

Task Interdependence & Communication Styles in Teams

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Interdependence amongst team members for task related work is an important factor of differentiation between types of teams. The focus of the present study is on the ability of team members to handle different tasks interdependencies and the communication styles of team members as they handle team task responsibilities. The dominant communication style displayed by the team members impacts the team work and the results indicate that team members with certain styles are more suitable for task work with pooled, sequential or reciprocal interdependence. These communication styles help in fostering handling of task responsibilities of interdependent nature and the team work will proceed efficiently and effectively.

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Introduction

Researchers like Rico et al. (2007), Cross et al. (2008) state that universally all organizations have teams and therefore an increased interest in teamwork is observed among scholars (Mathieu et al., 2008). Teams can be distinguished from different groups of individuals by the nature of interdependence of team members for team related work (Saavedra et al., 1993; Katzenbach & Smith, 2005) as it is not possible for individual team members to accomplish team tasks and fulfil team goals alone, with no cooperation from other individuals in the team. Task Interdependence signifies the extent to which “team members interact and depend upon each other to attain their goals” (Campion et al., 1993). The findings of Maznewski and Chudoba (2000) indicate that in a majority of effective teams a higher frequency of communication among team members could be linked with tasks that required greater interdependence.

As per Eunson, (2008) “A team is a collection of people who must work inter-dependently to achieve a common goal or output.” Therefore, communication pro-

vides a foundation for team collaboration. In all types of teams in which people are members of or the team task they aim to undertake, constant interaction and exchange of information for accomplishment of team goals is a necessity, and this is evident through each team member's own unique style of communication. The focus of the present study is on the ability of team members to handle different tasks interdependencies and the communication styles of team members as they handle their team task responsibilities.

Task Interdependence

Wageman (1999) indicated that Interdependence encapsulates team interaction and the way team members interact with each other and includes those features of the team that relate to determining how much team members rely on each other. Interdependence is a concept that is fundamental to the definition and existence of teams and which may impact the success of the team. Task Interdependence is a measurement of the degree to which a team has work collaboration and is a reflection of the extent of information exchange and this work collaboration contributes to team task completion (Thompson, 2003). Researchers like Saavedra et al. (1993), Wageman (1995), Van der Vegt et al. (2000), Van der Vegt & Janssen (2003), Stewart (2006) have studied the influence of the degree of Task Interdependence on team effectiveness and performance (Burke et al., 2006). According to Ramamoorthy and Flood (2004) Task Interdependence may "not only be related to task characteristics, and the way work is organized, but also to the way in which

people work together" and other social cues, like leader behaviors and other team member behavior. Further their signals might also be the focus of the team members (Drach-Zahavy & Somech, 2010).

Communication Styles

Communication styles play an important role in personal relations as they are an expression of one's personality (De Vries et al, 2009). Gudykunst et al. (1988) concludes that Communication style refers to a "meta-message" which is a reflection of the unique way individuals convey and interpret a verbal message. These styles of communication are uniquely associated with the personalities of individual team members. Mitchel's and Winick's Color Model (2006), DeBakey's Adaptive Matrice (2007), De Vries et al. (2009) are various models of communication styles which have been developed and presented in different studies. The Lexical approach which specifically helps identification of the content and the different dimensions in communication styles has been used by De Vries et al. (2009). This approach also takes into consideration the unique individual way of conveying through paraverbal, non-verbal and verbal signals in social interactions. Communication style is a "characteristic way a person sends verbal, paraverbal, and non-verbal signals in social interactions" (De Vries, Bakker-Pieper, et al., 2009)

Theoretical Antecedents

Kelley & Thibaut (1959), in their Interdependence theory focuses on the

analysis of relations between people in different situation structures. The consistent patterns of behavior that a person showcases across situations are evidence of individual differences. The cognitive-affective processing systems (CAPS) model (Mischel & Shoda, 1995) proposes that anticipated patterns of response to critical areas of situations or constitution of behavioral “signatures” can be observed, and these are actually activated by situations as typical patterns of cognition and affect.

von Bertalanffy (1950) outlined Systems theory which emphasizes that real systems work in harmony with their surroundings and brings attention to “the collection of as well as relations between the parts” that join them into a unit (Kast & Rosenzweig, 1972). Mulej et al. (2004) suggested that Interdependence is one of the seven principles of systems theory. Buble (2012) research indicates that Interdependence relates to diverse set of systems within an organization that work autonomously towards task completion.

Purpose

This research paper is an attempt to study the relationship between Task Interdependence and Communication styles of team members in teams. The question guiding the research is:

- What is the relationship between Communication styles and task Interdependencies in work teams?

