

From Belonging to Performance: The Impact of Organisational Cohesion on Team Outcomes and Employee Commitment

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Abstract: Cohesion is a fundamental concept in organisational sociology, referring to the degree of interdependence and integration among team members within a work environment. This research highlights organisational cohesion as a key factor in enhancing team performance by examining two main dimensions: task cohesion, the commitment of individuals to achieving common goals, and social cohesion, which stems from a sense of cooperation and belonging among colleagues. The research showed that teams with high cohesion tend to work more collaboratively, achieve better results, demonstrate greater resilience in the face of challenges, and experience lower employee turnover. The research also examined factors that influence this cohesion, including supportive leadership, shared values, organisational justice, and effective communication channels. A positive organisational climate was found to play a significant role in fostering an environment conducive to constructive interaction, which, in turn, strengthens team bonds and leads to outstanding results. Furthermore, cohesion fosters a culture of learning and teamwork and increases levels of commitment and job satisfaction. At the conclusion of the study, a set of recommendations was presented that emphasised building an environment that fosters cooperation and trust, develops social skills, and encourages policies that support openness and integration, given that cohesion is the cornerstone of sustainable institutional performance.

Keywords: Organisational Sociology; Work Environment; Constructive Interaction; Organisational Cohesion; Learning and Teamwork; Collective Performance; Positive Relationships.

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1. Introduction

In a study, Dion [15], researchers found that psychological research on cohesion began with the contributions of Festinger [17] and colleagues in the 1940s and 1950s, who defined cohesion as a "field of forces" that influences individuals to remain in the group. In the 1950s, critics pointed out that different measures of cohesion often failed to correlate with one another. By the mid-1960s, Lott and Lott [30] conceptualised cohesion as the attraction between individuals, with researchers primarily focusing on this force. In the 1980s and 1990s, multidimensional models of cohesion became dominant, with the debate centring

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on how to define these dimensions. Alongside Carron's hierarchical model, several two-dimensional models were summarised, including task-related and social cohesion, vertical and horizontal cohesion, belonging and morale, and interpersonal versus social attraction. Cohesion is expected to remain a key component of group and organisational research in the 21st century, with significant challenges yet to be addressed. Lott and Lott [30] found that small-group cohesion can be defined as mutual attraction among members and discussed the rationale for this approach. By reviewing empirical literature from 1950 to 1962, they identified variables assumed to be either antecedents or consequences of interpersonal attraction. To achieve this, they collected and categorised studies across various fields, including group dynamics, personality, and learning. They also reviewed theoretical positions on the development of interpersonal attraction and its impact on subsequent behaviour and compared these predictions with empirical data. The study primarily aimed to document the relationships that have been clearly established and to identify those that remain uncertain or unexplored.

Bollen and Hoyle [7] argue that most measures of cohesion focus on objective assessment but neglect individuals' perceptions of their connection to the group. They emphasised that these perceptions influence the behaviour of both individuals and the group as a whole. They defined perceived cohesion as consisting of two fundamental dimensions: a sense of belonging and a sense of morale. A study of two groups—one composed of students from a college known for its strong sense of community, and the other composed of residents of a medium-sized city—found that individuals living in environments that foster group cohesion experience greater cohesion than those in other environments. Miller [36] indicated that the cohesion of organisational structures results from interconnected, robust, and cyclical relationships among their components, thus limiting the diversity of organisational forms. The study also demonstrated that these structures experience long periods of stability punctuated by brief, revolutionary transformations, as they resist radical changes in their developmental direction. Consequently, the study emphasises the need to classify organisational structures before predicting their evolution, thereby promoting a balanced approach to organisational analysis. As researchers Boxx et al. [8] have found, organisational values and their alignment with employees' values play a pivotal role in fostering job satisfaction, commitment, and cohesion within non-profit organisations. An analysis of data from transportation department leaders showed that the organisation's values significantly influence these behavioural aspects. Furthermore, alignment between organisational and employee values enhances feelings of satisfaction, commitment, and cohesion among individuals.

