THE ROLE OF TEAM CULTURAL ORIENTATION AND VIRTUAL COMMUNICATION IN SHAPING TEAM NORM CLARITY AND ITS OUTCOMES

Young Hun Ji

N. Sharon Hill

Virtual Teams and Relationship Conflict

- Despite the advantages of virtual collaboration, virtuality introduces various challenges that can leave team members more prone to dysfunctional relationship conflict (eg., de Wit, Greer, & Jehn, 2012; Hinds & Mortensen, 2005).

- Relationship conflict can, in turn, adversely impact performance, satisfaction, and other team outcomes (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003).

Primary Research question:

"How can relationship conflict be minimized in virtual teams?"

- *Team norm clarity,* i.e., the extent to which norms for behavior are clear and well-shared among team members (Wageman, Hackman, & Lehman, 2005).

Theoretical Perspectives

Why Team Norm Clarity?

- According to group norms theory (Feldman, 1984), teams develop norms to reduce uncertainty, express important team values, and elicit desirable behaviors .

- Theories of technology-mediated communication (e.g., Moser & Axtell, 2013) suggests that deviance from team norms are particularly detrimental in virtual environments.

What Shapes Team Norm Clarity?

- Research on the normative account of cultural differences (Savani et al., 2015) suggests that the motivation to adhere to norms differs across cultures.

- We propose that team cultural values (i.e., team collectivism and team uncertainty avoidance) significantly shape team norm clarity.

Contributions

- Highlights a novel perspective to understanding the effects of team norms:

    - Existing theories frame the importance of team norms in terms of their potential to produce predictability and to elicit desirable behaviors (e.g., helping).

    - We shift the focus to a fundamentally important facet of team norms (i.e., **clarity**) that has profound implications on team processes and outcomes.

- Extends research on team cultural values and team functioning:

    - Our study provides support for the notion that cultural values shape team members' motivation to adhere to norms. We also build on this perspective by exploring the implications of team culture on relationship conflict.

- Extends research on virtual team effectiveness:

