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DETERMINING COHESIVENESS OF A GROUP: A SYSTEMATIC STUDY OF INTERACTION PROCESS SCORES BY A PEER OBSERVATIONAL TECHNIQUE

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Introduction

Cohesiveness of a group is usually related to productivity. Universal findings of cohesiveness state that it increases with success. Cohesiveness is usually measured through traits of the groups, tendency to be together, the time taken to be together, how group members influence each other, openness among members and verbatim remarks showing cohesiveness in the group.

A group is understood as, "two or more persons are in interaction (Borgotta, 1962; p. 259). As cohesion has been defined as "a group property with individual manifestation of feelings of belongingness or attraction to the group" (Lieberman et. al. 1973, p. 337). Thus, as to conclude, cohesion is usually identified as the socio-emotional factor of interaction. For the purpose of this study, cohesion is operationally defined as "attraction to the group, morale, the level of motivation evidenced by group members and coordination of efforts of group members (Shaw 1976, p. 197).

Interaction exists if for two elements, each serves as a stimulus for the other. It is the observed reaction one would record for each, and such reactions may well have meaning, as we developed information about interaction phenomena. Stimulus here, is conceived as a phenomenon to which one person would act at a minimum level.

The peer is defined as an external observer, he or she shares many of the qualities of more formally defined external observers, such as, the laboratory specialists who categorizes and records certain types of information. It is he or she who seeks deliberately and sistematically to explore a variety of information.

There is good evidence that cohesiveness is related to both quantity and quality of group interaction. In a study, Lott and Lott (1961), indicated that cohesiveness and amount of

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communication were related (a rank difference correlation of 0.42), even when opportunity for interaction was the same for all groups. According to Shaw (1976, p. 201) members of high cohesive group tend to communicate to a greater extent with each other and are positively oriented compared to less cohesive group which is of the opposite.

Based on studies by French (1941), Back (1951) and Shaw and Shaw (1962), we can conclude that members of high cohesive groups are cooperative, friendly and generally behaved in ways designed to promote intergration. Back (1951) also found that in the high cohesive groups, the members made more attempts to reach agreement.

An early study by French (1941), showed some of the qualitative differences that may be observed between cohesive and non-cohesive groups, although he did not use cohesiveness to label the differences in his groups. An interesting factor in his study was the analysis of verbatim remarks; the usage of "we" than "I" in determining organized groups. Another factor that can be used as an analysis is the number of times the group members acknowledged each other by names.

In a study of group cohesiveness in industrial work groups by Seashore (1954), among other things, he indicated that members of high-cohesive work groups exhibited less anxiety than members of low cohesive groups and that they showed less variation in productivity among members.

The purpose of this study is to determine a cohesive group through an interaction analysis. Based upon the pattern proposed by Lewin (1947), the author attempts to look at a combination of the task and socio-emotional areas in a systematic approach.

Based upon the foregoing investigations, at least three questions can be derived for this study:

- i. what performance is the group based upon, task or socio-emotional?
- ii. is the group studied a cohesive group and factors that determine it?
- iii. does verbatim remarks apply to cohesive group?

Method

Subjects

Five members forming themselves into a team participated in the study. They are marketing executives from a prominent international company based in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The company deals with household electrical goods that captures a high market share in Malaysia. The group consisted of three male members and two female members.

Measures

The revised IPS (Interaction Process Scores) categories developed by Borgotta (1962) is used as a measurement. The IPS categories is based on a category system containing eighteen items or elements. Nine items identifies the socio-emotional categories namely items, 1,2,3,9,10,15,16,17,18 and the remaining nine as task categories namely 4,5,6,7,8,11,12,13,14. Identification of the two groups of orientation (socio-emotional and task) was held based upon the inclination of the reaction categories.

Procedures

The group was set in their normal meeting setting and they were allowed to discuss on topics dealing with their marketing plan. Several meetings were done before the actual one hour

of recorded (VTR and audio) group meeting. In all the meeting held, not one of them extended beyond an hour. For the purpose of this research, thirty minutes from the earlier part of one of the meeting was chosen to be transcribed and analysed.

Analysis:

The transcription was then analyzed by a peer observational technique through the interaction analysis method. The observer then recorded the scores based on the items or elements specified by the IPS categories. The analysis of verbatim remarks was also employed, namely, the usage of “we” than “I” and the usage of members’ names by group members.

