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THE CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS OF GROUPS AND GROUP DYNAMICS OF GRADUATE STUDENTS USING A NEGOTIATION ROLE-PLAY SIMULATION

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ABSTRACT

Group dynamic is the center of attention of organizations across the world. Employers nowadays are focusing on creating a collaborative culture among employees. This research brings to the forefront a unique analysis highlighting the important of groups, group dynamics and the main characteristics while conducting a negation role-play simulation. The nature of this study is qualitative conducted on graduate students majoring in business studies at the College of Business Administration at the American University of the Emirates in the United Arab Emirates. The findings have shown that group dynamics is an essential component of educating students majoring in business and that role-play simulation plays a significant part in the development of it.

INTRODUCTION

The work in today's world is becoming increasingly challenging day after another. Employers around the world desire to have graduates who are able and capable of working in teams. The structure of work and businesses nowadays is focusing on teams and working in-group dynamics (Stewart, 1999). The importance of working in groups is growing at educational institutions and organizations across the world. The importance of group dynamics and working in groups is on the rise across many disciplines (Bonebright, 2010). The group of wales called a gam; the group of kangaroos called a mob; the flight of flock of larks is called exaltation; and the gathering of a human being is called a group (Forsyth, 2018).

Literature review

The concept of groups, working in groups and group dynamics is becoming even more popular than ever. The term group is defined as two or more individuals who are associated within the same social category (Turner, 1982). It is a dynamic process of interdependence among group members

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(Lewin, 1948); It is a shared common social identity among members of the same group (Brown, 2000). It is a group of individuals who share the common values, norms, and behavior (Sherif, 1956). It is a group of individuals who shares the common purpose, roles and goals (Hackman and Katz, 2010). There are plethora of scholarly literature proposed in the context of group and group dynamics. The later is defined as the science of studying the process of groups, changes and actions that happens between and among groups (Forsyth, 2018). It is based on interaction and interdependence among groups (Hackman and Katz, 2010). The process of group dynamics is systematic in nature and based on engagement and collaboration among group members. Therefore, groups and group dynamics is based on group interaction, interdependence, engagement, collaboration, collective entity, collective thoughts and feelings, and a shared purpose among all (Hutchins, 1995; James, Joyce, and Slocum, 1988). It is the study of group action and reaction to different changing circumstances (Lewin, 1951). It is a field of study that focuses on nature of groups, laws of group development, and interrelations between group members, among groups, and larger organizations (Cartwright and Zander, 2000). The nature of groups is complex due to its manifest and latent scopes. The main characteristics of group dynamics are: work accomplishment, harnessing the skills, abilities and capabilities

of the group, and the overall wellbeing of its valued members (Hackman and Katz, 2010). The main five characteristics of group dynamics, on the other hand, are interaction between group members, goal accomplishment, interdependence among group members in one group and among different groups, structure and formation of group, and cohesion between and among groups (Forsyth, 2018).

RESEARCH METHODS

The study was conducted at the graduate level of student studying at the college of business administration at the American University in the Emirates. The sample size was relatively small composed of 20 students: 15 of which were males and 5 females. Participants were a diverse mixed group of nationalities from the Middle East region. The age group of participants ranged from 20 to 32 years old. There were no other demographics measures taken into consideration into this study. Groups were given 20 minutes to negotiate the simulation.

The research aim was to answer the following two questions: 1) the nature of group dynamics in general, and 2) the group dynamics characteristics while conducting a role-play simulation.

Participants were divided into four groups of an equal distribution. Each group has five members and was given a negation role-play simulation adopted from Lewicki, Barry, and Saunders, 2015.Group dynamics and interaction was measured through direct observation. The simulation titled The New House Negotiation found in (Lewicki, Barry, and Saunders, 2015). It is to negotiate a real states deal selling a house that involves a seller, buyer and/or an agent to facilitate the process based on a certain commission as retribution to the services rendered. Participants are at liberty to choose the role they desire to take from the previous. The aim of which is stimulating participants interests and involvement through conducting a transaction between a seller and a buyer. The house description is as follows: a three-bedroom, two-bath, one-story house, selling price $250,000, 2,100 square feet, six years old (one owner prior to current owner), two-car garage, contemporary styling (back wall of house is basically all glass, with sliding draperies), half-acre lot (no flooding problems), brick exterior, built-in range, dishwasher, garbage disposal, and microwave, electric cooling and gas heat, fireplace and ceiling fan in the family room, no fence, and on loan (Lewicki, Barry, and Saunders, 2015).