    - Our study identifies a mechanism (team norm clarity) that is particularly important for team success in virtual environments.
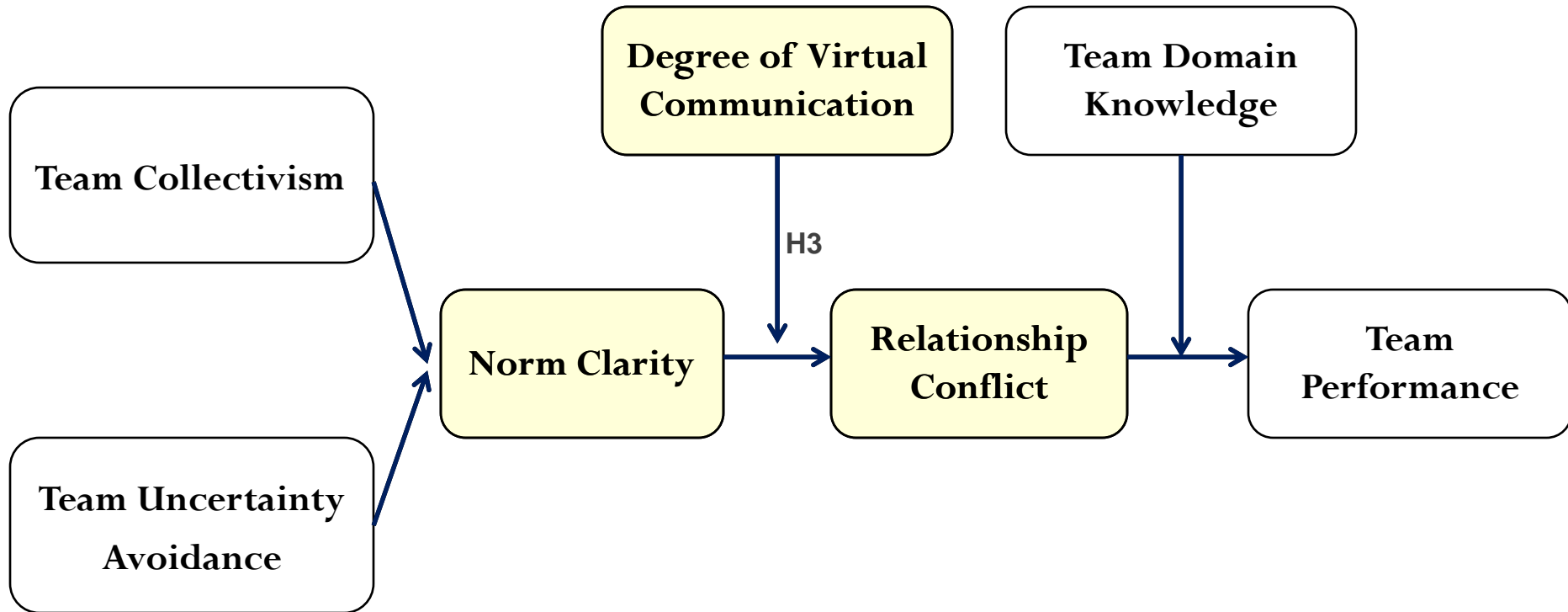
Conceptual Model
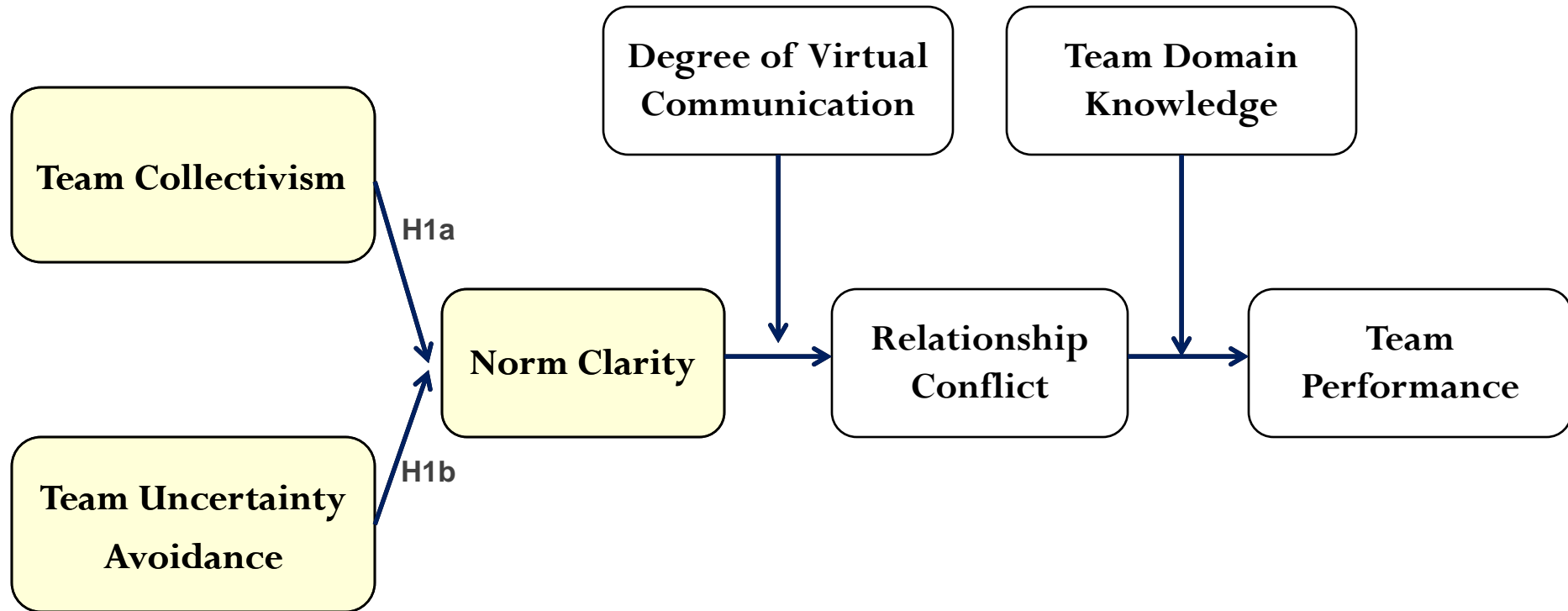
H1: (a) Team collectivism and (b) team uncertainty avoidance positively relate to team norm clarity.
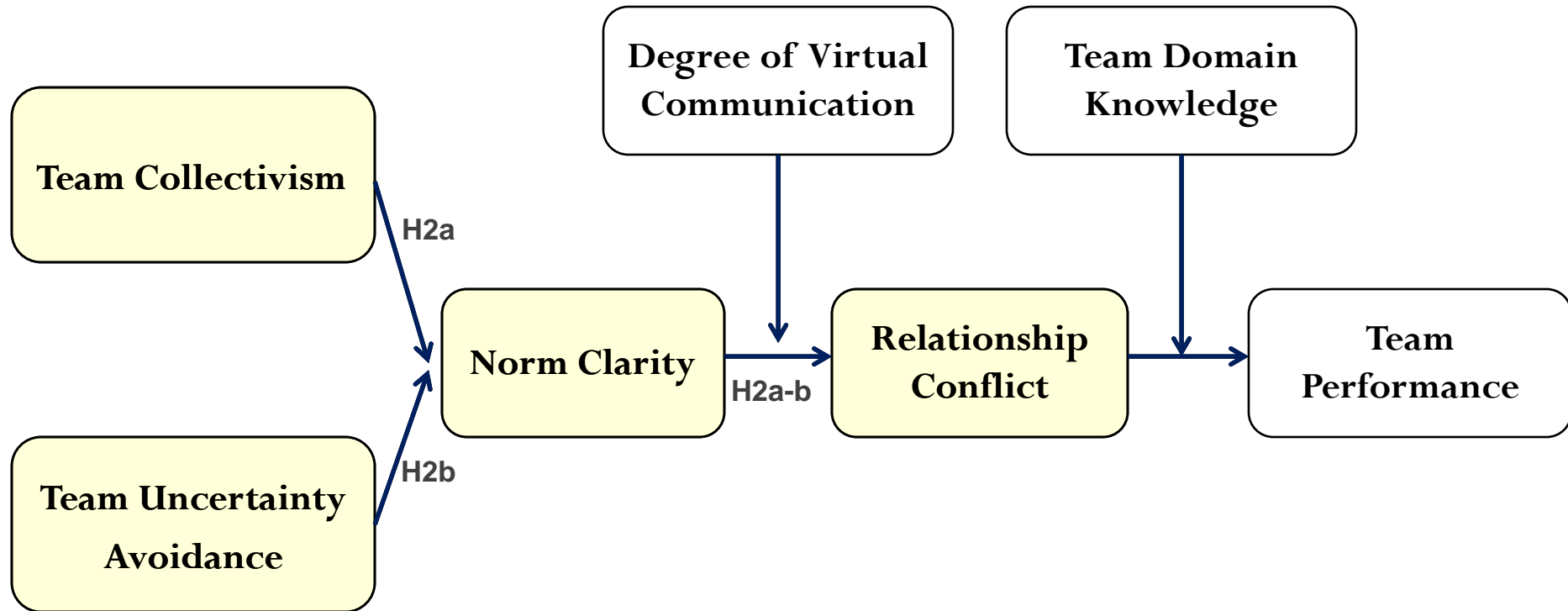
Conceptual Model

