

ChapterModule - 7Group Dynamics

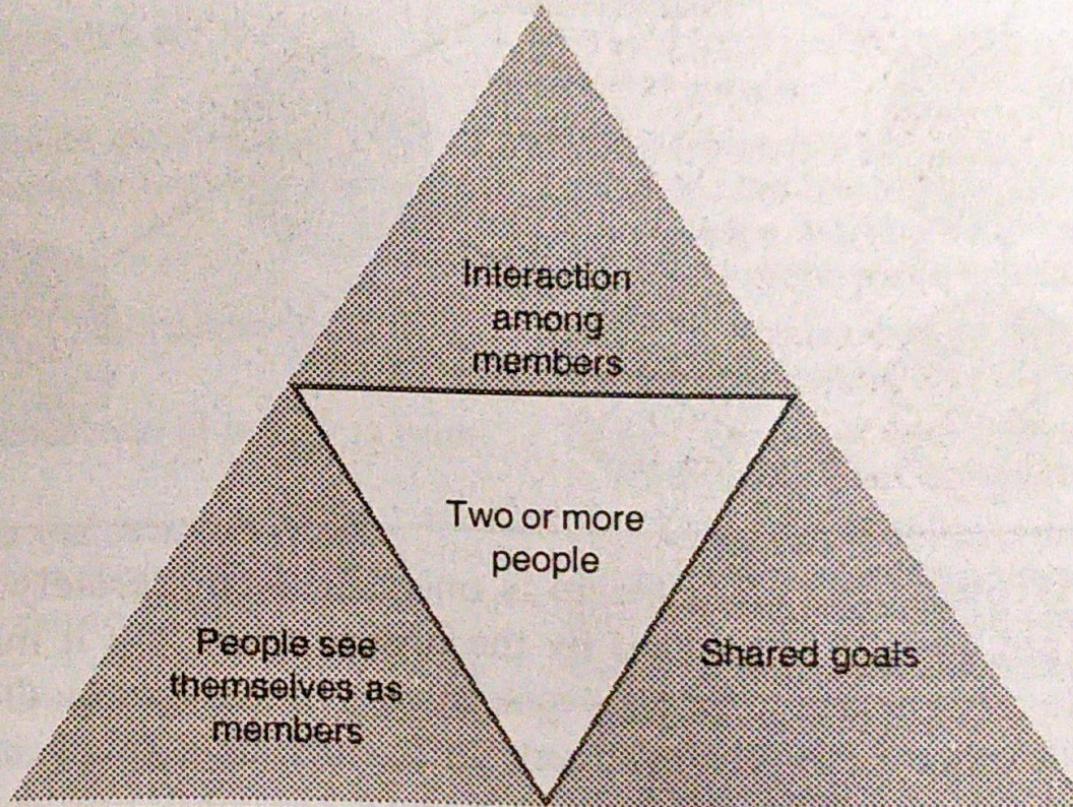
→ group def's

- coll. of two or more interacting individuals with a stable pattern of relationship b/w them who share common goals and who perceives themselves as being a group.

4 char:

- 1) Interactions among members
- 2). Common interest or goals
- 3) People see themselves as members
- 4) two or more people are needed to form groups

FIGURE 14.1
GROUP CHARACTERISTICS



* → Types of groups

~~Essay~~ Study text pdf.

→ Group Development

- Groups have life cycles like similar to people.
- They are born, grow, develop and often die.
- A group's effectiveness is influenced by its stages of dev. and how well its members have learnt to work together.

