

RELATIONSHIP OF CREATIVITY AND TEAM EFFECTIVENESS: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY

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Abstract

Enhancing creativity, team efficacy and team effectiveness are the paramount interest of the team based organization to achieve sustainability. This study focuses upon identifying the relationship of freedom, communication and team creativity with team efficacy and team synergy. A sample of thirty eight executives of team based organization was selected through simple random sampling technique and a structured questionnaire was distributed to collect the data for the study. A structural equation model using Partial Least Square (PLS) method reveals the significant relationship of freedom, communication and team creativity with team efficacy and team synergy.

Introduction

In competitive world, creativity becomes the vital trait for any successful team performance. There is an important need for empirical study on the extent of creativity enabled in an organization and within the individuals, and its influence on the effectiveness of teams. This study attempts to find the effect of creativity on the team effectiveness. Improving the creativity of employees is important if organizations are to compete successfully in today's globally competitive environment. In this study, based on the previous researches, three dimensions have been identified as independent variables to measure creativity of employees in an organization i.e. Freedom, Communication and Team creativity and their relationship with dependent variable i.e. Team efficacy and Team synergy, the outcome variable.

Freedom is the level of autonomy and openness within the team which will give liberty to perform by their own potential (Geert Vissers and ben Danbaar 2002). Communication is another important component of providing a work atmosphere, in which employees can feel motivated to be creative (Rebecca A. Thacker 1997). Group creativity is influenced by the Individual and the group characteristics that influence creativity of the individuals and can be

described in terms of generation of ideas or solutions (Thomas B, Merryl J & Cynthia M 2004). Billy Bateman, F Collin Wilson and David Bingham (2002) define team effectiveness by a cluster of 6 basics core themes: (1) Team synergy which is the sense of purpose shared within members, (2) Performance objectives established by the team and are monitored on an ongoing basis, (3) Skills of members in order to be competent in their work, (4) Use of resources which includes buildings, people and equipment usage, (5) Innovation for improving products and systems of work and (6) Quality which designates standards of works. However, this study focuses on the two important dimensions i.e. Team efficiency and Team synergy. Team efficiency examines whether team members are adequately trained and are competent to do their work and their flexibility between areas of work. The notion of creative synergy is the idea that a group of people has produced something that no one would have been able to do alone. This may result from the combination of personality characteristics, or the interpersonal interaction that promotes creativity (M.S Kim, Kim & T.H Kim 2007).

Review of Literature

Geert Vissers and ben Danbaar (2002) demonstrated that the best way of optimizing creativity in teams is to support the openness and the freedom of the group members, which act as a strength for the activities they perform. Moreover Jane Collier and Rafael Esteban (1999) precise that freedom is a mean of releasing human potential while working in group. In Greg L Stewart (2006), investigating the relativeness between the team features and the team efficacy, found that increased level of autonomy in team corresponds with an improved degree of efficacy. In another words, teams with more autonomy are given increased freedom to make decisions, to plan work activities, and to adapt to changing conditions hence proving their efficacy in performing. The study of Gabriele Piccoli and Anne Powell(2004) found that communication increases information sharing and its coordination within team s .Expertise in team coordination ,group thinking and the managerial skills, hence efficacy within the work group, are facilitated by it. Sujin K. Horwitz and Irwin B. Horwitz (2007) relate that work teams with diverse background, knowledge and expertise augment their competitive advantage by improving the efficacy of their internal operations. But excess in heterogeneity of teams can also engender difficulties from coordination, tension and group conflict leading to suboptimal

performance. According to Eduardo Salas and Drew Rozell (1999), team-building interventions, such as interpersonal relations, are evidently believed to lead to a substantive increase in team efficacy, by an increase in team work abilities, such as mutual supportiveness, reasoning, and individual competencies. James T. Scarnati (2001) describes synergy as a magnifying effect of each component of a work group. According to him, the quality synergy depends upon the intellectual equipment of the team members. Indeed the synergy is a benefit which is get as a result of members' knowledge, skills and experiences. Based on various literature and studies, a conceptual model considering freedom, communication and creativity of team members as independent variables and team efficacy and team synergy as dependent variable (Figure -1) is evolved and the following hypotheses are developed.

H₁: There is a significant positive relationship between freedom and team efficacy

H₂: There is a significant positive relationship between communication and team efficacy

H₃: There is a significant positive relationship between team creativity and team efficacy.

H₄: There is a significant positive relationship between team efficacy and team synergy

Measures and scales

The instrument used for this study was adapted from Mando Karvelli (2008) which identifies the factors of creativity and Billy Bateman, F Collin Wilson and David Bingham (2002) for identifying the dimensions of team effectiveness. The reliability test of the instrument revealed Coefficient Cronbach's alpha is 0.92, indicating the fitness for main study.

Profile of the sample

The sample consists of 38 executives of team based organisation. The population is well defined and the source list was available for the study hence simple random sampling was adopted to select the sample from the given population. This includes employees of junior, middle, and senior level management. Since all the samples were in executive level, the questionnaires were distributed to each of them individually.