H2 (Mediation): (a) Team collectivism and (b) team uncertainty avoidance indirectly relate to a team's level of relationship conflict through the mediating effect of team norm clarity.

Conceptual Model

H3 (Moderation): The negative relationship between team norm clarity and relationship conflict will be stronger when degree of virtual communication is high.

Conceptual Model
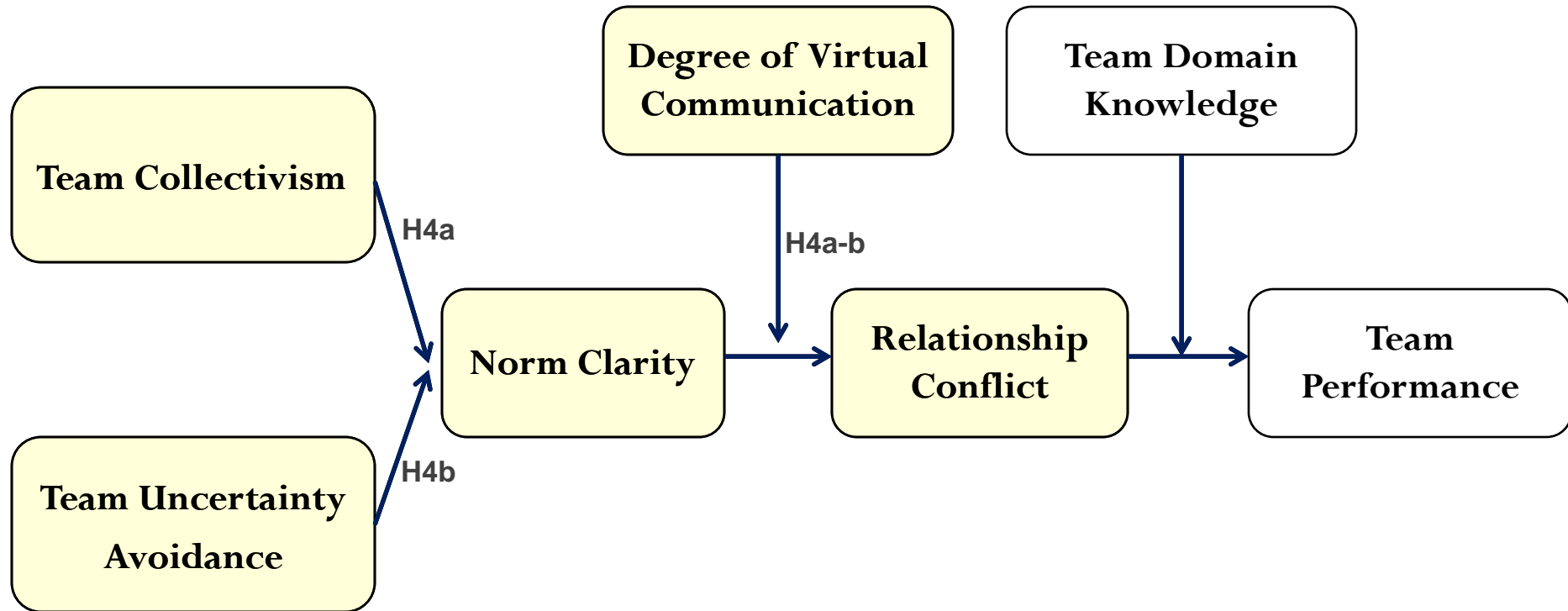
H4 (Moderated mediation): Degree of virtual communication moderates the indirect effect of team (a) collectivism and (b) uncertainty avoidance on relationship conflict through team norm clarity, such that these indirect effects will be more strongly negative when degree of virtual communication is higher.

