Original Article

Experimental management of work collectives through social and socialization activities

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Abstract
Introduction. The research refers to the experimentation of a group of researchers of the Research Center for Human Performance, of the University of Pitesti, Romania, of expert monitoring, for the performance of social and socialization activities at an economic company. The project aimed to combine some social activities with socialization activities. The social part of the project took place through a volunteer action in support of nature, by greening a wild segment of a mountain river, in order to make company members responsible for society's problems; the socialization part of the project aimed at conducting some team-building activities carried out in nature, to optimize the relations between the company's human resources. **Material and methods** - a group of 46 adult employees of a company (29 men and 17 women) participated for 3 days in a program that included an application carried out for social purposes and 6 applications carried out for socialization purposes. Before the program, an anamnesis of the needs of the workforce was conducted for one day. The potential participants unanimously accepted a set of 4 rules necessary to achieve psychological safety. The working procedures included the following techniques specific to team building: the metaphorical transfer of situations in an attempt to reduce the gap between real/fictitious environments; reflection used to produce changes in how participants feel and think, the facilitation techniques used were "Speaking for the experience" type at the end of each application.**Results**: Based on the data and observations made, the project achieved an increase in collective responsibility towards the issue of keeping the environment as clean as possible and the nature intact. Reasonable reactions were shown in the area of conflict resolution within the team; professional communication was optimized; solving difficult tasks by synchronizing the efforts of team members has been demonstrated; the "breaking of barriers" between the collective members was facilitated; the reflection of the participants expressed the achievement of well-being, relaxation and pleasure of joint movement. **Conclusions**: Based on the reflections verbally expressed by the participants, but also by their observations, the project managed to produce a change in the mentality of the work groups, improving the degree of awareness of the company's needs but also the awareness of the members in relation to the problems of society as a whole. The project had notes of originality by successfully combining social activities with those of socialization, focused together on improving teamwork.
Key words: company, team building, **volunteering, greening**, communication, leadership

Introduction

Specialists in the field of Sports Science and Physical Education (a scientific field in Romania) charge to direct their own research towards areas of intelligent specialization (Roșu & Miroiu, 2018), responding by their own means to the development of society. This can be achieved by overcoming the boundaries of activities specific to sport and physical education and intersecting other levels of social life, through interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary approaches (Roșu, 2019).

On the other hand, company management felt the need for an additional intervention to strengthen work teams through an activity generically called team building. This type of activity primarily aims to improve problem-solving, decision-making, conflict prevention and management skills within workgroups. In the search for greater efficiency of economic processes, employee animation has become a viable solution, within any type of enterprise or organization (Roșu, 2008). Economic environment, realized that the value of human resources in modern companies is undeniable. Every company is constantly looking for staff to be motivated, loyal and competent (Widawska-Stanisz, 2021). Although management and leadership research continuously offers field, laboratory, or quasi-experimental models, they are still relatively underutilized (Podsakoff & Podsakoff, 2019).

Although the recognition and application of team building is currently validated by numerous managers in the economic sphere, its field of theoretical and scientific development is lacking. The training of specialists in the field of team-building is at the crossroads of several scientific fields. Recently, a series of team building researches come from the field of physical education and sports (Stefănică & Roșu, 2018).

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The present research refers to the monitoring of team building services offered by researchers of the Research Center for Human Performance of the University of Pitesti, Romania, to a company in the socio-economic environment, which consisted in the coordination and evaluation of some social and socialization activities. The project represented an attempt by researchers in the field of physical education and sport to integrate their activities into priority objectives of European research, provided for in the European Strategic Plan 2020-2024 (Strategic Plan 2020-2024, 2020) such as: "A European green deal "-general objective 1, and "An economy that works for people"-general objective 3.

The social part of the project aimed at making the company's work groups responsible for the global problems of society and took shape in a volunteer action in support of nature, aiming at the greening of a wild sector of a mountain river. The socialization part of the project focused on optimizing the relations between the company's human resources and was carried out exclusively by means of team building.

The use of volunteering as a means of the social part of the project was meant to empower (Filizöz & Fișne, 2011). Volunteering helps manage time and opportunities, builds skills and builds character. Through corporate volunteering you can acquire skills that highlight leadership in a professional environment, you can develop leadership qualities, initiative, new visions to achieve certain goals appear, strategic thinking develops, all arguments for optimizing the organizational climate of a company. The success of a corporate volunteering action depends to a large extent on the organizers of such events who must make efforts to make the activity well-coordinated and efficient (Osipov et al., 2017).