→ Stages of group development

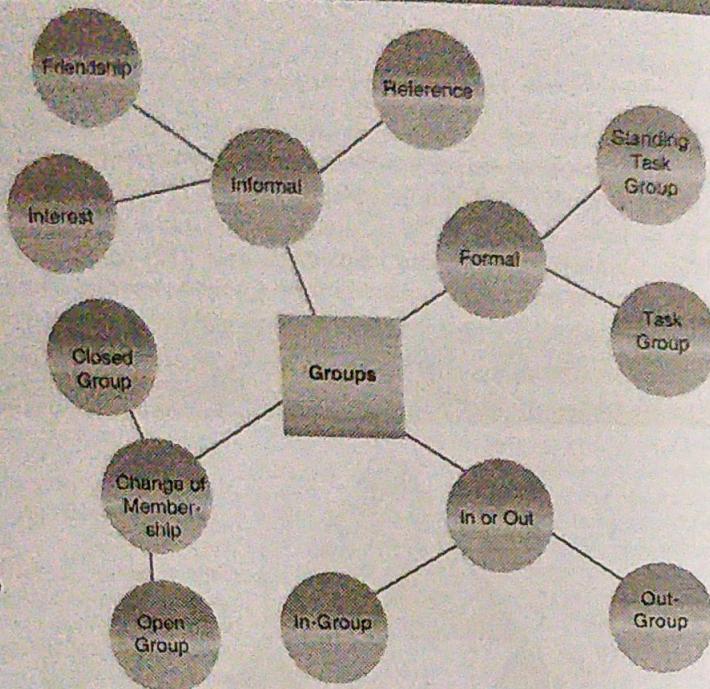
fig 14-3

Explanation - slide share ppt.

TYPES OF GROUPS

Sociologists and psychologists who study the social behaviour of people in organisations identify several different types of groups. Examples of each of these types can be found in most large organisations. (See Fig. 14.2)

**FIGURE 14.2
TYPES OF GROUPS**



Formal and Informal Groups: A *formal group* is one that is deliberately created to perform a specific task. Members are usually appointed by the organisation, but it may not always be the case. A number of people assigned to a specific task form a formal group. One example of such a group is a committee and other examples are work units, such as a small department, a research and development laboratory, a management team or a small assembly line. A distinctive feature of formal groups is that a hierarchy of authority exists, with specified member rules and regulations. Rules, regulations, incentives and sanctions guide the behaviour of small groups. Table 14.1 brings out the advantages and disadvantages of formal groups. Standing task group and task group are two variations of formal groups.

A *standing task group*, also known as command group, is permanently specified in the organisational structure and consists of a supervisor who exercises formal authority over subordinates. The foreman and his group of subordinates constitute a command group.

Key Terms: Groupthink: Members of groups tend to become so concerned about not 'rocking the boat' that they are reluctant to challenge the group's decisions. When this happens, group members tend to isolate themselves from outside information, and the process of critical thinking deteriorates. This phenomenon is called groupthink.

(Source: Jack Wood, et.al., *Organisational Behaviour*, pp.268-269).

A task group (Copy 10) is a temporary formal group that is created to solve specific problems. The group comprises employees who work together to complete a particular task or project, but who do not necessarily report to the same supervisor. The employees belong to different departments. They stay together till the task is completed and once the work is completed, the task group usually disbands and members return to their respective task groups.³

An informal group, also called a clique, is an alliance that is neither formally structured, nor organisationally determined. Informal groups are natural formations in the work environment which

Key Term: *Risky and Cautious Shifts*: A situation where groups favour riskier decisions than individuals by themselves can do. When individuals (who otherwise are less risk prone) when placed in a group setting, shift their endorsement to a riskier position. This phenomenon is called risky shift.

Co-existing is a cautious shift. This is the tendency of group to move in a more conservative direction than would individuals. In other words, this group prefers less risky decisions.

The tendency of groups to move towards extremes has been termed group polarisation.

appear in response to the need for social contact. They often develop within formal group out of certain values or concerns which some members find they share. They may also develop across or outside of formal groups. Whatever may be the way of formation, informal groups obviously do not possess formal structures. Rather, member roles are loosely defined, based on member expectations and the needs of a group at any particular moment. A member's behaviour is guided by his own internalised perception of what is appropriate and sanctioned by the bestowing or withholding of social approval.⁴

Interest group, friendship group and reference group are part of informal groups.

An interest group is made up of individuals who affiliate to achieve an objective of mutual interest that may have nothing to do with their formal task group memberships. Working mothers who lobby together to get their organisation to facilitate their multiple roles by providing day care facilities on the premises, flexitime and shared job assignments is an example.⁵

A friendship group also develops on common characteristics such as marital status, political views, college affiliations and sports. Friendship groups are important because they satisfy affiliation needs of their members. Enlightened managers maintain good relations with friendship groups because these groups have tremendous influence on their members that managers would prefer to have directed towards organisational goals.⁶

A reference group is any group with which an individual identifies for the purpose of forming opinions or making decisions. Reference groups are the bases for many interest and friendship groups, but they may also exist outside of the organisation and still influence a person's behaviour at work. Reference groups are based on such factors as race, gender, politics, religion, social class, education level, profession and the like. Reference groups provide values for individuals on which to base personal decisions and norms that justify social behaviour, both of which may or may not be congruent with organisational preferences.