Conceptual Model
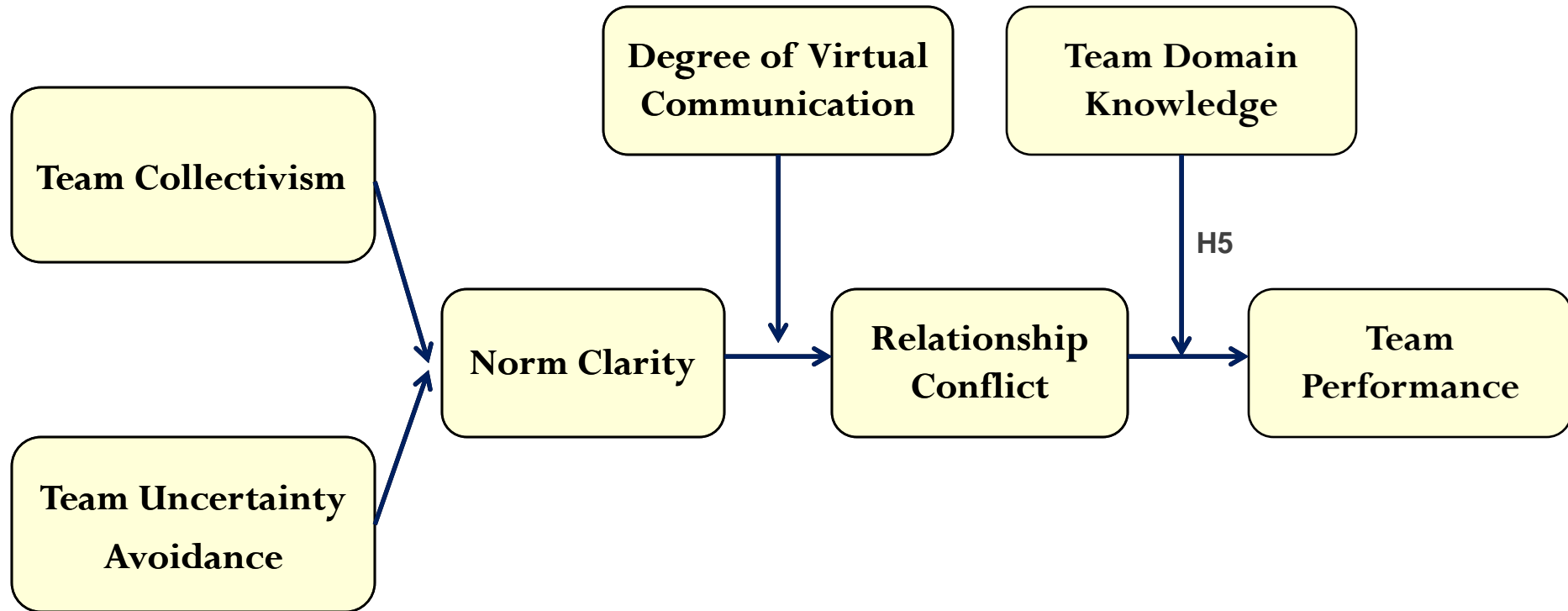
H5 (Moderation): The negative relationship between relationship conflict and team performance will be stronger when team domain knowledge is higher.

Sample & Procedure

- **Sample:** 209 students organized in 49 teams of five or six.

- **Study setting**: Students worked on a semester-long team project , i.e., a skit that demonstrates key concepts from the course.

- **Procedure:** Survey and performance data were collected in four time periods throughout the semester.

