
UNIT 2 GROUP DYNAMICS

Structure

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2.0 INTRODUCTION

Group dynamics is the scientific approach to the understanding of the dynamics of group. It implies an interactive psychological relationship in which members of a group develop a common perception based on feelings and emotions. Group dynamics refer to the changes that take place within the group. It also refers to forces operating within the groups. Group dynamics is related to the field theory of Lewin which assumes man's behaviour to be a function of the field existing at the time of the occurrence of behaviour. We can further say that it is the study of group processes, their objective analysis and measurement and the effect of group membership on individual members.

Our behaviour is not static. It means that the change of behaviour is through interaction in the group. According to Segal, group dynamics is a process by which one considers other individuals and a problem in a group at the same time. It not only tends to increase understanding of the problem, but also creates a solution which the individual practices in bringing about emotional balance. We can also say that group dynamics is influenced by sympathy, suggestion and imitation. Sympathy enables the members of a group to perceive the psychological state of the other members. Suggestion plays a big role in influencing group behaviour. The suggestions put forward by leader of a group are implemented by the members of the group.

2.1 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you, will be able to:

- 1 explain about the group interaction process;

- 1 define about the meaning of group dynamics;
- 1 elucidate the concept of group dynamics;
- 1 express the importance of group dynamics process; and
- 1 find out the group dynamics vis-à-vis different processes and patterns.

2.2 GROUP DYNAMIC: DEFINITION

A group includes only persons who share some norms and values about something. We can say that group contains people with interrelated social roles. An aggregate of people may form themselves into a group as a result of interaction. Thus, we can say that groups are the products of interaction. Group interaction is a two way process whereby each individual or group stimulates the other and also in varying degrees that modify the behaviour of the participants. The behaviour and personality characteristics of individual members of a group affect the behaviour of others and make a significant impact over the functioning of a group as a whole.

In this context we can consider two types of groups, viz., formal and informal groups. Formal groups are formed on the basis of specific norms, values etc. School is an example of formal group. On the other hand, play group, peer group and social clubs are examples of informal groups. In informal groups, rules are usually flexible. An individual may belong to many groups. The behaviour of an individual is different from the group behaviour. In the group a person has to act according to the norms of the group and generally, a few individuals may guide the behaviour of the group.

In this context, we can say that group interaction is a two-way process whereby each individual or group stimulates the behaviour of the participants. We can further say that the behaviour and personality characteristics of individual members of a group affect the behaviour of others and ultimately it makes a significant impact over the functioning of a group as a whole. As for example, we can say that the school is a social institution set up by the society to serve its ends. School is primarily a social institution. Group activities should be encouraged to provide opportunities to the students to participate in the affairs of the group.

One of the important functions of the school is social interaction. Not only are the teachers and pupils continually interacting in the class-room system, but the pupils are also interacting among themselves through special pre determined code or signs or looks, and there are many common stereotypes and values that they share with each other. Like any other social system, the class-room group shows a variety of interactions continuously. Formal structure is not only factor in group functioning. Within this formal structure, there is informal relationship. Communication within the group may flow more through informal channels than through formal ones. The informal sub-groups are typically more homogenous than the classroom group. Not only this, peer group pressures exert a powerful impact in many cases.

2.2.1 Meaning, Concept and Importance of Group Dynamics

In 1944, Kurt Lewin, set up the Research Centre for Group Dynamics to meet the need of a scientific approach to the understanding of the dynamics of group.

Group dynamics can be defined as a field of enquiry dedicated to the advancing knowledge about the nature of groups, the laws of their development and their interrelations with individuals, other groups and larger institutions. Actually, it implies that the interactive psychological relationship in which members of a group develop a common perception based on feelings and emotions. It is not easy to define the important area of group dynamics. We can say that it represents a field of enquiry, a series of inter-related problems, a set of techniques and interaction process.

Group dynamics consists of two words – (i) group and (ii) dynamics. A group is a unit of two or more individuals who share a set of beliefs and values. The members of the group share a common purpose, task or goals. The relations among the members are interdependent. Not only this, there is a feeling of belongingness or we feeling among the members of the group. The members of the group generally prescribe a set of norms of behaviour for themselves. The members want to attain the goal effectively. The structure is hierarchical where the functions and powers are distributed.

