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Communication Enhancement with Drama Techniques Analysis of Inter-Team Dynamics and the Adaptation Process

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ABSTRACT: *This study explores the effectiveness of creative drama-based training in addressing communication problems within R&D teams working remotely or in hybrid settings. Sixteen employees from an international telecommunications company in Türkiye participated in a one-day, in-person workshop titled "Communication and Relationship Management through Drama Techniques." Activities such as Story Completion, Role Playing, Emotion Cards, and Group Sculpture were designed to tackle issues like role ambiguity, poor feedback, and lack of information sharing. Data were collected through structured observations, verbal feedback, and two-week follow-up monitoring. Results indicate that the training improved active listening, empathy, feedback quality, and collaborative decision-making. The findings suggest that drama-based methods not only reveal hidden communication barriers but also promote lasting behavioural improvements. This research provides theoretical insights into the value of drama techniques for enhancing communication and synergy in remote or hybrid technology teams.*

Key words*: Drama techniques, information sharing, intra-team communication problems, remote work, team, cohesion.*

1. Introduction

With the rise of globalization, today's business world has become more dynamic and complex. The acceleration of technological transformation, increased uncertainty, and economic fluctuations are forcing companies to operate in more challenging and highly competitive environments. Today's business world, which forces companies to constantly change, has also profoundly affected the way companies compete. Digital transformation, artificial intelligence developments, and expectations for personalized mass production bring new opportunities for companies, but they also bring uncertainty, complexity, and fragility (Nast et al., 2024; Mewes and Broekel, 2022; Dosi and Nelson, 2013; Rosiello and Maleki, 2021). Therefore, companies must not only possess technical competence but also the ability to manage their social capital in order to achieve sustainable success. Thus, positive relationships, trust, and motivation among employees within the company enhance the company's competitive strength and facilitate sustainable success (Mishchuk et al., 2022; Alghababsheh and Gallear, 2021).

Especially for firms operating in knowledge-intensive sectors, as well as those competing in environments characterized by high uncertainty and intense competition, firm success is not measured solely by financial

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performance indicators (Falciola et al., 2020). Parameters such as innovation capacity, agile decision-making structures, and the development of tacit intellectual capital also deeply influence company success (Rehman et al., 2022; Farzaneh et al., 2022; Han and Li, 2015; Ganguly et al., 2019). Therefore, in today's highly competitive economic environment, companies must adopt and implement proactive strategies in order to survive and gain a sustainable competitive advantage. Especially for firms operating in knowledge-intensive sectors, effective interpersonal communication and collaboration have become a prerequisite for the development of innovative outputs (Koch and Strotmann, 2008; Bettiol et al., 2023).

Although creative drama techniques are generally used as a method in education, their use has become widespread in many other fields today. Fundamentally, through drama techniques, participants are placed at the center of the subject matter by their own will, which in turn helps to move away from rote learning (Bessadet, 2022). For this reason, creative drama techniques have begun to be used in many different areas in businesses in recent years. In particular, they are preferred as an effective method for achieving critical goals such as strengthening interpersonal communication, developing empathy, building trust, and increasing role awareness in businesses. Studies in the literature show that application techniques such as improvisation, role-playing, and group interaction lead to improvements in participants' emotional and social intelligence levels, and that these improvements increase individual communication skills (Alfonso-Benlliure et al., 2021). Thus, improvements in individuals' communication skills enable the formation of healthier feedback mechanisms within the organization, more constructive management of conflicts, and easier internalization of common goals within the organization. Therefore, creative drama techniques can be used as a tool to increase internal synergy within the organization; increased synergy will not only strengthen individual commitment and motivation but also enhance teamwork effectiveness and internal coordination.

Improving communication within an organization or between teams undoubtedly plays a critical role in increasing project performance, decision-making and problem-solving processes, job satisfaction, and organizational innovation (Newman et al., 2020; Yap et al., 2020; Marlow et al., 2018). Given the success of creative drama techniques in strengthening communication, it is evident that creative drama applications not only support individual development but also serve as a strategic development tool that can directly contribute to organizational success.