The study indicated that the absence of organisational values or weak alignment between them and employee values can negatively affect these factors. Therefore, it is recommended that organisations review and adjust their value orientations to better align with employees' expectations and values, thereby fostering a more cohesive and effective work environment. These findings highlight the importance of shared values as a strategic tool for promoting organisational cohesion. Carless and De Paola [9] stated that task cohesion, compared to social cohesion and individual group attraction, was the strongest correlation across all variables examined. They defined cohesion as the totality of forces acting on members that keep them in the group. These forces may depend on the attractiveness or unattractiveness of the group's prestige, its members, or the activities in which the group participates. Sobo and Sadler [41] found that enhancing communication between employees and senior management through employee leadership councils improved employee morale after restructuring. They also confirmed that providing opportunities for the constructive expression of grievance and innovative ideas strengthens a sense of belonging and cohesion within the organisation. The results showed that the executive leader's involvement in these initiatives directly affected organisational cohesion and the culture of participation. Wang et al. [44] found that group cohesion within teams positively impacts willingness to participate and commitment to learning the new system, two essential factors for the successful implementation of Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems. Group cohesion is also positively correlated with achieving management goals. Therefore, the study emphasises the importance of providing organisational resources to support a learning environment and foster effective participation among team members to achieve success in large-scale projects, such as ERP implementation.

In a study by Li and Zhang [26], organisational cohesion was found to be measured by the Organisational Cohesion Inventory (OCI), which comprises six dimensions: employee-centeredness, leader cohesion, task collaboration, interpersonal harmony, benefit-sharing, and value identification. Across three studies conducted in a Chinese context, the researchers validated the inventory on its construction, incremental value, theoretical consistency, and concordance validity. The results demonstrated that the inventory possesses strong psychometric properties, making it a useful tool for studying organisational cohesion in greater depth and comprehensiveness [27]. A study by Huang et al. [21] found that a shortage of human and material resources poses a major challenge for emergency managers during disasters. Differing perceptions among multiple response teams lead to inefficient resource allocation, which weakens organisational cohesion. The study also showed that executive leaders play a direct role in promoting organizational cohesion and effectiveness, and that the quality and quantity of equipment and personnel causally influence organizational effectiveness, as shown in a study by Li et al. [25], demonstrated that psychological stress can negatively impact resident nurses, leading to decreased job satisfaction, increased emotional exhaustion, and a sense of burnout. This, in turn, results in lower-quality care and higher turnover among junior nurses. Therefore, it is crucial to identify protective factors that can mitigate these negative outcomes and promote positive ones, such as job satisfaction and emotional well-being. The study also focused on identifying the role of group cohesion and organisational commitment as protective

factors that can alleviate the impact of stress and post-traumatic stress symptoms on negative outcomes for nurses. The results showed that group cohesion effectively reduces the negative effects of stress, such as increased emotional exhaustion and burnout, and promotes emotional satisfaction.

In a study by Vanhove and Herian [43], researchers found a clear relationship between team cohesion and individual well-being. Belonging to a cohesive team enhances its members' well-being, while individual well-being, in turn, contributes to strengthening cohesion within the team. Based on existing literature, the researchers focused on two types of cohesion: social cohesion and task-related cohesion, along with two types of well-being: subjective well-being (SWB) and psychological well-being (PWB). The results showed that social cohesion is strongly associated with subjective well-being, while task-related cohesion is associated with psychological well-being. The researchers also discussed the interrelationships among these variables, as well as the close relationships between social and task cohesion and between subjective and psychological well-being. Finally, the study offered research recommendations on the importance of exploring these relationships and their implications for team performance. Salas et al. [39] found that cohesion exhibits more significant relationships with performance when conceptualised using only social and task dimensions (and no others) and when analyses are conducted at the team level. Cohesion is a time-dependent phenomenon, yet researchers rarely measure it at multiple points throughout a team's life cycle. Furthermore, cohesion is particularly important in large and dynamic groups, which complicates measurement. However, innovative and non-intrusive methodologies have been employed, as highlighted in this study. The practitioners and researchers are encouraged to define cohesion in terms of the sub-dimensions of task and sociality, and to measure it using behavioural and attitudinal components. While individual and team-oriented elements are recommended, team-level analyses are more effective. Further research into innovative, non-intrusive methodologies to enable temporal measurement of cohesion in large, dynamic groups is also needed.