Although informal groups exist to satisfy individual needs, they also provide contributions to the formal organisation. Table 14.2 contains some of the primary contributions of informal groups.

and stable

Open and Closed Groups Another basis for classifying groups is whether they are open or closed. At the one extreme is the completely *open* group, which is in a constant state of change; at the other extreme is the completely *closed* group, which is quite stable. Open groups differ from closed groups in four respects — changing membership, frame of reference, time perspective and equilibrium.⁷

With regard to *changing group membership*, in open groups, true to their nature, members keep changing — new members joining and existing ones leaving.

A good deal of time is devoted to socialising new members. A closed group maintains a relatively stable membership, with few additions and losses in members over time. Power and status relationships are usually well established and fixed.

With regard to *frame of reference*, it may be mentioned that a high rate of turnover in an open group helps it to expand its frame of reference. New members bring new perspectives to the group's activities and problems. The expanded frame of reference in an open group can enhance creativity. The stability of membership in closed groups, on the other hand, usually results in a relatively narrow frame of reference. Bereft of the challenge from new members who bring in fresh ideas, a closed group can become very unlikely to change its established perspectives.

An open group has a relatively short *time perspective*. The instability and constant change of an open group make it difficult for the group to have long time horizons. Since membership may be brief, members' perspectives for group activities are oriented towards the present or very near future. In contrast, the stable membership of a closed group enables it to maintain a much longer time horizon. Members, because of their long association with closed groups, are able to recollect the history of the group and their expectations for continued long association enable them to use long-term planning.

Equilibrium refers to the process of restoring to the state of balance and stability from imbalance and instability. Because of changing membership, an open group is easily susceptible to imbalance and instability, though closed groups are relatively free from such problems. An open group must develop method for counteracting the disequilibrium, for any disruption is detrimental to the interests of the group. One way to make an open group stable is to make members committed to group ideals. This makes changes in members less frequent. Another way is to enhance group membership. The larger the number of members, the more stable does a group emerge.

An organisation may have both open and closed groups. Many groups whose function is evaluation or review may be relatively open. For example, membership on a promotion committee is often limited to one or two years and terms are staggered so that half the members are replaced every year. Boards of directors exemplify closed groups; they have been described by critics as "self-perpetuating cliques" whose members hold sufficient votes or proxies to re-elect themselves each year. The closed nature of such groups enables them to develop historical perspective and to engage in long-term planning, often at the cost of developing new perspectives.

In-groups and Out-groups: A distinction is also made between in-groups and out-groups. The groups to which we belong are in-groups and groups to which we do not belong are out-groups, especially if we look upon them with a certain amount of antagonism. The in-group versus out-group concept is applicable to friendly rivalries between schools, clubs and associations, but is also applicable to much more hostile groups. On a small-scale, it is descriptive of violent neighbourhood gangs; on a larger-scale it is descriptive of wars between nations.

The in-group versus out-group concept is intimately linked to *ethnocentrism*, which means that one's own group is the best and the other is to be judged on its terms. Ethnocentric attitudes

are mentioned most frequently in relation to national rivalries, but ethnocentrism has many applications. One can be ethnocentric about one's community, state, social class, or even race.

WHY DO PEOPLE JOIN GROUPS?

There is no single reason why individuals join groups. Since most people belong to a number of groups, it is obvious that different groups offer different attractions and benefits to their members. The most popular reasons for joining a group is related to our needs for security, esteem, affiliation, power, identity, huddling and task functions.

Proximity, Interaction and Influence: One of the most common reasons why people join groups is because they work near each other. Informal groups seem to form among those who are in close proximity. Additionally, when people have frequent interaction or contact with one another, there is likelihood that they will form a group. Finally, if the behaviour of one individual influences that of others, they are likely to form a group.

