Occupational psychology about team and teamwork

Business, Decision Making

Introduction Nowadays, teams are a fashionable topic in the workplace and many observers think that more and more people are working in teams rather than as individuals. However, whether teams are necessarily a good way of organising work, whether work by teams could be more effective than individuals have been a controversy issue. A high cohesion team is always considered to be beneficial and efficient in performance by using the strengths of individual members and achieving the goal through a right way. However, it could also bring some negative phenomena such as social loafing, groupthink and group polarisation. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to review and discuss both advantages and disadvantages of cohesive teams. The following content can be divided to five parts for better understanding: Definition differences between groups and teams, team development stages, positive and negative outcomes of cohesion team, and key factors of successful teamwork. Definition differences between Groups and Teams Many people used the words ' team' and ' group' interchangeably, actually there are slight differences between a team and a group in real world applications. As Deborah Mackin(2007) have put it, a group is ' a small number of people who are committed to a leader's goal and approach and are willing to be held accountable by the leader'. Teams can be argued as a special case of groups. The best definition of a team is from the book Wisdom of Teams. A team is a small group of people with complementary skills and abilities who are equally committed to a common purpose, goals and working approach for which they hold each other mutually accountable. Perhaps teams differ from groups in the extent to which there is an incremental performance need or opportunity and

members are truly interdependent and really share accountability. Hence, it is clear that teamwork refers to work that involves a group of colleagues who co-operative closely and are interdependent in achieving work goals. Stages of team development It is important to build a social connection with team members in order to communicate, solve problems and work together effectively. Research by Bruce Tuckman has shown that teams typically tend to go through a series of stages from inception to disbandment. Forming is the initial stage of team development which means gathering of people and bringing them together as a team. People might be impersonal, superficial and guarded in communication, task might be not clear in that stage. Moving to Storming stage, members begin to test each other's strengths and weaknesses. It could be a difficult stage when members jockey for power positions and feel frustrated about lacking progress. The third is Norming stage where they start conforming to ideas, rules and values of the team and patterns of communication are established. The level of relaxation begins to change colleagues to friends and develop social bonds. Leader should encourage group member to discuss about the constructive aspects of work and future. Getting to the Performing stage, team is now motivated, focused and inspired and really functions as a unit. With the basis of previous development process, group should be tight and supportive, open and trustful, resourceful and effective. The final phase is the Adjourning stage which is the team finally meets their goal and be disbanded. It would be important for team member to analyse the important elements which helped the team to success such as cohesiveness, trust, cooperation and the willingness to participate socially. Positive Outcomes of Cohesion Team

According to Carron, Brawley and Widmeyer (1998), group cohesion could be defined as " a dynamic process that is indicated in the orientation of a group to stick together and persist in being united in its pursuit of instrumental objectives and/or for the satisfaction of member' affective needs". The task and social cohesion concepts are included in this definition. As a team is usually founded by an accomplished purpose, task cohesion plays the fundamental role and social cohesion among team members is another cohesion force. High cohesion of team has always been considered to be beneficial and lead to better performance. The relationship between cohesion and performance has been investigated broadly (Carron, Colman, Wheeler, &Stevens, 2002; Mullen & Copper, 1994). Carron et al. (2002) found from a meta-analysis that the connection between cohesion and performance is reciprocal: High cohesion increases the team's performance and effective performance also raises cohesion of the team. As a result, the performance could get better when team members are united and attracted to each other and to the task they are doing. It has been pointed by Prapavessis & Carron (1997) that weak team cohesion is connected with weak training intensity. Greater cohesion was also influenced by the extent of adherence behavior (Prapavessis & Carron, 1997), adherence to training schedules (Carron, Widmeyer, & Brawley, 1988), conformity to group norms (e. g., Shields, Bredemeier, Gardner, & Boston, 1995), collective efficacy (e. g., Paskevisch, Brawley, Dorsch, &Widmeyer, 1999), assuming responsibility for negative outcomes (e. g., Brawley, Carron, & Widmeyer, 1987), and tolerance of the negative impact of disruptive events (e. g., Brawley, Carron, & Widmeyer, 1988). Team cohesion could be improved by following ways.

