Groupthink principles and fundamentals in organizations

Hassan,Golkar
Department of Management, ShahidBahonar University, Kerman, Iran

Abstract

Groupthink is a widely utilized theory in social psychology, organizational theory, group decision-making sciences, and management fields.Groupthink, a term coined by social psychologist Irving Janis (1972), occurs when a group makes faulty decisions because group pressures lead to a deterioration of "mental efficiency, reality testing, and moral judgment". Groups affected by groupthink ignore alternatives and tend to take irrational actions that dehumanize other groups.Groupthink is a psychological phenomenon that occurs within a group of people, in which the desire for harmony or conformity in the group results in an incorrect or deviant decision-making outcome. Group members try to minimize conflict and reach a consensus decision without critical evaluation of alternative ideas or viewpoints, and by isolating themselves from outside influences.Research into the phenomenon of groupthink is a pertinent area of study that involves understanding how group processes influence the making of decisions. This includes the analysis of the conditions under which miscalculations; faulty information processing, inadequate surveys of alternatives, and other potentiallyavoided errors are most probable.This article examines the fundamentals and concepts of Groupthink practices and their structural effects on Decision making of Managers.

Keyword: Groupthink, Decision making,organization

Introduction

Rarely has a single theory had such enormous and lasting impact on a wide array ofdisciplines as Irving Janis' "Groupthink" model. According to Janis, members ofhigh-status decision-making groups may develop such extreme forms of camaraderieand solidarity that they suppress dissent, valuing group membership and harmonyabove all else. This silencing of ideas that depart from majority thinking can havedevastating results; it may lead to the distortion of reality, the adoption of risky polices,and the abandonment of ethical considerations (Janis, 1971, 1972, 1982).

Irving Janis introduced the theory of groupthink in his classic study Victims of Groupthink in 1972. He attempted to determine why groups, oftenconsisting of individuals with exceptional intellect and talent, made irrational decisions. He concluded that groups often experienced groupthink, amode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive group, when the members? striving for unanimity overridetheir motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action. His major proposition was groups that displayed groupthink symptoms weremore likely to produce poor decision outcomes. His initial works sparked an explosion of research into how group behaviors, biases, andpressures affect group decision-making. Groupthink has become a widely studied and accepted phenomenon. Groupthink is a widely utilizedtheory in social psychology, organizational theory, group decision-making sciences, and management fields. Research into the phenomenon ofgroupthink is a pertinent area of study that involves understanding how group processes influence the making of decisions. This includes theanalysis of the conditions under which miscalculations; faulty information processing, inadequate surveys of alternatives, and other potentiallyavoided errors are most probable. Many professional fields have recognized the impact of group behaviors, and specifically the phenomenon ofgroupthink, on decision-making.

Since the origination of groupthink, additional case studies have appeared inthe literature that involve the retrospective applications of actual groupdecision-making situations to Janis' groupthink framework.
More specifically, groupthink has been used to explain highly consequential decisionmaking settings such as the Kent StateGymnasium controversy(Hensley,1986), the Space Shuttle Challenger launch(Moorhead et al, 1991), and thejury deliberations in the trial of US v. John DeLorean(Neck and Moorhead, 1992).

Although these analyses provide support for the occurrence and/or avoidance of the groupthink phenomenon, this case study approach to the groupthink research still falls short of completely addressing this decision-making process, owing to one glaring omission. all of these studies that followed Janis' work were situationsinvolving a

single decision executed by a group in which groupthink did or didnot occur. Consequently, the groupthink literature is missing case studies thatexamine successive decisions made by the same decision-making group. Surely, we can learn as much, if not more, about decision-making by examiningconsecutive decisions made by the same group, thus examining a group over aperiod of time rather than just studying a single decision-making process of agroup.

The term "groupthink" is appropriate only when the concurrence seekingemerges prematurely, thus curtailing thinking and discussion, and increasing the likelihood of poor decision outcomes (Longley and Pruitt, 1980).

This phenomenon is not inevitable in decision making groups. Indeed, Janis (1972) and Neck and Moorhead (1992) described several cases where policy makers worked closely together to solve a complex dilemma while displaying few, if any, symptoms. The puzzle then, was this: why does a groupthink tendency happen in some problem solving situations and not in others?

For Janis (1972) the answer was to be found in the characteristics of the context within which the decision was made. He theorised that groupthink only emerged when group members were faced with a decision task in a "provocative situational context" involving a moral dilemma or risks of material losses. Such contexts were stressful – they made the decision makers anxious and fearful of not coping adequately. The stress was exacerbated in situations where the group had experienced previous failures (Janis, 1982). From Janis's perspective concurrence seeking was a form of striving for mutual support to help group members cope with the emotion, and this was only really possible for groups that were highly cohesive. In fact, he thought that cohesiveness was the most important factor in the emergence of a groupthink tendency.