The variables studied are:

Task Interdependence – Task Interdependence refers to the degree of dependence of team members on each other for team tasks.

The three Task Interdependence are:

- *Pooled Interdependence* involves team task work characterized by relatively independent functioning of team members who come together for a combined output contributing to team’s or organization’s overall goals.
- *Sequential Interdependence* happens when the output of one unit in the overall team task process is a necessary requisite for performance by the next unit.
- *Reciprocal Interdependence* involves a continuous to and fro of information and interaction and is characterized by the cyclical exchange of the output of one department as it becomes the input of another.

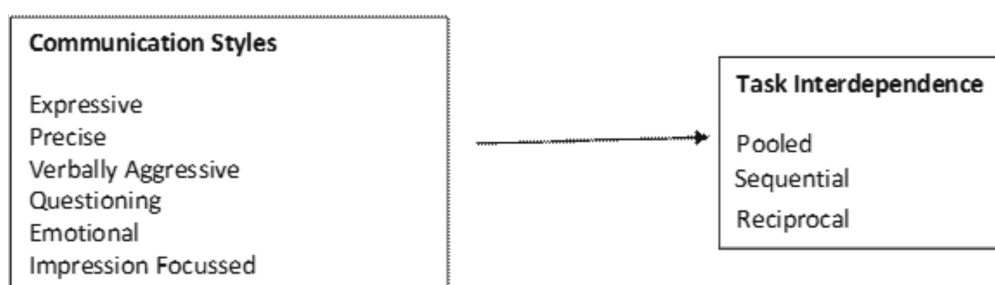
Communication Styles – indicates the manner in which information is sent and received by individuals. Each style has its own uniqueness and effectiveness for specific tasks and situations and has its share of advantages and challenges.

- *Expressive* - Relates to expressiveness while communicating in different situations and with different people. The facets of this style are dominant, humorous, informal and talkative

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- *Precise* -Relates to preciseness in communicating and could be thoughtful, concise, structured, and substantive.
 - *Verbally Aggressive* - Relates to how verbal aggressiveness in communication with others and includes facets like authoritarian, angry, harsh and supportive.
 - *Questioning* - Relates to how questioning one's communication style is and could be argumentative, philosophical, unconventional and inquisitive.
 - *Emotional* - Relates to emotionality in one's communication style and this includes facets like worrisome, defensive, tense, and sentimental.
 - *Impression Focused* -Relates to how focused one is on making an impression and/or manipulating impressions and this style includes the use of charm, inscrutability, concealment and flattering while communicating with others.
- Proposition**
- The communication style adopted by the Team members is related to the Task Interdependency.
- Hypotheses**
- H1 The Communication Style will influence Task Interdependence
- H1.1 The Expressive Communication Style will impact Pooled task interdependence.
- H1.2 The Precise Communication Style will impact Pooled Task Interdependence.
- H1.3 The Verbal Aggressive Communication Style will impact Pooled Task Interdependence.
- H1.4 The Questioning Communication Style will impact Pooled Task Interdependence.
- H1.5 The Emotional Communication Style will impact Pooled Task Interdependence.
- H1.6 The Impression Focused Communication Style will impact Pooled Task Interdependence.
- H1.7 The Expressive Communication Style will impact Sequential Task Interdependence.
- H1.8 The Precise Communication Style will impact Sequential Task Interdependence.
- H1.9 The Verbal Aggressive Communication Style will impact Sequential Task Interdependence.
- H1.10 The Questioning Communication Style will impact Sequential Task Interdependence.
- H1.11 The Emotional Communication Style will impact Sequential Task Interdependence.
- H1.12 The Impression Focused Communication Style will impact Sequential Task Interdependence.
- H1.13 The Expressive Communication Style will impact Reciprocal Task Interdependence.

- H1.14 The Precise Communication Style will impact Reciprocal Task Interdependence.
- H1.15 The Verbal Aggressive Communication Style will impact Reciprocal Task Interdependence.
- H1.16 The Questioning Communication Style will impact Reciprocal Task Interdependence.
- H1.17 The Emotional Communication Style will impact Reciprocal Task Interdependence.
- H1.18 The Impression Focused Communication Style will impact Reciprocal Task Interdependence.

