Personality Types and the Configuration of Online Groups

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Introduction

Selection of nursing students for learning groups frequently occurs through random assignment, random selection, or from some other faculty-determined method. Since nurses must juggle shift work, family life, personal needs and educational needs, they tend to prefer independent learning rather than group work. RN-BSN students frequently cite dissatisfaction with online work groups, which could be related to the random selection methods used to formulate them. This study was undertaken to determine if online teams formed with the variables of personality could: a) create better working relationships, b) enhance the online learning experience, c) improve team outcomes (grades), & support team development skills, an essential nursing care component.

Population

Included 102 RN-BSN students enrolled in two online nursing courses at two different universities within the PA State System of Higher Education. There were 28 teams assigned by personality traits and the remaining students who did not want to participate were placed into 10 groups and served as the controls.

Methods

- IRB approval was received from both universities.
- Students invited to participate using a letter with description of study.
- Students submitted an informed consent and completed the 60-question Open Extended Jungian Type Scales 1.2 (OEJTS 1.2)™ and demographic data.
- Faculty formulated groups using student personality type.
- Each team completed a signed agreement (charter) listing team goals, a skill inventory of member strengths, a list of team roles, and a description of potential team obstacles with conflict resolution methods.
- Each team submitted a scholarly paper and each member anonymously submitted a 31-statement Team Development Measurement Evaluation Tool™ that measured team characteristics of cohesion, communication, clarity of team roles, and clarity of team goal achievement.
- Data obtained from each group was analyzed by the researchers and a statistician using SAS Software.

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<th>Personality Type Indicators</th>
<th>Sensing Types</th>
<th>Intuitive Types</th>
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<td>Thinking</td>
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Findings

In examining the Stages in Group Development from Pre-team-Stage 0- Full Developed Stage 9, it was determined that experimental groups were higher than the control group in their stage of positive team development. On the dependent measures cohesion, communication, clarity of team roles, and clarity of team goal achievement although there were differences noted between groups unfortunately the differences on each variable did not meet statistical significance at a 95% confidence interval.

In examining Paper Grade versus Team Stage, there was at least one statistically significant (pairwise) difference between achievement (grade) - comparing pairs of teams in different developmental stages there was a statistically significant difference in the project performance (grade) between teams at Stage 6 and those at "Pre-team" stage. Results may have been affected by the number of control groups as well as participants’ demographics, team size, gender mix, background, and experiences which can affect team success and the measures of team development.

Conclusions

Personality type may have the potential to be an effective predictor of team performance (Paper Grade) if more independent data are collected and the sample size is increased. The statistical tests and models used on the entire data, from the two subpopulations do not confirm researchers’ hypothesis of existing statistically significant difference in team performance depending on the student team category. However, such differences become very evident (and significant) when School is included in the analysis (taken as factor) interacting with team type. This relationship is worth further exploration – to be confirmed or rejected.