On the other hand, the word dynamics means force. Group dynamics refers to forces operating with in the groups. Group dynamics is related to field theory of Lewin, which assumes man's behaviour to be a function of the field existing at the time of the occurrence of behaviour. We can also say that the group dynamics is the study of group processes, their objective analysis and measurement and the effect of group membership on individual members. When a group of people is formed with a common goal, a kind of social force is created. Our behaviour is not static. Thus, group dynamics means the change of behaviour through interaction in the group.

Concept of group dynamics

The social psychologists seek to explain group behaviour on the basis of social interaction and cultural transmission through social interaction. The interactive psychological relationship is termed as “group dynamics”. The important two variables we can say in this context are “group cohesiveness” and “group locomotion”. Cohesiveness plays a vital role in determining the influence of the group on the members. On the other hand, locomotion indicates the movement towards the desired goal. Personality of the individual and character of the social situation both takes an important role for group dynamics. All the psychological effects take place within the individual members who compose the group. According to Cartwright and Zander (1968), the basic assumptions are:

- i) the groups are inevitable (even the hermits / Sanyasis and the Hippies),
- ii) that groups mobilise powerful forces that produce effects of utmost importance to individuals,
- iii) that groups can produce constructive as well as destructive consequences and
- iv) that it is the correct understanding of group dynamics based on empirical studies that helps in enhancing the constructive aspects of group life and group achievements.

It can also be said that group cohesiveness indicates the degree to which the members stick together so that there is unity in the group. Actually the basis of attraction to the group may lie in the interaction itself because of the mutual

satisfaction of needs. The group may be teen-age group or a political group or a religious group. Three important things one can consider for group cohesiveness, i.e., task direction, personal attraction and group prestige. The strength of the cohesiveness may vary on the basis of the situation. Thus, when we study the group as a whole we are aware of studying changes which occur in the behaviour of the individuals and how these changes are transmitted to all the individuals to the total field, so that the behaviour of the group is altered. On the other hand, when the group itself shows a readiness to change by active participation then actual social change becomes possible. The change will occur when the group actually takes the decision to change. Thus the concept of group dynamics is helpful in understanding social changes which involve not only the introduction of an innovation, but also in overcoming of resistance.

Group dynamics is also influenced by sympathy, suggestion and imitation. Sympathy enables the members of a group to perceive the psychological state of the other members. Actually the members begin to feel as others feel. On the other hand, suggestion plays a big role in influencing the group behaviour. The suggestions put forward by the leader of the group are readily accepted. The behaviour of the leader of the group is initiated by the members of the group. Besides this, some specific group techniques which could be utilised for improvement of the group process, viz., buzz sessions, role playing, brain storming and recreational experiences.

In buzz sessions, in which five or six members participate and is organised for purposes of stimulating discussion. In role playing, problems are handling in such a manner so that it comes for the benefit of the group. Brain storming in which group is organised for stimulating discussion. Recreational experiences where opportunities are provided to the group members to participate in group discussion.

Self Assessment Questions

1) What do you mean by Group dynamics?

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2) According to Cartwright and Zander (1968) what are the basic assumptions of group dynamics?

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3) Group dynamics is influenced by (i).....,(ii).....and (iii).....

Importance of group dynamics

The importances of group dynamics are given below:

- i) It is essential for effective practice with any type of task.
- ii) It promotes out the unproductive meetings.
- iii) Individual members or group as a whole benefit in a number of ways.
- iv) Underlying group dynamic is the multicultural diversification of the society.
- v) The future functioning of the group is influence by group dynamic.
- vi) Facilitates the participation of the members.
- vii) Helps to achieve the goals of the group in connection with the participation and satisfaction of the group.
- viii) It increases the interpersonal attraction.
- ix) It increases the communication processes and interaction patterns.
- x) It increases the power and control of the group.
- xi) It creates impact on racial, ethnic and cultural background.

