Interlevel Paradoxes in Motivation

Unraveling the Tensions Between Individual and Team Drives

Lluís M. Rosés
Univeristy of Antwerp
Setven A.Y. Poelmans
Univeristy of Antwerp

September 2024

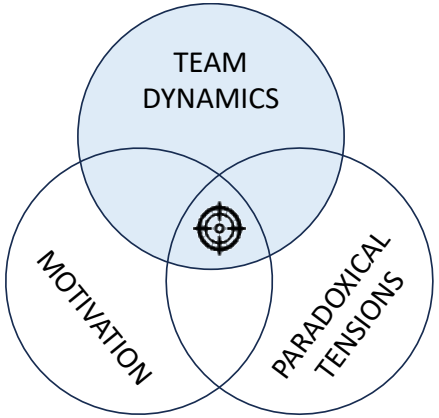
SUMMARY

OBJECTIVE: To identify and analyse the paradoxical tensions between individual and team-level motivational factors, thereby enhancing our understanding of team dynamics and effectiveness

Main Research Question: How do motivational paradoxes manifest between individual and team levels?

Propositions:

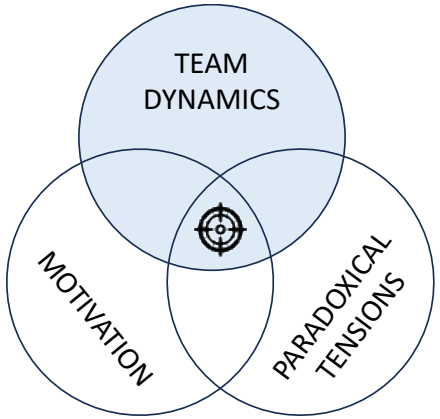
- Predictors of motivation embody inherent paradoxes
- Certain paradoxical dynamics within teams may not align with established paradox models
- The multilevel composition of teams could potentially induce tensions



SUMMARY

WHAT DO WE WANT TO ACHIEVE:

This study aims to identify and analyse potential paradoxical tensions in team motivation using an Extended Self-Determination Theory (SDT) framework. We will begin by conducting a comprehensive review of team performance literature and aligning potential paradoxical predictors with Extended SDT dimensions. Our goal is to synthesize SDT components with team performance predictors to create a matrix of potential paradoxes. To evaluate and validate these hypothesized paradoxical tensions, we plan to employ a modified Delphi study, engaging experts in organizational behaviour and team dynamics. These experts will assess a matrix of individual vs. team-level motivation predictors. Through this process, we aim to uncover significant paradoxical tensions in team motivation. Our ultimate objective is to develop practical implications from our findings, providing strategies for leaders to effectively manage motivational paradoxes in team settings. This research seeks to bridge the gap between individual motivation theories and team dynamics, offering a more nuanced approach to understanding motivation in multilevel organizational structures.



ADRESSED GAPS:

- Limited understanding of paradoxes at the team level, particularly in motivation
- Lack of integration between individual motivation theories and team dynamics
- Insufficient exploration of tensions between individual and collective motivational drivers
- Need for a more nuanced approach to motivation in multilevel organizational structures

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) - Core Foundation (Deci & Ryan, 2000)

- Autonomy: Freedom and discretion in work
- Competence: Feeling capable and effective
- Relatedness: Connection with others
- Extended Dimension: Meaning/Task Significance (Grant & Ashford, 2008; Hackman & Oldham, 1976)

Team Performance

- Literature Identified key predictors of team effectiveness
- Aligned predictors with SDT dimensions

Predictors	Description	Predictors
Autonomy	The degree to which a job provides freedom, independence, and discretion to the employee	Empowerment; Clear framework; Goal Setting-Goal Striving; Supportive Leadership; Shared Leadership
Competence / Self-Trust	The feeling of effectiveness, capability, and ability in performing tasks, self-trust, and the variety of skills used	Achieving; Excellence execution; Challenge; KSA Alignment; Self-trust
Relatedness / Task Interdependence	The sense of connection with others and the degree of interconnectedness in their tasks	Consensus / Alignment; Belonging; Shared Mental Models; Task Interdependence
Task Significance / Impact	The perceived importance of tasks and their impact on others	Personal Growth; Non-rutinary tasks; End-to-end tasks; Enjoyable tasks; Task Visibility; Transcendent tasks

Paradox Theory (Smith & Lewis, 2011)

- Defines paradoxes as persistent contradictions
- Applied to tension between individual and team motivations
- Example: Need for autonomy vs. need for direction