Table 1: Scores On The IPS Categories

<i>Category</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>Percentage of total</i>
01 Common social acknowledgement	0	0.00
02 Shows solidarity through raising the status of others	19	4.12
03 Shows tension release, laugh	19	4.12
04 Acknowledges, understands, recognizes	100	21.69
05 Shows agreement, concurrence, compliance	40	8.68
06 Gives a procedural suggestions	28	6.07
07 Suggests solutions	17	3.69
08 Gives opinion, evaluation, analysis, expresses feeling or wish	68	14.75
09 Self analysis and self Questioning behavior	6	1.30
10 Reference to the external situation as redirected aggression	2	0.43
11 Gives orientation, information, passes communication	41	8.89
12 Draws attention, repeats, clarifies	47	10.19
13 Ask for opinion, evaluation, analysis, expression of feeling or wish	55	11.93
14 Disagrees, maintains a contrary position	7	1.52
15 Shows tension, asks for help by virtue of personal inadequacy	11	2.39
16 Shows tension increase	0	0.00
17 Show antagonism, hostility, is demanding	0	0.00
18 Ego Defensiveness	1	0.22
	Total 461	100
	Mean 25.61	

Result:

The group spent a reasonably high quantity of interaction, a total of 325 sentences. The IPS categories scores for the group are presented in table 1. The total scores of the eighteen categories is 461. The highest score obtained is 100 and the lowest is 0. The mean score is 25.61. There are seven categories with scores above the mean, eight scores below the mean and three categories with no score at all. The highest percentage score is for item 4, being 100 (21.69%).

Analysis of the scores in terms of the highest five scores and the lowest five scores are presented in Table II and III :

The analytical measurement used was the distribution of measurement method.

Table II : Highest IPS Categories Scores

<i>Category</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>Percentage of total</i>
04 Acknowledges, understands, recognizes	100	21.69
08 Gives opinion, evaluation, analysis, expresses feeling or wish	68	14.75
13 Ask for opinion, evaluation, analysis, expression of feeling or wish	55	11.93
12 Draws attention, repeats, clarifies	47	10.19
11 Gives orientation, information, passes communication	41	8.89

Table III : Lowest IPS Categories Scores

<i>Category</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>Percentage of total</i>
10 Reference to the external situation as redirected aggression	2	0.43
18 Ego Defensiveness	1	0.22
01 Common social acknowledgement	0	0.00
16 Shows tension increase	0	0.00
17 Shows antagonism, hostility	0	0.00

Table IV indicates the IPS categories scores on task activity. The highest score obtained is 100 and the minimum score is 7. The mean score is 44.77 and the highest percentage score is 24.81%.

The highest five scores are of the task categories, whereas the five lowest scores are of the socio-emotional.

Table IV : IPS Categories Scores on Task Activity

<i>Category</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>Percentage of total</i>
04 Acknowledge, understands, recognizes	100	24.81
05 Shows agreement, concurrence, compliance	40	9.92
06 Gives a procedural suggestions	28	6.95
07 Suggests solution	17	4.22
08 Gives opinion, evaluation, analysis, expresses feeling or wish	68	16.87
11 Gives orientation, information, presses communication	41	10.17
12 Draws attention, repeats, clarifies	47	11.66
13 Ask for opinion, evaluation, analysis, expressive of feeling or wish	55	13.65
14 Disagrees, maintain a contrary position	7	1.74
	Total	403
	Mean	44.77

The IPS categories scores for socio-emotional activity produced results as indicated in Table V. The maximum score is 19 and the minimum score is 0. The mean is 6.44. The highest percentage score being 32.76%.

Table V : IPS Categories Scores on Socio-Emotional Activity

<i>Category</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>Percentage of total</i>
1 Common social acknowledgement	0	0.00
2 Shows solidarity through raising the status of others	19	32.76
3 Shows tension release, laugh	19	32.76
9 Self analysis and self questioning behavior	6	10.34
10 Reference to the external situation as redirected aggression	2	3.45
15 Shows tension, asks for help by virtue of personal inadequacy	11	18.96
16 Shows tension increase	0	0.00
17 Shows antagonism, hostility, is demanding	0	0.00
18 Ego Defensiveness	1	1.72
Total	58	100
Mean	6.44	

Figure 1 indicates the comparison between the two activities. The scores on task activity are relatively higher than the socio-emotional activity. Figure 2 shows that positive socio-emotional activity is relatively higher than the negative socio-emotional activity (positive = categories 1,2,3, 9, 10 and 15, negative = 16, 17 and 18). This indicates that the group supports positive socio-emotional activity.