Groupthink is: a mode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive in-group, when the member's strivings for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action (Janis, 1972, p. 9).

Groupthink has not yet been fully analyzed in temporary organizations but it has been found to contribute to similar disasters (Allison and Zelikow, 1999; Janis, 1982; Loosemore, 1998; Loosemore and Lee, 2002; Snook, 2002; Thiry, 2001). More importantly, although central to the initial model of groupthink, provocative situational contexts have been neglected in the analysis (Chapman, 2006). Essentially, the question is whether the structure of organization carries features of groupthink?

Business worlds, its framework applied to current events discussed in popular print and electronic media (Fell, 2011; Hertan, 2008; Schneider, 2011). Remarkably, the term "groupthink" began appearing in mainstream dictionaries in 1975 (Turner and Pratkanis, 1998), only a few years after Janis first coined the term. However, cohesiveness was not in itself sufficient to explain why groupthink occurred since not all groups succumbed to it. Apart from the provocative situational context, Janisproposed an additional set of structural antecedent conditions: a leader actively

promoting his or her own solutions; homogeneity of group members; lack of methodical decision-making procedures; and insulation of the group from the opinions of other qualified associates. Janis did not think that all of these needed to be present.

Over a period of several decades a considerable amount of research and writing has been generated with regard to the groupthink model. However, the results provide only partial validation of it (McCauley, 1998; Aldag and Fuller, 1993; McCauley, 1989), and little support for the central notion that groups need to be cohesive for premature concurrence-seeking to take hold (Aldag and Fuller, 1993; Park, 1990). Theorists and researchers have responded in two ways to these results. On the one hand, various modifications to the chain of causality in the model have been proposed, and some new variables have been factored in (e.g. Neck and Moorhead, 1995). A different, but Complementary response is to probe more deeply into, or re-evaluate the underlying theory about concurrence seeking, its causes and impact on decision making behavior in groups. This aspect of the groupthink model is not well understood (Neck and Moorhead, 1995).

This article examines the fundamentals and concepts of Groupthink practices and their structural effects on Decision making of Managers.

Literature Review

The major thrust of Janis' model is that the presence of a number of specificantecedent conditions increases the probability that the group will demonstrate symptoms representative of groupthink(Janis, 1982). Additionally, these symptoms will lead to observable defects in the group's decision-making processes that might result in poor quality decisions(Moorhead and Montanari, 1986).

Although Janis' groupthink theory was based on historical case studies and not empirical evidence it quickly found mass appeal. Groupthink became extremely popular in a wide range of literature. Articles warning of the dangers of groupthink and suggesting remedies appeared in management, psychology, and sociology periodicals. Groupthink even entered the popular vocabulary. Numerous research efforts since Janis' initial works have attempted to explain,

prove, expand, and refine the original theory of groupthink. This research has taken two distinct patterns—case analysis and empirical analysis of part(s) of Janis' groupthink theory. Significant case analysis research include Kent State Gym Controversy (Hensley and Griffins 1986), Space Shuttle Disaster (Moorhead, Ference, and Neck (1991), and jury deliberations in the trail of US vs. John DeLorean (Neck and Moorhead 1992). Empirical analysis utilizes laboratory tests of various aspects of the groupthink theory. Empirical studies have helped link the groupthink model with other human decisionmakingand group behavior theories while validating the groupthink theory.

A clearer understanding of groupthink could be facilitated by a case study that examines multiple decisions made by the same group over a period of time in which the decision-making group is susceptible to groupthink and describes the factors that seem to account for why defective decision making does or does not occur in each separate decision-makingcontext. Considering that most of the important and highly consequentialdecisions affecting organizations today are made in groups, a better understanding of the groupthink phenomenon could be quite Beneficial.

According to Janis, antecedent conditions are the observable causes of groupthink. In other words, they are the conditions "that produce, elicit, or facilitate the occurrence of the syndrome"(Neck and Moorhead, 1995).The primary antecedent condition necessary for groupthink is a highly cohesive group. As Janis states: Only when a group of policy-makers is moderately or highly cohesive can we expect the groupthink syndrome to emerge as the members are working collectively on one of another of their important policy decisions.

Group cohesiveness is often defined as "the result of all the forces acting on the members to remain in the group". Similarly, Janis argues that "the more amiability and esprit de corps among the members of an in-group of policymakers, the greater the danger that independent critical thinking will be replaced by groupthink …"(Janis, 1972, p. 9).