2.2.2 Role of Communication in Group Dynamics

Communication involves the transmission of a message from a sender to a receiver. According to Toseland and Rivas (2001) communication includes:

- i) encoding of perception, thoughts and feelings into language and other symbols by a sender;
- ii) transmission of language and symbols verbally, non-verbally or virtually; and
- iii) decoding of the message by the receiver.

Face-to-face group members experience both verbal and non-verbal communication, whereas members of telephone groups experience only verbal communication and members of computer groups experience only virtual communication. Interaction patterns are also fundamental to group dynamics. According to David (1980) some of the significant points in this regard include:

- i) Leader is the central figure, and communication occurs from member to leader and leader to member.
- ii) Group members take turns talking.
- iii) Indication of extension between leader and the member.
- iv) All members freely communicate.
- v) Interaction pattern focuses on the degree of centralisation of communication.
- vi) Group-centered interaction pattern is more valued than leader-centered interaction pattern.
- vii) Indication of full participation among the members.

- viii) The status and power relationship within the group affect the interaction pattern.
- ix) Interpersonal attraction and the emotional bonds that form between members influence the interaction pattern.
- x) Size of the group affect the interaction pattern. In general, there is more chance to communicate if the group size is small.
- xi) Selective attention, clues and reinforcement may take important role to change the interaction patterns.
- xii) If members do not interact with equal valence, there seems to be indication of sub-group formation.
- xiii) Interpersonal attraction, emotional bonds and interest may create impact on the group members.
- ix) Physical arrangement in some situation may affect interaction patterns.

Thus, we can say the communication processes and interaction patterns are important factors for group dynamics.

2.2.3 Interpersonal Attraction and Cohesion in Group Dynamics

We can say that sub-group formation depends on interpersonal attraction among the group members and the level of cohesion depends on this. There are some important features that can be mentioned here:

- i) Proximity increases interaction among people and ultimately it increases attraction.
- ii) Similarity tend to make people attract toward each other.
- iii) The important contributing factors are acceptance and approval.
- iv) Members are attracted to those who engage in group interactions that meet their expectations.
- v) Interpersonal attraction is just one of the building blocks of group cohesion.
- vi) Compatibility tends to promote interpersonal attraction.
- vii) Group cohesion is the sum of all the forces that are exerted on members to remain in a group.
- viii) Cohesion means satisfaction of group members' need for affiliation, recognition and security.
- ix) Participation of the group members increases the prestige and resources.
- x) Cohesion reveals the positive relationship among the group members.
- xi) Cohesion can lead to a level of conformity that detracts from the work of the group.

According to Toseland and Rivas (2001) high levels of cohesion have been associated with beneficial group member behaviours. These include the following:

- i) greater perseverance towards group goals;
- ii) willingness to take responsibilities for group functioning;
- iii) willingness to express feelings;
- iv) willingness to listen; and
- v) ability to use feedback and evaluations.

High levels of group cohesion are generally associated with positive outcomes. We can also say in this regard that

- 1 Great satisfaction with the group experience,
- 1 Higher levels of goal attainment by group members and group members and group as a whole,
- 1 Great commitment by group members,
- 1 Increased feelings of self-confidence, self-esteem and personal adjustment, amongst members of the group.

Sometimes it happens that high levels of cohesion may lead to dependence on the group. Some members remain silent. In this context we can say that there is a relationship between group dynamics and interpersonal attraction as well as cohesion.

Self Assessment Questions

- 1) Write five importances of group dynamics.

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- 2) Write two features of group dynamics.

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2.2.4 Group Dynamics and Social Integration

Social integration means how group members fit together and are accepted in the group. In each and every group there are norms, roles and status. These are the group dynamics that promote social integration by influencing how members behave. The norm, status and roles help the groups to avoid conflict and unpredictability

which may create chaos. It is true that group can not function effectively without a fairly high level of social integration among group members. Social integration helps to build unanimity about the purposes and goals of the group.

Deutsch and Gerard (1955) postulated two forms of social influence: normative influence and informational influence. Normative influence is the desire to meet other people's expectations and to be accepted by others. Informational influence is accepting and being persuaded by information provided by others. It is undoubtedly true that certain amount of predictability, conformity and compliance is necessary for the group members to work together to achieve the goals of the group. Actually norms develop slowly in the group, as members experience what is valued and what is preferred behaviour through group interaction.

