previous approaches to functioning in diverse environments. It integrates different perspectives instead of seeking one “true” one, focuses on proactively transforming differences into advantages, and provides mechanisms for systematic transition from barriers to synergies. This represents a shift from reactive “diversity management” to proactive “wisdom-based diversity utilization.”

Theoretical Framework of the Study

The combination of epistemic depth (Deep Rationality Theory) and pragmatic orientation toward results provides theoretical foundations for conceptualizing DW as a meta-ability characterized by reflective awareness of one’s own cognitive limitations and openness to revising beliefs about diversity, as well as orientation toward practical transformation of diversity into organizational value.

In the organizational context, DW operationalizes through three key dimensions. Based on Deep Rationality Theory, the epistemic-cognitive dimension includes reflective awareness of one’s own cognitive limitations and stereotypes, epistemic humility understood as readiness to revise beliefs in the face of new evidence, and the ability to recognize and deconstruct cognitive biases toward diversity. The moral-emotional dimension integrates the ethical dimension with emotional regulation, encompassing empathy as the ability to understand different perspectives, emotional regulation enabling constructive functioning under uncertainty and complexity, and moral sensitivity to justice and inclusion issues. The dialogical-adaptive dimension focuses on practical transformation skills, including cognitive flexibility, the ability to change perspectives and action strategies, intercultural communication competencies, and building a super-ordinate identity integrating different groups around common goals.

Based on this, DW can be defined as a meta-ability for transforming diversity from potential barriers into organizational synergies, encompassing integrated cognitive, emotional, and behavioral processes that enable not only overcoming challenges arising from diversity, but also proactively utilizing it as a source of value and developmental advantage for teams and organizations. Thus understood, DW integrates cognitive

elements (reflective knowledge about diversity and mechanisms of its transformation), behavioral elements (communication and collaboration skills under diversity conditions), and motivational elements (orientation toward proactive utilization of diversity potential). In contrast to adaptive competencies that focus on adjusting to differences, DW emphasizes transformational utilization of diversity as a strategic resource.

Research Methodology

The choice of research methodology was directly determined by the nature of both research questions. The first research question, concerning the constituent elements of the DW construct, required systematic identification and synthesis of concepts dispersed across diverse theoretical traditions and empirical studies. No single theoretical source integrates these elements into a coherent framework, making a systematic literature review the most appropriate method for mapping the conceptual landscape. The second research question, concerning the model of relationships between DW, collaboration barriers, and team outcomes, required moving beyond identification toward relational synthesis, that is, explaining how identified elements interact and produce outcomes. This necessitated thematic analysis and axial coding as tools for constructing a conceptual model grounded in empirical evidence. The combination of SLR with qualitative content analysis thus directly mirrors the two-part structure of the research problem: identification followed by explanation.

To identify the constituent elements of DW and determine the mechanisms of their interaction in transforming collaboration barriers arising from diversity into organizational synergies, a systematic literature review (SLR) methodology combined with thematic analysis of source material was employed.

Thematic analysis was conducted in hybrid mode, combining deductive and inductive approaches. Some codes were defined deductively based on the adopted theoretical framework, while others emerged inductively from publication content. Subsequently, codes were grouped into categories corresponding to three DW dimensions: epistemic-cognitive, moral-emotional, and dialogical-adaptive.

Methodological rigor was ensured through transparent and documented source selection processes, standardization of coding procedures, and documentation of analytical decisions. Combining a broad theoretical foundation with rigorous qualitative analysis enabled obtaining a theoretically grounded conceptual framework for DW as a starting point for further research.

Source identification within SLR was preceded by pilot searching using general phrases concerning overcoming barriers in diverse teams (e.g., “multicultural collaboration barriers”, “overcoming intercultural barriers”, “diverse teams and collaboration”).

The search indicated publications of mainly practical-organizational character and revealed the risk of obtaining material with limited theoretical value. Consequently, the search strategy was modified, directing it toward terms describing cognitive, emotional, and behavioral processes and their functions in the context of cultural diversity and multicultural teams.

