

LECTURE SESSION 8

GROUP AND GROUP DYNAMICS

Lecture Outline

- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2 Learning Outcomes
- 8.3 Define group and group dynamics
- 8.4 Characteristics of a Group
- 8.5 Process/Stages of Group Development/Evolution
- 8.6 Factors affecting group behaviour
- 8.7 Group Structure
- 8.8 Self Assessment Questions
- 8.9 References and Further Reading

8.1 Introduction

Welcome to lecture seven in development studies and ethics. In this lecture, we shall explain the concept of development. at the same time we shall gain an understanding of the goals of development and their impact on growth of a nation.



8.2 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this lecture, you should be able to:

- i. Define group and group dynamics
- ii. Distinguish characteristics of a Group
- iii. Describe the stages of development of a group of a group
- iv. Discuss the factors affecting group behaviour

8.3 Definitions of group and group dynamics

Let us start our discussion by asking ourselves this question.



In text Question 1: Who is in charge of this university college?

8.3.1 Group

Every organization is a group unto itself. A group refers to two or more people who share a common meaning and evaluation of themselves and come together to achieve common goals. In other words, a group is a collection of people who interact with one another; accept rights and obligations as members and who share a common identity.

8.3.2 Group Dynamics

Group dynamics deals with the attitudes and behavioral patterns of a group. Group dynamics concern how groups are formed, what is their structure and which processes are followed in their functioning. Thus, it is concerned with the interactions and forces operating between groups. Group dynamics is relevant to groups of all kinds – both formal and informal.



Take Note

A group refers to two or more people who share a common meaning and evaluation of themselves and come together to achieve common goals.

Group dynamics deals with the attitudes and behavioral patterns of a group

We have defined groups and group dynamics. we are now going to look at characteristics of groups

8.4 Characteristics of groups

Regardless of the size or the purpose, every group has similar characteristics:

- (a) 2 or more persons (if it is one person, it is not a group)
- (b) Formal social structure (the rules of the game are defined)
- (c) Common fate (they will swim together)
- (d) Common goals (the destiny is the same and emotionally connected)
- (e) Face-to-face interaction (they will talk with each other)
- (f) Interdependence (each one is complimentary to the other)
- (g) Self-definition as group members (what one is who belongs to the group)
- (h) Recognition by others (yes, you belong to the group).



Activity

Outline any five characteristics of groups.

Well done. You have been able to outline the characteristics of groups. This leads us to our next subsection in this lecture ,processes or stages of group development .

8.5 Process/Stages of Group Development/Evolution

Group Development is a dynamic process. How do groups evolve? There is a process of five stages through which groups pass through. The process includes the five stages: forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning.

Forming

The first stage in the life of a group is concerned with forming a group. This stage is characterized by members seeking either a work assignment (in a formal group) or other benefit, like status, affiliation, power, etc. (in an informal group). Members at this stage either engage in busy type of activity or show apathy.

Storming

The next stage in this group is marked by the formation of dyads and triads. Members seek out familiar or similar individuals and begin a deeper sharing of self. Continued attention to the subgroup creates a differentiation in the group and tensions across the dyads / triads may appear. Pairing is a common phenomenon. There will be conflict about controlling the group.

Norming

The third stage of group development is marked by a more serious concern about task performance. The dyads/triads begin to open up and seek out other members in the group. Efforts are made to establish various norms for task performance.

Members begin to take greater responsibility for their own group and relationship while the authority figure becomes relaxed. Once this stage is complete, a clear picture will emerge about hierarchy of leadership. The norming stage is over with the solidification of the group structure and a sense of group identity and friendship.

Performing

This is a stage of a fully functional group where members see themselves as a group and get involved in the task. Each person makes a contribution and the authority figure is also seen as a part of the group. Group norms are followed and collective pressure is exerted to ensure the Process of Group effectiveness of the group.