Integration

- Adding Team Motivation

Theory	Authors	Constructs
Prosocial Motivation	Grant (2007)	Desire to protect and promote the well-being of others (Perceived Impact, Affective Commitment), Meaningful job
Task Interdependence	Hon and Chan (2013)	Motivators (Recognition, Achievement, Responsibility, Advancement, Personal growth), Hygiene factors (Company Policies, Leadership Behaviors, Working Conditions)
Justice Climate	Mossholder, Bennett, and Martin (1998)	Impact, Competence, Autonomy, Meaningfulness

- Team performance predictors categorized under SDT dimensions
- Taxonomy of Dimensions (SDT+), Facets and Concepts (Performance)

METHODOLOGY

1. Literature Review
   - Comprehensive review of SDT and team performance literature
   - Identification of motivation predictors aligned with SDT dimensions

Dimension	Facet	Concepts
Autonomy	Empowerment	Opportunities of choice, Work scheduling autonomy, Decision-making autonomy, Work methods autonomy, Team Empowerment
Autonomy	Clear framework	Autonomy framework, Mission Analysis, Role Clarification
Autonomy	Goal setting-Goal striving	Goal specification, Goal setting
Autonomy	Supportive leadership	Supportive leadership, Encouraged self-initiation and innovation, Team proactivity
Autonomy	Shared Leadership	Shared Leadership

Dimension	Facet	Concepts
Competence	Achieving	Goal/Standards achieving, Task demonstrability
Competence	Excellence execution	Strategy formulation, Coordination/Planning
Competence	Challenge	Challenging tasks, Use variety of skills
Competence	KSA Alignment	Tasks aligned with KSA, Task ownership
Competence	Self-trust	Self-trust, self-efficacy, Collective efficacy, Self-potency

Dimension	Facet	Concepts
Relatedness	Consensus / Alignment	Internal and External Alignment
Relatedness	Belonging	Commitment, Belonging, Cohesion, Group positive affect
Relatedness	Shared Mental Models	Common understanding, Collective sense making, Information sharing
Relatedness	Task Interdependence	Task Interdependence

Dimension	Facet	Cocepts
Meaning	Personal Growth	Personal Growth
Meaning	Interesting tasks	Non-rutinary tasks, End-to-end tasks, Enjoyable tasks
Meaning	Visibility	Task Visibility
Meaning	Meaningful tasks	Transcendent tasks

2. Paradox Identification Framework
   - Development of "Acid Test" criteria based on paradox theory (Smith & Lewis, 2011;Poelmans, 2022) to identify paradoxes
     a) Co-existence of opposing elements
     b) Interconnectedness and complementarity
     c) Gestalt and dynamic homeostasis
     d) Generative force
   - Creation of a matrix of potential paradoxes between individual and team levels

	TEAM	Autonomy				Competence				Relatedness				Meaning			
	INDIVIDUAL	Empowerment	Clear Framework	Goal Setting- Striving	Supportive Leadership	Shared Leadership	Achieving	Excellence Execution	Challenge	KSA Alignment	Self-trust	Consensus / Alignment	Belonging	Shared Mental Models	Task Interdependence	Personal Growth	Interesting tasks	Visibility	Meaningful tasks
Autonomy	Empowerment																		
	Clear Framework	CO:		IN:			CO:		IN:			CO:		IN:		CO:		IN:	
	Goal Setting-Goal Striving																		
	Supportive Leadership	GE:		GF			GE:		GF			GE:		GF		GE:		GF	
	Shared Leadership																		
Competence	Achieving																		
	Excellence Execution	CO:		IN:			CO:		IN:			CO:		IN:		CO:		IN:	
	Challenge																		
	KSA Alignment	GE:		GF			GE:		GF			GE:		GF		GE:		GF	
	Self-trust																		
Relatedness	Consensus / Alignment	CO:		IN:			CO:		IN:			CO:		IN:		CO:		IN:	
	Belonging																		
	Shared Mental Models	GE:		GF			GE:		GF			GE:		GF		GE:		GF	
	Task Interdependence																		
Meaning	Personal Growth	CO:		IN:			CO:		IN:			CO:		IN:		CO:		IN:	
	Interesting tasks																		
	Visibility	GE:		GF			GE:		GF			GE:		GF		GE:		GF	
	Meaningful tasks																		

CO Opposing elements that co-exist simultaneously, creating tension
IN Modifying one affects the other, and they complement each other
GE The paradox is more than the sum of its parts and maintains balance (does not break) despite changes
GF The paradox drives action or change