The proper search was conducted on 25 June 2025 in the Scopus and Web of Science (WoS) databases. The initial search scope covered publications from 2000 to 2025, with the possibility of including earlier studies considered fundamental for the development of the theoretical framework. Queries were formulated in the TITLE-ABS-KEY field in Scopus and in the ALL field in Web of Science, combining two main conceptual contexts (“cultural diversity” and “multicultural teams”) with keywords derived from the adopted theoretical framework. The filtering process was additionally limited by subject areas. In Scopus, the search was restricted to Social Sciences, Psychology, Business, Management and Accounting, and Economics. In Web of Science, the filtering included the categories Education, Psychology, Business Economics, and Social Sciences Other Topics. The publication selection process followed PRISMA 2020 (Table 1) guidelines and included systematic filtering stages. Initial searching yielded $N = 689$ records, subsequently filtered to $N = 513$ peer-reviewed articles, then $N = 477$ English-language publications, $N = 161$ publications from 2020–2025, and $N = 98$ publications after thematic area filtering.

The conducted abstract analysis for compliance with substantive criteria ultimately allowed the selection of $N = 60$ articles meeting the following inclusion criteria: (1) peer-reviewed scientific publications in article form, (2) English language, (3) publication period from 2020 onwards, (4) describing cognitive, emotional, or behavioral processes in the context of culturally, value-wise, or cognitively diverse teams, (5) relating studied processes to reducing collaboration barriers or improving team outcomes.

The analysis excluded popularizing works, texts focusing exclusively on organizational interventions without analyzing underlying processes, and studies focusing only on selected differences without the broader context of cultural, value-based, or cognitive diversity.

Qualitative analysis was conducted according to Braun and Clarke’s [2006] six-stage approach, adapted to DW research specificity. In the first stage, in-depth familiarization with the material was achieved through multiple readings of selected publications. The second stage involved initial hybrid coding. Some codes were defined deductively based on the theoretical framework, identifying superordinate codes: behavioral flexibility, practical reflection, perspective-changing ability, empathy, and emotional regulation. Simultaneously, inductive coding was applied, allowing additional codes to emerge from the content of the analyzed publications.

Table 1. Search strategy in the SLR procedure

Step	Criteria	Effect
Records identification from databases	Search string: (“cultural diversity” AND “perspective-taking”) OR (“cultural diversity” AND empathy) OR (“cultural diversity” AND “cognitive flexibility”) OR (“cultural diversity” AND “emotional regulation”) OR (“cultural diversity” AND “reflective practice”) OR (“multicultural teams” AND “reflective practice”) OR (“multicultural teams” AND “perspective-taking”) OR (“multicultural teams” AND empathy) OR (“multicultural teams” AND “cognitive flexibility”) OR (“multicultural teams” AND “emotional regulation”)	Scopus: N = 495 WoS: N = 194
Excluding records	Exclusion criteria: ▪ Non – peer – reviewed papers ▪ Non-English publications ▪ Publications before 2020 ▪ Non-specified research areas	Excluded: N = 176 N = 36 N = 316 N = 55
Excluding duplicates	Duplicate removal	Excluded: N = 10
Abstract and title screening	Inclusion criteria: (1) Peer-reviewed journal articles, (2) English language, (3) Published from 2020 onwards, (4) Address cognitive, emotional, or behavioral processes in culturally, cognitively, or value-diverse teams, (5) Link these processes to either reducing barriers to collaboration or improving team outcomes	Excluded: N = 38
Records included in review	Studies meeting all inclusion criteria	Final sample: N = 60

Source: own elaboration.

