

Human Resources Development and Group Cohesion During Technological and Management Changes

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Roundtable: Human Resource Development

Based on Turner and Tajfel's (1986) social identity theory of intergroup behavior and Arrows et al.'s (2000) group dynamics, this work explored the relationship between human resources development (HRD) and group cohesion during technological and management changes. The exegesis for this study occurred at Matthew 5:3-12, which provided traits conducive to support group cohesion during management and technological shifts. Robbins' (1996) inner texture as part of the socio-rhetorical analysis was used to exegete traits from Matthew 5:3-12 (NIV). It was hypothesized that HRD during times of technological changes called for managers to function as situational leaders who inspired and motivated group members to attend training for knowledge transfer into the succeeding organizational processes for sustainability while safely idling the existing procedures. While there appeared to be synergies between Turner and Tajfel's (1986) social identity of intergroup behavior theory and group cohesion during management and technological changes, it became evident that the balance between HRD and group cohesion was critical and predominately placed in the hands of the manager as an effective leader. The traits that emerged from the participants' narratives on the relationships with the retired and succeeding managers using Saldana's (2013) were compared to the exegeted set from Matthew 5:3-12 (NIV). While the traits of the retired manager were consistent with the pericope, those of his successor were not.

Keywords: Group cohesion, human resources development, management change, technological change.

The phenomena of HRD and group cohesion appeared to be mutually dependent on one another. While HRD as part of human resources management (HRM) could be perceived as the enhancement of an individual's skills to be applied to the organizational processes, this endeavor occurred not only within the context of a functional group in an organization, but it affected the group and the organization as

the firm responded to its internal and external environments and dealt with its contextual dynamics (Arrow et al., 2000). It was reasonable to infer that those contextual dynamics of functional groups could be impacted by group cohesion and vice versa.

Literature Review

The below literature review analyzed the topics of HRD, group cohesion, and technological and management changes to inform and guide qualitative research questions. The research questions emerged when phenomena of interest were viewed from multiple perspectives citing various authors and potential relationships between them were identified and explored. Within this context, the hypothesized relationship between HRD, group cohesion, and technological and management changes was amplified to support not only the qualitative research questions but the data collection and analysis to draw inferences, answer the research questions, identify limitations, and point at the direction of further research.

Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behavior

Turner and Tajfel's (1986) social identity theory of intergroup behavior emphasized the importance of belonging to a group in which members found the source of (a) identity, (b) pride, and (c) self-esteem. While social identity gave a person a sense of who they were within the context of group membership, pride was a feeling derived from this sense of being. According to Cast and Burke (2002), self-esteem was a behavioral outcome of feeling proud due to belonging to a group.

HRD

Gold et al. (2013) discussed HRD not just from the standpoint of acquiring skills but how this process affects personal and professional growth. Moreover, HRD as an organizational program that facilitates employee training to acquire new professional skills to adapt to ongoing organizational changes could also be perceived as an outlet to cope with changes in diversified contemporary environments. Shuck et al. (2014) used social exchange theory to examine how employees perceive support for participation in HRD and how their participation affects their engagement and turnover intentions. Shuck et al. (2014) ascertained that employees' participation in HRD coupled with (a) emotional, (b) psychological, and (c) behavioral engagement were negatively correlated with the employees' turnover intent affirming the vital role of HRD in any organization. Wreczycki (2021) posited that sufficient self-awareness was necessary for a person to sustain emotional maturity and sovereignty and to rely on self-concept (Knowles et al., 2015) to cognitively and feelingly assess the consequences of thoughts that may turn into words and actions to have constructive social implications. HRD in the adult learners setting called for (a) the need to know, (b) the learner's self-concept, (c) life experiences, (d) readiness to learn, (e) orientation toward learning, and (f) motivation to learn (Knowles et al., 2015).