Security: Probably, the strongest reason for group formation is the people's need for security. By joining a group, we can reduce our insecurity — we feel stronger, have fewer self-doubts and are more resistant to threats. New employees are particularly vulnerable to a sense of isolation and turn to the group for guidance and support. New or experienced, no employee likes to stay alone. We derive reassurance from interacting with others and being part of a group. This often explains the appeal of unions — if management creates an environment in which employees feel insecure, they are likely to turn to unionisation in order to reduce their feelings of insecurity.

Esteem: An individual can increase his self-esteem through group membership. First, one may gain esteem by becoming a member of a high status group. Associating with high status people is reinforcing and one who belongs to such a group is usually accorded a high status by outsiders.

Second, the close relationship an individual can develop as a group member provides opportunities for recognition and praise that are not available outside the group.

Affiliation: Another reason why people join groups is that they enjoy the regular company of other people, particularly those who possess common interests. Individuals may seek out others at work who share common hobbies or common backgrounds. Especially when people are new to an organisation, they are eager to find friends with whom they can check their perceptions of new, or uncertain environment.

Power: Membership of groups offer power to members in at least two ways. First, there are sayings such as "united we stand, divided we fall" and "there is strength in numbers". These are driving forces behind unionisation in organisations. Workers enjoy much greater power collectively than they do as individuals. Even belonging to an informal group gives the individual a sense that his or her group will not let him or her be overcome by the impersonal bureaucracy of the organisation.

Second, leadership of an informal group enables an individual to exercise power over group members, even if he or she does not enjoy a formal position of authority in the organisation.

Identity: Group membership contributes to the individual's external quest for an answer to the question. "Who am I." It is common knowledge that we try to understand ourselves through the behaviour of others towards us. If others praise us, we feel we are great, if others enjoy our jokes, we see ourselves as funny persons, and so on. Groups provide several "others" who will laugh, praise or admire us.

Huddling: One more reason why individuals want to join groups is for huddling. Because of the way bureaucracies work, individuals, particularly executives, make use of informal get-togethers called huddles. These are intimate task-oriented encounters of executives trying to get something done.

Huddling enables executives to deal with emerging matters and minimise the amount of surprise. It also serves to reduce red tapism by cutting through hierarchical channels of communication and minimising misunderstandings. Because organisational charts represent real duties, huddling can compensate for a lack of leadership by taking collective and unofficial responsibility for getting things done.

Functions of Groups: The last reason why groups are so common is that they fulfil a wide range of functions both for their members and for the larger organisation. While the former have been explained above, the task functions are listed here.

The organisational functions of groups help realise an organisation's goals. Such functions include the following:

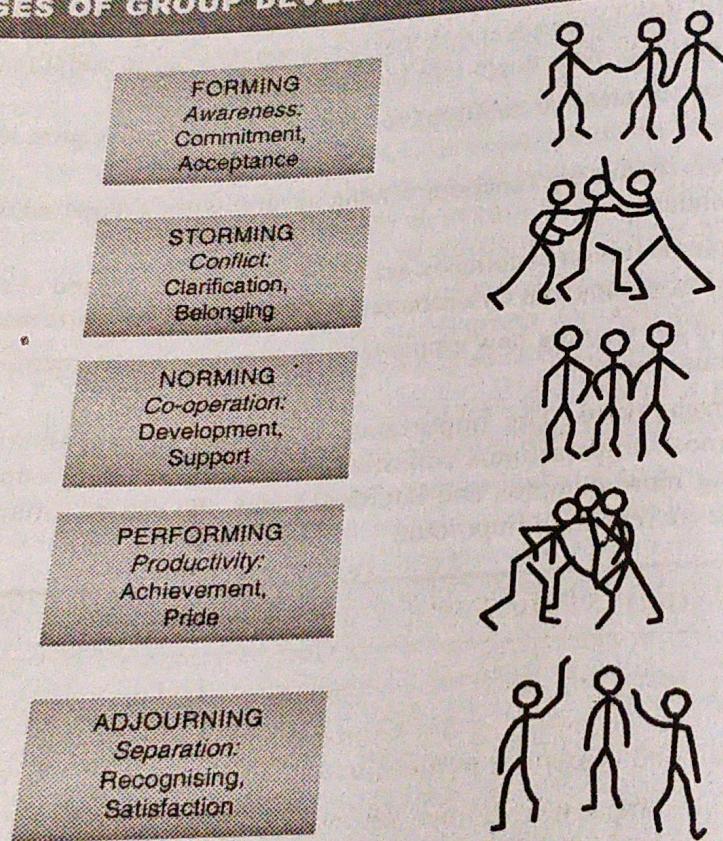
- (i) Working on a complex and independent task that is too complex for an individual to perform and that cannot be easily broken down into independent tasks.
- (ii) Generating new ideas or creative solutions to solve problems that require inputs from a number of people.
- (iii) Serving liaison or co-ordinating functions among several work groups whose work is to some extent independent.
- (iv) Facilitating the implementation of complex decisions. A group composed of representatives from various working groups can co-ordinate activities of these interrelated groups.
- (v) Serving as a vehicle for training new employees, groups teach new members methods of operations and group norms.⁹