On the other hand, roles are shared expectations about the functioning of individual members of the group. Members may take different roles. Besides this, status refers to the ranking of importance of members of the group relative to each other. Status is determined by the prestige, power, position and expertise. Because a group member's status is measured in relationship to other members, it may change when other members join or leave the group. Status is also determined by the situation. Status hierarchies have a good deal of influence on social integration within groups. Thus, norms, roles and status are important components of the social influence that groups have on members.

2.3 CULTURE AND GROUP

Culture as is well known is a combination of values, beliefs and traditions of the society. Every individual born in that culture and it influence his overall personality. Values, beliefs, customs, traditions etc. are important factors for culture and these are shared by group members. When group members meet, they explore their value system and interpersonal styles, searching for a common ground on which to relate to each other. The culture of a group is determined by the communality and also the larger society. The system depends on the nature and extent of their interaction with the group. Multicultural differences are salient interpersonal factors that have significance for the group culture. Group processes have reflected the European and American values of individualism, independence, competitiveness and achievement. Besides this, cultural experiences of group survival, social hierarchy, inclusiveness and also ethnic identification influence the way members interact with one another in the group. Member's expectations and goals in a multicultural group vary widely. They significantly influence the dynamics of the group (Hopps and Pinderhughes, 1991; Matsukawa, 2001). According to Davis et al (1995), the group leader should be sensitive to racial /ethnic and socio-economic differences, should understand the effect of these differences on group dynamics and should translate this knowledge into culturally sensitive modes of program development and service delivery. Many factors affect group development. Structural characteristic is one of the important impacts on development.

2.4 MEASUREMENT OF GROUP DYNAMICS

Measurement of group dynamics is essential to understand the behaviour of a group as a whole as well as individuals who make up the group. There are many scales to measure group dynamics, viz., Group Climate Questionnaire (Mackenzie, 1983), Group Cohesiveness Scale (Budman, 1993), Group Work Engagement

Measure (Macgowan, 2000) and Group Member Interpersonal Process Scale (Soldz, 1993). Task groups, such as committees, teams, board of directors are not merely collections of individuals. The synergy that is created when people come together to work in these groups transcends the collection of individual efforts. We have to pay attention to group dynamics because group dynamics facilitate member participation and satisfaction to achieve the group goal.

2.5 GROUP DEVELOPMENT

As groups develop over time, group dynamic processes evolve. In this context, we can mention a well-known model by Tuckman (1963), which is known as stage model (as mentioned in unit 1). The stages are:

- i) forming,
- ii) storming,
- iii) norming and
- iv) performing.

There is also the widely used model by Garland, Jones and Kolody (1976) Here the five significant stages are:

- i) Pre-affiliation: Should be affected to the group.
- ii) Power and control: Should be able to have some influences over the other members.
- iii) Intimacy: There must be certain closeness and intimacy.
- iv) Differentiation: The group members should be able to differentiate their personal goals from group goals
- vi) Separation: This refers to each influence having a separate identity despite being part of the group.

Beginning stages of group development are characterised by the formation of group dynamics. Members interact tentatively, establishing norms, roles and status hierarchies and ultimately a group culture slowly emerges through interaction. At first, interaction is tentative and cautious and there exists little conflict. After that members become more comfortable resistance can develop. After that members want to become a part of the group but at the same time group members maintain their own identity and independence. Many factors affect group development. Structural characteristics have an important impact on group development.

2.6 LET US SUM UP

Like individuals, groups are also entities that pose characteristics and properties which can be observed, measured, classified and predicted. There are certain conditions which predetermine certain kinds of behaviour on the part of members of the group and the group as a whole. The term “group processes” is sometimes applied to the formulations or explanations of such tendencies. “Group dynamics” is a term introduced by Kurt Lewin. Both “group processes” and “group dynamics” carry the implication that groups are to be considered as entities characterised by

change and on-going activity. Groups may be formed in different ways. Once groups have been formed, they tend to take on certain characteristics. They are likely to develop a structure, whereby members have positions that stand in relationship to one another. Reciprocal role patterns, positions, expectations and certain predetermined attitudes and percepts constitute the structure that gives groups a degree of stability and predictability. The willingness of people to join, remain with, or leave a group may be explained in terms of the rewards they receive and the costs that they incur.