This study aims to examine how creative drama-based interventions change intra-team and inter-team communication dynamics in remote and interdisciplinary R&D teams. The research examines (i) the impact of creative drama on communication skills—particularly empathy, trust, and collaboration—(ii) the implications of these impacts on organizational synergy and project outcomes, and (iii) the contribution of these techniques to sustainable productivity in a remote work context.

2. Theoretical Background

Drama is defined as a form of expression that visually and aurally conveys the creative process from the past to the present (Bukhari, 2021). This form of expression has evolved over time under the influence of different intellectual movements and has gained a multidimensional structure through interaction with various disciplines. The basic element of drama is the human being, and every context in which humans exist offers a potential drama field (Manzur, 2020; James, 2014). However, the random behaviors exhibited by individuals only under certain conditions do not constitute a narrative in themselves; a meaningful dramatic structure is formed only through stories shaped within a fictional context. In this context, creative drama can be considered not only a form of expression but also a pedagogical method that contributes to the education and transformation of the individual (Lee et al., 2015; Lee et al., 2020). In this respect, drama is often preferred as a subject for developing empathy and critical skills (Allern and Eriksson, 2022). In addition, creative drama can be used as an effective tool in structured environments such as the workplace. Studies in the literature show that creative drama methods enable participants to be more creative, problem-solving, initiative-taking, and quick decision-makers, and play an important role in strengthening the quality of communication within the organization and empathy within the team (Bil, 2013).

Remote working systems, which have become widespread with the Covid-19 pandemic, have changed the forms of interaction within organizations and weakened the natural communication grounds among employees (Al-Habaibeh et al., 2021; McGloin, 2022; Yang et al., 2022). This transformation has necessitated the integration of new methods. This is because teamwork and the effectiveness of communication within organizations directly affect the success of companies (Shonubi and Akintaro, 2016; Musheke and Phiri,

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2021). In today's global business world, companies must constantly innovate in order to adapt to changing conditions, manage technological developments, and stay one step ahead of their competitors (Georgellis et al., 2000; Souto, 2015). Internal communication plays a critical role in overcoming the challenges faced by companies operating in this dynamic environment. Because an effective communication network and teamwork facilitate the sharing of employees' knowledge and experience, accelerate decision-making processes, and enable more strategic steps to be taken (Hoegl and Gemuenden, 2001; Kozlowski, 2018; Mayo and Woolley, 2016).

The positive impact of team communication on company success has been demonstrated in studies in the literature. Factors such as empathy, trust, cooperation, and leadership between individuals are another important parameter in developing employees' communication skills (Hynes, 2012). Studies in the literature indicate that the development of these skills leads to improved cooperation within the organization. This is because empathy and proper communication reduce uncertainty about trust among employees and cause psychological relief in individuals. Creative drama techniques, due to their game-based nature, accelerate the exchange of cognitive and emotional resources between individuals by strengthening the environment of trust within and between teams; they encourage creativity within the team and add flexibility to new behavior development and learning processes (Dassen, 2015). As a result, communication gaps between individuals and teams are also reduced (Yue et al., 2019; Jin, 2010; Jiang and Luo, 2018; Ilavarasi, 2024). This is because creative drama techniques develop the ability to initiate and maintain relationships within or between teams (Tümer and Aslışen, 2022). Thus, thanks to the ability of individuals within the team to communicate messages through body language, establish empathy between individuals, and develop effective dialogue, both team cohesion processes are further developed and role distribution and conflict resolution are made more effective (Cengiz et al., 2020; Koçyiğit and Karatay, 2022).

In addition, creative drama techniques enable team members to get to know each other better and to approach events from different perspectives and analyze them in depth. Evaluating different perspectives together and reaching the optimal solution path improves both company success and team compatibility (McCaslin, 2016; Lethonen et al., 2016).