The list is not comprehensive. The importance of groups in organisations cannot be overemphasised because most organisational activities are carried out by groups. Since jobs in organisations are becoming more complex and interdependent, the use of groups in performing task functions will become increasingly important.

GROUP DEVELOPMENT

Groups have life cycles similar to people. They are born, grow, develop and often die. A group's effectiveness is influenced by its stage of development and how well its members have learnt to work together. A group passes through five stages in its life cycle. The stages are: forming, storming, norming, performing and adjourning (See Fig. 14.3).¹⁰ It may be stated that different groups will remain at various stages of development for different lengths of time and some may remain at a given stage permanently, either by design or because the group is stalled. By being aware of a group's process, its leader can facilitate members' functioning at each stage and the transition to the next stage of development.

**FIGURE 14.3
STAGES OF GROUP DEVELOPMENT**



(Source: Curtis W. Cook and Phillip Hunsaker, *op.cit.*, p.344)

Forming: In the forming stage, there is a great deal of uncertainty about group's purpose, structure and leadership. Members are concerned about exploring friendship and task potentials. They do not have a strategy for addressing the group's task. Nor are they sure of what behaviours are acceptable as they try to determine how to satisfy needs for acceptance and personal goal satisfaction. As awareness increases, this stage of group development is completed when members accept themselves as a group and commit the group goals.

Storming: At this stage of group development, conflict arises because of the need to clarify roles and behavioural expectations. Disagreement is inevitable as members attempt to decide on task procedures, role assignments, ways of relating and power allocations. One objective at this stage is to resolve the conflict about power and task structure. Another is to work through the accompanying hostility and replace it with a sense of acceptance and belongingness that is necessary to reach to the next stage. Failure to realise these objectives results in splitting the group itself.

Norming: At this stage, a single leader emerges and this may bring about group cohesion. There is now a strong sense of group identity and comrade. New group standard roles and behaviour expectations are formed for members. Desired outcomes for this stage of group development are increased member involvement and mental support as group harmony emerges. If groups become too contended, they can get stalled at this stage because they do not want to create conflict or challenge established ways of doing things.

Performing: This stage is marked by teamwork, role clarity and task accomplishment. Group energy moves from conflict to task accomplishment. Productivity is at its peak. Desired outcomes are achievement and pride and major concerns include preventing loss of enthusiasm and sustaining momentum. Performing happens to be the last stage in permanent work groups.

At this stage of development, a group is made up of members who:

- Continue to work well together
- Understand their individual and collective responsibilities to other groups and to the larger organisation.
- Are able to adapt successfully as opportunities and demands change over time.

In effect the group has achieved maturity, as shown in Fig. 14.4. A matured group scores high on all the criteria.

Adjourning: But for temporary task forces and similar other groups, which have specific tasks to perform, adjourning happens to be the last stage. The groups disband after the task has been accomplished. Feelings about disbanding range from sadness and depression at the loss of friendship to happiness and fulfilment at task performance. The leader can facilitate positive closure at this stage by recognising and rewarding group performance. Ceremonial events bring closure to the desired emotional outcome of a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment.

There is an alternative theory of group development. According to this, group development proceeds on four stages: (1) Mutual acceptance, (2) Communication and decision making, (3) Motivation and productivity, and (4) Control and organisation.⁽¹¹⁾ (See Fig. 14.5).