Group Cohesion

Forsyth (2021) described group cohesion as group members' level of unity and pointed at attraction and pride as antecedents. Group cohesion characterized people who (a) liked working together, (b) were committed to a common objective, and (c) derived satisfaction from being part of the group. Lawler et al. (2000) evaluated a theory of relational cohesion to explain when and how group members commit to one another through positive emotions and uncertainty reduction to create and sustain a psychological group formation. Severt and Estrada (2015) interpreted group cohesion as one of the most researched group phenomena studied linking effectiveness and performance.

Technological Changes

Over the past couple of decades, technological advancements accelerated exponentially to evolve from technology used as an administrative tool to the driver of the strategic organizational activities (Rassool and Dissanayake, 2019). Digitization became necessary for organizations to avoid "digital Darwinism" (Udovita, 2020). Consequently, implementing and deploying innovative technologies as fast as possible for organizational transformation and therefore maximum advantage became the sign of organizational digital agility to re-envision customer experience rather than just selling goods or services (Schwartz, 2001).

Management Changes

Sabherwal, Hircheim, and Goles (2013) proposed that appropriate management is essential to support and sustain technological changes. Managers who were effective leaders could inspire followers to embrace and support changes in technology to advance organizations into the next phase of the digital era to ensure that firms survive and thrive. Yukl (2013) posited that for organizational transformations to be successful, strong leadership among managers must exist to ensure success. Ulrich (2011) argued that technical leadership must be present for technological changes to be implemented and sustained. Yukl (2013) emphasized that a manger who embodied and exhibited (a) authentic, (b) charismatic, (c) ethical, (d) servant, (e) spiritual, and (f) transformational leadership traits must also be technologically savvy to serve as a digital transformation champion.

The above literature review guided and informed the below research questions:

1. Do you agree with the working definition of group cohesion as characterizing people who (a) like working together, (b) are committed to a common objective, and (c) derive satisfaction from being part of the group (Forsyth, 2021)? If so, why? If not, why not?

- 2. Have you ever participated in a technological change that coincided with the management shift, and if so, were HRD, group cohesion, and the manager traits key factors during the transitions (Rassool and Dissanayake, 2019; Sabherwal et al., 2013)?
- 3. What managerial traits emerged during the technological change and were they conducive to supporting a technological shift and sustaining it (Rassool and Dissanayake, 2019; Sabherwal et al., 2013)?

Methodology

Using Liamputtong and Ezzy's (2005) qualitative method and analysis model, this research focused on collecting qualitative data in a narrative format as answers to the above research questions from three female participants and members of a functional group within an entertainment industry organization who participated in a rapid technological change immediately prior to their manager's retirement and the onset of COVID-19, which introduced the necessity to work from home remotely. There were three columns presented in each table. The left column was used to house the narrative data from each participant as answers to research questions. The middle column allowed for the immersion in data to facilitate the emergence of themes to be then interpreted into single word traits presented in the right column. The traits anchoring the retired and succeeding managers' behavioral outcomes as interpreted by the functional group members were then compared to the traits exegeted from Matthew 5:3-12 (NIV) based on Robbins' (1996) inner texture as part of the socio-rhetorical analysis to investigate commonalities or identify contrasts. Saldana's (2013) in vivo method to present the thematical version of the first reading of the participants' responses was used then supported by deductive logic to arrive at codes as single-word representations of traits of the retired and succeeding managers.

Results

At the end of 2019, the executive management of an entertainment industry firm had decided to implement an innovative technology to manage the organizational compensation, benefits, and their taxation processes known as payroll. A key service provider was selected to facilitate access to the new software to go live as of January 1, 2020. The functional group involved in this decision to change was composed of 5 persons such as (a) a male manager, (b) a female supervisor, (c) a female payroll tax specialist, (d) a female payroll specialist overseeing the exempt payroll, and (e) a female payroll specialist overseeing the non-exempt payroll. Between April and July 2021, 3 female members of the functional group were asked to answer qualitative research questions in a narrative format. Presented below is feedback from them in the left column of each table. In the middle column, the content was interpreted into themes, which were then translated into a single word trait to aid in answering the research questions.