Of the thirty-five minutes meeting recorded, the number of "we" used in the interaction is 164 times compared to the number of "I" used, 59 times. Group members' names are mentioned 25 times.

Discussion

Results of this study appeared to indicate that the group is more task oriented than socio-emotional. Up to 87.42 percent of the interaction process are task oriented compared to only 12.58 percent of socio emotional binding. The mean being 44.77 and 6.44 respectively.

As cohesion is usually identified through socio-emotional factors, the most likely question to be asked, is the group a cohesive group? Analyzing the socio-emotional part of the IPS categories, the group tends to spent 32.76 percent on showing solidarity through raising the status of each other, another 32.76 percent showing tension release and laughter and 18.96 percent showed tension and asked for help by virtue of personal inadequacy. To include, the results indicated that the group is more on positively inclined socio emotional activity. The members spent nothing at all on tension increase and showing antagonism and, hostility and demanding. The group members only spent 0.22 percent of ego defensiveness. Thus, we may say that it is a cohesive group.

This findings supported the theory that cohesive group can be a task oriented group although socio-emotional activity usually determines cohesiveness. As Stokes (1983, p. 170) puts it, if group members meet with work as the primary goal, they will spend little time on the socio-emotional activity. Thus, certain aspects of cohesion are more important for certain types of groups.

As Back (1952) explained, if in a group, "cohesiveness was based on the performance of a task, group members wanted to complete the activity quickly and efficiently, they spent just the time necessary for performance of the task and they tried to use this time for the