Fuller and Aldag (1998) and Paulus (1998) argued that the conceptual base of the model needed to be generally broadened in the light of the research results, while McCauley (1998) argued for a broader and more consistent use of research in group dynamics. In addition, Fuller and Aldag (1998) was concerned that groupthink studies had lionised the research on group decision making, and that artificial boundaries were being drawn between premature concurrence seeking and other causes of poor decision making. This may have, he suggested, hampered progress on decision making in groups generally, as well as on the groupthink phenomenon itself, through the exclusion of potentially useful ideas from related research domains. Since a special 1998 issue of Organization Behavior and Human Decision Processes, relatively few papers have been published on groupthink, and fresh ideas are needed.

However, it is important to note that cohesiveness is a necessary but insufficient condition for groupthink to pervade a decision-making group. Janis postulated a number of secondary conditions necessary for groupthink to occur.

Some of these secondary conditions related to the structural or administrative faults of the organization. These include:
• insulation of the group;
• leader preference for a certain decision;
• lack of norms requiring methodical procedures;
• homogeneity of members' social background and ideology.

The remaining conditions are related to the decision-making context and include:
• high stress from external threats with low hope of a better solution than the leader's;
• low self-esteem temporarily induced by the group's perception of recent
failures, excessive difficulties on current decision-making tasks, and
moral dilemmas (i.e., apparent lack of feasible alternatives except ones
that violate ethical standards)(Neck and Moorhead, 1995).

The Groupthink Model

The groupthink model (see Figure 1) provides a visual representation of the theory of groupthink, including the conditions under which groupthink is likely to occur, the symptoms of groupthink, and the consequences resulting from groupthink. According to the model the antecedent condition of a moderately or highly cohesive group (Box A) interacts with other structural faults of the organization (Box B-1) and/or provocative situational context factors (Box B-2) to increase the probability of the groupthink tendency. The groupthink tendency is expressed in the observable consequences of the symptoms of groupthink (Box C). When a group displays most of the symptoms of groupthink, we can expect to find that the group will also display symptoms of defective decision-making (Box D). Defective decision-making normally lowers the probability of a successful decision outcome (Box E). "The theory predicts that when a group is moderately or highly cohesive (Box A), the more of the antecedent conditions listed in boxes B-1 and B-2 that are present, the greater the chances of defective decision making as a result of the groupthink syndrome."
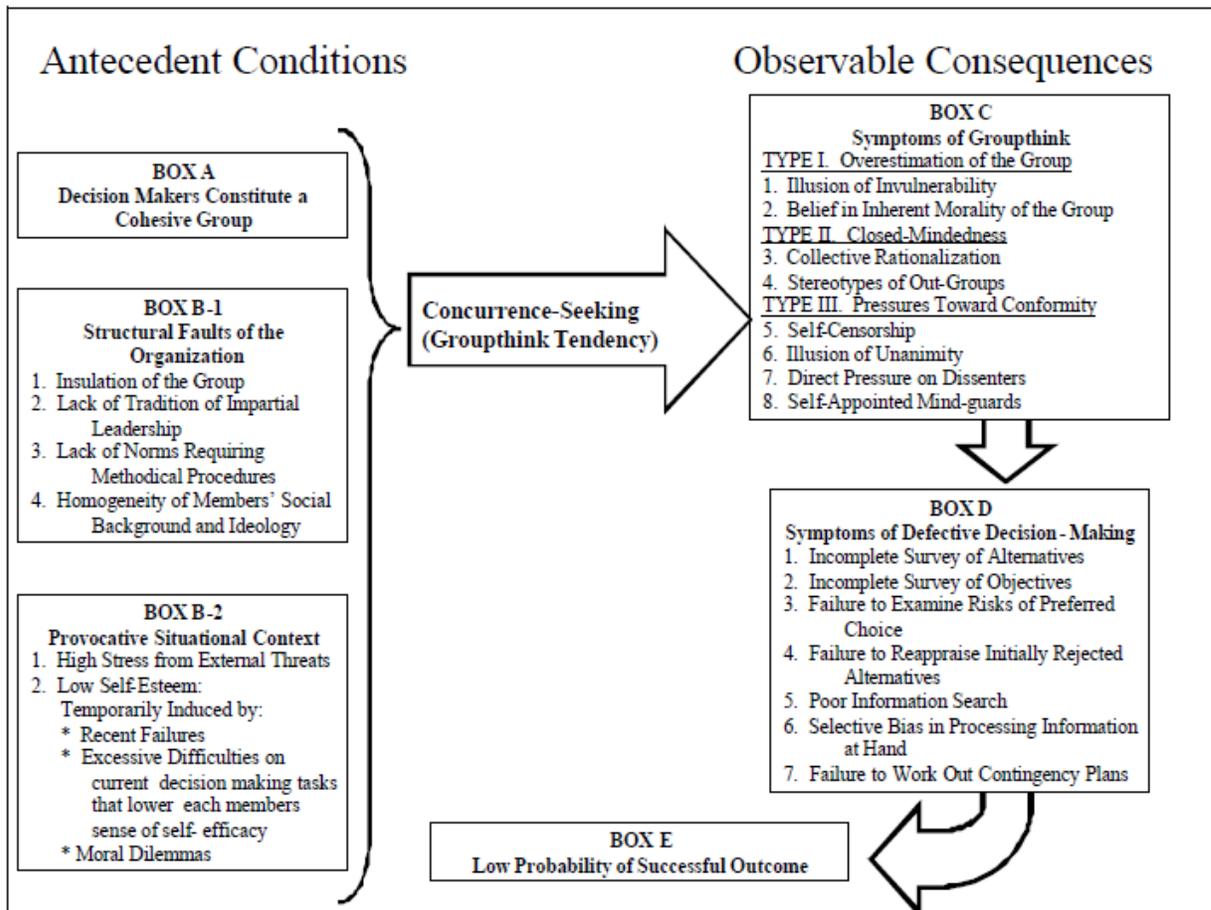

