The Self-Help Groups’ Workgroup Characteristics and Its Relations with the Group’s Effectiveness - a Conceptual Study

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ABSTRACT
This conceptual study attempts to examine the applicability of the organizational workgroup characteristics model on the women self-help group (SHG). This conceptual study examines the model, on Women SHG, from the previous research conducted by the Campion et al., (1993). The current study conducted the review of literature and stresses the importance of a study on women self-help groups from the perspective of group dynamics perspective.

INTRODUCTION
This conceptual research proposes the application of the work group characteristics and effectiveness model designed by Campion et.al (1993) on studying women’s self-help group characteristics’ relation with its effectiveness. The Campion’s et.al (1993) model encompasses 19 characteristics within 5 themes and for measuring the work group effectiveness measures (Campion et.al.,1993). The study relates those 19 characteristics to organizational work group’s effectiveness in a field setting with natural work groups. The work group effectiveness is defined in terms of productivity, work group members’ satisfaction and supervisor’s judgment. The current study examines the work group characteristics and its effectiveness, through the Campion’s et.al. (1993) model on the women’s self-group which are self-organized and self-managed and also assumes responsibility for all the positive and negative outcomes of their group. The current research proposes to apply the Campion’s model on the women’s self-help group engaged in economic activities. Campion et al., examined the work group characteristics within the dimensions of job design, interdependence, composition, and process.

The model is depicted in figure-1 below. The 19 characteristics included under above mentioned dimensions are:
(a) Job design: self-management, participation, task variety task significance, task identity;
(b) Interdependence: task interdependence, goal interdependence, interdependent feedback and rewards
(c) composition; training, managerial support, communication/ cooperation between groups;
(d) Process: Potency, social support, work loading sharing, communication/ cooperation within groups.

Campion et.al., related this themes/characteristics to the three effectiveness criteria –
(a) Productivity
(b) Satisfaction
(c)Manager’s judgment

(Fig -1: Work group themes/characteristics and effectiveness)
Campion et.al.(1993). Relations between work group characteristics and effectiveness:
Implications for designing effective work groups; Personnel Psychology, 46
WORKGROUP CHARACTERISTICS

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

(i) GROUPS
A group is a two or more interdependent individuals who influence one another through social interaction (Forsyth, Group dynamics, 1998, p. 5). According to Cartwright & Zander (1968, p. 46) Groups have relationships to one another that make them interdependent to some significant degree. A collection of people can be defined as a group; however they may be unique, if it possesses a critical element called interdependence among members (Lewin, 1948). Beyond this properties of interdependencies, there are also properties that defines the common characteristics of group such as communication (Homans, 1950, p.1), influence (Shaw, 1981, p. 454), interaction (Johnson, 1995, p. 125), interrelations (McGrath, 1984, p. 8), psychological significance (Turner, 1987, pp.1-2), shared
identity (Brown, 1988, pp. 2-3) structure (Sheriff & Sheriff, P. 144), size (Hare, 1976). Though different types of groups possess their own unique characteristics, but while studying a group, one must go beyond its unique qualities by considering characteristics common to most groups (Borgatta, Cottrell & Meyer, 1956; De Lamater, 1974; Hare 1976, Mullen, 1987a, 1990; Turner, 1985).

(ii) WORK GROUPS/TEAMS
Work teams and groups: (a) are composed of two or more individuals, (b) who exist to perform organizationally relevant tasks, (c) share one or more common goals, (d) interact socially, (e) exhibit task interdependencies (i.e., workflow, goals, outcomes), (f) maintain and manage boundaries. (Alderfer, 1977; Hackman, 1987; Hollenbeck, Ilgen, Sego, Hedlund, Major, & Phillips, 1995; Kozlowski, Gully, McHugh, Salas, & Cannon-Bowers, 1996a; Kozlowski, Gully, Nason, & Smith, 1999; Salas, Dickinson, Converse, & Tannenbaum, 1992).

Kozlowski et al. (1999) proposed (1) task, (2) goals, (3) process emphasis which are three among five features ranged to depict the teams along simple to complex continuum. Complex teams are characterized, among others, by a process emphasis that focuses on task interaction, performance coordination and performance demands that require coordinated individual performance in real time. While simple teams are characterized by common goals that make no specific demands for individual contributions and which are fixed for the team's lifecycle; roles that are unspecified and undifferentiated, such that all team members possess essentially equivalent knowledge and skill; a process emphasis that focuses on social roles, social interaction, normative behavior, and conflict;

(iii) TEAM EFFECTIVENESS
When individuals join groups, they no longer control their outcomes. Group create interdependence among members, so that the actions of each group member potentially influence the outcomes and actions of every other group member (Forsyth, Group dynamics, 1998, p. 51). It is essentially to understand the effectiveness of the group through its characteristics.