Summary of Data Collected by Time Period

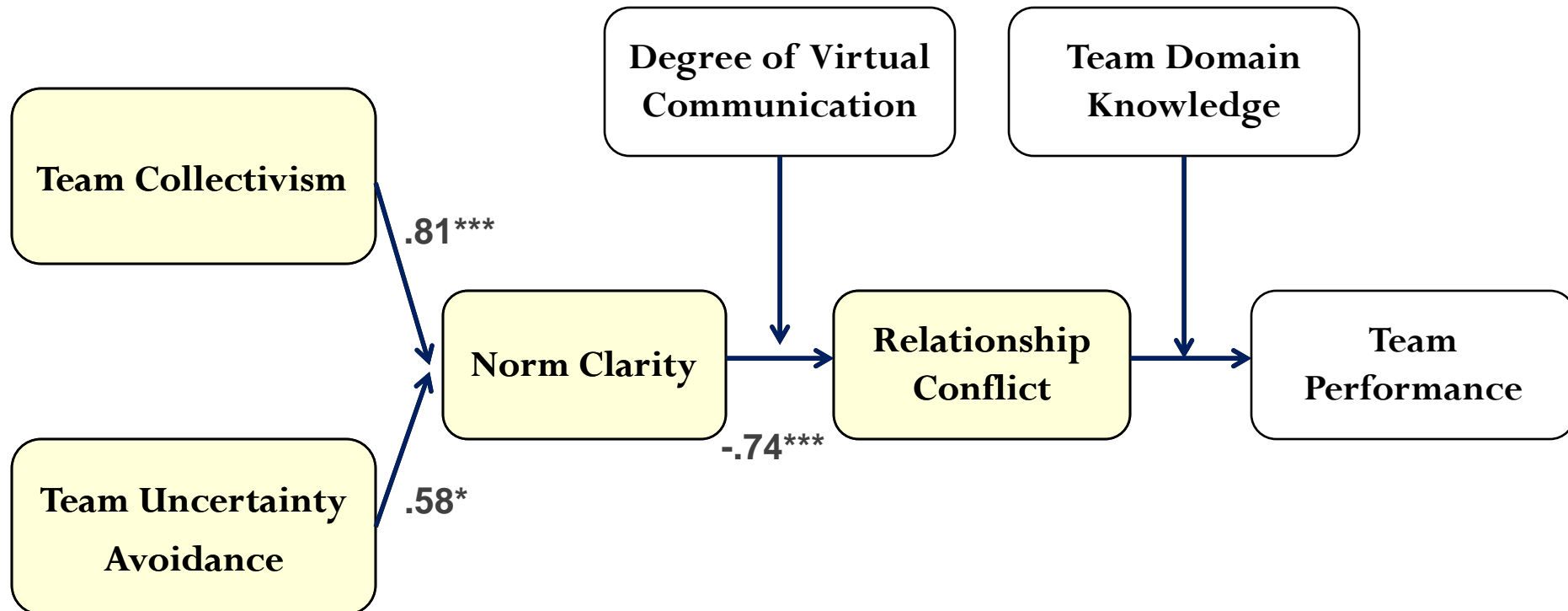|	
T1	(1) Collectivism, and (2) Uncertainty avoidance orientation
T2	Team domain knowledge (i.e., midterm grades)
T3	Team performance (i.e., presentation grades)
T4	(1) Norm clarity, (2) Degree of virtual communication, and (3) Relationship Conflict

Measures

Team Collectivism	"Group success is more important than individual success" (Dorfman and Howell, 1988).
Team Uncertainty Avoidance	"Rules and regulations are important because they inform employees what the organization expects of them" (Dorfman and Howell, 1988).
Team Norm Clarity	"It is clear what is-and what is not-acceptable member behavior in this team." (Wageman, Hackman, and Lehman, 2005). Mean r_{wg} = .80, ICC(1) = .51 (F = 4.17; p < .001), ICC(2) = .76
Relationship Conflict	"How much friction was there among members?" (Jehn, 1995). Mean r_{wg} = .86, ICC(1) = .33 (F = 2.92; p < .001), ICC(2) = .66
Degree of Virtual Communication	Percent of team interaction using non face-to-face communication. Varied between 13% and 73%, with a mean of 44% ICC(1) = .34 (F = 3.05; p < .001), ICC(2) = .67
Team Domain Knowledge	Midterm grades.
Team Performance	Team project grades. Each team was rated by 4 TAs (i.e., consensus approach to aggregation).

Results

Team Collectivism — .81*** → **Norm Clarity**

Team Uncertainty Avoidance — .58* → **Norm Clarity**

Degree of Virtual Communication → **Relationship Conflict**

Team Domain Knowledge → **Team Performance**

Norm Clarity → **Relationship Conflict** → **Team Performance**

H1 (a-b): Supported.