On the other hand, organizational change is also more effective and efficient with the environment of trust that will be created among employees with high empathy skills (Men et al., 2020). In this respect, creative drama techniques are also considered an important and effective tool used to improve communication and team success within the company (Dassen, 2015). Additionally, creative drama techniques enable the identification and elimination of dysfunctional processes and behavioral patterns within the team, thereby contributing to team success (Dassen, 2015). For this reason, the use of creative drama techniques to improve inter-team communication and harmony processes has begun to find its place in recent academic studies.

In this context, creative drama techniques stand out with their structure that enhances communication skills at both individual and group levels and strengthens trust among employees (Carter, 2020). Companies seeking to reinforce team cohesion processes and ensure lasting learning can benefit from creative drama techniques. Especially with the pandemic changing ways of working and prompting a shift towards remote work, the importance of drama techniques has increased. It is anticipated that the use of drama techniques will lead to effective success in preventing communication problems, supporting new team members, and facilitating a faster adaptation process. However, a review of the relevant literature shows that although the methods of implementing drama techniques and their areas of focus vary, studies specifically addressing intra-team communication and cohesion processes remain limited. Evidence on the impact of these techniques on knowledge sharing and the development of empathy in knowledge-intensive and remotely coordinated R&D environments is still scarce. In particular, there is a clear gap in the literature regarding how storytelling and embodied interaction-based practices transform communication patterns within distributed agile teams.

3. Methodology

3.1. Procedure

Within the scope of this study, the effect of communication training supported by creative drama techniques on team-internal and team-interpersonal relationships, communication, and company success among remote workers was examined. The study investigated the extent to which communication problems experienced in the remote work system, which intensified with the COVID-19 pandemic, could be overcome with creative drama techniques.

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The study was conducted as a case study, one of the qualitative research methods. The main reason for choosing a qualitative method was that the research structure allowed for the observation of changes in participants' behaviors and attitudes in their natural environment and within their interactions. This would enable a clearer investigation of the cause-and-effect relationships of the findings.

The study was conducted at the R&D Center of an international telecommunications company based in Turkey. The company had already allowed some teams to work in a hybrid system before the Covid-19 pandemic; however, with the Covid-19 pandemic, it decided to have all teams work remotely and continued this practice after the pandemic. With the transition to a 100% remote work system post-pandemic, the company has designed all its business processes using agile management as its work system. Project teams use the Scrum methodology, which allows for self-management and the establishment of a continuous planning cycle for cross-functional teams.

The study was conducted with a team of 16 people working at the company's R&D Center. Participants included Product Managers, Scrum Masters, Software Developers, and Unit Managers. Some of the participants were also new to the company. The participants are individuals who work in cross-functional teams that bring together different disciplines. In this respect, the participants represent a homogeneous distribution within the company.

The participants are volunteers who expressed interest in attending the “Communication and Relationship Management Workshop Using Drama Techniques” announced within the company. Prior to the study, all participants were informed about the purpose and process of the research, and their verbal consent to participate voluntarily was obtained. No participants' names or identity information were included in the analysis reports. The findings were evaluated anonymously and collectively and shared with senior management.

Data was collected before, during, and after the training process. Prior to the training, preliminary observations were made regarding communication issues within the team, and the fundamental problem was identified. Based on the preliminary findings, the company's main problem areas were: (1) disruptions in conference calls with customers and their reflection on internal coordination, (2) negative first impressions due to unit managers' lack of technical expertise, (3) process confusion during feedback sessions, (4) failure to seek input during priority setting, and (5) recurring errors due to insufficient review of previously opened support requests. The game activities within the scope of the study were designed based on these issues.

The training took place in person on 31 July 2024 and was held as a full-day session. During the training, participants' behaviors, interactions, and emotional responses were recorded using a structured observation form. After each drama technique, participants were asked to verbally share their experiences. At the end of the training, a general evaluation meeting was held to encourage participants to comprehensively review the entire process and verbally share the communication barriers they observed within the team.