Fig.1 Research Model



Methodology

The attempt of the research is to understand the relationship of team Task Interdependence and communication styles and to observe if certain different communication styles were adopted by managers when they handled task responsibilities with different Interdependencies in teams. Task Interdependence and communication styles of team members were both measured through a self-report questionnaire. 519 managers working in various teams in different organizations and industry sectors responded to the questionnaire. For this study Team Interdependence Scale (TIS) (Karve et al, unpublished) measured individual team member behavior for Task Interdependence taking into consideration the dif-

ferent dimensions of Task Interdependence namely pooled, sequential and reciprocal. Communication styles were measured along with the different dimensions as outlined by the Communication Styles Inventory (CSI), (De Vries et al, 2009) that distinguishes six communication behavior dimensions of Expressiveness, Preciseness, Verbal Aggressiveness, Questioning, Emotionality, and Impression Manipulativeness. The researchers used a six-point Likert type scale (with 1 = strongly disagree and 6 = strongly agree) as it tends to give higher discrimination and reliability values compared to Likert's 5 points scale (Chomeya, 2010).

The two constructs, viz. Task Interdependence and Communication Styles

and their variables were studied to understand the direction and strength of relationship between them. The Task Interdependencies (pooled PO INT), sequential (SEQ INT) and reciprocal (REC INT)) were studied with relation to the six communication styles (expressiveness (EXP), preciseness (PRE), verbally expressive (VA), questioning (QUE), emotional (EMO) and impression focused (IM)) displayed by the managers, in order to understand which communication

style was most likely to influence the different Task Interdependencies. The data was analyzed to understand the relationship between Task Interdependencies and communication styles by using statistical tool SPSS.

Analysis & Results

In this paper the researchers have conducted correlation and inter-correlation analysis within and between variables.

Table 1 Correlation Analysis of Task Interdependence & Communication Styles

	Correlations								
	Exp	Pre	V A	Que	Emo	IM	Po Int	SeqInt	Rec Int
Expressiveness	1								
Preciseness	.325**	1							
Verbal	-.026	-.359**	1						
Aggressiveness									
Questioning	.358**	.332**	.322**	1					
Emotionality	.145**	.003	.471**	.510**	1				
Impression Focused	.161**	.066	.486**	.524**	.462**	1			
Pooled Interdependence	.365**	.674**	-.130**	.474**	.279**	.177**	1		
Sequential Interdependence	.362**	.664**	-.133**	.460**	.279**	.170**	.986**	1	
Reciprocal Interdependence	.358**	.645**	-.086*	.471**	.303**	.208**	.961**	.985**	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
N = 519

Correlations within and between the variables of Team Task Interdependencies and the Communication styles of the team members revealed that expressiveness as a communication style shows a positive correlation with preciseness (.325**), questioning (.358**), emotionality (.145**) and impression focused (.161**). Therefore, expressive team members, who are also precise, question-

ing, emotional and use impression manipulation foster interdependent team task work. It is further observed that expressiveness shows a positive correlation with pooled (.365**), sequential

Individuals who are expressive will work effectively in all team task work.

(.362**) and reciprocal (.358**) Task Interdependence thus indicating that individuals who are expressive will work effectively in all team task work that involves any of the three kinds of interdependence.

Preciseness communication style is positively correlated with questioning (.332**) that indicates that team members who are precise and expressive ask appropriate questions. However, verbal aggressiveness shows a negative correlation (-.359) with preciseness and it indicates that team members who use verbal aggressiveness as a communication style do not find use in it. Further preciseness shows a high positive correlation with pooled (.674**), sequential (.664**) and reciprocal (.645**) Task Interdependencies. Therefore, we can conclude that team members with a communication style that is precise can function optimally in all three types of Task Interdependence.

Verbal Aggressiveness is positively correlated with questioning (.322**), emotionality (.471**) and impression manipulation (.486**) which indicates that team members who use verbal aggressiveness as a communication style technique will use emotionality, questioning and impression focused style. So, verbally aggressive people will use emotionality, questioning and impression focused communication style to their advantage and get their way. This communication style also shows a negative correlation with all the three team Task Interdependence pooled (-.130**), sequential (-.132**) as well as reciprocal (-.086*). This indicates that

verbal aggressiveness as a communication style will have an inverse impact in team tasks that require pooled, sequential or reciprocal Interdependence and therefore is contraindicative in tasks which have interdependent work.

Questioning as a communication style has a high positive correlation with emotionality (.510**) and impression focused (.524**) which indicates that team members with a questioning communication style will use an emotional tenor and manipulation in their questioning techniques which is to the advantage of the team and may help the team in clarifying varied issues. Questioning also shows a positive correlation in all three types of Task Interdependence that is pooled (.474**), sequential (.460**) and reciprocal (.471**). This shows that as a communication technique questioning can be very useful in any kind of team task work that involves interdependent task behavior. It may help teams to clarify and therefore avoid errors and waste of resources.