A study by Jung et al. [22] found that professional autonomy, group cohesion, and job complexity are key factors that enhance organisational commitment among Research and Development Employees. An analysis of data from researchers at an international information technology institute in South Korea found that these three factors positively contribute to increased employee engagement with the organisation. The study also indicated that job complexity strengthens the relationship between professional autonomy and group cohesion on the one hand, and organisational commitment on the other. In other words, in more complex jobs, the impact of autonomy and group cohesion on organisational commitment becomes more pronounced. These findings offer important insights for Research and Development Organisations, highlighting the need to foster professional autonomy and build cohesive teams, especially in environments characterised by complex tasks and intellectual challenges. These factors can be effective tools for increasing employee commitment and improving performance. A study by Wu [46] found that demographic factors, including position, work experience, education, and marital status, play significant roles in promoting organisational cohesion among employees in sports business management. The results showed that employees with longer work experience, higher levels of education, and higher organisational positions tend to be more aligned with the organisation's goals and values. These findings highlight the importance of considering individual differences among employees when designing management policies to enhance organizational cohesion. Deckers et al. [12] indicate that group personality comprises two fundamental dimensions: group openness and group cohesion. The former represents the group's outward orientation, while the latter reflects its inward orientation. A new measurement tool, the Group Openness and Cohesion Questionnaire (GOCQ), was developed to assess these two dimensions across group contexts.

Confirmatory factor analyses validated the questionnaire's binary structure, and its results demonstrated excellent psychometric properties. Validation evidence further supported the measure's validity through its correlations with factors such as group age and size, as well as its alignment with assessments of team characteristics. These findings reinforce the concept of a dualistic structure of group personality and provide preliminary evidence of the instrument's validity. In a study by Forsyth [18], researchers found that while research and theories in these areas have provided significant insights into cohesion and related group processes, some definitional, methodological, and theoretical ambiguities remain. To address some of these ambiguities, an integrative model of cohesion was proposed. This model defines cohesion as the degree of group unity and identifies the differences between the causes (or precursors) of this unity (such as attractive bonds or group pride) and indicators of cohesion.

A short assessment tool was also developed to measure members' perceptions of their group's unity. A study by Manata and Bozeman [32] found that in-group conflict negatively impacts group cohesion over time, even when controlling for the effect of past cohesion on future cohesion. Conversely, the effect of cohesion on reducing group conflict was very limited and considered negligible. The results indicate that conflict is a strong causal predictor of group cohesion, while the inverse effect of cohesion on conflict is less significant. The study calls for future research to explore factors that may modify the relationship between conflict and cohesion, thereby mitigating or even reversing the negative effects of conflict. The study by Birhanu and Gugssa [6] indicates that employee cohesion is influenced by several key factors, most notably shared vision and goals, age and gender similarity among employees, mutual support, a sense of belonging, trust, and solidarity. Management support and the nature of the work, which requires teamwork, also play an important role in promoting cohesion.

The study highlights that age, gender, and job characteristics as factors influencing cohesion have not been adequately addressed in previous research. In a study by Yu et al. [48], researchers found that perceived differences pose a challenge for new employees, acting as a workload that hinders their integration. Conversely, a supportive diversity climate fosters proactive behaviour in building relationships with supervisors, thereby increasing organisational cohesion. The findings also demonstrated that inclusive environments motivate new employees to take the initiative to strengthen their relationships with supervisors, thereby further enhancing their integration into the organisation. This study offers a new perspective on how individual differences and organisational climate influence workplace dynamics, emphasising the importance of building relationships with supervisors to foster organisational cohesion. Furthermore, a study by Chubala et al. [11] found that group cohesion is associated with improved information sharing and situational awareness updates among team members in command-and-control (C2) scenarios. The results showed that teams that reached decisions more similar to the expert team—which possessed all the information beforehand—demonstrated higher group cohesion, greater individual situational awareness updates, and greater overlap in shared situational awareness. These findings suggest that enhancing information sharing and promoting group cohesion can be effective strategies for improving team performance in complex environments. A study by Anuar et al. [2] found that transformational leadership behaviours can enhance group cohesion in outdoor recreational programs. The results showed a weak positive correlation between group integration in tasks and transformational leadership behaviours, but no correlation between group social integration and transformational leadership.