METHODOLOGY

3. Delphi Process:
   - Expert Selection Criteria (+10 years tenure):
     a) Experts on consultancy about teams
     b) Experts on leading cross-functional teams w/coaching knowledge
   - Inception:
     a) Explanation of objectives, process & guiding example
     b) Provided with background info about paradoxes
     c) Experts provided with matrix of individual vs. team motivation predictors
     d) Evaluation of paradoxical tension on a 0-4 scale based on "Acid Test" criteria
   - Iterative feedback and refinement process
     a) Summary report with responses including group's aggregate opinions, average scores and levels of agreement
     b) Experts are encouraged to revise their revise their scores or provide additional justification for their original ratings.
     c) After 2 rounds, responses are not changing

4. Data Analysis
   - Analysis Calculation of average scores and agreement levels for each potential paradox
   - Identification of significant paradoxes (score > 6.5, >70% expert agreement)
   - In-depth examination of top-scoring paradoxes
   - Validation Stress testing of the system by adjusting thresholds
   - Examination of robustness of identified paradoxes

RESULTS

		TEAM			
		Autonomy	Competence	Relatedness	Meaning
INDIVIDUAL	Autonomy	9.55 ✓	6.36 !	5.68 ✗	6.36 !
	Competence	6.59 ✓	8.86 ✓	5.68 !	6.82 ✓
	Relatedness	6.14 ✗	5.23 ✓	8.41 ✓	7.50 ✓
	Meaning	6.59 !	6.82 ✓	7.73 ✓	9.32 ✓

Figures: Average scores from the expert panel

Arrows: Agreement about it is or it is not a paradox. ✗ (0-60%) ! (60%-70%) ✓ (70%-100%)

Colour: Grey cells are considered paradoxes, considering an average above 6.5 and a percentage of agreement over 70%

CRITERIA	PARADOX LEVEL	MET	MET (%)
>3 CRITERIA	>75%	6	37.5%
>2 CRITERIA	>50%	10	62.5%
>1 CRITERIA	>25%	0	0%
<1 CRITERIA	<25%	0	0%

Paradox	Val	Explanation
Team Autonomy vs Individual Autonomy	9.55	The tension arises from balancing the collective decision-making freedom within the team against the individual's sense of independence and control over their work. While team autonomy focuses on collective empowerment and shared leadership, individual autonomy is driven by personal empowerment and clear frameworks that define roles and responsibilities, potentially leading to conflicts in decision-making processes.
Team Competence vs Individual Competence	8.86	This paradox reflects the challenge between achieving team-wide excellence and the individual's drive to demonstrate personal expertise and success. Team competence is cultivated through aligned knowledge, skills, and shared mental models, while individual competence thrives on personal challenges and the attainment of goals that showcase individual abilities, potentially leading to discrepancies in team vs personal performance standards.
Team Relatedness vs Individual Meaning	7.73	The conflict here stems from integrating the individual's search for personal growth and task significance within the team's pursuit of a cohesive community and aligned goals. Relatedness within a team emphasizes shared values and consensus, whereas meaning for an individual is often found in personal development and engaging in tasks that stand out in the broader context, which may not always align with the team's objectives.
Team Meaning vs Individual Meaning	9.32	This paradox occurs when the collective meaning derived from team goals and visions challenges or overshadows the individual's pursuit of personal growth and involvement in tasks that they find inherently valuable and fulfilling. The balance between ensuring that team tasks are significant and meaningful for each member without diminishing individual pursuits of meaningful work requires careful navigation to maintain motivation and satisfaction.
Team Relatedness vs Individual Relatedness	8.41	A paradox arises when the need for individual belonging and forming meaningful relationships encounters the team's drive for unity and shared purpose. Relatedness at the individual level involves personal connections and feeling a part of a community, whereas at the team level, it involves collective agreement and a unified direction, which can sometimes conflict with individual relationship needs.
Team Relatedness vs Individual Autonomy	6.14	This paradox encapsulates the struggle between fostering individual empowerment and decision-making within the team's framework for consensus and alignment. Autonomy allows individuals the freedom to set and pursue goals, whereas relatedness requires a harmonious agreement on team objectives, which can limit how autonomy is expressed and experienced by team members.
Team Competence vs Individual Autonomy	6.36	The paradox here lies in the interplay between individual empowerment and the team's strategic execution of tasks. While individual autonomy supports personal goal-setting and initiative, team competence demands that these efforts align with the team's standards and executional excellence, which can sometimes restrict the independence of team members in how they approach and complete their tasks.
Team Meaning vs Individual Autonomy	6.36	A paradox emerges as the collective purpose and significance of the team's work potentially impede the individual's sense of empowerment and discretionary decision-making. Meaning within the team context involves shared visions that unify efforts, while autonomy encourages self-leadership and independent goal striving, which may diverge from collective meanings and cause tension.
Team Competence vs Individual Relatedness	5.23	The paradox emerges from the need to integrate individual desires for belonging and interpersonal connections with the team's focus on high-level performance and skill execution. While individuals seek to build relationships and feel part of the team, the drive for competence emphasizes efficiency and expertise that may