Emotionality as a communication style has a positive correlation with impression focused communication style (.462**) which means that such team members use emotionality in their communication style to create impressions. At times it may result in emotional decision or indicate impression management on the basis of feeling. Emotionality is also positively correlated with pooled (.279**), sequential (.279**) and reciprocal (.303**) Task Interdependence. This indicates that emotionality as a communication style most of the time will

function in interdependent tasks by using the emotions which bind the team together to get the task done in Task Interdependence.

Impression Focused as a communication style indicates a positive correlation with pooled (.177**), sequential (.170**) and reciprocal (.208**) Interdependence. This indicates that impression focused communication style most of the time correlate with interdependent task situations.

Further high positive inter correlation is observed in all the three Task Interdependencies also. Pooled Task Interdepen-

dence shows a high correlation with both sequential (.986**) and reciprocal (.961**) Task Interdependence. Similarly, a high positive correlation is observed in sequential and reciprocal (.985**) Task Interdependence. This may indicate that there are no clear separators in the Task Interdependence and there might be an overlap.

Regression Analysis was done taking all three Task Interdependencies (pooled, sequential and reciprocal) as dependent and all the communication style dimensions (expressiveness, preciseness, verbal aggressiveness, questioning, emotionality and impression focused) as independent variables.

Table 2 Model Summary^a

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.749a	.562***	.556	15.662	.562	109.304	6	512	.000	1.402

a. Predictors: (Constant), Impression Manipulation, Preciseness, Expressiveness, Emotionality, Verbal Aggressiveness, Questioning

b. Dependent Variable: Pooled Interdependence*** $p < 0.001$

Table 3 Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-20.668	9.035		-2.288	0.023
	Expressiveness	0.311	0.113	0.089	2.744	0.006
	Preciseness	1.514	0.101	0.558	15.041	0.000
	Verbal Aggressiveness	-0.186	0.104	-0.072	-1.779	0.076
	Questioning	0.476	0.105	0.189	4.536	0.000
	Emotionality	0.474	0.080	0.220	5.927	0.000
	Impression Focused	-0.099	0.094	-0.040	-1.048	0.295

a. Dependent Variable: Pooled Interdependence
N = 519

Table 4 ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	160865.118	6	26810.853	109.304***	.000b
	Residual	125586.998	512	245.287		
	Total	286452.116	518			

a. Dependent Variable: Pooled Interdependence

b. Predictors: (Constant), Impression Manipulation, Preciseness, Expressiveness, Emotionality, Verbal Aggressiveness, Questioning

***p<0.001

Regression Analysis - Pooled Interdependence & Communication Styles

When pooled Interdependence is a dependent variable, it can be inferred that .56 % (R2: .562***) of the time it is influenced by all the six communication style dimensions (Table 2). Table 3 indicates the Beta values of pooled Interdependence with communication style dimensions expressiveness (.089**), preciseness (.558***), questioning (.189***), emotionality (.220***). A positive Beta

value indicates preciseness, emotionality, questioning and expressiveness have an impact on pooled Task Interdependence. A communication style verbal aggressiveness and impression manipulateness with a negative beta value has no impact on pooled Task Interdependence.

A communication style verbal aggressiveness and impression manipulateness with a negative beta value has no impact on pooled Task Interdependence.

Table 5 Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.739a	.546***	.540	16.172	.546	102.490	6	512	.000	1.364

a. Predictors: (Constant), Impression Manipulation, Preciseness, Expressiveness, Emotionality, Verbal Aggressiveness, Questioning

b. Dependent Variable: Sequential Interdependence ***p<0.001

Regression Analysis – Sequential Interdependence & Communication Styles

When sequential Interdependence is a dependent variable, it can be inferred

that .55 % (R2: .546***) of the time it is influenced by all the six communication style dimensions (Table 5). Table 6 indicates the beta values of sequential interdependence with communication style dimensions expressiveness (.093**),

Table 6 Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-20.776	9.329		-2.227	0.026
	Expressiveness	0.330	0.117	.093**	2.824	0.005
	Preciseness	1.516	0.104	.551***	14.587	0.000
	Verbal Aggressiveness	-0.196	0.108	-.075	-1.817	0.070
	Questioning	0.441	0.108	.172***	4.068	0.000
	Emotionality	0.503	0.083	.230***	6.097	0.000
	Impression Focused	-0.105	0.098	-.042	-1.080	0.281

a. Dependent Variable: Sequential Interdependence
 N = 519 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001

Table 7 ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	160818.328	6	26803.055	102.490***	.000b
	Residual	133898.054	512	261.520		
	Total	294716.382	518			

a. Dependent Variable: Sequential Interdependence
 b. Predictors: (Constant), Impression Manipulation, Preciseness, Expressiveness, Emotionality, Verbal Aggressiveness, Questioning
 ***p<0.001

preciseness (.551***), questioning (.172***) and emotionality (.230***). A positive beta value indicates preciseness, emotionality, questioning and expressiveness have an impact on sequential Task Interdependence and a communication style with a negative beta value (verbal aggressiveness and impression manipulativity) has no impact on sequential Task Interdependence.