A moderately strong negative correlation was also found between individuals' attractiveness to the group in terms of tasks and transformational leadership variables. In contrast, no correlation was found between individuals' social attractiveness within the group and transformational leadership. The study suggests that adopting a transformational leadership approach can foster a spirit of cooperation and solidarity among group members in outdoor educational recreational programs. Pinto and Marques [37] indicate that the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of group social control mechanisms directly affects group cohesion and social identity management strategies. According to the SCIM model, the failure of social control mechanisms to penalise deviance increases the threat associated with its emergence within the group. When formal control mechanisms align with members' expectations, they reinforce commitment to maintaining internal order and the status quo. When they do not align, individuals may react in various ways, such as abandoning the group, resorting to informal control mechanisms, or attempting to reinforce the internal normative order through social innovation or strengthening controls. This model contributes to understanding social protection strategies for identity by highlighting the impact of the effectiveness of social control mechanisms on cohesion dynamics within groups. Dekate and Mehta [13] argue that group cohesion partially mediates the relations between communication and trust and between knowledge sharing and adaptive team performance. Still, it does not mediate the relationship between communication and adaptive team performance. However, knowledge sharing has a significant direct impact on adaptive team performance. These findings suggest that enhancing group cohesion may improve the impact of communication and trust on performance. At the same time, knowledge sharing plays an independent role in improving adaptive team performance within a metaverse environment.

2. Organisational Cohesion

In physics, the molecular integrity of matter is known as cohesion. When matter is cohesive, the particles that make it up are so tightly bound together that they resist any competing attraction. But when matter is not cohesive, it tends to break apart over time as particles move apart or stick to other objects. The nature of teamwork has changed dramatically in recent years, a key factor driving practitioners and scientists to advocate for new and innovative ways of measuring team structures. While teamwork previously involved stable, supervised, and personal interactions, today's teams are often characterised by dynamic composition, increasing autonomy, and technology-mediated communication. One aspect of teamwork that has emerged as particularly important is team cohesion—a shared attraction, bonding, or sense of pride among team members, driven by social or task-based elements associated with team membership [19]. Cohesion is one of the most researched topics in the literature on teams in management, healthcare, the military, sports, and other stress-induced environments, in relation to team and group performance. Indeed, cohesion can be viewed as a word that evokes a sense of attraction, harmony, and alignment with the system. Cohesion is a process by which individual motivations and differences are set aside within the organisational context. Clearly, the degree and strength of cohesion determine the success rate of organisational activities [16]. Cohesion is a pivotal factor in workplaces, the economy, sports, the military, and even group therapy, and has been researched in numerous contexts. For organisations striving for internal integration, building cohesive teams is a strategic imperative that enables them to address operational challenges effectively.

This makes it a shared objective between the organisation and its team leaders. Organisational cohesion is the state in which an organisation functions with unity and coherence to achieve its goals, while taking external circumstances into account. It forms the core of an organisation's competitiveness and plays a fundamental role in its growth and sustainability. Furthermore, individual cohesion is fundamental to organisational development, as individuals represent the smallest unit in value creation, making them the core of the organisation's value chain [47]. Moreover, cohesion strengthens social bonds within work teams, which positively impacts employee job satisfaction. Team cohesion not only improves performance but also plays a crucial

role in shaping the work climate and fostering overall team satisfaction. In organisational literature, cohesion is a unique construct that has gradually evolved. Festinger's [17] ideas contributed significantly to the prominence of this concept in organisational studies. From Festinger's [17] perspective, cohesion is a set of forces that strive to keep individuals within the group and promote their growth. During the 1950s and 1960s, group research reached its peak, and researchers used the concept of cohesion to deepen their understanding of social influence, loyalty, commitment, conformity, compliance, and the process of getting to know one another. Kurt Lewin was one of the first scholars to lay the foundations for the concept of group cohesion in the late 1930s and early 1940s, developing the field of forces and field theory in psychology. He defined cohesion as a set of forces that maintain members' attachment to the group, including positive forces of attraction and negative forces of repulsion. In the 1960s, Lott and Lott [30] offered a further perspective on the concept of cohesion, viewing it as a reflection of attraction among group members, inferred from the number and strength of positive interactions between members.