The coding process was conducted in two rounds to increase analysis reliability and minimize interpretational errors. In the first round, initial coding of the entire material was performed, applying both deductive codes derived from the theoretical framework and inductive codes emerging from publication content. A preliminary codebook was developed during this stage, containing operational definitions of each code and examples of coded fragments, which supported consistency in subsequent coding decisions. After completing the first pass through the material, the second round involved systematically revising all assigned codes, verifying their adequacy and consistency, and making necessary corrections and refinements. Additionally, a randomly selected 20% sample of the material was re-coded after two weeks to check coding stability over time. To further reduce potential coding bias, the coding process involved continuous comparison of coded fragments across publications to ensure consistent interpretation of categories. This approach increased interpretational consistency and transparency of the analytical process. As a result, seven research codes were identified: Empathy, Perspective Taking, Reflectiveness, Bias Recognition, Intercultural Communication, Emotion Regulation, and Superordinate Identity. In the third stage, thematic patterns were sought by grouping codes with similar characteristics. The fourth stage involved review and validation

of identified themes in terms of their internal consistency and clear boundaries between categories. In the fifth stage, final themes were defined and named, resulting in three superordinate DW dimensions. The sixth stage involved preparing the analysis report, which was presented in subsequent sections of the article.

In the next step, axial coding was applied, grouping the identified codes into three categories corresponding to theoretical DW dimensions: (1) epistemic-cognitive dimension (encompassing reflectiveness and bias recognition), (2) moral-emotional dimension (merging empathy and emotion regulation), and (3) dialogical-adaptive dimension (integrating perspective-taking ability, intercultural communication, and superordinate identity building). The grouping enabled direct reference of results to theoretical assumptions and capturing the spectrum of elements constituting the DW construct.

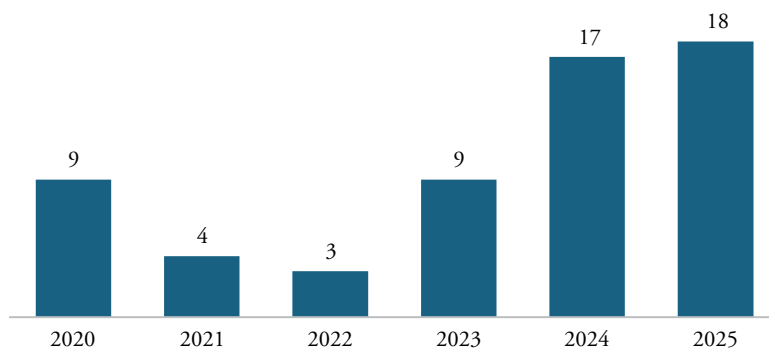
This research stage is exploratory and preparatory within the broader research program. Its aim is not full operationalization of the DW construct or its empirical validation, but identification of key constituent elements based on systematic literature analysis. The complexity of the studied construct justifies such a staged approach as a meta-ability and the need for solid theoretical foundations before proceeding to empirical verification in subsequent phases of the research program.

The limitation of the search to publications from 2020 to 2025 stems from the assumption that the most recent research best reflects contemporary organizational challenges related to increasing workplace diversity.

Bibliometric Characteristics of the Research Sample

The analyzed sample comprises 60 publications from 2020 to 2025, capturing the latest research trends in cognitive, emotional, and behavioral processes related to functioning in culturally diverse environments (Figure 1). The temporal distribution shows a clear upward trend in recent years, with most articles published in 2024 (17 publications, 28.3%) and 2025 (18 publications, 30.0%) constituting over half of the analyzed corpus.

As shown in Table 2, publications from 2020 show the highest bibliometric impact (204 total citations, average 22.7 per publication), while 2023 publications also show high indicators (122 total citations, average 13.5 per article). Citation distribution analysis reveals that most publications (46 articles, 76.7%) fall within the 0–4 citation range, reflecting the fresh character of a significant portion of the analyzed corpus. Simultaneously, the presence of several publications with high bibliometric impact (one each in the 45–49, 75–79, and 115–119 citation ranges) indicates the existence of key works that significantly influenced research development in the analyzed area and may constitute important reference points for DW conceptualization.

Figure 1. Number of analyzed publications by year

Source: own elaboration.