Study 1 - Traits Exegeted from Matthew 5:3-12 (NIV)

Matthew 5:3-12 (NIV) was also known as the Beatitudes, which in Latin meant happy, or Sermon on the Mount, which indicated inner joy. The pericope was a pronouncement of eight blessings. Robbins' (1996) inner texture as part of the socio-rhetorical analysis was used to exegete traits from the eight blessings.

Table 1: Traits Exegeted from Matthew 5:3-12 (NIV) via Robbins' (1996) Inner Texture as Part of the Socio-Rhetorical Analysis

Content	Themes	Codes
Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven	Surrendering the self and placing the group members' needs first	Humility
Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted	Exercising empathic imagination while planning and executing HRD with the group	Care
Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth	Refraining from placing the self-first.	Self-restraint
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, they will be filled.	Cherishing the relationship with others through the relationship with God	Justice
Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy	Exercising compassion toward human frailties caused by obstacles while empowering group members to overcome them.	Mercy

Content	Themes	Codes
Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God	Acting from the rational mind and appreciative heart while the self is reconciled to the highest social role through (a) self-awareness, (b) emotional maturity, (c) emotional sovereignty, (d) self-concept, (e) ascension of free will to be in Entheos/God within, and (f) making moral choices to act to create sustainable social value.	Integrity
Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God	Placing emotional, conceptual, physical, and spiritual needs of the group first	Cohesion
Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven	Surrendering personal wants to the unwavering commitment to the group	Commitment
Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me	Staying the course	Perseverance
Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.	Celebrating together.	Joy

The above traits such as (a) care, (b) cohesion, (c) commitment, (d) humility, (e) integrity, (f) joy, (g) justice, (h) mercy, (i) perseverance, and (j) self-restraint emerged.

They were exegeted from Matthew 5:3-12 (NIV) to support the working hypothesis that they aided managers in sustaining group cohesion during technological changes. These traits are consistent with the findings of Winston (2002). The below was a brief interpretation of each exegeted trait:

- 1. Care was exercising empathic imagination while planning and executing HRD with the group,
- 2. Cohesion was placing (a) emotional, (b) conceptual, (c) physical, and (d) spiritual needs of the group first,
- 3. Commitment was surrendering personal wants to the unwavering commitment to the group,
- 4. Humility was surrendering the self and placing the needs of the group members first,
- 5. Integrity was acting from the rational mind and appreciative heart while being self-reconciled to the highest social role through (a) self-awareness, (b) emotional maturity, (c) emotional sovereignty, (d) self-concept, (e) ascension of free will to be in Entheos/God within, and (f) making moral choices to act to create sustainable social value (Wreczycki, 2021),
- 6. Joy was celebrating together,
- 7. Mercy was exercising compassion toward human frailties caused by obstacles while empowering group members to overcome them,
- 8. Self-restraint was refraining from placing the self as important in favor of being others-centered (Winston, 2002),
- 9. Social justice was cherishing the relationship with others through the relationship with God.

Study 2 - A Female Payroll Supervisor

The female payroll supervisor was briefly in charge of the four-person payroll team including herself once the male manager retired in early March 2020. This was after the new payroll software implementation and during the onset of Covid-19 lockdown and working from home remotely. The female payroll supervisor was then relieved from her responsibility of overseeing 3 direct reports when a female manager was hired in late March 2020. The team composed of initially 5 and then 4 females had worked remotely until April 2021 when the organization's executive management decided to start recalling employees into the office.