Two weeks after the training, participants were observed remotely. These observations identified whether participants had integrated the knowledge gained during the training into their daily workflows, whether there were changes in their communication styles, and developments in team dynamics.

3.2. Implementation

The creative drama techniques to be used in the study have been designed to address the shortcomings identified prior to the research and to develop the participants' personal communication skills. The drama techniques used in the study are as follows:

The Story Completion exercise aims to develop participants' listening and collaboration skills. In this exercise, participants take turns continuing a story. Participants are divided into two groups, and each group is given cards containing the opening sentence. Each participant in the group added a sentence to the story based on the sentence written before them and continued the story. The story was completed with the sentence written by the last participant and the entire exercise was read aloud to all participants.

The Role-Playing exercise aims to develop participants' empathy skills. Within the scope of this activity, participants played different professional roles within pre-determined scenarios. During the activity, participants were occasionally asked to switch roles, with the aim of internalizing different perspectives. Additionally, participants who were not on stage were asked to observe the participants performing and note where communication breakdowns occurred.

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The Emotion Cards exercise aimed to develop participants' skills in expressing emotions during communication. In this exercise, each participant was given a card and asked to act out the emotion written on the card through a short, silent improvisation. Other participants were asked to observe the performance and guess which emotion the person was acting out.

The Problem Solving Scenario exercise aimed to develop participants' creative thinking and problem-solving skills. In this exercise, participants were tasked with working in small groups to come up with solutions to a specific problem. Participants were first asked to analyze the current situation and the problem. Each participant in the group took on different roles and generated various ideas. After internal group discussions, all suggestions were evaluated together with the aim of identifying the most appropriate idea.

The Silent Stage exercise aimed to develop participants' empathy skills. In this exercise, participants were given a series of different situation statements and asked to act out certain situations without using words. The structure of this exercise began with broad situation statements given to participants and narrowed down as the game progressed. Thus, as the situation sentences progressed, the participant's personal space and stress increased, and their reactions were observed.

The Group Sculpture exercise aimed to develop participants' team harmony and cooperation skills. In this exercise, all participants were asked to create a sculpture physically around a common theme.

4. Research Fındıngs

According to preliminary observations made prior to the study, it was determined that the company experienced various communication problems both within teams and between teams. In particular, misunderstandings and communication breakdowns arising from a lack of clarity regarding roles and responsibilities were identified as key issues in internal team communication. In terms of inter-team communication, it was found that there was a lack of information sharing regarding the work carried out by teams within the company. In particular, it was observed that there was a lack of information sharing between teams working on parallel projects using Agile methodologies.

The drama techniques developed as part of the study were designed to address these communication gaps identified within the company. The importance of attentive listening was instilled in the participants through the *Story Completion* activity carried out as part of the study. During this study, which was conducted to address the lack of information flow experienced prior to the study, it was observed that some participants did not listen attentively and that this led to a lack of information. *The Role-Playing* activity was observed to increase participants' empathy skills. After this game, participants stated that they had gained a more empathetic perspective, as evidenced by their comments such as “this job is more complicated than I thought” and “I felt the pressure they were under.” With the *Emotion Cards* activity, the “inability to show emotions and suppression” elements identified before the study were overcome. Participants who experienced these problems were observed to be more courageous in expressing themselves. During the *Problem Solving Scenario* activity, the problems encountered in the process of jointly producing solutions and searching for optimal solutions were resolved. The participants in the working group were able to think in multiple ways by stepping out of their own identities and taking on other roles. It was also determined within the scope of the study that the tendency of the team to bring solution proposals related to their own areas of expertise while working with different disciplines has decreased. *The Silent Stage* activity also aimed to enable participants to identify the emotional states of individuals from their gestures and facial expressions. In particular, feedback received from participants after the study revealed that they realized that “behaviors under stress are different from what they thought.” Finally, *The Group Sculpture* activity was observed to enhance participants' ability to collaborate and act in unison. Verbal feedback from participants highlighted the challenges of becoming a cohesive unit within the team and the value of the joy and satisfaction derived from achieving such unity.