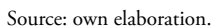
Table 2. Number of citations of the analyzed publications

Indicator	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Total
Number of publications	9	4	3	9	17	18	60
Average number of citations	22,7	6,3	4,7	13,5	1,5	0,3	6,6
Sum of citations	204	25	14	122	26	6	397

Source: own elaboration.

Analysis of 229 keywords reveals clear thematic patterns corresponding to the adopted theoretical framework, with the most frequent terms being “cultural diversity” (4.4%), “empathy” (2.6%), and “intercultural competence” (2.6%), “intercultural communication” (1.3%), and “ethnocultural empathy” (1.3%). A significant group also consists of terms related to educational contexts, including “education” and “higher education,” which reflects the important role of school and academic environments as natural settings for studying intercultural processes. This concentration on educational contexts is particularly valuable for this study, as educational environments are often characterized by high degrees of diversity and intensive group processes. The structure of keywords is presented in Figure 2.

The structure of keywords confirms the accuracy of the adopted search strategy and the relevance of the collected material for identifying DW constituent elements. The dominance of terms related to empathy, intercultural competencies, and intercultural communication corresponds directly to the theoretical dimensions of DW, particularly the moral-emotional and dialogical-adaptive dimensions. Simultaneously, the relatively minor representation of terms directly related to reflectiveness and cognitive processes may indicate a research gap in this area, which this study partially addresses by emphasizing the epistemic-cognitive dimension of DW.



Main Code (DW)	Working Definition for Coding
Recognition of Bias	Identifying and naming prejudices, stereotypes, or discriminatory ideologies in intercultural relations.
Intercultural Communication	Skills and attitudes of intercultural communication, including linguistic, cultural, and adaptive competencies.
Emotional Regulation	Conscious management of affect and emotional responses in intercultural interactions.
Superordinate Identity	Building a broad, inclusive identity that encompasses diverse groups and perspectives.

Source: own elaboration.

Empathy in the context of cultural diversity manifests as a multidimensional process encompassing cognitive understanding of perspectives and emotional co-experiencing. Research confirms its development through art courses and clinical simulations in medical education [Lahti et al., 2025; Shin et al., 2023; Vieten et al., 2023; Uddin et al., 2025], educational narratives [Ngema, Lange, 2020; Carcausto-Calla et al., 2025], multiculturalism in school [Egitim, Akaliyski, 2024] and “embodying otherness” in language learning [Li, Costa, 2023]. Empathy effectively counteracts exclusionary ideologies and bullying [Yi et al., 2023; Schultze-Krumbholz et al., 2020; Hagler, 2020], constituting a key element of intercultural sensitivity [Cancino, Nuñez, 2023; Mahbub et al., 2024; Guo, Li, 2025]. In professional practice, it supports the creation of inclusive work environments, as confirmed by research on leaders participating in DEI book clubs [Alexander et al., 2025].

Perspective-taking ability develops through diverse educational interventions. Less directive scenarios and metaphor work effectively broaden understanding of other viewpoints [Rockstuhl, Lievens, 2021; Shakoury, Boers, 2025], connecting with diversity-seeking attitudes and higher well-being [Zhang et al., 2024]. Practical applications include improving relationships in veterinary work with diverse communities [Gongora et al., 2023] and ethical debates in pharmacy supporting inclusive practices [Rajiah, 2025].

Reflectiveness manifests as critically analyzing one’s beliefs and adjusting to diverse environments. It develops through project-based learning and linguistic autobiographies, fostering perspective transformation [Carlson et al., 2025; Oikonomakou et al., 2024; Seo, Lim, 2025]. In teacher education, reflectiveness enables belief evolution toward equality and diversity [Hanna, 2023; Angel-Alvarado, 2025]. In the arts domain, cultural exposure combined with creative expression supports creativity development [Li, Vasilyevna, 2025], while in medical professions it transforms diversity into a source of value through better professional decisions and care standards [Rajiah, 2025; Er et al., 2025; Alexander et al., 2025].