Table 2: Traits of the Male Payroll Manager Who Retired and His Female Successor as Presented by the Female Payroll Supervisor

Content	Themes	Codes
I agree that group cohesion is necessary for people to work together, be committed to common goals, and feeling satisfied as part of the group and the company. Our former male manager was that kind of glue. He was simple, fair, hardworking, meticulous, honest, and compassionate. He cared about us. The way he was set the tone for our cohesive group. We enjoyed working together and had fun while working hard.	Consented with the working definition of group cohesion Associated the male payroll manager with the glue/cohesion	Care Cohesion Commitment Humility Integrity Joy Justice Perseverance
At the end of 2019, the executive management decided to stop using the in-house payroll software and go with a payroll service provider. Our environment is fast paced. The former manager drove the implementation of the new software. It went live after January 1, 2020. This change would have been more difficult without him being in charge. He retired in early March 2020.		
In late March 2020, a new female payroll manager was hired. Through working with her remotely, I noticed immediately that her	Acknowledged the male payroll manager for driving the implementation while writing policies and	Autocratic Harsh Impersonal Negative Opinionated Proud

personality was different from our previous manager. She was more process than people focused. Her language was not always appropriate. I sensed that she was more about fault finding than teaching us new things. The way we worked together changed for the worse. In April 2020, she discharged the payroll tax specialist. In January, 2021, she asked me to put 2 imparting knowledge to transfer and retention Unfair Contrasted the new manager as being the opposite of the former	Content	Themes	Codes
members of our team on a performance improvement plan. She could have done it herself. This had a negative impact on our trust. Pointed at the new manager's lack of people/soft skills Deterioration of trust	from our previous manager. She was more process than people focused. Her language was not always appropriate. I sensed that she was more about fault finding than teaching us new things. The way we worked together changed for the worse. In April 2020, she discharged the payroll tax specialist. In January, 2021, she asked me to put 2 members of our team on a performance improvement plan. She could have done it herself. This had a negative impact on our	Contrasted the new manager as being the opposite of the former Pointed at the new manager's lack of people/soft skills	

The traits that emerged from the female payroll supervisor in relation to the retired male payroll manager were (a) care, (b) cohesion, (c) commitment, (d) humility, (e) integrity, (f) joy, (g) justice, and (h) perseverance. These traits overlap with the ones exegeted from Matthew 5:3-12 (NIV) in 8 instances. The traits from the pericope such and mercy and self-restraint did not emerge but are related to self-compassion and self-control. While self-compassion was more common in females, males are naturally endowed with self-control due to their emotional selves.

The traits that emerged from the female payroll supervisor in relation to the female payroll manager were (a) autocratic, (b) harsh, (c) impersonal, (d) negative, (e) opinionated, (f) proud, (g) self-focused, and (h) unfair. These traits did not overlap with the ones exegeted from Matthew 5:3-12 (NIV) in any instance. The overarching trait of being self-focused rather than others-centered, the characteristic that drove the others, revealed a personality that is not conducive to working in a group setting.

Study 3: A Female Payroll Specialist Overseeing the Exempt Payroll

Table 3: Traits of the Male Manager Who Retired and His Female Successor as Presented by the Female Payroll Specialist Overseeing the Exempt Payroll

Content	Themes	Codes
I am a simple person who likes friendly atmosphere at work. Without using big words, working together, helping each other,	Revealed her own humility	Care Cohesion Commitment Confidence Humility
learning, and getting things done is what I enjoy. I liked our previous manager who kept us working together with his big heart. There was never	Acknowledged group cohesion without calling it as such	Integrity Joy Perseverance Servanthood
a question he would not answer. He made the implementation of the new system easy putting simple instructions for us to	Acknowledged compassionate leadership	
follow. We knew he was retiring and was going to finish the project. His humble personality and staying on task got us	Recognized the manager as servant	
through the implementation.	Pointed at the former manager's reliability	
I am not sure the new manager would have implemented the new system. She joined our team without asking us what we had gone through, if we were comfortable with the new software, and if we needed any help. Her expectations are high. She is not always nice. I no longer enjoy coming to work as I used	Expressed doubt about the new female payroll manager's ability to drive the new payroll system's implementation	Harsh Impersonal Insensitive Joyless Mechanistic Not compassionate Unpleasant

Content	Themes	Codes
to and am afraid of job loss.		