The team building activities carried out with the aim of socializing company members had active forms based on consistent physical activity, carried out outdoors, in correspondence with the cultivation of a healthy lifestyle (Aghyppo et al., 2016). In recent years, a gradual process of ethical and cultural maturation of Western society has led to an increasing interest in carrying out more and more activities in a natural setting, under the name of green exercise (Federici, 2021). Outdoor seems to have a greater impact on well-being, reducing fatigue, at the same time increasing energy, concentration, satisfaction, pleasure and the likelihood that the practitioner will engage in the activity again, the concept being even called "a way of life" (Valentini & Donatiello, 2021).

Tourism is often used in different ways as a team building tool, especially when it has connotations of green tourism, ecotourism or responsible tourism (Buffa, 2015). Physical activity decreases with age (Petiot & Desbiens, 2022), and tourism can become a useful tool both for the development of physical capabilities and the development of socialization. The integration of an adventure module in tourism programs, as a team building tool (Buckley, 2012) brings to the fore the level of a new type of education - adventure education, with notable effects (Badau & Badau, 2018) and the addition of numerous values (Williams & Soutar, 2009). Carefully monitored adventure, avoiding extremes, may even constitute an element of the "tourism of the future" (Baba & Stăncioiu, 2018).

Every employee needs contact and connection with the people they work with. The relationships between colleagues at work are necessary for the smooth running of work projects, but also for the mood, improving their quality of life. People with an active social life and quality interpersonal relationships live longer and are happier. When a company promotes socialization, it encourages people to form lasting relationships, and the integration of new employees becomes much easier. In this context, team-building activities favor a friendly, happy environment (Yaprak et al., 2018), based on good understanding and knowledge between work colleagues, regardless of the decision-making level.

Material and methods
Research context - Running the project entitled "Experimental management of the involvement of work groups in social and socialization activities". Project period: March-June 2022. The project objectives were established starting from the organizational development objectives of the beneficiary company (OD goals).
The objectives of the project
The objectives were the following:
a. The provision of specialized assistance activities to the provider by means of specialists from the Sports Science and Physical Education Domain (Scientific Domain from Romania). They were able to coordinate volunteer activities through manual labor, adventure applications, and active socializing activities.
b. The realization by the beneficiary of social, voluntary activities, carried out by work collectives in support of disadvantaged local communities, as part of the project
c. Obtaining learning benefits through socialization and optimizing work relations, within the beneficiary company.
Subjects
The service provider formed a team of 4 (four) members of the Human Performance Research Center, University of Pitesti, Romania, who coordinated, monitored and evaluated the entire project. The beneficiary company had a workforce of 46 employees in the industrial sector, who participated, for 3 days (May 2022), in a combined activity: a voluntary greening activity of a mountain river sector, combined with a team building activity. The profile of the participants is presented in table 1:

Table 1. Profile of research beneficiaries

Gender		Old				Profile of basic work	
men	women	18-30	30-40	40-50	over 50	office workers	physical workers
29	17	14	15	15	2	12	34
63%	37%	30%	33%	33%	4%	26%	74%

Variables

The project was carried out taking into account the following variables (table 2)

Table 2. Quantitative and qualitative variables

Established indicators	Indicator name	Standard
Quantitative indicators	Number of days of activity	3
	Number of volunteer activities	1
	Number of experiential applications Costs/participant	7
	Amount of waste/plastic collected	~150 Eur
	Beneficiary group diagnosis time	560 kg
	Time to design activities	1 day
		1 day
Qualitative indicators	Targeted area, object of volunteering/ greening	Greening 80%; just remove plastic materials
	Satisfaction level of participants	big
	Level of learning new knowledge	average

Procedures and methods

The procedures are summarized in table no. 3 At the start of the program, we had in mind that all participants accept the set of rules necessary to achieve psychological safety, aimed at creating a comfortable environment, in which participants talk, collaborate and experience new ideas (Perrmann-Graham et al., 2022): Acceptance participation, respecting the set of circumstances created by the other participants, duplicating the example, not refusing the partners' proposals; Adding your own proposals to the ideas launched by the team; Making statements and giving up asking questions, determining to be part of the solution, both with voice and action; Accepting that there are no mistakes, but opportunities created as a result of failure.