From this perspective, cohesion is seen as a result of the various influences that motivate individuals to remain in the group, whether these influences are related to the attractiveness of the group's status, its members, or the activities it undertakes. Festinger [17] also indicated that cohesion is measured by the degree to which group members desire to remain within the group [10]. In the 1990s, Bollen and Hoyle [7] expanded the concept to include the affective dimension, defining cohesion as individuals' sense of belonging to a particular group, along with the emotional attachments associated with their membership. Dion [15] added the relational dimension of cohesion, describing it as a sense of collective connection in which actors are united within a shared social context [42]. With the dawn of the new millennium, more holistic views of cohesion emerged. Siebold [40] emphasised the importance of mutual trust and interdependence among members, enabling them to monitor and support one another, and considered teamwork essential for achieving common goals.

As Bakali et al. [4] explained, cohesion is characterised by group members' tendency to build strong social bonds, which reinforce their unity and survival as a cohesive entity. In the last decade, cohesion has come to be defined as a dynamic process reflecting a group's tendency to stick together and strive together to achieve practical goals and satisfy the emotional needs of its members. Recent research has emphasised that group cohesion stems from solidarity among members, a shared commitment to group goals, and a collective spirit. According to Lieb et al. [28], cohesion is still understood as the sustained tendency of group members to remain united and work together toward their goals.

Thus, the historical development of the concept of cohesion demonstrates its shift from being a social force that maintains group continuity to a dynamic process inherent in social bonding and shared commitment, reflecting its crucial role in understanding the nature of relationships within teams and organisational groups. Organisational cohesion is a fundamental concept in organisational behaviour research, encompassing two main dimensions: "task cohesion" and "social cohesion." Both play a critical role in fostering group unity and increasing cooperation to achieve common goals [29]. Organisational cohesion comprises task cohesion, reflecting individuals' commitment to the group's tasks and objectives, and relationship cohesion, referring to the interpersonal bonds among members and their appreciation for one another and the group as a whole.

Task cohesion stimulates cooperation among group members, promotes mutual support, and improves group performance. Studies show that teams with high task cohesion are more effective at achieving goals due to their shared interests and dedication [45]. Furthermore, team cohesion influences group processes such as idea sharing, testing new strategies, effective collaboration, and open communication, thus fostering a collaborative work environment [14]. Social cohesion, on the other hand, is linked to the emotional bonds among group members and their sense of belonging and satisfaction with teamwork. It reflects individuals' ability to integrate into work teams and to face external challenges with a spirit of solidarity and cooperation. Social cohesion is also a fundamental element in supporting relationships within society, as it promotes positive communication among individuals and helps achieve harmony among diverse groups in the work environment [38].

Studies also indicate that it may facilitate group learning by increasing group communication. On the other hand, it may lead to uncritical acceptance of solutions. However, organisational cohesion, both in its task-related and social dimensions, remains a crucial factor in achieving effective performance and building a collaborative and sustainable work environment. Organisational cohesion is a key factor in achieving effective performance within organisations, as it fosters collaboration among individuals and creates a more stable work environment. While the literature indicates the existence of different patterns of team cohesion, the two-dimensional model that distinguishes between "task cohesion" and "social cohesion" is the most widely accepted among researchers. Task cohesion is the shared commitment of individuals to achieving goals that require collective effort. In contrast, social cohesion is related to the emotional bonds among team members.

Organisations with a high degree of organisational cohesion reap numerous benefits, as this cohesion helps boost productivity and achieve both organisational and individual goals, leading to the organisation's long-term continuity and success. Organisational cohesion also indicates the extent to which employees contribute to achieving the organisation's and society's common interests, a fundamental element in the success of modern organisations [5]. When organisational cohesion is high,

organisational decisions and actions are closely aligned with strategic goals, reducing the gap between planning and actual implementation and enhancing operational efficiency [24].