Research analysis

The researcher conducted the actual observation of groups. The researcher designed an observation form (see *Appendix A*).The focus of the observation was on the following: (a) group interaction; (e) the team's leadership and level of dominance; (f) the team's strategies; (i) the team's communication; and (j) the team's trust. The terms group and teams are used interchangeably during this section. The participants' age and gender was not controlled by the researcher but rather randomly selected. It is worth mentioning that the level of engagement was affected significantly by the age and gender of participants. Older participants took more initiative into starting discussion than younger ones. Male participants showed more courage to participate than their counterparts of females who were rather shy mostly. This can

be associated to cultural barriers as most participants were from the Middle East region. The level of engagement and interaction was moderate to high. Group members were interacting with each other through actual discussion of the simulation trying to divide roles among each other. The technology side has played a major role. The simulation was printed on a regular print paper and each group got to have one copy. Participants in each group used their smart phones taking a shot of the case study to be able to discuss it among each other. That was a smart move to take towards making a progress of achieving the desired outcome of negotiation. That, in turn, ensured proper collaboration among participants in each group and alleviated the level of engagement. The level of harmony appeared to be high among group participants of each group. Most groups maintained a calm attitude with excitement and high level of energy in the same time. The leadership among groups was distributed. Some groups led by one member and other in the same group followed. Other groups had no leader but rather efforts shared collaboratively among participants of the group. Leadership in groups was mostly male dominated while females maintained time track and group orders.

Most members of the groups were thinking strategically using their analytical skills. All were trying to come up with the best strategies of negotiating a deal dividing the roles among each other. Most made sure to get the best deal and work on most cost effective strategies. They mostly focused on what the best way to get the house price reduced drastically and strategically with less or no commission paid to a third party, the agent. The groups maintained a quality of communication among group members. They all carried a respectful manner of attitude. Most of their communication is based on clarity and transparency. They mostly listened to each other's opinion with an open mind attitude. The most interesting is that they allowed each other a fair amount of voicing their opinions equally. However, that was not achieved among all groups. Some members were dominating the communication in their group. This, in turn, did not allow other members in their groups to have a fair share of communication equally. The amount of trust among members in each group was significantly high. Most members were respecting each other's suggestions and trusted what they provide of alternatives to the challenges faced. They all showed a significant amount of trust and respect to decision making and conclusion made by group members of their groups.

Conclusion

The answer of the first question of this research has resulted in the following Jones CIM model:
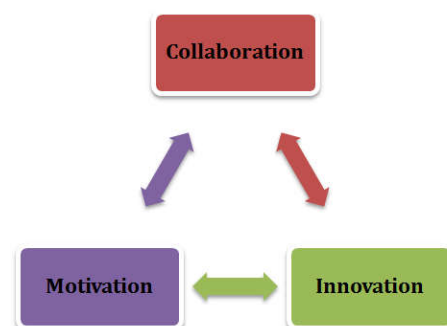

Figure 1. CIM Model

The collaboration among team member was significant. Each members of the group showed high level of efforts to achieve the desired outcome. They demonstrated professional attitude of negotiation conducted through team collaborative efforts among participants of each group. The shared efforts resulted in effective ways of communication through asking questions seeking clarity among each other. The diverse mix group, age, and gender have contributed significantly to the dynamic level of engagement among the groups. This, in turn, has resulted in coming up with innovative strategic solutions to the scenario presented created by participants of each group. Group members were investigative to the facts presented. This made group members seeking and searching facts to reach the desired outcome. The level of motivation was driven intrinsically. Group participants were pushing each other to be engaged communicating with each other effectively and respectfully. Time has served as a critical agent for them to be motivated. It seemed that groups could be motivated by time constraints. This leads to the fact that group members were mostly responding positively to pressure. The motivation factor was shared among participants of each group mostly in an equal level. They all felt that they had a goal to achieve and that they needed to motivate each other collaboratively as a team. Furthermore, the answer to the second question of this paper has resulted in the following Jones model of the characteristics of group dynamics while conducting a negotiation role-play:

Figure 2. Jones Model of Characteristics of Group Dynamics While Conducting a Negotiation-Role Play

The main characteristics of group dynamics while conducting a negotiation role-play simulation are: 1) participation: participants tends to engage among each other whether taking the initiative first or being part of the discussion on a later

stage, 2) trust: it is build across time among group members and taking into consideration time constraints in this situation has contributed significantly to the improvement of such among groups simply because they all focused on achieving the desired outcome within the limited time frame, 3) engagement: members of groups had contributed to the success of the role-play through engaging themselves among each other achieving active participation, discussion, and suggestions, 4) strategy: participants used their analytical skills, critical thinking skills, and problem solving skills trying to reach the best solutions after laying out the best strategies, evaluating each and choosing the best among all, and 5) leadership: all members took the responsibility guiding each other. It was a shared leadership among all. It was based on guidance, counseling, respect, vision and achieving the desired mission of the role-play negotiation within the time frame allocated. Time constraints has contributed significantly to the fast pace progress of the simulation. However, further studies and testing is required to be conducted on the same discipline and others from the same culture and other ones around the world.

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