Table 3. Project procedures

No	Name activity	Way of realization, methods	Allocated resources
A1	Preparation activities, diagnosis of the beneficiary group	training visit, exchanges of information with the beneficiary regarding the participants and suitable activities	travel, discussions, interviews
A2	Volunteer activities through greening	physical activity	as appropriate: garbage bags, gloves, shovels, etc
A3	Takeover of plastic materials extracted through greening	agreements/agreements with local decision-makers	provision of a car/garbage collection container, transport to responsible institutions
A4	Adventure in nature	deployment in hiking mode	suitable personal equipment: rucksack, raincoat, drinking water bottles, compass, map
A4	Team/building type activities	explanation, demonstration, execution, repetition, teamwork,	sticks, balls, goalposts, t-shirts
A5	Evaluare	observations, reflections, decoding the experience	sheets, notes, final report

In an attempt to reduce the gap between environments, the service provider resorted to the metaphorical transfer of situations, achieving a comparative similarity or similitude between the company's activity and the applied situations.

The provider administered 7 applications, in 3 days, in a relaxed schedule, by common agreement with the participants. The reflection produced changes in the way of feeling and thinking of the participants. The facilitation techniques used were of the "Speaking for the experience" type at the end of each application. The facilitator (a person from the provider's staff) informed the beneficiaries of what they learned and how the new knowledge should be applied in the future within the company. A human resources representative (HRD professional) also participated in the project, who observed the activities in order to later transfer what was learned, to all levels of the company.

Application 1 – The application concerned the realization of an action to green a running water route of about 4 km, in a wild mountain area, between two isolated localities. The action used the opportunity of recreation in the natural environment (Job & Paesler, 2013) with the need to obtain a sustainable environment (Harshaw & Sheppard, 2013). The members of the company mobilized in work teams supporting each other in extracting plastic residues from the water, in a total amount of 560 kg, in about 3 hours of continuous activity.

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The remains were then handed over to the official representatives of Bughea de Jos City Hall, Argeș County, Romania, based on documents.

Application 2 – The application consisted in carrying out a tourist hike in a group on the route Bughea de Jos – Ciocanu Hermitage – Bughea de Sus, Argeș County, Romania (distance about 10 km, 350 m difference in level), with a presentation of the historical connotations -religious of the place. The use of tourism as a means of optimizing group relations contributes to obtaining quality experiences, in direct relation to obtaining a feeling of great satisfaction (Chen & Chen, 2010). An adventure module was implemented unannounced on the way back from the mountain area, where the group wandered off the path.

Application 3 - Participants were divided into four teams, with the challenge being launched in meetings of two teams each. The activity requested the construction of materials prepared in advance by the provider (tubes and tube insertion bends), through oral communication, without visual contact between the teams. The first team made a construction, each member verbally transmitting the actions to a second team behind an opaque screen. The task was to convey the construction details as concisely as possible by the first team (the command team) and to similarly execute the construction by the team behind the screen (the executing team). The execution team was encouraged to ask for any additional details, in order to achieve a similar build to the command team.

Application 4 - The participants, in a circle, had to perform a motor action of catching-passing a vertical stick, the action having to be performed with one hand

Application 5 - The application took over the basic rules of the previous one, the sticks floating in the air, being simultaneously passed-retrieved between the members of the teams, with one hand.

Application 6 – 3 teams of 15 participants were distributed in 1 column. The last participant in each column received an XXL size t-shirt and at a start signal he helps the competitor in front of him to put it on. He then returns the third contestant behind the column who joins hands with the one wearing the jersey and facilitates the transfer of the jersey through undressing to the third. He then sits at the front of the column, waiting to later become a player dressed and undressed by the colleague behind him. The player who has just taken off his shirt in turn facilitates the passing of the shirt to the next player, then he also sits in front of the column and so on.

Application 7 - The application called "ninja" in team building environments asked all the participants, in a circle, to maintain funny, somewhat unnatural positions, in an attempt to touch another participant on the palms, by surprise. Triggering of touch attempts took place in turn, with each participant having access to attack when it was their turn, clockwise. Changing positions in the game was allowed only for the purpose of defending against an attack, or as a result of the attack, when the participant had this role.

Results and discussion

Application 1 aimed at increasing collective responsibility towards the general problems of society or disadvantaged communities. Through the attitude of the entire collective of the beneficiary company, the support of rural communities was achieved, as a very good solution to the development of sustainable tourism (Muresan et al., 2016). The greening of the wild route of a portion of a mountain river between two isolated localities can open the perspectives of tourist visiting the objectives in the Bughea area, Argeș County Romania.