Figure 1. The Groupthink Model

Laboratory studies have generally tested for the presence and strength of linearrelationships between selected antecedent conditions and symptoms of groupthink.

Overall, the evidence provides only partial support for the model. Neck and Moorhead (1995) noted that most of the studies to that point had focused on the interactive effects of cohesiveness and the structural faults. Their review, and those of others (Aldag and Fuller, 1993; McCauley, 1989) indicated that the best predictors of groupthink were closed leadership style (the presence of a strong leader showing early support for a particular solution to the problem) and lack of methodical processes for making decisions. For example, Longley and Pruitt (1980) found that the presence of structural faults increased the tendency for early development of a norm towards a particular choice in cohesive groups, possibly explaining the symptoms of defective decision making.

Consistent with this, research showed that the existence of norms regarding methodical procedures reduced the groupthink tendency (Callaway and Esser, 1984).

The provocative situational context (producing stress and anxiety) has received little attention from researchers, which is surprising, given its importance in the original model. Callaway et al. (1985) found support for the hypothesis that concurrence-seeking is a stress-reduction process that was not mitigated by the presence of decision making procedures while Turner (1992 cited in Esser, 1998) manipulated stress and found more rationalisationbehaviour in information processing when levels of stress were higher. In other studies, the importance of stress and anxiety was asserted (e.g. Moorhead et al., 1991), but supporting studies were not reported. Neck and Moorhead (1992, 1995) were also interested in the idea of the provocative situational context, but suggested the inclusion of two additionalvariables: highly consequential decision and pressure due to time constraints. It seemstherefore that stress and anxiety have been overlooked in the research. Hence, a central tenet of the groupthink model remains largely untested.

Symptoms of groupthink

The existence of the antecedent conditions produces the "observables" orsymptoms of groupthink. Janis argued that eight symptoms were evident in the fiascoes studied and serve as the primary means of identifying the occurrence
of groupthink. The symptoms include:

(1) an illusion of invulnerability;
(2) an unquestioned belief in the group's inherent morality;
(3) collective efforts to rationalize;
(4) stereotyped views of enemy leaders as evil, weak, or stupid;
(5) self-censorship of deviations from the group consensus;
(6) a shared illusion of unanimity;
(7) direct pressure on any member who expresses strong arguments against
any of the group's stereotypes;
(8) the emergence of self-appointed mind guards to protect or screen the
group from adverse information(Callaway and Esser, 1984).

Groupthink and temporary organizations

Groupthink behavior is associated with people retaining the status quo by minimizingtheir conflicts without critical assessment, analysis and evaluation. Motives may vary but essentially those involved seek to avoid standing out in the crowd and any risk of embarrassment. Essentially, groupthink developed in high-level policy situations where it was commonly observed. Not so grand but nonetheless important, are the various connections made between groupthink and temporary organizations (projects).

Bourgeon (2007) associates the phenomenon with the beginning of the project and with staffing approaches; Bresnen (2007) with the breakdown of partnerships between organizations; and McElhinney and Proctor (2005) with entrapment and decision making in projects. The studies mainly contribute to aspects of project management and focus more upon groupthink than on understanding organizational structures and groupthink behavior within them.
Chapman (2006) argues that organizational structure has received limited interest and suggests that groupthink behavior is facilitated by emotions where people engage in control-denial-escape behavior. Emotions are commonly a vital part of a crisis.
With regard to structure, Lindkvist (2005) notes that the temporary organization may be protected from groupthink by its very setup. He argues that the difference between the team members' knowledge bases contributes to flexibility and creativity whereas stability and being uninventive (features commonly associated with bureaucracies and permanent organizations (King, 1999)) contribute to groupthink.