Results

Team Collectivism .81*** → **Norm Clarity**

Team Uncertainty Avoidance .58* → **Norm Clarity**

Degree of Virtual Communication

Team Domain Knowledge

Norm Clarity -.74*** → **Relationship Conflict** → **Team Performance**

H2 (a-b): Supported.
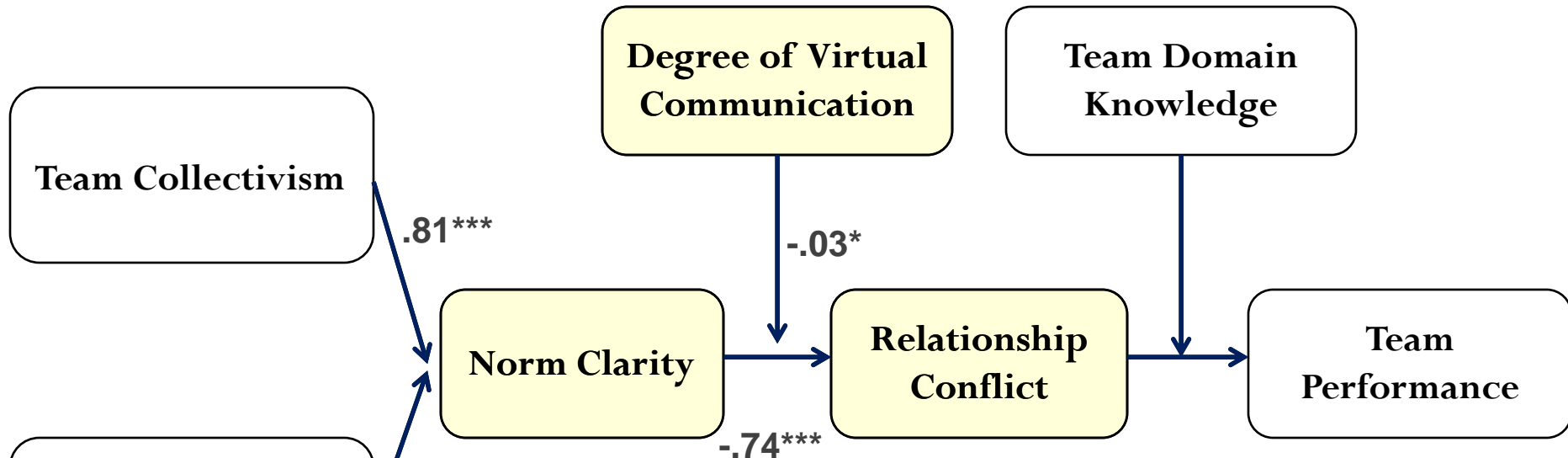
Indirect effect of Team Collectivism onto Relationship Conflict:
B = -.60; C.I. = -1.73, -.06; α = .05
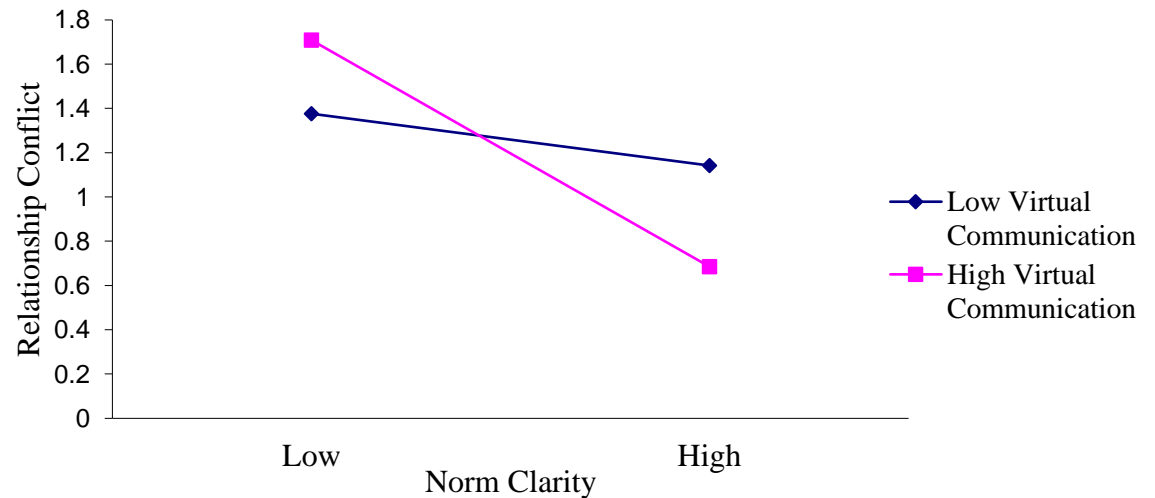Indirect effect of Team Uncertainty Avoidance onto Relationship Conflict:
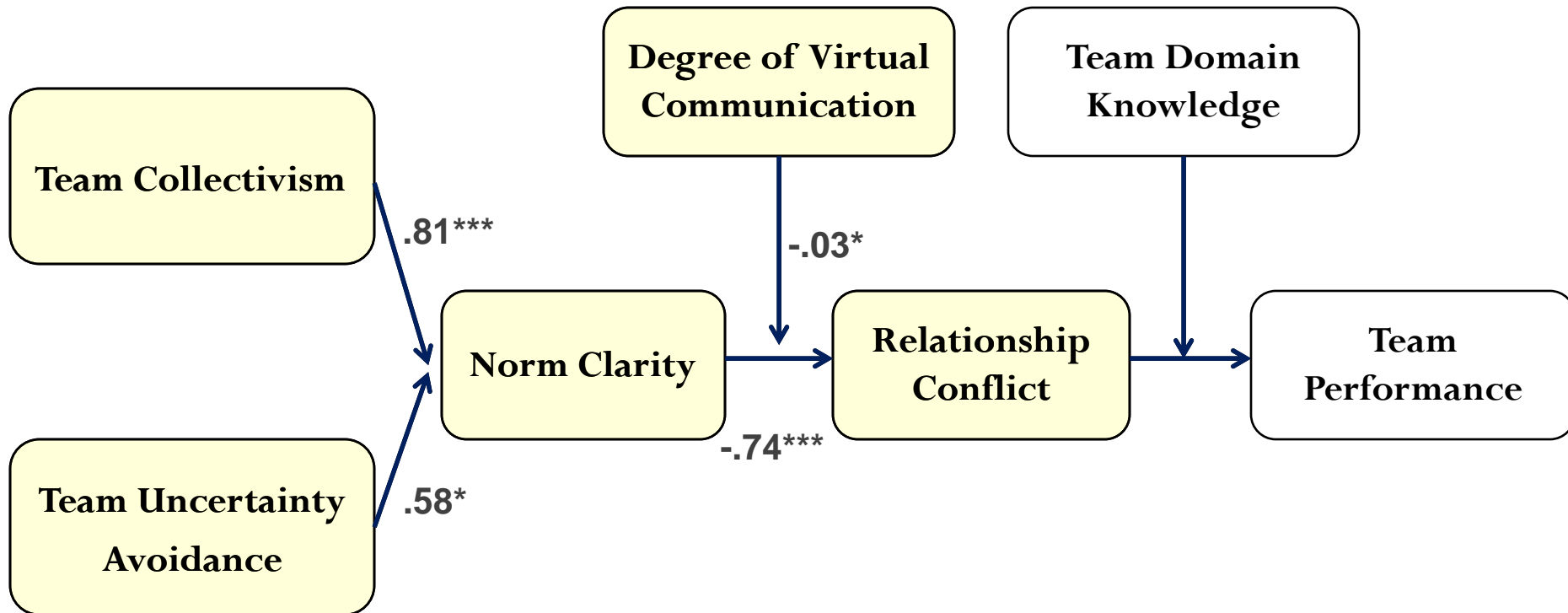B = -.43; C.I. = -.98, -.17; α = .05