Cohesion is increased by participation in team goal setting (e. g., Brawley, Carron, & Widmeyer, 1993) and democratic leader behavior (e. g., Kozub, 1993; Westre & Weiss, 1991). Cohesiveness is also greater in smaller teams (Widmeyer, Brawley, &Carron, 1990) and altruistic teams (Prapavessis & Carron, 1997). Negative Outcomes of Cohesion Team High Cohesion may not be beneficial for the team all the time and does not make better performance necessarily in all situations. Although high cohesion of team could make members feeling responsible for their performance, not wanting to let others disappointed, it also may increase the pressure to conform, groupthink and group polarisation which may turn against itself. Social loafing effect Many experimental researches indicated that with the number of team member increased, the effort and/or performance of each member often decreases — the so-called social loafing effect (e. g., Latane et al., 1979). Motivational loss in team is one of the reasons which cause this effect. When a team with several people working towards a well-defined goal, team member will optimize the task and may feel they can work less, hide in the crowd and avoid the consequences of not contributing. It also could make them believe that others are not putting forth as much effort as themselves. However, this phenomenon can be improved by indentifying individual's contribution in the team and making a significant difference to the team's performance by their contribution. The other reason of social loafing is pressure to conform. Team members may feel the pressure of not to criticize social loafers in order to preserve feelings of team unanimity (Carron & Hausenblas, 1998). Higher cohesion team leads to greater conformity. With a qualitative research in a junior-league ice-hockey,

researchers (Rovio et al., 2009) pointed out that team members were afraid of giving critical feedback to their teammates and hesitated to share true personal thoughts in the meeting and led to deterioration in the team's performance eventually. In addition, the large size of the team and young age of the team member may increase the pressure to conform. Social loafing is more likely to occur in individualistic societies rather than the collectivist societies. A previous study was conducted by comparing American managers (individualistic values) to Chinese managers (collectivistic values). The result showed that the trainees from China did not have social loafing phenomenon (Earley, 1989). Contrary to the individualistic orientations, people places team goals and collective action ahead of self-interests in collectivist counties and also feel satisfied and accomplished from team outcomes. Groupthink There is a serious problem which causes some real-life policy-making groups making extremely poor decisions called groupthink. According to Janis (1972, 1982a, b), groupthink refers to the tendency for team members to become deeply involved in a cohesive team and so concerned about the motivation for unanimity and agreement more than the motivation to critically and realistically evaluate their risks and benefits of alternative decisions. Many factors contribute to the risk of groupthink, such as unclear group procedure, circumstances difficulty, overestimation of team's power and morality, closed-mindedness and pressure towards uniformity. Janis (1982b) classified these factors into two categories: group antecedents and situational antecedents. Highly cohesive relationships, leader preference, members' similarity, lacking self-confidence and insulation from external opinion are embraced in group

antecedents. On the other hand, situational antecedents include significant threat and difficult solution to achieve. Those factors cause several negative symptoms which lower the probability of team reaching their goals and successful outcomes. Janis (1972) emphasized group cohesiveness above all other. High cohesiveness could tight link team members through bonds of attraction which should be a positive and important role in teams. However, Janis argued that the effect can be detrimental when cohesiveness is extremely high. Similarly, with an experiment research, Parker (2000) also found that more symptoms of groupthink usually appear in high cohesive teams which those team member are friendly with each other and respect every viewpoint. Researchers have analysed several important policy errors of various government at various times in history. Those disaster happened was not just bad luck, but also the groupthink impact on decision-making. For instance, Janis (1972, 1977) cited an important history incident which was the Bay of Pigs fiasco in the early 1960s. The wrong groupthink decision made by the new US administration under President John F. Kennedy cost many people's lives and $53 million in aid. Another tragedy has been mentioned is explosion of NASA's Columbia shuttle in February 1, 2003. Ferraris and Carveth (2003) used the methods of examining the reports of Columbia shuttle explosion and organizing it in categories consistent with the characteristics of groupthink and eventually pointed out that there was sufficient evidence to prove the fault of decision-making was due to groupthink. The conception of groupthink is indeed important to organizations for understanding the model and focusing on the practical applications. Risk of groupthink can be avoided by a series of measures