In the *mutual acceptance* stage of group development, members get to know about each other by sharing information about themselves. They discuss subject, often not connected with the group, such as politics, weather, price rise, deteriorating morals, sports or recent events within the organisation. Some aspects of the group's task, such as its formal objectives, may also be discussed at this stage.

As the members get to know one another, discussion may turn to more sensitive issues, such as the organisation's politics or recent controversial decisions. In this way, the participants explore one another's reactions, knowledge and expertise. From the discussion, members may learn one another's views on a variety of issues, how similar their beliefs and values are and the extent to which they can trust one another. Eventually, the conversation will turn to the business of the group. When this discussion becomes serious, the group is moving to the next stage — communication and decision making.

Once group members have begun to accept one another, the group progresses to the *communication and decision making stage*. Here, the group members discuss their feelings and opinions more openly. They may show more tolerance for opposing view points and explore different ideas to bring them about a reasonable solution or decision. Members discuss and eventually

(Source: Jack Wood, et.al., op.cit., p. 284).

agree on the group's goals. Then they are assigned roles and tasks to accomplish the goals.

In the *motivation and productivity stage*, emphasis shifts away from personal concerns and viewpoints to activities that will benefit the group. Members co-operate and actively help others accomplish their goals. The members are highly motivated and may carry-out their activities creatively. In this stage, the group is accomplishing its work and is moving towards the final stage of development.

In the final stage, *control and organisation*, the group works effectively towards accomplishing its goals. Tasks are assigned by mutual agreement and according to ability. In a matured group, the members' activities are relatively spontaneous and flexible, rather than subject to rigid structural restraints. Matured groups evaluate their activities and potential outcomes and take corrective actions if necessary. The characteristics of flexibility, spontaneity and self-correction are essential if the group is to become productive and last long.

Not all groups go through all four stages of development. Some groups disband before reaching the final stage. Others may skip certain stage because of pressure from leaders or deadlines. Group productivity, however depends on successful development at each stage. A group that

→ Usefulness of group in org:

- Groups are highly useful for org and members.
- They can make imp. contributions to org. task accomplishment and can also exert considerable influence on individual work attitudes and behaviors

① org task accomplishment

- Many things in life are beyond the capabilities of one person.
- It takes group efforts
- eg: to build a multistory office building.
- when pb solving can be handled by a division of labours and the sharing of info., groups are typically more

Successful than individuals, Bz of their

- tendenuis to make risky decisions than individuals, groups can be more creative and innovative in their task accomplishment.

→ Social loafing (Ringlemann effect)

- named after Ringlemann, German psychologist

→ by asking people to pull as hard as many people they could in a rope, first alone then in a group.

- He found that avg productivity dropped as more people joined the rope pulling task.

- Thus the Ringlemann effect acknowledges that people may not tend not to work as hard in group as they would individually.

→ Pitfalls of groups:



The principal pitfalls identified with groups are:

- 1) Status differentials
- 2) Group norms
- 3) Sicky and Cautious Shifts
- 4) Polarisation and
- 5) Groupthink

Perhaps, the most apparent function of groups is their ability to satisfy the needs of their members. Groups provide for obvious social interactions and interpersonal fulfilments. A group can provide individual security in the form of direct work assistance and technical advice or emotional support in times of special crises or pressure. Groups also give their members a sense of identification and offer opportunities for ego involvement by assisting in-group activities.

PITFALLS OF GROUPS

The principal pitfalls identified with groups are:

- status differentials,
- group norms,
- risky and cautious shifts,
- polarisation, and
- groupthink

Status differentials: As stated earlier, groups are formed for task fulfilment. The fulfilment of purpose requires group members to interact with one another. Interaction implies exchange of emotions and stimuli. Through such exchange people become conscious of other members of the group. But status differentials hinder integration of members. High status individuals receive prominence and their views are accepted and respected, even if they are wrong. Group effectiveness is jeopardised by status differentials.