The group may redefine its goals Development in the light of information from the outside environment and show an autonomous will to pursue those goals. The long-term viability of the group is established and nurtured

Adjourning

In the case of temporary groups, like project team, task force, or any other such group, which have a limited task at hand, also have a fifth stage, known as adjourning.

The group decides to disband. Some members may feel happy over the performance, and some may be unhappy over the stoppage of meeting with group members. Adjourning may also be referred to as mourning, i.e. mourning the adjournment of the group.

The readers must note that the four stages of group development mentioned above for permanent groups are merely suggestive. In reality, several stages may go on simultaneously

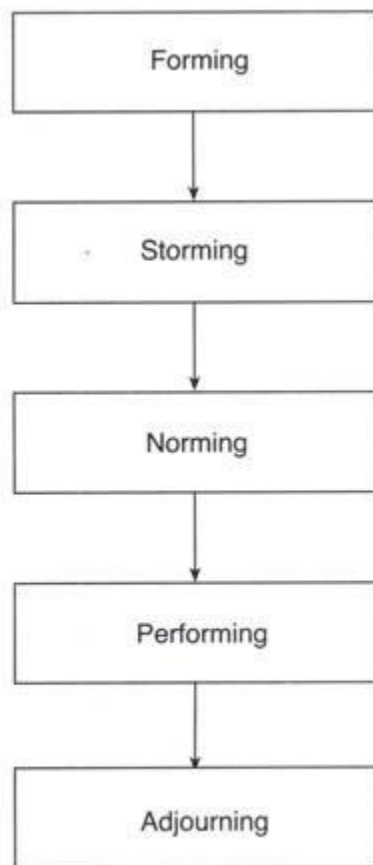


Figure 12.1 : Process of Group Development

8.6 Factors influencing group behavior

The success or failure of a group depends upon so many factors. Group member resources, structure (group size, group roles, group norms, and group cohesiveness), group processes (the

communication, group decision making processes, power dynamics, conflicting interactions, etc.) and group tasks (complexity and interdependence).

8.6.1 Group Member Resources:

The members' knowledge, abilities, skills; and personality characteristics (sociability, self-reliance, and independence) are the resources the group members bring in with them. The success depends upon these resources as useful to the task.

8.6.2 Group Structure:

The behavior of the group also depends on its structure which is characterized by the following

8.6.3 Group Size:

Group size can vary from 2 people to a very large number of people. Small groups of two to ten are thought to be more effective because each member has ample opportunity to take part and engage actively in the group. Large groups may waste time by deciding on processes and trying to decide who should participate next.

Evidence supports the notion that as the size of the group increases, satisfaction increases up to a certain point. Increasing the size of a group beyond 10-12 members' results in decreased satisfaction. It is increasingly difficult for members of large groups to identify with one another and experience cohesion.

8.6.4 Group Roles:

In formal groups, roles are always predetermined and assigned to members. Each role shall have specific responsibilities and duties. There are, however, emergent roles that develop naturally to meet the needs of the groups.

These emergent roles will often substitute the assigned roles as individuals begin to express themselves and become more assertive. Group roles can then be classified into work roles, maintenance roles, and blocking roles.

Work roles are task-oriented activities that involve accomplishing the group's goals. They involve a variety of specific roles such as initiator, informer, clarifier, summarizer, and reality tester.

Maintenance roles are social-emotional activities that help members maintain their involvement in the group and raise their personal commitment to the group. The maintenance roles are harmonizer, gatekeeper, consensus tester, encourager, and compromiser.

Blocking roles are activities that disrupt the group. Blockers will stubbornly resist the group's ideas, disagree with group members for personal reasons, and will have hidden agendas. They may take the form of dominating discussions, verbally attacking other group members, and distracting the group with trivial information or unnecessary humour.

Often times the blocking behaviour may not be intended as negative. Sometimes a member may share a joke in order to break the tension, or may question a decision in order to force group members to rethink the issue. The blocking roles are aggressor, blocker, dominator, comedian, and avoidance behaviour.