- Stress testing revealed strong paradoxes: 6 elements remained at threshold 7.0, 4 at 7.75.
- Most robust paradoxes (4 elements above threshold 9.0) represent same-dimension conflicts between individual and team levels.
- Findings suggest paradoxes are more evident within the same concept across levels than between different concepts and levels.

CONCLUSIONS

P1: Motivation predictors inherently encapsulate paradoxes, especially across individual and team dimensions. For example, individual autonomy can conflict with team meaning, creating tensions between personal freedom and collective alignment (Smith & Lewis, 2011; Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2009).

P2: Unique team dynamics may not align with conventional paradox models, as illustrated by the tension between internal team relatedness and boundary-spanning activities for task significance/impact (Ancona & Caldwell, 1992).

P3: Multilevel team composition creates tensions between individual and collective elements, exemplified by the paradox between individual autonomy and task interdependence, highlighting the challenge of balancing self-governance with collaborative efforts (Morgeson & Humphrey, 2008; Langfred, 2007).

CONTRIBUTION

Theoretical Contributions

- Expansion of Self-Determination Theory:
  - Added task significance dimension to SDT
  - Links SDT to team leavel
- Paradoxes as Integral to Team Motivation:
  - Paradoxes are central, not peripheral
  - Motivational drivers are interactive (paradoxes), not just additive
- Identification of Specific Team-Based Paradoxes:
  - Revealed unique team paradoxes
  - Examples: autonomy vs. interdependence, personal vs. collective impact
  - Demands rethinking of team dynamics and motivation
- Complex Dynamics of Identity within Teams:
  - Highlighted battle between individual and team identities
  - Reconciliation of identities crucial for team motivation
- Emergent Nature of Meaning in Work:
  - Meaning emerges as paradoxical with other motivators
  - Deepens understanding of purpose in team and organizational roles
- Implications for Paradox Theory:
  - Bridges macro-organizational and micro-leadership paradoxes
  - Introduces meso-level perspective through team dynamics
  - Teams as active ecosystems for paradox emergence and management
  - Foundation for multi-level paradox examination

Practical Contributions

- Offers a model based on SDT to understand team motivation paradoxes.
- Highlights the importance of balancing individual and collective motivations.
- Provides strategies to manage paradoxical tensions in team settings.
- Emphasizes the need for heightened sensitivity to motivational paradoxes in organizations.
- Suggests educational programs and workshops to develop leaders' understanding of these paradoxes.
- Recommends clear, consistent communication to harmonize individual and team motivations. Proposes an integrated approach to nurture motivation at both individual and team levels.
- Presents a framework for enhancing team cohesion and efficiency.
- Guides organizations in creating an environment where motivation thrives amid paradoxes.

LIMITATIONS & Future Research Directions

- Need for quantitative analysis of paradoxes' impact on team outcomes.
- Explore inner-dimensional paradoxes between individual predictors within each dimension.
- Investigate the role of controlled motivation and external incentives in team dynamics. Integrate additional motivational theories (e.g., expectations, self-regulation, feedback) and neuroscientific insights.
- Examine macro environmental factors' influence on team motivation.
- Study the impact of personal preferences, cultural backgrounds, and personality traits on team motivation. Investigate predictors of demotivation in team contexts.
- Expand the expert panel in future Delphi studies for greater generalizability.
- Observe how motivational dimensions manifest in real-world team interactions.
- Conduct quantitative research on the efficacy of different paradox management strategies.
- Further explore the complex interplay of team dynamics and motivation in organizational settings.

FEEDBACK & RECOMENDATIONS

Lluís M. Rosés, PhD Candidate
Univeristy of Antwerp
Antwerp Management School

Steven Poelmans, PhD
Univeristy of Antwerp
Antwerp Management School

luis.rosespou@student.uantwerpen.be