Table 8 Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.730a	.533***	.527	16.401	.533	97.300	6	512	.000	1.365

a. Predictors: (Constant), Impression Manipulation, Preciseness, Expressiveness, Emotionality, Verbal Aggressiveness, Questioning
 b. Dependent Variable: Reciprocal Interdependence
 ***p<0.001

Table 9 Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-28.462	9.462		-3.008	0.003
	Expressiveness	0.321	0.119	.090**	2.709	0.007
	Preciseness	1.511	0.105	.549***	14.337	0.000
	Verbal aggressiveness	-0.105	0.109	-.040	-0.961	0.337
	Questioning	0.404	0.110	.158***	3.676	0.000
	Emotionality	0.510	0.084	.233***	6.089	0.000
	Impression Focussed	-0.034	0.099	-.014	-0.347	0.729

a. Dependent Variable: Reciprocal Interdependence
N = 519

p<0.01 *p<0.001

Table 10 ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	157038.984	6	26173.164	97.300	.000 ^b
	Residual	137724.950	512	268.994		
	Total	294763.935	518			

a. Dependent Variable: Reciprocal Interdependence

b. Predictors: (Constant) Impression Manipulation, Preciseness, Expressiveness, Emotionality, Verbal Aggressiveness, Questioning

Regression Analysis – Reciprocal Interdependence & Communication Styles

When Reciprocal Interdependence is a dependent variable, it can be inferred that .53 % (R2: .533***) of the time it is influenced by all the six communication style dimensions (Table 8). Table 9 indicates the beta values of Reciprocal Interdependence with communication style dimensions expressiveness (.090**), preciseness (.549***), questioning (.158***) and emotionality (.233***). A positive beta value indicates preciseness, emotionality, questioning and expressiveness have an impact on reciprocal Task Interdependence and a communication style

with a negative beta value (verbal aggressiveness and impression manipulativity) has no impact on reciprocal Task Interdependence.

As observed communication styles and its different dimensions have varied impacts on Task Interdependence. Expressive communicators will foster team task work of pooled, sequential and reciprocal interdependencies. Therefore, the hypotheses (H1.1; H1.7; H1.13) are sustained.

Precise communicators will foster team task work of pooled, sequential and reciprocal interdependencies. Therefore, the hypotheses (H1.2; H1.8; H1.14) are sustained

Team members with questioning as a dominant communication style are also suited for team tasks of pooled, sequential and reciprocal interdependencies. Therefore, the hypotheses (H1.4; H1.10; H1.16) are sustained.

Emotionality as a communication style most of the time will get the task done in any kind of task; pooled, sequential and reciprocal interdependence. Therefore, the hypotheses (H1.5; H1.11; H1.17) are sustained.

Verbal aggressiveness and impression focused communication style have no impact on pooled, sequential and reciprocal team Task Interdependence. Therefore, the hypotheses (H1.3; H1.9; H1.15; H1.6; H1.12; and H1.8) are rejected.

Conclusions & Contributions

These results indicate that if team members have expressive, precise, emotional and questioning communication style it helps in fostering handling of task responsibilities of interdependent nature. Preciseness is a communication style that is best suited for interdependent team tasks which indicates that if team members have a precise communication style the team work will proceed faster effectively with clarity and less conflicts.

If team members have expressive, precise, emotional and questioning communication style it helps in fostering handling of task responsibilities of interdependent nature.

While handling team task responsibilities of interdependent nature the dominant communication style displayed by the team member will have an impact on the team work and team members with these styles are more suitable when the task requires pooled, sequential or reciprocal task work. On the other hand, team members who have communication styles that are predominantly verbally aggressive and /or impression focused will not be able to work in team tasks which have pooled, sequential or reciprocal interdependence. This is in line with the *Interdependence theory* (Kelley & Thibaut, 1959) focusing on relations between people in different situation structures and *Systems theory* (von Bertalanffy, 1950).

Suggestions & Future Directions

Further research may look at the role of communication styles in other interdependencies like goal, resource and reward interdependencies. It will also be interesting to study the impact of communication styles in varied types of teams, level of teams, permanent and temporary teams etc.

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