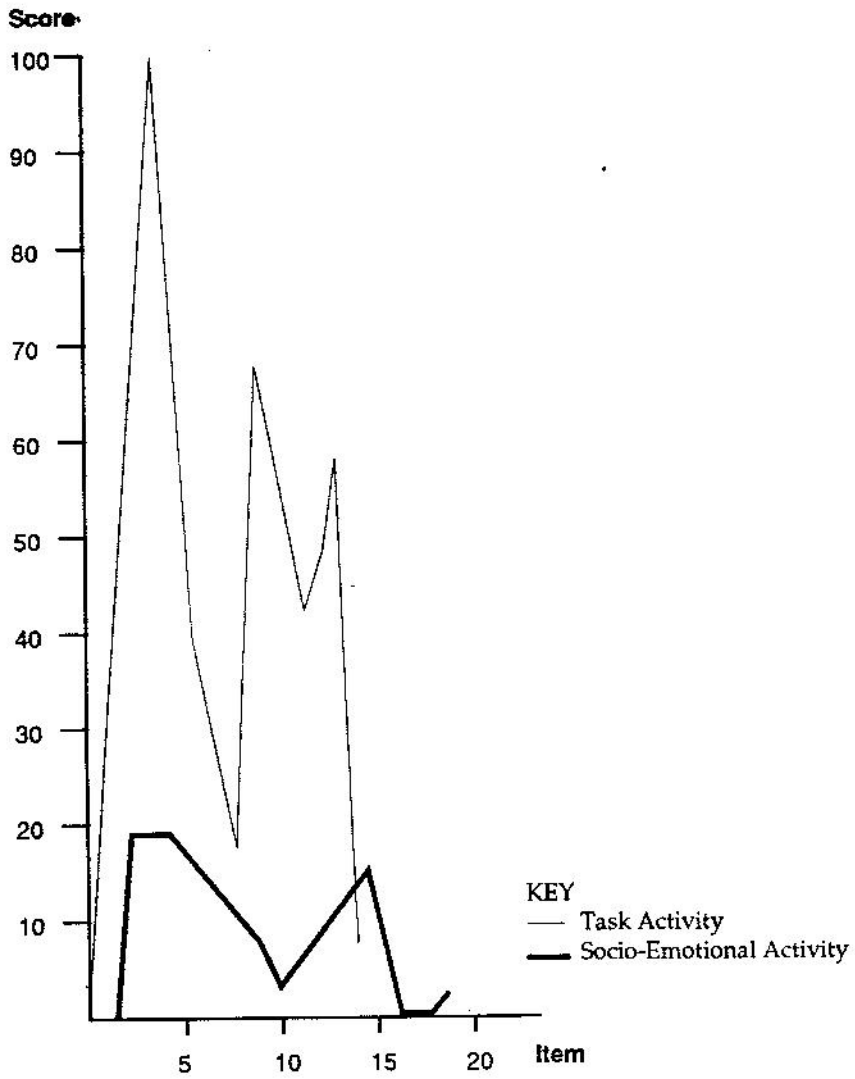


Figure 1: IPS Categories Scores of Task and Socio-Emotional Activities

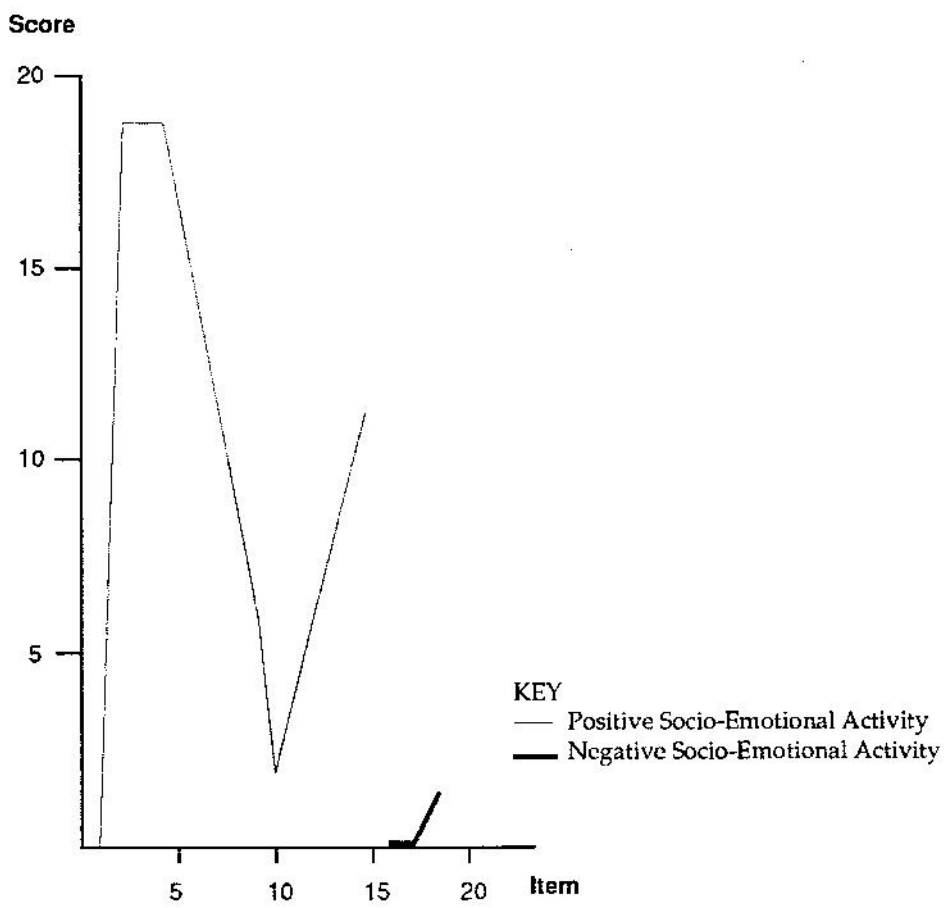


Figure 2 : IPS Categories Scores on Positive and Negative Socio-Emotional Activity

performance of the task only. They tended to participate in the discussion (*meeting*) only as much as they thought it valuable to achieve their purposes (Hare 1962, p. 219-220). As this findings indicated, cohesiveness can be identified in a task oriented group by looking at the inclination of activities of socio-emotional in that group. If it is positively inclined, than this may determines that the group is a cohesive group and vice versa.

Well, does verbatim remarks apply to cohesive groups? The group studied spent a reasonably high quantity of interaction. The group also used more "we" than "I". At the same time they acknowledged their members by name. Since we were able to determine the group as a cohesive group, the findings of verbatim remarks thus can be applied to cohesive group. The group used more "we" than "I" and acknowledged among members by name. Thus verbatim remark can be another factor in determining cohesiveness of a group.

Based upon further observation, the members of the group are attracted to each other. They also seem to spent most of their time producing fruitfull task results, thus showing productivity. There is a high degree to which members are motivated to remain in the group.

Conclusion

We may conclude that the group studied is more task oriented than socio emotional oriented. Although the group is more inclined to the task activity and spent little time on socio emotional activity, we are still able to determine cohesiveness of a group based on other related factors. Another factor that can be suggested in studying group cohesiveness is probably the degree of cohesion.

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