(Janis, 1982b). These ways include: impartial leadership in order to make team members not just tempt simply following the leader; encourage every member in the team giving high priority to raise doubts and objections; ensure experts attended the meeting and hold ' second chance' meeting where people could express their doubts and questions about previous part. Group polarisation Teams are inclined to make more extreme decisions instead of compromise decisions than the original team member's preferences (Bettenhausen, 1991). It happened when an initial trend of individual team members toward a given direction is enhanced following discussion. This concept has always been indicated with respect to risk. If the initial majority of team members' preferences turned to moderately risky, the final group decision is often more risky than that. In contrary, a cautious initial members' decision may translate to more cautious team decision eventually. There are two primary explanatory mechanisms under group polarisation named social comparison explanation and persuasive argumentation explanation, though the second effect is stronger. Social comparison explanation is that people are continuously motivated both to perceive and to present themselves in a social desirable way. In order to do this, team member need be constantly processing information about how others present themselves and try to be adjusting and like other team member accordingly (Isenberg, 1986). There are two variations of social comparison processes on polarisation. The first one emphasizing the removal of pluralistic ignorance which means people tends to present their position as compromises between their own ideal decision and the impression of the centre group tendency. The second explanation one-upmanship (bandwagon

effects) noted individuals are motivated by a desire to be different from as well as better than others (Fromkin, 1970). Many previous researches related to the processing of relevant information which could influence group polarisation, the most exquisite and successful version of explanation for choice shit is persuasive arguments theory (e. g., Burnstein & Vinokur, 1975. 1977; Burnstein, Vinokur & Trope, 1973; Madsen, 1978). Persuasive argumentation explanation is that the majority choices or positions will dominant discussion and have a persuasive function to influence others. Otherwise, there are two factors determine how persuasive a given argument will be which are perceived validity and perceived novelty (Burnstein, 1982; Vinokur & Burnstein, 1978b). To reduce the impact of group polarisation, team member should prevent social unanimity and make sure all members raising all relevant points and information in order to rejecting the original favoured decision. Chen et al. (2002) have stated that a quantitative decision aid could also slightly decrease the effects of biased persuasive arguments on team members. Moreover, minority influence is another way to limit the extent of group polarisation although it is rarely convert to a major viewpoint. However, minorities can maximize their opportunity by constantly disagreeing with the majority and then insisting on their own idea (Moscovici and Mugny, 1983; Moscovici, 1985). The influence of minority is being perceived as consistent, independent and confident instead of reasonable. Key Factors of Successful Teamwork To enhance the efficiency of team work, need to define the main organizational and management characteristics which could advance and develop it. There are several factors related to the team success which can be separated to three

sets. Support factors. Hackman's model identified five support factors which are important for promoting and supporting teamwork (Hackman, 1986). Clear aim and goal is needed to let team member focusing on their achievements and measuring their performance. Teams require a good leadership so that they can deal with all relations inside and outside the team, choose the right teamwork metaphor and lead the team toward its goal. Teams also need a suitable task which means not be too simple and unchallenging. The resources include material and personnel resources are necessary. Last but not least, a supportive environment is a beneficial aspect for team members to make and implement their decisions. Human resources. Teams with qualified members who have the necessary technical and social skills are good for operating. It is also important for an effective team to have diverse people in the aspect of weakness and strengths, occupational and organizational role. This kind of team has the potential to be highly effective, but they hardly achieve that potential (Kandola, 1995). Besides, organizational feedback and awards need a performance evaluation system in order to assess team success and individual contribution. Team relations. To be successful, teams need a satisfactory external relationship with supportive organizational environment, as well as an effectively internal relationship with team members. Conclusion In conclusion, as this paper showed, teamwork is not always being effective in all situations. Cohesion teams may lead to a better performance sometimes, it also may become a strong norm so that increase the pressure of social loafing, groupthink and group polarisation which are negative potential effects. With the teamwork becoming more prevalent, the implication of the paper will be a good value

to various kinds of organisations to prevent and try their best not to be the victims of these negative impacts when they use teamwork. References: 1. Arnold, J., Silvester, J., Paterson, F., Robertson, I., Cooper, C. and Burnes, B. (2004). Work Psychology: Understanding Human Behaviour in the Workplace (4thed.). London: Financial Times/ Prentice Hall. pp. 428-72. 2. Bettenhausen, K. L., (1991). Five years of group research: What we have learned and what needs to be addressed. Journal of Management, 17, 345-381. 3. Brawley, L. R., Carron, A. V., & Widmeyer, W. (1987). Assessing the cohesion of teams: Validity of the Group Environment Questionnaire. Journal of Sport Psychology, 9, 275-294. 4. Brawley, L., Carron, A., & Widmeyer, W. (1988). Exploring the relationship between cohesion and group resistance to disruption. Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology, 10, 199-213. 5. Brawley, L., Carron, A., & Widmeyer, W. (1993). The influence of the group and its cohesiveness on perceptions of group-related variables. Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology, 15, 245-260. 6. Burnstein, E. & Vinokur, A., (1975). What a person thinks upon learning he has chosen differently from others: Nice evidence for the persuasive arguments explanation of choice shifts. Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 11, 412-426. 7. Burnstein, E. & Vinokur, A., (1977). Persuasive argumentation and social comparison as determinants of attitude polarization. Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 13, 315-332. 8. Carron, A., Brawley, L., & Widmeyer, W. (1998). The measurements of cohesiveness in sport groups. In J. Duda (Ed.) Advancements in sport and exercise psychology measurements (pp. 213-226). Morgantown, WV: Fitness Information Technology. 9. Carron, A. V., Colman, M. M., Wheeler, J., & Stevens, D. (2002). Cohesion and performance