Similarly, associating groupthink with structure, Snook and Connor (2005) argue that groupthink contributes to what they call structurally induced inaction. Structurally induced inaction is essentially a matter of the organizational structure putting the lid on any action that may have prevented a certain situation from eventuating. Rather than
seeking the explanation from the group, they thus focus on the organization. A focus on structure would correspond to one out of three core creators of groupthink symptoms: group, structure and context (Chapman, 2006, p. 1394; Janis, 1972, 1982).

One might be tempted to think that groupthink is inevitable is some cases. Janis (1972, pp. 207-18) offers some remedies for avoiding it:

- use a critical reviewer;
- do not allow managers to express their preferences in advance;
- from time to time use independent groups;
- consider all alternatives;
- discuss the ideas with people outside of the group;
- . invite experts to meetings; and
- . use non-continuous devil's advocate examination of warnings and open sessionsto reconsider alternatives.

Groupthink in temporary organizations

Caution should be exercised before generalizing the results of one case to all temporaryorganizations. Nevertheless, considering the bureaucratic organizational structure under discussion, there are some implications if groupthink is to be avoided. Thus, the following section will focus on the lessons that project managers can learn from. The case and the literature (Christensen and Kreiner, 1991; Ekstedt et al., 1999; Janis, 1972; Lundin and So¨derholm, 1995; PMI, 2004) suggest that there is reason to be cautious around temporary organizations as their structure may create features of groupthink. This effect is contrary to what has been argued (Lindkvist, 2005).

Janis (1972, pp. 207-18) suggested some practices to avoid groupthink including: using a predetermined critical evaluator; refusing to allow the permanent organization to voice objections about personnel; using several working groups; examining all alternatives; discussing the task with people outside of the project; inviting experts to

contribute; using a non-continuous devil's advocate; examining warnings and including open sessions to reconsider alternatives. In a typical project setting, not all of these options are available but this analysis suggests that under some circumstances project managers should be aware of the inherent danger of the structure and therefore consider the options above.

It should also be noted that avoiding groupthink is a balancing act between freedom, efficiency and fast decisions, which is seldom easy in a crisis situation. Too much freedom, for example, may enable close scrutiny of a goal but hamper fast decisions. Therefore, evidence from this case study suggests that some aspects of project decision making in a temporary organization should be deliberately open whilst others are closed to influence. The context decides what and when each strategy is applicable.

For example, it may be wiser to make a fast decision in a situation where waiting for confirmation would result in severe delay and the answer is reasonably certain. On the other hand, if there is no reason to assume that the answer will go in a certain direction the project manager may be better off waiting. Finally, no one should ever be punished for whistle blowing (Near and Miceli, 1985).

Avoiding groupthink means that everybody should be free to express an opinion, including people outside of the temporary organization. In the bureaucratic organizational setup of the Everest events, whistle blowing was almost impossible (King, 1999, p. 324).

Groupthink is of course, not a phenomenon restricted to temporary organizations. Several of Janis (1972) examples in fact emerge in permanent organizations. Whether temporary organizations are more likely than permanent organizations to develop groupthink is, however, impossible to say considering the scope of the paper. One very interesting avenue for further research would however be to investigate the similarities and differences in regards to groupthink in the two types of organization. Furthermore, the relationship between temporary organizations and groupthink need further investigation as so far the linkages have been shown but not properly investigated in depth.

Groupthink – Towards effective decision making in self-managing teams

A recent paradigm labelled "inner leadership" focuses on establishing and maintaining constructive desirable thought patterns (Manz and Neck, 1991). This perspective suggests that, just as individuals tend to develop behavioural habits that are both functional and dysfunctional, individuals also develop habits (or patterns) in their thinking that influence

their perceptions, the way they process information, and the choices they make, in an almost automatic way. Personal strategies for purposefully influencing these thought patterns include the analysis and management of:

• beliefs and assumptions,
• internal dialogues (self-talk), and
• mental images.

According to this approach, by effectively applying inner-leadership techniques, employees can enhance their performance, and thus organizational performance. Various research supports this theory. Many studies have indicated that what we covertly tell ourselves (self-talk), and our symbolic experience of imagined results of a behaviour before it is actually performed(mental imagery) can improve individual performance across a variety of tasks and activities.