During the study, in addition to the above observations, it was observed that participants expressed their feelings and ideas more openly and confidently. Furthermore, when comparing the participants' activity in their daily and routine tasks with their participation in this study, it was observed that participants showed more active participation in this study. When asked about the reason for this, they stated that they did not feel the stress and pressure they experienced at work. The study was concluded with information provided to participants on stress management.

Two weeks after the completion of the study, participants were monitored using a remote observation method. The most important finding identified in this observation was that some of the drama techniques were

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internalized by the participants in a lasting and practical way. It was observed that after the training, the participants used a more empathetic language in their daily work, the frequency and quality of feedback increased, they became more participatory in decision-making processes, and the number of collaborations between teams increased.

5. Conclusıon

Within the scope of this study, the effects of creative drama techniques on communication behaviors and team interaction were qualitatively examined in the R&D team of an international telecommunications company based in our country. The training program was designed to address issues such as role ambiguity, insufficient feedback, inconsistencies in prioritization, and lack of information sharing observed prior to the training among a volunteer group of 16 members from the R&D team, which had been working remotely at 100% capacity post-pandemic.

Following the exercises conducted as part of the training, it was observed that participants' empathetic perspectives were strengthened, stress levels decreased, and communication barriers became more visible. In the follow-up observations carried out after the training, the lasting effects of the drama practices were examined and identified. The findings indicate an increase in inter-team collaboration, improvements in the frequency and depth of feedback, and a wider prevalence of participation and empathy in decision-making processes.

We can examine the findings of this study from theoretical and practical perspectives. When we examine the study in terms of theoretical contributions, it shows that drama-based interventions can mitigate the consequences of hidden communication deficiencies in technology-focused companies and/or teams. Important findings obtained from participant observations conducted after the workshop also support this situation. Although previous studies have linked drama studies with trust, findings regarding the sustainability of these applications have been limited. The findings of this study support the idea that drama-based workshops implemented within a remote team can achieve sustainable success.

The second theoretical contribution of this study is that, despite the reduction in interaction between individuals due to remote working methods that began with the pandemic and have become increasingly widespread, the "Story Completion" and "Role Playing" drama techniques have proven to be successful in resolving team problems. In particular, it has been observed that empathetic relationships between individuals have strengthened with the revitalization of dialogue channels and the reduction of subjective stress levels.

When we consider the results of this study in terms of practical applications, we observe that it has important implications for managers of companies operating in remote or hybrid models. According to this, a well-designed drama workshop is an important actor in making invisible or unnoticed coordination problems visible. It can be stated that with the widespread adoption of such practices within the organization, the problems associated with remote work or hybrid systems will be quickly resolved.

This study aimed to evaluate the impact of creative drama techniques on inter-team communication and coordination processes. The drama technique has been effective in revealing communication and planning deficiencies in teams and showing what steps need to be taken. By improving communication, effectively managing resources, prioritizing appropriately, and involving all team members in the process, it is possible to prevent similar problems in the future and increase customer satisfaction. This demonstrates that drama techniques can be used as a functional learning and communication tool in work environments.

As with any study, this study has certain limitations. First, the results of this study were obtained from a sample of 16 volunteers at a single company. This may limit the generalizability of the study findings. Therefore, future studies should replicate this design in different companies and cultures. Another limitation is the two-week follow-up period after training, which was determined to be the duration of retention. Extending this period in future studies could further highlight the causal retention of the study. Finally, this study focused on communicative behaviors but did not evaluate direct business outcomes. Researchers may investigate whether drama-induced empathy translates into measurable gains in project speed, customer satisfaction, or innovation outputs in future studies.

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