Group norms: Norms, as will be explained later, play an important role in enabling groups to function. The existence of norms can prevent embarrassment or conflict by supporting mention of undesirable subjects. Norms can be economically efficient in that they may enable the group to expedite business by rendering some decisions automatic, such as excluding certain categories of people from membership. However, norms dictate the behaviour of group members. Group norms may force members to support decisions which privately they disagree with and which are detrimental to the organisation.

Risky and Cautious Shifts: Risky shifts occur when a group makes a decision which is more risky than an individual operating alone would make.

One reason for the risky shifts is *diffusion of responsibility*. This phenomenon holds that when individuals are in groups, they may feel less personally responsible for consequences of their actions.

The tendency of groups to move in a more conservative direction than would individuals is called the cautious shift. Cautious shift may co-exist with risky shift. For example, certain items under review might be interpreted in a cautious direction after the discussion, whereas other items are biased towards risk.

The tendency of groups to move towards extremes has been termed *group polarisation*. At least two reasons support polarisation. First, the pre-meeting inclinations of the group members encourage a certain bias during discussions that leads the group to explore and endorse arguments and information that support the members' initial positions. Throughout discussions, the group members will voice, and thereby encourage, additional rationales for being either conservative or risky, depending on their original bias.

Second, polarisation occurs because of the tendency of groups to make decisions that endorse dominant cultural values. The content of the decision then becomes an important issue in predicting whether a cautious or risky shift will occur.^{13(a)}

Key Term: Diffusion of Responsibility: Tendency of group members to feel less personally responsible for consequences of their actions.

Groupthink: Groupthink refers to the tendency of members in a highly cohesive group to lose their critical, evaluative capabilities. Group cohesiveness demands conformity and the members of the cohesive group are unwilling to criticise one another's ideas and suggestions. Desires to hold the group together and to avoid unpleasant disagreements lead to an overemphasis on concurrence and an underemphasis on realistically appraising alternative courses of action.

Leaders who are intolerant of criticism encourage groupthink. Implicit faith in group morality may lead to groupthink. Members believe that group is always right and beyond reproach. Conformity also arises when members are unwilling to communicate personal concerns or alternative points of view to the group as a whole. Finally, groupthink arises because of **mind guarding**. Mind guarding occurs when members of the group keep outsiders away and try to protect the group from hearing disturbing ideas or view points.

Social psychologist Irving Janis is the author behind the concept of groupthink. He also suggests ten guidelines to deal with groupthink. They are:

- Assign the role of critical evaluator to each group member, encourage a sharing of objections.
- Have the leader avoid seeming partial to one course of action.
- Create subgroups operating under different leaders and working on the same problem.
- Have group members discuss issues with subordinates and report back on their reactions.

Invite outside experts to observe group activities and to react to group processes and decisions.

Assign one member of the group to play 'devil's advocate' role at each meeting.

Write alternative scenarios for the intentions of competing groups.

Hold 'second-chance' meetings after consensus is apparently achieved on key issues.

The final component of group structuring relates to decision making. Decision making will be examined in greater detail in Chapter 23. Here, we propose to focus on the problems and benefits of group decisions.

Group or organisational decision making is more difficult than individual decision making for the simple reason of the number of people involved in the process.

APPROACHES TO GROUP DECISION MAKING

There are several approaches to group decision making. A few major approaches are explained here.

Autocratic decision making. Here, the leader makes a decision by himself or herself or independently. This approach is fast and often effective, particularly when the leader is competent person. The method is highly useful in times of crisis.

Expert member soliciting. In this method, advice of an individual who is expert in the concerned area, is obtained and decision is then made. Where the persons involved in decision making do not possess adequate knowledge about the subject, this method is appropriate.

Consultative decision making. This approach involves obtaining inputs from those responsible for and affected by the decision and then making a decision independently. To the extent that the decision makers obtain inputs from others, this approach is an improvement.

Minority control. This approach involves allowing a small number of people in the group to make a decision. This method is desirable when there is a crisis demanding immediate action and when only a small number of members have the requisite knowledge about the matter.

Majority control. Where majority of members involve themselves in decision making, the method is called majority control method. This method has an advantage inasmuch as it allows a large number of members to involve themselves in decision making.

Consensus. This approach involves finding a proposal acceptable to all members. This is a 'win-win' situation. This approach has an advantage in the sense that all the group members are committed to the decision. But the problem with the approach is its procrastination.