Similarly, a study of aspiring psychological counsellors demonstrated that mental imagery can lead to successful performance on complex skills such as decision making and strategy formulation. Also, various researchers including David Burns and Albert Ellis have emphasized the usefulness of managing personal beliefs and assumptions to deal with a wide range of personal problems such as destructive habits, phobias, and depression. Overall, a variety of research does support the contention that inner-leadership strategies can contribute to individual performance. (For a more extensive discussion of this research, see (Ellis, 1975).

Similarly, we propose that positive "teamthink" can be established by combining constructive team self-management of self-talk (the team's internal dialogue), mental imagery (the team's common imagination and vision of the future), and beliefs and assumptions (the team's common belief system). These team self-management strategies can be combined to facilitate constructive thought patterns (the team's habitual patterns of thought) within self-managing teams. The resulting benefits of this process can be enhanced group effectiveness (e.g. decision-making quality and team performance) resulting from a movement beyond the limitations of groupthink to a synergistic combination of members' knowledge and cognitive abilities (Rost et al, 2010).

Team self-dialogue

Inner leadership suggests that self-talk (what individuals covertly tell themselves) can serve as a self-influence tool for improving the personal effectiveness of employees and managers. Similarly, the groupthink perspective argues that group verbalizations (the self-talk of the group) may affect group performance. More specifically, within a cohesive self-managing team, there is a tendency for members to put social pressure on other members who verbalize views that deviate from the dominant opinions expressed by the group. This pressure is exerted to assure that the deviant member does not disrupt the consensus of the group as a whole. This pressure towards conformity in the group's dialogue tends to undermine constructive critical analysis and may lead to defective decision making on the part of the group. The creation of teamthinkrequires constructive team dialogue that is conducive to the fuller contribution of the knowledge and expertise of each team member, and allows for challenge of the status quo.

Team mental imagery

"We can create and, in essence, symbolically experience imagined results of ourbehavior before we actually perform." From this perspective, mental imagery refers to imagining performance of a task prior to its actual physical completion. For example, some service employees are required by their work to deal with irate customers. Employees can potentially enhance their effectiveness in serving irate customers by mentally visualizing a successful interaction before it actually occurs. Such visualization can help the employee rehearse and prepare to use effective behaviours as well as promote needed confidence. In the same manner, we believe that a work team can potentially enhance its performance through the utilization of group mental imagery to establish a common mental image of vision of how best to address an existing challenge. In fact, it has been suggested that the most successful groups consist of members who share a common vision(Napier et al, 1987).

Consequently, when faced with important decisions, an effective self-managing work team may interactively create a common view or vision regarding what and how it is going to accomplish. For example, a selfmanagingcross-functional design team could combine the expertise and experience of its various members for creating a feasible image of a new technological advancement to an existing product.

Team thought patterns

The combination of beliefs, mental imagery and self-talk produce overallthought patterns. Thought patterns can be described as integrated patterns of thinking that tend to be repeated when triggered by situational events, or as habitual ways of thinking. Sometimes individuals engage in negative or positive chains of thoughts (habitual ways of thinking) that affect emotional and behavioural reactions. Opportunity thinking vs. obstacle thinking is an example of different types of thought patterns. Opportunity thinking involves a pattern of thoughts that focus on opportunities, worthwhile challenges, and constructive ways of dealing with challenging situations. It tends to promote a realistic appraisal of difficult situations that leads to the necessary preparation and application of skills to overcome existing challenges. Opportunity thinkers view challenging/difficult situations as temporary occurrences that can be overcome. Obstacle thinking, on the other hand, involves a focus on the negative aspects (the obstacles) involved in challenging situations, e.g. reasons to give up and retreat from problems. Obstacle thinkers view troubling occurrences as permanent events that happen repeatedly and can rarely be conquered.

Research suggests that the nature of one's thought pattern may be directly related to personal performance. In other words, if the thought patterns are constructive – i.e. focused on opportunities and potential ways of overcoming challenges, rather than obstacles and the futility of trying – subsequent performance should be enhanced. On the other hand, obstacle thinking tends to interfere with confidence and constructive preparation and consequently can contribute to performance failures.

Anxiety and information processing

The interplay of reason and emotion has been noted by many researchers (e.g.Ashforth and Humphrey, 1995; Fineman, 1996; Damasio, 2000; Loewenstein et al., 2001; Sinclair and Ashkanasy, 2005). The research on negative emotion indicates that being in this state typically has a detrimental effect on the capacity of decision makers. Mittaland Ross (1998) concluded

that people in a negative emotional state process information more systematically, while those in a positive state do it more strategically.

Overall, the quality of decision making when in a positive mood state was better. Environmental uncertainty is one factor that stimulates stress and anxiety (Garling et al., 1998).