Bias recognition encompasses stereotype identification and critical challenging of exclusionary ideologies. Bias awareness reduces bullying and supports antiracist attitudes

[Yi et al., 2023; Schultze-Krumbholz et al., 2020; Seo, Lim, 2025]. Important roles are played by reflection on cultural presence in teaching processes [Ren, 2024; Sierra-Huedo et al., 2024] and inclusion of diversity competencies in medical programs [Linde et al., 2025]. In professional practice, this leads to transformational results: DEI book club participants transform discomfort from privilege awareness into commitment to inclusivity [Alexander et al., 2025], while ethical debates teach overcoming bias influence on decisions [Rajiah, 2025].

Intercultural communication encompasses didactic practices, the role of teachers working with refugees, and the connection between high intercultural sensitivity and better functioning in diverse environments [Nigar, Kostogriz, 2024; Martínez-Medina, Chania, 2024; Mahbub et al., 2024]. It develops through innovative forms of education: virtual international exchanges, integration of cultural elements in teaching, use of intelligent technologies and arts education [Jaskolski, Udoh, 2022; Dwi, Hidayatullah, 2024; Hatmono et al., 2025; Li, 2025; Zlotnyk et al., 2024]. In professional practice, intercultural competencies enable more effective action in diverse teams and communities [Vaughn, Johnson, 2021; Gongora et al., 2023; Nurhayati et al., 2024] and translate analysis of traditional practices into higher clinical care standards [Er et al., 2025].

Emotion regulation in intercultural contexts is essential for maintaining effectiveness and well-being. Research reveals cultural differences in negative affect avoidance strategies [Seow et al., 2025], coping strategies for emotional burdens in teaching work [Swanepoel, 2020], and anxiety reduction through clinical simulation experiences [Shin et al., 2023]. Experienced mentors demonstrate better emotion regulation in contact with mentees [Hagqvist et al., 2020], confirming the developmental nature of this competency.

Superordinate identity functions as a mechanism for mitigating divisions and fostering group integration. Genkova and Schaefer [2023] linked European identification with multiculturalism acceptance, while Viviani [2022] indicated global citizenship as a product of sustainable development education. Communities of practice based on arts and language education create a sense of “greater we,” strengthening bonds across cultural boundaries [Ngema, Lange, 2020; Nigar, Kostogriz, 2024].

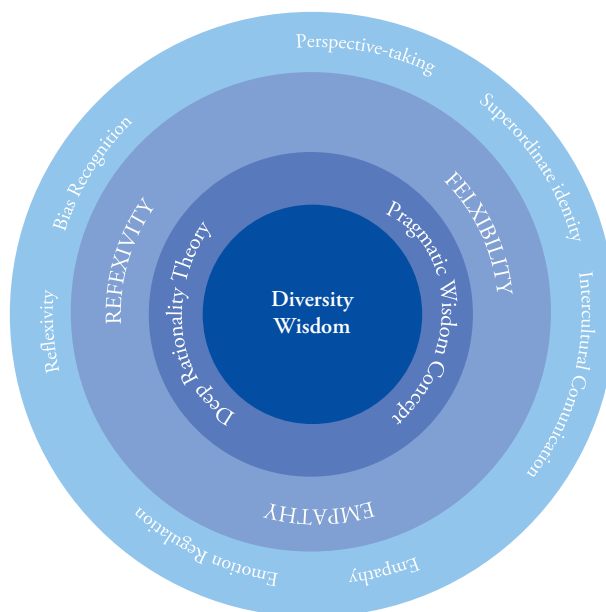
The identified elements differ from traditional adaptive competencies primarily in their transformational function. While empathy in classical approaches serves a better understanding of others, it functions as a synergy catalyst in the DW context, enabling creative integration of different perspectives into innovative solutions. Similarly, reflectiveness transforms from self-awareness into a tool for cognitive reconfiguration and the ability to transform discomfort arising from differences into a source of creative approaches.