The traits that emerged from the female payroll specialist overseeing the exempt payroll in relation to the retired male payroll manager were (a) care, (b) cohesion, (c) commitment, (d) confidence, (e) humility, (f) integrity, (g) joy, (h) perseverance, and (i) servanthood. These traits overlap with the ones exegeted from Matthew 5:3-12 (NIV) in 7 instances. Additionally, the traits of confidence and servanthood emerged that are consistent with servant leadership model.

The traits that emerged from the female payroll specialist overseeing the exempt payroll in relation to the succeeding female payroll manager were (a) harsh, (b) impersonal, (c) insensitive, (d) joyless, (e) mechanistic, (f) not compassionate, and (g) unpleasant. These traits did not overlap with the ones exegeted from Matthew 5:3-12 (NIV) in a single instance. The overarching trait of not being compassionate drove the others and revealed a personality that is not conducive to working in a group setting.

Study 4: A Female Payroll Specialist Overseeing the Non-Exempt Payroll

Table 4: Traits of the Male Manager Who Retired and His Female Successor as Presented by the Female Payroll Specialist Overseeing the Non-Exempt Payroll

Content	Themes	Codes
I am a person who keeps	Pointed at own	Care
to herself. At the same	introspection	Cohesion
time, I enjoy being part of	-	Commitment
the cohesive team. I am	Acknowledged the	Compassion
analytical and like putting	importance of group	Dedication
together descriptions of	cohesion	Humility
processes. Our former		Joy
manager was a man of a		Perseverance
big heart. He worked hard		
and helped us hard. I felt	Acknowledged the male	
comfortable coming to	manager as compassionate	
work and be greeted by		
him. He navigated us	Acknowledged the male	
smoothly through an	manager's focus and	
important implementation.	group cohesion skills	
He cared to ensure that we		

Content	Themes	Codes
could learn the basics about the new system to use it. As a simple person, he was committed to making sure that we could work independently but feel as part of a cohesive team.	Acknowledged the male manager's humility and dedication	
His successor is a female who joined us during Covid-19 when we were working remotely. I do not know if that played a role,	Pointed at the female payroll manager as not being personable	Careless Harsh Impatient Impersonal Incompetent Uncomfortable
but I have not developed a relationship with her. The way she speaks, and shares instructions is	Lack of care	Cheomorable
different. Like she does not care or does not have the personality to build good relationships with her team members. I do not	Lack of patience	
feel comfortable working with her. I do not think she would be able to implement the system. I also do not think she would be able to have patience and people skills to train us how to use it.	Lack of competence to implement the new system and train staff for skill transfer and retention	

The traits that emerged from the female payroll specialist overseeing the non-exempt payroll in relation to the retired male payroll manager were (a) care, (b) cohesion, (c) commitment, (d) compassion, (e) dedication, (f) humility, (g) joy, and (h) perseverance. These traits overlap with the ones exegeted from Matthew 5:3-12 (NIV) in 6 instances. Additionally, the traits of compassion and dedication emerged that are consistent with the servant leadership model.

The traits that emerged from the female payroll specialist overseeing the non-exempt payroll in relation to the succeeding female payroll manager were (a) careless, (b) harsh, (c) impatient, (d) impersonal, (e) incompetent, and (f) uncomfortable. These traits did not overlap with the ones exegeted from Matthew 5:3-12 (NIV) in a single instance. The overarching trait of not being impersonal drove the others and revealed a personality that is not conducive to working in a group setting.