Apparently heightened levels of stress interfere with optimal human functioning, but how this happens is not entirely clear. It may be that stress creates an imbalance between environmental demands and an individual's resources to cope.

Generally, people seek to reduce or minimise uncertainty and prefer environments that are more predictable and controllable (Evans and Cohen, 1987).

Presumably, efforts to reduce uncertainty interfere in some way with, or limit the capacity for full cognitive functioning, for example, by increasing errors on cognitive tasks (Leon and Revelle, 1985).

Janis and Mann (1977) proposed a "decision conflict theory" concerning the effects of stress on information processing. This theory contends that decision makers under stress resort to hypervigilant strategies for information processing, manifested as a frantic search for solutions, a failure to consider all alternatives, disorganization and rapid shifting among possible solutions.

Baradell and Klein (1993) found support for decision conflict theory when they investigated the effects of anxiety on the quality of decision making performance. Exposure to naturally occurring life stressors, such as undesirable life events or daily hassles, produced autonomic reactions that individuals perceived as anxiety. These reactions demand the individual's attention, leaving him or her with less capacity to cope with the task at hand, ultimately resulting in impaired decision making.

Implicit motivation and anxiety reduction

When engaging in group decision making behaviour, those involved may be motivatedby a range of factors. Making a good decision is just one possibility among several (McCauley, 1998).

Other motivators in group situations include improving member satisfaction, gaining commitment to the decision, and diffusing responsibility for poor decisions (Aldag and Fuller, 1993).

Some of these could complement sound decision making outcomes, but others might not. The literature on the effects of implicit emotion on decision making has a long history, although it is not always presented as such. Bion (1968), for example, theorised that the need to reaffirm basic beliefs and assumptions could lead groups away from constructive solutions to their problems, while Asch (1956) demonstrated the influence of a desire to conform. Indeed, decision making situations are full of drama arising from the interplay of overt and covert motivations, the baggage from past decisions and experiences, and micropoliticalbehaviour (Fuller and Aldag, 1998).

The "mood maintenance hypothesis" (Isen and Patrick, 1983, discussed above) also suggests another way in which negative emotions can become an implicit source of motivation for risk taking behaviour. It is also known from the psychoanalytic literature that anxiety elicits a defensive response, although this is often at the cost of considerable self-deception and loss of contact with reality (Carlson and Hatfield, 1992, p. 33).

According to Rycroft (1968), the defensive response has three modes: controlling one's feelings or those of others, denying the reality of the threat, and seeking an escape from the situation. Specific defence mechanisms that work in with one or more of these modes include rationalisation, denial and repression. In relation to decision making situations where anxiety and stress are present, it could be suggested that decision makers deal simultaneously with the anxiety and the choice dilemma. It might be deduced that the anxiety reduction process, engaging the protective modes and defence mechanisms, is a distraction that lowers the chances of a sound choice being made. While it might seem counter intuitive that decision makers tend to be less vigilant when anxious, there is considerable research evidence to support   it.

Groupthink Symptoms

The model presents. three types of groupthink symptoms described here in outline form.

1.Overestimation of the Group

i.   Illusion of Invulnerability. This symptom is defined as excessive optimism that encourages taking extreme risks with little consideration of what would happen if the worst outcome should occur or the consequences of the solution proposed by the group. This always includes the overestimation of the potential success of the solution or the abilities of the group.

ii. Belief in the Inherent Morality of the Group. This symptom implies that the group ignores the ethical or moral consequences of their decisions.

2.Close Mindedness

i.   Collective Rationalization. This is an effort by members of the group to discount, withhold, or distort warnings and other information that could threaten the group's belief by convincing themselves as to the validity of the group's position. The group does not realistically or seriously consider outside information or other potential decision alternatives.

ii. Stereotypes of Out-Groups. "Just as the groups are overconfident in their own powers and morality, they tend to believe their opponents are weak or foolish." This results in an underestimation of their opponent's ability to counter or interfere with the group's plan.

3.Pressures Toward Uniformity

i.   Self-Censorship. This occurs when members hold back expressing their doubts or deviations from the apparent group consensus. This may reflect each member's inclination to minimize to himself the importance of his doubts and counterarguments.

ii. Illusion of Unanimity. Self-censorship and other devices create an environment of unanimity concerning judgments conforming to the majority view. This environment is also facilitated by the false assumption that silence means consent.

iii. Direct Pressures on Dissenters. The group uses direct social pressure on any members who express descent with the majority's views, stereotypes, proposed solution, or commitment. Group pressures and norms make it clear that dissenting viewpoints and behavior are contrary to expected group norms of loyalty.

Self-Appointed Mind-Guards. Members of the group take it upon themselves to protect the group from adverse information that could threaten the group's shared complacency and to keep others in line with the supposed consensus.