According to Cohen, Ledford, and Spreitzer (1996), work team effectiveness is defined as both high performance and employee quality of work life. The idea draws from sociotechnical theory, which states that both social and technical systems must be maximized for an optimally effective team.

According to Mohrman, Cohen & Mohrman, Jr., (1995) team effectiveness is based on team performance, which is the extent to which the groups' productive output meets the approval of customers, interdependent functioning, which is the extent to which the team is inter-reliant on one another, and team satisfaction, which is the extent to which the team is satisfied with team membership.

Hackman (as cited by Weil, 1995) cites three useful measures for team effectiveness. The measuring standards are 1) productive output that meets or exceeds standards, 2) social processes that maintain or enhance the capability of members to work together on team tasks, and 3) group experience that satisfies personal needs of group members (Weil, 1995).

(iv) SELF-HELP GROUPS
SHG is an organized set up to provide microcredit to the rural women on the strength of the group savings without insisting on any collateral security for the purpose of encouraging them to enter into entrepreneurial activities and for making them enterprising women (Gurumoorthy, 2000). The self-help group is a composite of small group of members who are homogeneous in terms same community, caste, place of living, economic back ground. They organize themselves under an initiative of an NGO, get trained in employment skills and avail loans from the banks for starting employment activities like manufacturing petty leather based products, bakery items, napkins, wiring, coir making, herbal products, animal husbandry and fishery etc., SHG members not only join together to procure loans but also work in groups to earn and repay the loan. Though, procurement of credit is a vital advantage for organizing themselves; but working together in a group determines the key success of the self-help group.
(vi) SHG IN GROUP THEORY PERSPECTIVE

Group studies are viewed from different theoretical perspectives. According to Conditioning and social comparison theories, people join in group to gain comparative information as well as to protect oneself from inappropriate decisions and judgment (Suls and wheeler 2000; Suls et al. 2000). In social identify theory, groups help the members to clarify about their identity like who we ‘are’ (Sherman et al. 1999). Rappaport (1993) asserted that self-help groups, which offer the venue for, shared experience; emotional support and social learning can help constitute a social identity. The exchange theory perspective encompasses all the benefits discussed in above mentioned theories. According to this theory, people join groups to gain certain advantages through group membership (Robert S. baron & Norber L. Kerr, Group Process, Group Decision, Group Action, pp.3, 2010). To relate this with SHG, members form as a group not only to derive social identity but also align together to gain economic advantages which would not have been possible individually.

The self-help groups in this research involve people who have joined together for economic upliftment by engaging in entering activities. The self-help group provides opportunities of earning activities through mutual interdependence, interacting socially, sharing common goals among the members which otherwise would not have been possible if conducted individually. These self-help groups are self-governed and peer controlled group. They are made of and controlled by the people and support is also mutual. The SHG groups will cease to exist without value derived members’ abilities in the groups. (National Commission for Women, 2004).

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

There are abundant literatures available and studies conducted across the world on effectiveness of work groups in organizations, therapeutic self-help groups like alcoholic anonymous, cancer self-help groups and other disadvantageous groups. There are also self-help group researches which are conducted in developmental studies perspectives. But from a work group characteristics and effectiveness perspective, seldom studies have been conducted on the self-help groups which are formed for economic empowerment and social upliftment.

As prominence of self-help group is growing in rural empowerment, the conceptual study applies work design perspective to study women’s self-groups those engage in an income generating activities. Thus study can be focussed on Women’s Self-help group work group characteristics in relationship with their effectiveness

CONCLUSION

Among the work group characteristics model adopted from Campion et.al (1993) a few of them can be eliminated based on their compatibility with SHG group design. Under interdependence dimensions, rewards can be eliminated as there are no former superior to give reward to the group for their performance. As the groups are self-organized to avail credit and invest in an income generating activities, they are bound by their acts for both earning as well as for penalizing from creditors. Under composition dimension, managerial support and communication/ cooperation between groups can also be removed as they are self-managed group without any managerial authority to direct them. They also do not work interdependence for cooperating with another group for completing their task. Additionally, a two more important characteristics of the team can be added under process characteristics such as group conflict and norms (Kozlowski et.al.). Effectiveness of SHG can be determined by team members’ satisfaction and NGO’s judgment. Following (Fig: 2) is the model suggested based on Campion’s model for determining relationship of self-help group characteristics with its effectiveness.

REFERENCE


4. Campion et.al.(1993). Relations between work group characteristics and effectiveness: Implications for designing effective work groups; Personnel Psychology, 46