Organisational cohesion is also a driving force that motivates employees to remain in their teams. Seright argues that group cohesion manifests as strong interpersonal relationships, a high sense of community, and solidarity that encourages team members to remain in the group [33]. Furthermore, it is a key element in fostering mutual communication among team members, and a cohesive team can be a source of support, as a team that supports one another can strengthen its members [20]. Furthermore, strong team cohesion encourages employees to work enthusiastically and reduces employee turnover. Employees who feel valued and included within their teams are less likely to seek other employment opportunities. The non-physical work environment, including the level of cohesion, working conditions, and relationships among colleagues, plays a pivotal role in an employee's decision to remain with the organisation [1]. Organisational cohesion also fosters leadership and job satisfaction, improves communication, and increases employee engagement, thereby facilitating learning within the organisation. Cohesive teams tend to achieve higher levels of productivity by encouraging constructive discussions, establishing clear standards for teamwork, and fostering trust in the group's ethical integrity. Leaders with emotional intelligence can also strengthen their teams' cohesion and motivate their members to perform more effectively. The impact of team cohesion on performance has garnered significant research attention across various disciplines, with studies revealing the complex nature of this relationship [34].

Cohesion fosters individual commitment to their tasks, motivating them to invest more time and effort in achieving team goals. When team members are highly committed, they are more willing to dedicate their resources and energy to completing the team's tasks and achieving its desired outcomes. High organisational commitment enhances individuals' confidence in the organisation's values, increases their desire to remain with the organisation, and leads to greater alignment among members regarding goals, thus contributing to improved group cohesion [31]. Consequently, team cohesion is considered a crucial element in the organisational development process. Studies confirm that the relationship between cohesion and performance is reciprocal: while cohesion improves team performance, high performance, in turn, enhances cohesion within the team. In work environments, managers may not be able to measure cohesion directly. Still, good team performance is often an indicator of high cohesion, which motivates them to retain the same team for future projects [23]. Organisational cohesion is also a factor in improving overall performance, as teams with high levels of cohesion demonstrate superior performance results compared to those lacking this element [3]; [49]. Furthermore, it plays a vital role in enhancing team effectiveness, as individuals working in cohesive work environments feel a greater sense of security and belonging, which motivates them to perform with greater passion and effectiveness [35]. Therefore, cohesion is a strategic element in enhancing organisational performance, as it leads to increased commitment, individual motivation, and positive outcomes that boost the success of both teams and organisations.

3. Conclusion

The theoretical analysis of organisational cohesion reveals its pivotal role in enhancing collective performance, team stability, and commitment within the organisation. This cohesion comprises two complementary dimensions: the first is task-related, reflecting individuals' commitment to working towards shared goals, and the second is social, expressing positive relationships and a sense of belonging among team members. The literature indicates that cohesive teams exhibit greater collaboration, deeper task engagement, and greater resilience under pressure, and are associated with higher levels of job satisfaction and lower employee turnover. The degree of cohesion is influenced by several factors, including value alignment, leadership quality, a sense of autonomy, effective communication, and genuine acceptance of diversity. A positive climate is also crucial for strengthening this cohesion, as it fosters constructive interaction, reduces psychological stress, and advances a culture of learning and teamwork. Thus, cohesion is not merely a social condition but a strategic tool that directly impacts performance quality, innovation, and sustained progress within the organisation.

3.1. Recommendations

Based on the research findings, organisations need to adopt well-considered steps to enhance organisational cohesion. This begins by instilling values of cooperation and belonging within teams and by creating a work environment that encourages freedom of expression and values individual contributions. Developing leadership styles based on emotional intelligence and mutual support is also recommended, as it fosters trust and strengthens professional relationships. Organisations need to adopt clear policies to build a culture that values diversity and respects individual differences, while focusing on shared goals that foster team spirit. Regularly measuring cohesion levels using reliable assessment tools is preferable to address any gaps that may emerge in team structure. Empowering employees by providing appropriate resources, especially in rapidly changing or high-pressure environments, and supporting effective communication across all levels of the organisation is also recommended. Finally, it is important to include training programs that focus on social skills and teamwork, as these are fundamental to strengthening cohesion and achieving long-term organisational success.

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