Creating Teamthinkto prepare SMT (self-managing teams) effectiveness

Teamthinksuggests that the collective thinking of self-managing teams canlead not only to negative outcomes (such as groupthink); but also to positive group outcomes.
Teams that experience Teamthinkwill tend to display a different, more constructive set of symptoms. These include:
• encouragement of divergent views
• open expression of concerns/ideas
• awareness of limitations/threats
• recognition of each member's unique value
• recognition of views outside of the group
• discussion of collective doubts
• adoption/utilization of non-stereotypical views
• recognition of ethical and moral consequences of decisions.
Teamthink and groupthink are two separate and distinct phenomena.
Groupthink involves a condition in which a group succumbs to a dysfunctional, unrealistic view of a challenging situation. This process tends to create excessive concurrence seeking and an inadequate appraisal of alternative courses of action. Teamthink, on the other hand, depicts a process in which the groups' realistic appraisal of challenging events leads to constructive thought patterns that stimulate the required preparation and skill application necessary to overcome obstacles and to pursue opportunities (Maharaj,2009).
Overall, teamthink is characterized by effective synergistic thinking within the group.

Conclusions

Groupthink theory explains one factor that can contribute to defective decision-making. Groupthink can have some benefits. When working with a large number of people, it can allow the group to make decisions, complete tasks, and finish projects quickly and efficiently. Groupthink is a phenomenon that occurs when the desire for group consensus overrides people's common sense desire to present alternatives, critique a position, or express an unpopular opinion. Here, the desire for group cohesion effectively drives out good decision-making and problem solving.

Janis suggested that Groupthink happens when there is:

- A strong, persuasive group leader.
- A high level of group cohesion.
- Intense pressure from the outside to make a good decision.

In fact, it is now widely recognized that Groupthink-like behavior is found in many situations and across many types of groups and team settings.

The challenge for any team or group leader is to create a working environment in which Groupthink is unlikely to happen. It is important also to understand the risks of Groupthink – if the stakes are high, you need to make a real effort to ensure that you're making good decisions.

To avoid Groupthink, it is important to have a process in place for checking the fundamental assumptions behind important decisions, for validating the decision-making process, and for evaluating the risks involved. For significant decisions, make sure your team does the following in their decision-making process:

- Explores objectives.
- Explores alternatives.
- Encourages ideas to be challenged without reprisal.
- Examines the risks if the preferred choice is chosen.
- Tests assumptions.
- If necessary, goes back and re-examines initial alternatives that were rejected.
- Gathers relevant information from outside sources.
- Processes this information objectively.

Groupthink occurs when a homogenous highly cohesive group is so concerned with maintaining unanimity that they fail to evaluate all their alternatives and options. Groupthink members see themselves as part of an in-group working against an outgroup opposed to their goals. You can tell if a group suffers from groupthink if it:

1. overestimates its invulnerability or high moral stance,
2. collectively rationalizes the decisions it makes,
3. demonizes or stereotypes outgroups and their leaders,
4. has a culture of uniformity where individuals censor themselves and others so that the facade of group unanimty is maintained, and
5. contains members who take it upon themselves to protect the group leader by keepinginformation, theirs or other group members', from the leader.

Group leaders can prevent groupthink by:

1. encouraging members to raise objections and concerns;
2. refraining from stating their preferences at the onset of the group's activities;
3. allowing the group to be independently evaluated by a separate group with a different leader;
4. splitting the group into sub-groups, each with different chairpersons, to separately generate alternatives, then bringing the sub-groups together to hammer out differences;
5. allowing group members to get feedback on the group's decisions from their own constitutents;
6. seeking input from experts outside the group;
7. assigning one or more members to play the role of the devil's advocate;
8. requiring the group to develop multiple scenarios of events upon which they are acting, and contingencies for each scenario; and
9. calling a meeting after a decision consensus is reached in which all group members are expected to critically review the decision before final approval is given.

However, if Groupthink does set in, it's important that you recognize and acknowledge it quickly, so that you can overcome it and quickly get back to functioning effectively.

Follow these steps to do this:

- Even with good group decision-making processes in place, be on the look out for signs of Groupthink, so you can deal with them swiftly.
- If there are signs of Groupthink, discuss these in the group. Once acknowledged, the group as a whole can consciously free up its decision making.
- Assess the immediate risks of any decision, and the consequences for the group and its customers. If risks are high (for example risk of personal safety), make sure you take steps to fully validate any decision before it is ratified.
- If appropriate, seek external validation, get more information from outside, and test assumptions. Use the bullets above as a starting point in diagnosing things that needs to change.

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