Personality Types and the Configuration of Online Groups

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Introduction
Selection of students for learning groups can occur through random assignment, random selection, or some other faculty-determined method. Since nurses juggle shift work, family life, personal and educational needs, they prefer independent learning rather than group work. RN-BSN students cite dissatisfaction with online work groups, possibly due to formulation through random selection. Study Purpose: To determine if online teams formed with variables of age and personality could: a) create better working relationships, b) enhance the learning experience, c) improve team outcomes (grades), and d) support team development.

Population
- 102 RN-BSN students enrolled in two online nursing courses at two different universities within the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education
- 28 groups assigned by age & personality traits using Open Ended Jungian Type Scales 1.2 (OEJTS™)
- 10 groups who did not choose to participate served as controls

Methods
- IRB approval received from both universities; students received letter inviting participation
- Students submitted informed consent and completed 60-question OEJTS™ and demographic data
- Faculty formulated groups using student age and personality type
- Each team completed a signed 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 from each was analyzed by the researchers and a statistician using SAS Software™

Findings
Stages in group development from Pre-team Stage 0 to Fully Developed Stage 9 were higher in experimental group compared to control groups. Dependent measures of cohesion, communication, clarity of team roles, and clarity of team goal achievement showed differences between groups, but the differences on each variable did not meet statistical significance at a 95% confidence interval.

Paper Grade versus Team Stage showed at least one statistically significant (pairwise) difference between achievement (grade) - comparing pairs of teams in different developmental stages, a statistically significant difference was noted in 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, as any could affect team success and measures of team development.

Conclusions
Personality type could potentially 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 all data from the two sub-populations 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.

References