Existence of any group depends on the participation and satisfaction of the individuals comprising the group. Social approval as far as the individual is concerned is expressed in terms of his being accepted by other members. As far as the group is concerned, it is expressed in terms of the individual's conformity to its norms. The group's willingness to accept is thus exchanged for the member's willingness to conform. It is fundamental to group life. This type of exchange is so fundamental in group life that it is difficult to imagine ourselves particularly in any other way. There is an intimate relationship between group acceptance and individual conformity. Group may be formed voluntarily and spontaneously because of a felt need to socialise or to accomplish some practical aim or they may be converted by external authority. The attractiveness of group that develops for its members is termed as its cohesiveness. Compatibility generally facilitates cohesiveness but cohesiveness and compatibility are not necessarily conducive to group effectiveness in some kinds of tasks. Generally, group cohesiveness depends on the extent to which members recognise and adhere to its norms. Small, intimate, face-to-face groups are the ones that demand and receive the highest degree of personal involvement. Group may be inclusive or exclusive depending on their functions and goals. In traditional societies exclusiveness is more likely to be based on social status than in more equalitarian societies. Our behaviour is not static. Interaction is an important part in this regard. Group dynamics is essential for effective practice with any type of task or treatment group.

Group dynamics mainly depends on:

- i) communication process and interaction patterns;
- ii) interpersonal attraction and cohesion;
- iii) social integration and influence;
- iv) power control and
- v) culture.

Although an understanding of group dynamics is essential for effective practice with individuals and communities, it is our belief that focused attention to the dynamic processes that occur in groups is what distinguishes group work from other forms of social work practice. We can say that culture, ethnicity and race affect the dynamic processes that develop and evolve in groups.

2.7 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) What do you mean by the term “group dynamics”?
- 2) Write in brief about the importance of group dynamics.

- 3) What is group development?
- 4) Is there any relationship between interpersonal attraction and cohesion with group dynamics? – Discuss.
- 5) Write in brief about culture and group.

2.8 GLOSSARY

Attitude	: An enduring system of evaluations or feelings in favour of or against a person or group.
Belief	: Acceptance of a statement about an object, event, person or group.
Cognition	: Sensation, perception, thoughts, ideas and such processes.
Cohesiveness	: The social force which keeps the group together. It is the product of attractiveness of the interaction with group members.
Communication	: The exchange of meaning and mutual influence.
Cooperation	: It arises when groups work together in the pursuit of common interest.
Culture	: The pattern of all arrangements, material or behavioural, which have been adopted by a society.
Dependence	: The condition in which a person or a group relies on another for its need satisfaction and outcomes.
Group	: A collection of individuals who are in interdependent relationship with one another sharing common norms of behaviour and attitude.
Group dynamics	: The way in which changes which take place in the behaviour of some members of the group lead to changes in behaviour of other members of the group. This is why groups can mobilise powerful force which may be constructive or destructive.
Group structure	: The differentiation of roles and status relations within a group.
Informal group	: A group that is not organised.
Power	: Ability of an individual or a group to control the process of decision making even against resistance.
Social change	: Alteration in the structure of a society.
Social cohesion	: Degree to which group members share common beliefs, practices and values.
Social control	: Application of positive and negative sanctions (rewards

and punishments) by a group to encourage its members to abide by the group norms, perform the required roles.

Social facilitation : The process by which a person works faster and turns out more when he is working with others than when he is working alone.

Social movements : Collective activity aimed at correcting some perceived inadequacy in the existing social arrangements.

Society : The most complex type of human group composed of many subgroups.

2.9 SUGGESTED READINGS

Baron, R.A. and Byrne, D.(2000). *Social Psychology*, 8th Edition, Prentice Hall of India Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi.

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