Three-Dimensional Diversity Wisdom Model

The conducted axial coding enabled grouping of seven codes into three superordinate DW dimensions, consistent with the adopted theoretical framework (Figure 3):

- **Epistemic-Cognitive Dimension (Reflexivity)** integrates reflectiveness and bias recognition, encompassing conscious work on one's own knowledge limitations, belief revision, and identification and deconstruction of biases. This dimension is rooted in Deep Rationality Theory [Ryan, 2012] and represents the ability for epistemic humility and openness to belief revision.
- **Moral-Emotional Dimension (Empathy)** merges empathy and emotion regulation, encompassing moral sensitivity and emotional maturity sustained by skillful affect regulation. This category corresponds to wisdom conceptualizations as the ability for prosocial action while maintaining emotional realism.
- **Dialogical-Adaptive Dimension (Flexibility)** includes perspective-taking ability, intercultural communication, and superordinate identity. It signifies practical openness to other perspectives, communicative adaptation, and building an inclusive “greater we.” It relates to wisdom as a flexible adaptation in interaction processes.

Figure 3. Diversity Wisdom Model



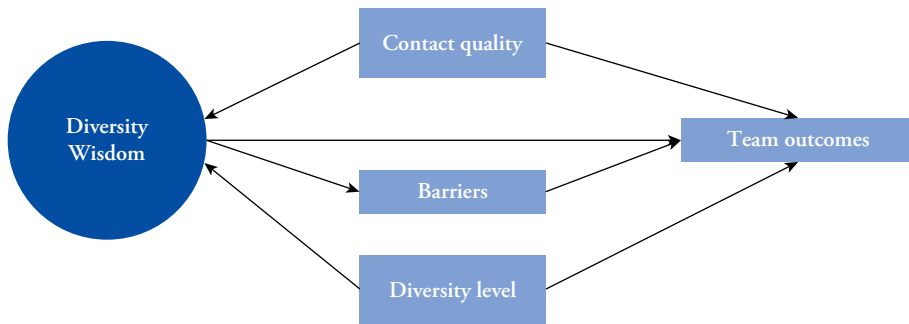
Source: own elaboration.

The presented classification is consistent with the adopted theoretical foundations. It reflects the processes that the literature associates with the transformation of diversity from a potentially conflict-generating factor into a source of team creativity, innovation, and resilience. This model serves as a proposed conceptual framework that lays the groundwork for the empirical operationalization and validation of diversity wisdom in the subsequent stages of the research program and, as such, provides the answer to the first research question.

Diversity Wisdom Impact on Achieved Outcomes

Literature review results show that the described processes constitute key elements of effective functioning in diverse environments. Analysis enabled the development of a conceptual model illustrating how DW affects diverse team functioning (Figure 4). The model presents DW as a higher-order meta-ability encompassing integrated cognitive, emotional, and behavioral processes that influence team outcomes through two main mechanisms.

Figure 4. The impact of Diversity Wisdom on team outcomes



Source: own elaboration.

The indirect mechanism assumes that higher DW levels reduce typical collaboration barriers in diverse teams, such as decreased trust, interpersonal conflicts, member withdrawal, or communication difficulties. Eliminating these barriers indirectly improves team outcomes through enhanced group processes and increased collaboration effectiveness.

The direct mechanism suggests that DW can positively influence team outcomes by better integrating diverse perspectives, adaptive action strategies, and proactive uti-

lization of diversity potential as a source of creativity and innovation. In this approach, diversity is not merely tolerated but actively transformed into a competitive advantage.

The model considers two key moderators: team diversity degree and contact quality between team members. These relationships give the model a dynamic and contextual character, emphasizing that DW's effectiveness in transforming diversity into organizational advantage depends on team specificity, the quality of interaction between members, and the degree of diversity the team faces. In this sense, the model answers the **second research question**.