Results

Results

Team Collectivism → **Norm Clarity**: .81***

Team Uncertainty Avoidance → **Norm Clarity**: .58*

Degree of Virtual Communication → **Relationship Conflict**: -.03*

Norm Clarity → **Relationship Conflict**: -.74***

H4 (a-b): Supported.

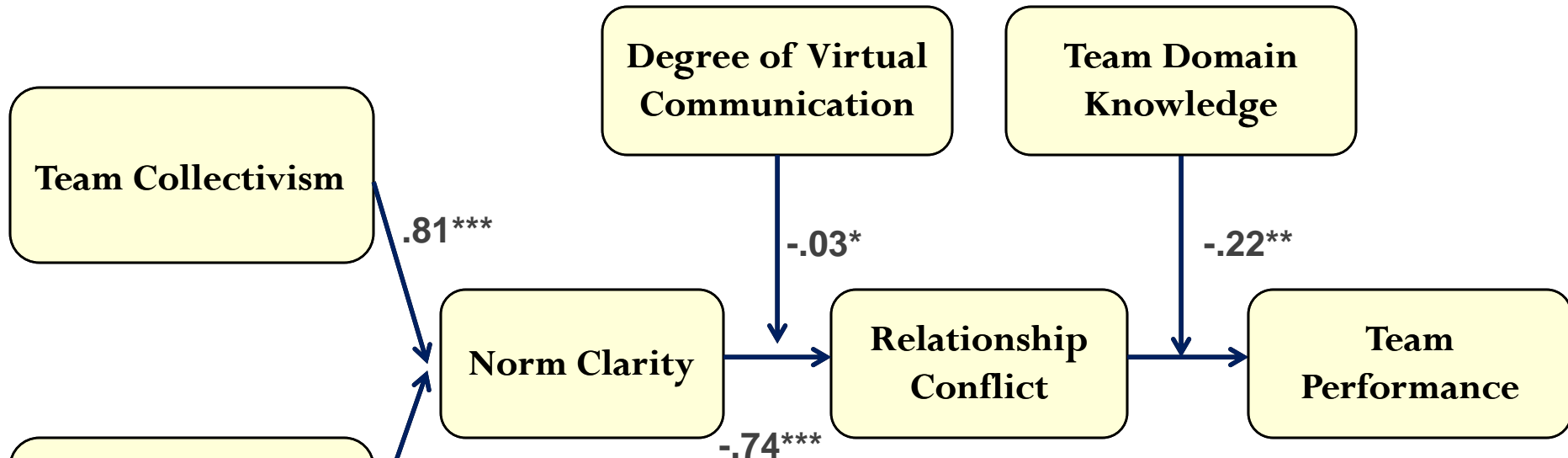Indirect effect of Team Collectivism onto Relationship Conflict:
B = -.26; C.I. = -1.04, .17; α = .05

