

# Teaching Group Dynamics Through the Collaborative Chain Exercise

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**Abstract.** Teaching group dynamics as an organizational behavior concept can present a challenge for contextualized understanding when done simply by definition. This article introduces the Collaborative Chain exercise, an innovative group activity designed for classes of 25-30 students that engages participants in learning principles of group dynamics through experiential learning. The 45 to 60-minute exercise emphasizes team cohesion, conflict management, and communication strategies, helping students critically understand group dynamics in an organizational behavior context. Through structured learning and guided reflection, instructors assess students' grasp of the key concepts using a three-tier evaluation framework that measures immediate engagement, reflective understanding, and practical application. This structured exercise also offers an engaging alternative to conventional case studies and business simulations, allowing students to discover key concepts through direct experience while providing clear metrics for learning assessment.

**Keywords:** communication, conflict resolution, experiential learning, instructional innovation.

## I. Introduction

Research-validated concerns about the inadequate transmission of Organizational Behavior knowledge in business education highlight the need to examine both its nature and the teaching challenges it creates (Pawar, 2015). One of the main difficulties when teaching undergraduate students about Organizational Behavior concepts stems from their lack of professional work experience (Mozahem and Ghanem, 2018). Students often struggle to reconcile idealistic social concepts with organizational realities (Aloni, 2011), particularly when traditional teaching methods fail to bridge the gap between theory and practice (Arteaga *et al.*, 2024).

Traditional classroom environments face obstacles such as behavioral disruptions, excessive student numbers, and varying levels of student engagement (Adsiz and Dincer, 2025). While traditional teaching methods rely heavily on case studies and written assignments, there is a need for more engaging approaches to demonstrate complex principles, which are crucial for building practical competence (Gravina *et al.*, 2023).

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Current literature in Organizational Behavior also highlights the importance of moving beyond traditional profit-driven approaches to embrace more holistic organizational practices (Arteaga *et al.*, 2024). This evolution reflects a growing recognition that successful management requires balancing financial performance with human development and ethical considerations (Ronaghi, 2024; Triviño, 2024). Serdyukov (2017) demonstrates how business complexities demand management approaches that also align financial success with moral concerns.

## **II. The Resolution**

Organizational behavior coursework provides a blend of educational instruction and experiential learning opportunities to address various organizational concerns (Gravina *et al.*, 2023). Recent pedagogical research also suggests that experiential learning approaches can help overcome this practical gap (Tharayil *et al.*, 2018; Serdyukov, 2017). It encompasses teaching methods that draw upon students' relevant personal experiences and reflective consideration of past events to foster a deeper understanding of the subject (Helm-Stevens and Orlando, 2009). This creates valuable opportunities for critical thinking about how students' insights will be shaped and can affect their future decisions (Kolb, 1984). The Collaborative Chain exercise directly addresses this gap by fostering experiential learning, enabling students to confront challenges similar to those encountered in real organizational settings, particularly those related to resource allocation, communication, and the critical role of trust in achieving collective goals.

Contemporary Organizational Behavior research also emphasizes the need for developing ethical business leaders who can effectively balance profit objectives with human dignity and social responsibility (Berges Puyo, 2022). Recent studies have demonstrated how this approach has evolved from its early focus on employee development to today's comprehensive framework that integrates economic success with social welfare (Aloni, 2011). This proposed learning exercise specifically integrates these elements by creating scenarios where students must not only collaborate within their assigned groups but also learn to build trust and communicate effectively across groups, mirroring the interdependencies found in complex organizational structures that cannot be effectively implemented through an online session.

To address these issues and gaps, the Collaborative Chain exercise was designed for Organizational Behavior classes with 25 to 30 students. This experiential learning activity typically lasts 45 to 60 minutes, focusing on team cohesion, conflict management, and communication strategies, to help undergraduate students critically understand group dynamics within an organizational behavior context. Through structured learning and guided reflection, students will be assessed using a three-tier evaluation framework that