Conflict, Supportive Communication, and Group Satisfaction
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Abstract & Literature Findings
Conflict among group members is an everyday phenomenon and is present in both academic and professional groups. Post-secondary educational institutions incorporate group work to better prepare students to work in groups within the job setting.

Results

RQ1: Is a group members' satisfaction associated with the existence of conflict?

Table 1: Frequencies of Conflict and Group Satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stable</th>
<th>Very Dissatisfied</th>
<th>Very Satisfied</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Our research findings suggest that students in an academic group setting were less satisfied when conflict was present.

RQ2: In a group that experiences conflict, how do members perceive the intent of social support provided?

Most respondents perceived the provider of support to engage in supportive communication for the purpose of maintaining positive group atmosphere.

RQ3: In a group that experiences conflict, which type of social support is preferred?

Most participants preferred emotional support while informational support was least desirable.

RQ4: Is higher group satisfaction based on received social support associated with greater commitment to a) task or b) group cohesion?

Group and task commitment are not correlated with overall satisfaction.

Discussion
Although students preferred the absence of conflict in an academic group setting, it is quite possible that conflict will occur.

Because students were motivated to accept social support on the basis of motivating positive group atmosphere, it can be implied that provision of social support will have a desirable impact on their group performances.

These results provide guidance for group members, group leaders, and teachers in deciding what type of support will best alleviate the negative effects of conflict, thereby leading to better group performance and more satisfied group members.

Results suggest that people are more committed to task than to group cohesion. Yet, receiving social support increases satisfaction with both task performance and group cohesion.

Future research should further investigate additional factors associated with the various ways people perceive the intent of the support provided.

Although results show most participants prefer emotional support, the study reflects the predominance of female respondents.

Method
Participants were recruited from several Midwestern Universities using e-mail and Facebook. Ages ranged from 18-30+. Of the participants, 17% were male and 83% were female.

Participants were given a scenario of a group conflict situation and asked how they would respond. Survey items consisted of multiple choice and Likert-scale questions. Two questions were geared toward types of social support, two questions focused on perceived intent of social support, eight questions dealt with group and task commitment, and seven questions focused on overall satisfaction. Some sample questions include:

- “Receiving support, in general, from another group member in this conflict situation would increase my satisfaction with group task.”
- “Indicate your level of agreement using the scale provided. Receiving social support in this group conflict situation would increase my overall satisfaction with the completed project.”
- “In a group setting, I am generally more committed to task performance than group cohesion.”
- “I believe some conflict above, why would you think your other group members provided you with social support?”

Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Social Support</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informational</td>
<td>19</td>
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</table>

Most participants preferred emotional support while informational support was least desirable.

References


Acknowledgements

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Figure 1: Perceptions of Intent

Figure 2: Types of Social Support

Figure 3: Satisfaction with Group Cohesion

Figure 4: Satisfaction with Task Performance