Conclusion

Theoretical and Empirical Contribution

Literature often indicates that wisdom is too general a category to serve as a research tool [Tiberius, 2008]. This limitation provides a key justification for the present study, which seeks to move from a metaphorical notion to an operational construct amenable to empirical verification and practical application in diversity management. In this sense, DW aligns with the broader approach to wisdom as metaheuristics [Baltes, Staudinger, 2000], understood as a practical mechanism that organizes knowledge and values into action.

The theoretical framework was embedded in two complementary theoretical approaches: Deep Rationality Theory, emphasizing the importance of reflective evaluation of one's beliefs and awareness of limitations, and pragmatic wisdom conception, emphasizing adaptive flexibility and orientation toward practical action results. Their integration identified three superordinate dimensions: reflexivity, flexibility, and empathy, creating the conceptual framework for DW.

DW is conceptualized as a higher-order meta-ability of individuals or teams to systematically transform potential diversity barriers into sources of organizational value, such as creativity, innovation, and organizational resilience. In contrast to traditional adaptive competencies that primarily focus on minimizing the negative consequences of diversity, DW represents a proactive and integrative capability aimed at converting diversity-related tensions into strategic resources for team collaboration and organizational performance.

Taken together, the two stages of analysis directly address the research questions posed in this study. The systematic literature review, by mapping cognitive, emotional, and behavioral processes across 60 publications, enabled identification of seven constituent elements grouped into three superordinate dimensions, thereby answering the first research question. The subsequent thematic analysis and axial coding synthesized these

elements into a conceptual model illustrating two transformation pathways – indirect barrier reduction and direct synergy generation – moderated by team diversity degree and contact quality, thereby answering the second research question. The correspondence between the research questions, the analytical stages, and the resulting models confirms the internal coherence of the adopted research design.

Scientific and Practical Significance

The study contributes significantly to diversity management literature by proposing a conceptual DW model as a construct integrating cognitive, emotional, and behavioral processes into a coherent meta-ability. This model complements existing approaches focusing on selected aspects of diverse team functioning, indicating the need to view them within a relational structure. Particular added value is the identification of diversity transformation mechanisms operating through two pathways: indirect (reduction of collaboration barriers) and direct (proactive utilization of diversity as a source of synergies). Additionally, the study emphasizes the importance of two moderators: team diversity degree and interpersonal contact quality in shaping DW effectiveness, giving the model a dynamic and contextually conditioned character.

From a practical perspective, the model provides a foundation for developmental interventions to strengthen three DW dimensions, which can effectively increase teams' ability to utilize diversity as a competitive advantage.

Limitations and Future Research

The presented results should be interpreted in the context of limitations characteristic of exploratory research stages. First, DW element identification is based solely on literature analysis. Second, the theoretical nature of this stage means that the identified mechanisms of DW require empirical verification. Third, the proposed model should be treated as a theoretical conceptualization that requires further empirical testing and validation in organizational contexts. Fourth, choosing literature published in 2020–2025, though justified by orientation toward contemporary organizational challenges, may have limited the completeness of the theoretical review and omitted important earlier findings. Fifth, limiting the search to the Scopus and Web of Science databases and to English-language publications may affect the representativeness of the analyzed text set, particularly in the context of the cultural diversity of the studied phenomenon.

As the first stage of a broader research program, this work provides theoretical foundations for empirical research. Future research stages include:

- Qualitative validation encompasses case studies of organizations that successfully transformed diversity into competitive advantage, focusing on identifying actu-

al DW action mechanisms in organizational practice and verifying the proposed three-dimensional model.

- Operationalization involves developing measurement scales for three DW dimensions, including analysis of reliability, theoretical and criterion validity, and temporal stability of the construct.
- Quantitative validation encompassing cross-sectional and longitudinal studies verifying the proposed model in various organizational contexts.
- Such a systematic research procedure will enable the transition from theoretical DW conceptualization to its empirical validation and practical application, filling the identified gap in the literature concerning diversity transformation mechanisms into organizational advantage.

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