Application 2 concerned the resolution of conflicts within the team. The individual initiatives, the solutions proposed by the group members, led to the successful resolution of the situation on the ground and the successful arrival of the group to the starting point. During the application, the objectives related to the optimization of conflict resolution were also achieved (Dragnea, 2006), solved by the members of the organization in a relatively elegant and efficient way.

Application 3 aimed to optimize professional communication, based on the execution of tasks verbally transmitted by members of the command team, to colleagues from the executing team behind a visually screened obstacle. During the activity, an optimization of communication was noticed, the words being better focused on the essence of the act that had to be performed, and the task being correctly fulfilled. The second round of this application captured a participant's initiative to code the landmarks used, which led to the facilitation of task communication. During the application, in all four teams the discovery of participants with superior leadership was highlighted.

Application 4 aimed to facilitate the synchronization of team members' efforts. Although theoretically passing the batons with one hand seemed impossible, the possible could only be achieved by synchronizing the efforts of the entire team. From one round to another, the spectator teams correctly selected the possibilities of optimizing the task, by selecting the best strategies, the execution times being continuously improved, with each trial and each team.

Application 5 aimed to facilitate the synchronization of team members' efforts in seemingly intractable situations. Aerial one-handed baton delivery required superior and simultaneous concentration, with task execution demonstrating a progressive ability to focus individual capabilities. The task was completed by all teams. The success proved to the participants that the team can overcome seemingly impossible obstacles.

Application 6 aimed at facilitating the "relaxation of the atmosphere" within the team. The means chosen at this stage tried to favor random "touches" between the participants, but also to introduce an

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atmosphere of good cheer and relaxation in the relations between the company members. The "Walking T-shirts" application responded well to this goal, carried out on two teams, at the end of which all participants felt the joy of movement, the accomplishment of tasks as a team. The success was also ensured by the fact that the application appeared to be original but also fun for all participants.

Application 7 was aimed at achieving well-being, relaxation and enjoyment of joint movement. The application also facilitated random touches between participants, something that will facilitate "breaking" or overcoming communication barriers in the future, within the company. At the same time, the application ended the team building module in a good mood and cheerfulness The correspondence of the applications with the reflection obtained by most of the participants is summarized in table no. 4

Table 4. Synthesizing the participants' reflections according to the content of the application

No	Content	Reflection on the participants
1	greening of mountain river	awareness of the general problems of society
2	tourism in which an adventure module was implemented	resolving conflicts within the team, managing the risk of failure
3	communication of tasks orally, without visual mediation	optimization of professional communication, efficiency and rational request for clarifications
4	walking sticks	synchronizing team efforts
5	floating sticks	team commitment and synchronizing team efforts
6	"ninja"	relaxation to achieve well-being
7	walking t-shirts	trust, teamwork efficiency

Conclusions

Based on the reflections expressed verbally by the participants, the project succeeded in producing a change in the mentality of the work groups, improving the degree of awareness of the company's needs but also the awareness of the members in relation to the problems of society as a whole.

The project had notes of originality by successfully combining social activities with those of socialization, focused together on improving teamwork. The project combined different categories of objectives: it started with applications to increase civic responsibility, continued with educational objectives and ended with recreational activities.

The project was applied to the entire beneficiary organization facilitating the understanding and acquisition of new knowledge and concepts, the understanding of new ways of communication and collaboration. The project activities were generally novel, experiential (applications 2,3,4,5,6,7). Application 1 – ecological volunteering was a repetition of similar actions carried out by the beneficiary in other geographical areas.

Each participant accepted before the start of the project the set of rules necessary to achieve psychological safety, aimed at creating a comfortable environment where participants talk, collaborate and experiment with new ideas.

Each application sought to obtain at the level of the participants reflections that change the way of feeling but also of thinking, generally reaching conclusions accepted by the majority of participants. Among the reflections, the recognition by the group of a special capacity in the field of leadership was highlighted in 6 people from the lower echelons of the company, highlighting the future possibilities of taking over some coordination tasks.

The activities were focused on the development of two categories of relationships: Interpersonal - namely the optimization of relationships between participants, including the benefits of improving teamwork, leadership, communication, collaboration and conflict resolution; Intrapersonal - people's relationships with themselves, including as benefits the improvement of self-concept, the development of confidence in one's own strengths and abilities, visionary leadership, vigilance in taking calculated risks

The experimental program of combining some social activities and socialization of a company - beneficiary- in Romania, was coordinated by a provider - a group of researchers in the field of Sports Science and Physical Education. The provider pursued the development of management skills of team building activities, aiming to extend his experience to other organizations/companies.

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