Role conflicts arise when there is ambiguity (confusion about delegation and no specific job descriptions) between the sent role and the received role which leads to frustration and dissatisfaction, ultimately leading to turnover; inconsistency between the perceived role and role behaviour (conflict between work roles and family roles); and conflicting demands from different sources while performing the task.

8.6.5 Group Norms:

Norms define the acceptable standard or boundaries of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, shared by group members. They are typically created in order to facilitate group survival, make behaviour more predictable, avoid embarrassing situations, and express the values of the group.

Each group will create its own norms that might determine from the work performance to dress to making comments in a meeting. Groups exert pressure on members to force them to conform to the group's standards and at times not to perform at higher levels. The norms often reflect the level of commitment, motivation, and performance of the group.

The majority of the group must agree that the norms are appropriate in order for the behaviour to be accepted. There must also be a shared understanding that the group supports the norms. It should be noted, however, that members might violate group norms from time to time.

If the majority of members do not adhere to the norms, then they will eventually change and will no longer serve as a standard for evaluating behaviour. Group members who do not conform to the norms will be punished by being excluded, ignored, or asked to leave the group.

8.6.6 Group Cohesiveness:

Cohesiveness refers to the bonding of group members or unity, feelings of attraction for each other and desire to remain part of the group. Many factors influence the amount of group cohesiveness

- agreement on group goals, frequency of interaction, personal attractiveness, inter-group competition, favourable evaluation, etc.

The more difficult it is to obtain group membership the more cohesive the group will be. Groups also tend to become cohesive when they are in intense competition with other groups or face a serious external threat to survival. Smaller groups and those who spend considerable time together also tend to be more cohesive.

Cohesiveness in work groups has many positive effects, including worker satisfaction, low turnover and absenteeism, and higher productivity. However, highly cohesive groups may be detrimental to organizational performance if their goals are misaligned with organizational goals. Highly cohesive groups may also be more vulnerable to groupthink. Groupthink occurs when members of a group exert pressure on each other to come to a consensus in decision making. Groupthink results in careless judgments, unrealistic appraisals of alternative courses of action, and a lack of reality testing.

Evidence suggests that groups typically outperform individuals when the tasks involved require a variety of skills, experience, and decision making. Groups are often more flexible and can quickly assemble, achieve goals, and disband or move on to another set of objectives.

Many organizations have found that groups have many motivational aspects as well. Group members are more likely to participate in decision-making and problem-solving activities leading to empowerment and increased productivity. Groups complete most of the work in an organization; thus, the effectiveness of the organization is limited by the effectiveness of its groups.

8.6.7 Group Processes:

Decision-making by a group is superior, because group generates more information and knowledge, generates diverse alternatives, increases acceptance of a solution, and increases legitimacy.

Decisions take longer time, minority is dominated, pressure is applied to conform to group decisions, and none is responsible for the decisions. Group processes also include communication, conflict management, and leadership that we shall discuss in details in the chapters to follow hereafter.



8.6 Summary

In summary, the lecture aimed at Defining group and group dynamics, characteristics of a Group, Process/Stages of Group Development/Evolution: factors affecting group behavior



8.7 Review Activity

- i. Explain the importance of belonging to a group
- ii. Discuss any three factors that influence group behavior



8.8 References and Further Reading

1. Desai, V. & Potter, R. (2014). The Companion to Development Studies. (3rd Ed.). London: Routledge. ISBN-13:978-1444167245.
2. Byrd, M. & Edwards, S. (2014). Leadership Development Studies: A Humanities Approach. (5th Ed.). Plymouth, USA: Hayden-Mc Publishing. ISBN-13: 978-0738066042.
3. Spear, J. & Williams, P. D. (2012). Security and Development in Global Politics: A critical Comparison. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press. ISBN-13: 978-1589018860