in sport: A meta-analysis. Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology, 24, 168-188. 10. Carron, A. & Hausenblas, H. (1998) Group dynamics in sport (2nd ed.). London, Ontario, Canada: Fitness Information Technology. 11. Chen, C., Gustafson, D. H. and Lee, Y., (2002). The effect of a quantitative decision aid-analytic hierarchy process-on group polarization. Group Decision and Negotiation, 11, 329-344. 12. Ferraris, C. and Carveth, R., (2003). NASA and the Columbia Disaster: Decision-making by Groupthink? Association for Business Communication. 13. Fromkin, H., (1970). Effects of experimentally aroused feelings of undistinctiveness upon valuation of scarce and novel experiences. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 16, 521-529. 14. Hackman, R., (1986). The psychology of self-management in organizations. In: M. Pallak and R. Perloff (Eds.), Psychology and Work. American Psychological Association. Washington DC, pp. 89-136. 15. Isenberg, D. J., (1986). Group Polarization: A critical review and meta-analysis. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 50(6), 1141-1151. 16. Janis, I. L., (1972). Victims of Groupthink. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin. 17. Janis, I. L., (1982a). Groupthink. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin. 18. Janis, I. L., (1982b). Counteracting the adverse effects of concurrence — seeking in policy planning groups: Theory and research perspectives. In Brandstatter, H., Davis, J. H. and Stocker-Kreichgauer, G. (eds) Group Decision Making. London: Academic Press. 19. Janis, I. L. and Mann, L., (1977). Decision-making: A psychological analysis of conflict, choice and commitment. New York: Free Press. 20. Katzenbach, J. R. and Smith, D. K., (1993). The Wisdom of Teams. Boston: Harvard Business School Press. 21. Kozub, S. A. (1993). Exploring the relationship among coaching behavior, team cohesion and

player leadership. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of Houston, TX. 22. Latane, B., Williams, K. and Harkins, S. (1979). Many hands make light the work: The causes and consequences of social loafing. Journal of Personality and Social psychology, 37, 822-832. 23. Madsen, D. B., (1978). Issue importance and choice shifts: A persuasive arguments approach. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 36, 1118-1127. 24. Moscovici, S., (1895). Social influence and conformity. In Lindzey, G. and Aronson, E. (eds) The handbook of social psychology (3rd ed). New York: Random House. 25. Mullen, B., & Copper, C. (1994). The relation between group cohesiveness and performance: An integration. Psychological Bulletin, 115, 210-227. 26. Park, W. W., (1990). A review of research on groupthink. Journal of Behavioral Decision Making, 3, 229-245. 27. Paskevich, D. M., Brawley, L. R., Dorsch, K. D., & Widmeyer, W. N. (1999). Relationship between collective efficacy and team cohesion: Conceptual and measurement issues. Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice, 3, 210-222. 28. Prapavessis, H., & Carron, A. (1997). Cohesion and work output. Small Group Research, 28, 294-301. 29. Rovio, E., Eskola, J., Kozub, S. A., Duda, J. L. and Lintunen, T. (2009). Can high group cohesion be harmful? A case study of a junior ice-hockey team. Small Group Research, 40(4), 421-435. 30. Ruppert, B. (2009), Beer — The key ingredient to team development. SANS Institute Reading Room site. 31. Shields, D., Bredemeier, B., Gardner, D., & Boston, A. (1995). Leadership, cohesion, and team norms regarding cheating and aggression. Sociology of Sport Journal, 12, 324-336. 32. Tuckman, B. W. (1965). Development sequence in small groups. Psychological Review, vol. 63, pp. 384-99. 33. Westre, K., & Weiss, M. (1991). The relationship between

perceived coaching and group cohesion in high school football teams. The Sport Psychologist, 5, 41-54. 34. Widmeyer, W., Brawley, L., & Carron, A. (1990). Group size in sport. Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology, 12, 177-190.