Indirect effect of Team Uncertainty Avoidance onto Relationship Conflict:
B = -.89; C.I. = -2.07, -.11; α = .05

Results

Team Collectivism — .81*** → **Norm Clarity**

Team Uncertainty Avoidance — .58* → **Norm Clarity**

Degree of Virtual Communication — -.03* → **Relationship Conflict**

Team Domain Knowledge — -.22** → **Team Performance**

Norm Clarity — -.74*** → **Relationship Conflict** → **Team Performance**

H5: Supported.
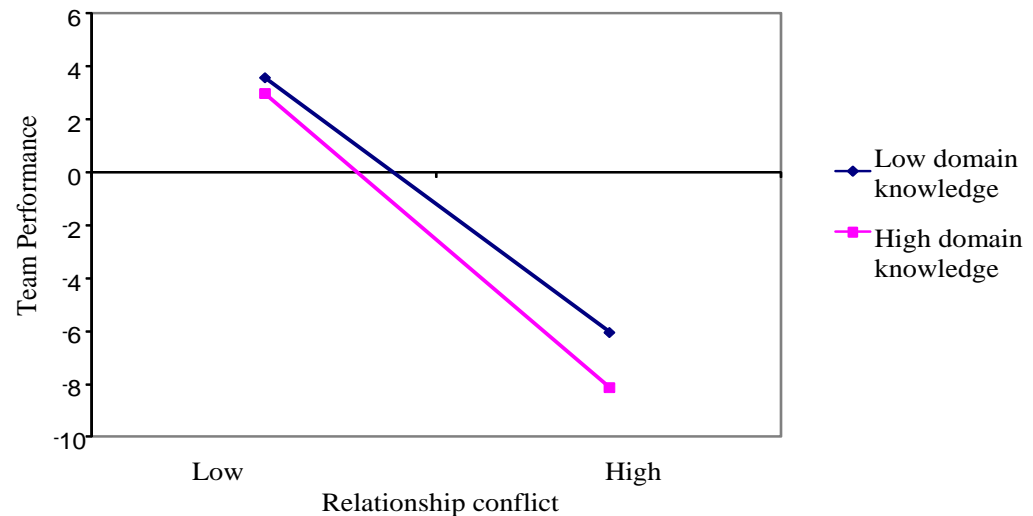
Implications

- Team norms need to be sufficiently explicit in virtual environments:

    - Team norms should be loose enough to allow room for flexibility and adaptability, but, they must also be sufficiently rigid and explicit so as to minimize variance in normative expectations, especially in highly uncertain environments.

- Team composition can shape team members' propensity and potential to achieve greater norm clarity.

- In terms of performance, virtual teams with high domain knowledge benefit the most from greater norm clarity and low levels of relationship conflict.

Limitations & Directions for Future Research

- Limitations:

  - Non-organizational study setting & student sample

  - Constrains generalizability.

- Future studies:

  - Multiple settings & Greater number of teams.

  - Leadership impacts on maintaining team norm clarity.

  - The significance of task characteristics.

Thank you for listening!

Appendix – Descriptive statistics

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Team total interaction	14.73	4.33	-						
2. Team collectivism	3.52	.28	-.16	-					
3. Team uncertainty avoidance	3.96	.26	-.05	.27	-				
4. Degree of virtual communication	43.83	15.44	.64**	-.35*	-.30*	-			
5. Norm clarity	3.76	.49	-.08	.55**	.48**	-.35*	-		
6. Relationship conflict	1.67	.59	.16	-.28	-.06	.23	-.53**	-	
7. Team performance	83.8	7.55	.07	.31*	.23	-.11	.10	.06	-