Results and Discussion

The data collected were analysed using visual PLS to test the model and hypotheses that can explain the relationship between dimensions of creativity and team effectiveness. Figure 1 depicts a fully specified model with path coefficient between dimensions under study. The estimate for relationship between the dimensions creativity and team effectiveness is shown in table 1, indicating the different paths of the structural model and its significance. The path coefficient between freedom, communication and team creativity and the team effectiveness dimension of team efficacy is positively significant (at 0.01 levels) implying higher level of autonomy, interaction and creativity enhances the team efficacy. The path coefficient between team efficacy and team synergy is positively significant (at 0.01 levels) and predicts 65.60% variance in synergy. Hence, the research hypotheses are accepted.

Fig 1: Structural Equation Model

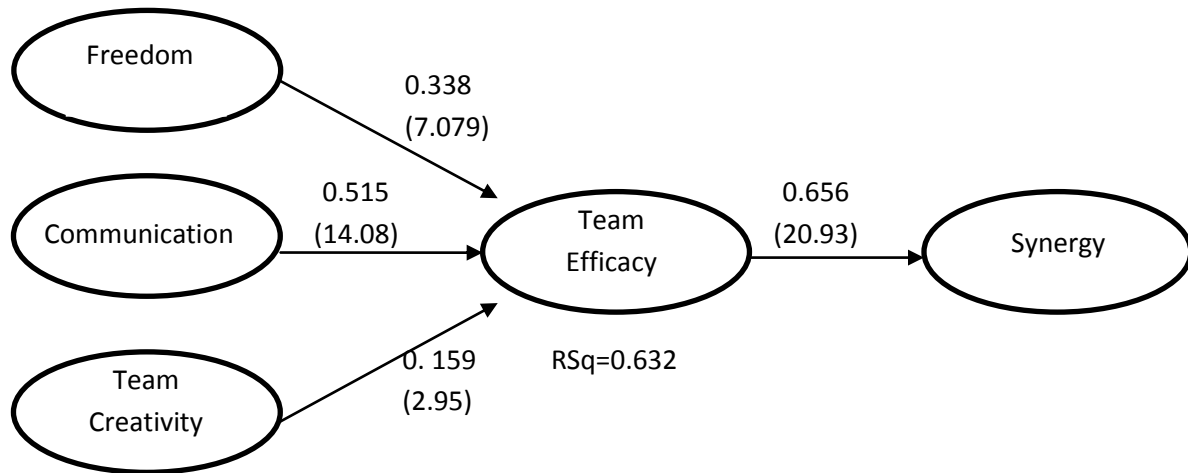


Table 1: Estimates of creativity and team effectiveness

Path	Entire Sample estimate	't'-Statistic
FRE->EFF	0.3380	7.0791
COM->EFF	0.5150	14.0823
TC->EFF	0.1590	2.9521
EFF->SYN	0.6560	20.9334

Managerial implications

This study made a significant attempt in understanding the relationship of the dimensions of creativity with team efficacy and team synergy functioning thus contributing towards theoretical formulation of team functioning. The result of this research has significance for the practitioners and the HR managers who should focus on providing an environment and climate that encourages creativity. As stated in the study, cascade of creative efforts can be possible only when sufficient height of autonomy is allowed in the organization: creativity, in contrast to humdrum work, cannot be forced or coerced, but has to flow out as per their abilities and intents. Allowing people to volunteer for tasks instead of assigning them and leaving them the decision power on the leeway in timing, have a significant effect on the intellectual capacity of employees. Moreover devising non evaluating meetings that will let people freewheel and proposing them a range of resource on which they can proceed on creative initiation can support freedom of employees. Communication is the fuel that powers the engine of creativity: interactive sessions can be conducted to improve creativity level such as workshop to help creative thinking, bringing guest speakers and creativity consultants or develop informal meetings where people share ways of enriching their own job creatively. The common brainstorming, the Delphi technique or even luncheon discussion activities can also be included where potential of individuals is shared and imagination is exhausted to solve a single problem. The managerial level could reward creative accomplishments by establishing an incentive program for new and productive ideas and foster daily enjoyment of intrinsic motivation.

Reduce the fear of failure among employees to encourage them to break down the barriers and produce new ideas is the challenge to be brought into the culture of the organization.

Conclusion and Direction for future research

Creativity is known to be the key factor for teams to be effective and to survive in a constantly changing environment. Hence it is important for an organization to support the emergence of creativity within the individuals and the work groups, and to make it grow within the corporate culture so that to improve the whole organizational efficiency. This research addresses creativity and team efficacy and team synergy in an IT industry, to generalise these findings, research can be extended to other industries where the creativity have great impact on team outcomes. Team composition, team diversity which is not a part of this study may act as an intervening variable and have impact on team outcomes can be considered in future research. A model of team synergy considering these variables can be developed. The results of this study may differ based on the team approaches and knowledge management practices of the organization, the researchers in work teams and organizational creativity may contemplate these aspects in their study.

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