Conclusion

This research used Turner and Tajfel's (1986) social identity theory of intergroup behavior and Arrows et al.'s (2000) group dynamics as well as Robbins (1996) inner texture as part of the social rhetorical analysis and Saldana (2013) in vivo method to analyze the relationship between HRD and group cohesion during management and technological changes at a firm operating within the entertainment industry economic sector. Although HRD during times of technological changes needed managers to function as situational leaders to inspire and motivate functional group members to attend training for knowledge transfer into the succeeding organizational processes for sustainability while safely idling the existing procedures, the above research proved that the management change immediately after the new technology implementation and the onset of Covid-19 lockdown and working remotely resulted in the decline of functional group cohesion. Since Turner and Tajfel's (1986) social identity theory of intergroup behavior emphasized the importance of belonging to a group in which members found the source of (a) identity, (b) pride, and (c) self-esteem, the succeeding manger did not support the three pillars of the model. Also, since group cohesion was a phenomenon characterizing people who (a) liked working together, (b) were committed to a common objective, and (c) derived satisfaction from being part of the group, the new female manager failed to foster the three components of group cohesion. Since based on Knowles et al.'s (2015) model, HRD in the adult learners setting called for (a) the need to know, (b) the learner's self-concept, (c) life experiences, (d) readiness to learn, (e) orientation toward learning, and (f) motivation to learn, the new manager did not foster the pillars of the model either. While there were synergies between Turner and Tajfel's (1986) social identity of intergroup behavior theory, group cohesion, and andragogy based adult learner model, during management and technological changes the balance between HRD and group cohesion was critical and leadership style dependent. Matthew 5:3-12 (NIV) was analyzed qualitative to exegete 8 values that appeared to be conducive in sustaining group cohesion during management and technological shifts. While the retired male payroll manager who drove the innovative technology implementation revealed 8 traits consistent with the set exegeted from Matthew 5:3-12 (NIV), the succeeding female manager lacked all of them. Since for the human resources training to be effective, managers must support it and participate in it, the succeeding female manager neither supported the development of the new skills nor participated in the training. Moreover, her destructive personality traits and the belief that group members were expandable, placed her on the path of deconstruction

of group cohesion. Since human resources training required managerial reevaluation in collaboration with Human Resources to ensure alignment with organizational needs, the female managers' traits came into question as to their usefulness in a functional group setting. Since technological changes in the conceptual era appeared to be (a) abrupt, (b) complex, and (c) large scale often crossing borders and necessitating the merge of organizational cultures, it was worthwhile to consider which managerial traits support functional group cohesion to achieve organizational objectives.

While technological changes are unavoidable, organizational leaders and managers could modulate their impact by performing detailed needs assessments to select the best technology for the current or upcoming organizational needs. Management and/or leadership styles could be aligned to mutually support each functional group. HRD needed to be relevant to the implementation and roll out of the innovative technologies impacting their end-users, and the implementations needed to be performed by engaged and supportive managers with the end-users in mind and heart to ensure acceptance and minimize customer service.

Limitations and Direction for Further Research

The limitation of this research was (a) the size of the population studied, (b) the specificity of the industry selected, (c) the single firm within the single industry chosen, and (d) the narrowing of the phenomena of interest to HRD and group cohesion within the context of the management and technological changes.

Given the results of the research, it would be worthwhile to follow up to see if the management change due to retirement in the backdrop of a new payroll software implementation and the subsequent onset of new management with a different trait have resulted in loss of personnel.

About the Author

Alina Wreczycki, PhD is May 2020 graduate of Regent University's School of Business & Leadership doctoral program in Organizational Leadership and Human Resources Development. Dr. Wreczycki is registered as a sole proprietor bridging human resources, payroll, and accounting. Dr. Wreczycki currently serves the Virginia Transportation Corporation, Guaranteed Transport Service, and Errol Tractor Trailer Sales and Leasing communities of auto haulers, drivers, diesel mechanics, and administrative staff in the capacity of Payroll Manager leading and developing two individuals. Dr. Wreczycki has published four articles to-date in peer reviewed journals on organizational leadership theories, adult learning, and Human Resources Development.

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