

LESSON 13

GROUP AND LEADERSHIP

SUMMARY

We use the word 'group' in various contexts such as games, political party, team for performing a task, committee members to decide about a programme, membership of an academic body or membership of the underprivileged group. We are born as an individual and we become members of various groups in the course of socialization.

Importance of group in our life

Groups are the basic components of society. The moment we are born into this world we immediately become a part of a group - our family. Groups like family fulfil certain essential needs and helps us to survive in the social world. It also helps to transmit culture of one's society by the process of socialization. Groups teach us thoughts and behaviours, rules and regulations.

Group life allows us to fulfil social and emotional needs. These include recognition, affiliation, security, prestige, identity, sense of belongingness, and status. Groups allow us to meet our task related need such as goal achievement. Indeed, groups are central to human life.

Characteristics of a group

A group is collection of individuals who work together so as to contribute towards a common aim or goal under the direction of a leader. The characteristics of a group are as follows:

- Members define themselves as group members and have a strong 'we feeling' a psychological feeling of belonging to each other.
- Group members are engaged in frequent interaction and they affect the behaviour of each other.
- Further, group members share common norms and mutual interests and values. They depend upon each other and rely for fulfilment of their needs and the survival of the group.
- Members of a group are aware of rules and regulations that are to be followed, as it helps maintain order and discipline.
- Groups vary in size. They can be large or small.

Group Dynamics

The process of influencing each other's behaviour pattern in a group is called **Group dynamics**. It is affected by factors of individual personality, social situation and cultural traditions.

Cohesiveness - it refers to the shared perspective which binds the members of a group or community.

Conformity – is getting affected by how the behaviours of others change our own behaviour by changing our beliefs. It is of two types-

Compliance - Sometimes we conform to others without believing it. This type of **outward conformity** is called compliance. If our compliance is to an explicit command or acting in accordance with a direction - it is called obedience.

Acceptance - The sincere **inward conformity** is a process when we are genuinely convinced and it is called acceptance.

Difference between “Us” and “Them”

There is a natural tendency of humans to form groups based on common identity. We use our identity with our groups, often called **in-group**, to evaluate others, termed as **out-group**, even when it leads to forming incorrect conclusions. We tend to evaluate the out-groups as being more similar to each other than the in-group.

This type of **social categorization** becomes associated with stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination. When we link negative attitudes toward other groups and differentiate between ‘us’ and ‘them’ we start creating a

boundary that separates the groups. This labelling makes the ‘them’ group to be less human. Violent and evil acts are common against those whom we have a prejudice.

We tend to categorize people on the basis of shared characteristics. We automatically categorize people on the basis of sex, age, and religion. This categorization is done because it is a quick and easy way of dealing with people. It has an adaptive function. Responding to every person as an individual would create an overload on the perceiver’s cognitive assessment of the person. However, if we have enough time and information then we tend to make a more accurate perception of the person or group.

Group’s Effect on Performance

The effect of a group on performance can be positive or negative.

Social Facilitation - improvement in an individual’s performance of a task that often occurs when others are present. This effect tends to occur with tasks that are uncomplicated or have been previously mastered through practice.

Social loafing - is the tendency of people in a group to exert less effort towards a common goal.

Group Size - The bigger the group size the more its members lose self-awareness and in an aroused state are more likely to commit

mob atrocities of looting, burning or lynching.

Group Polarization - the tendency for members of a group discussing an issue to move toward a more extreme version of the positions they held before the discussion began. As a result, the group as a whole tends to respond in more extreme ways than one would expect given the sentiments of the individual members prior to deliberation.

Group Think - refers to group-induced distortions that do not allow objective considerations of all the possible alternatives. It takes place when a cohesive group remains isolated from dissenting viewpoints.

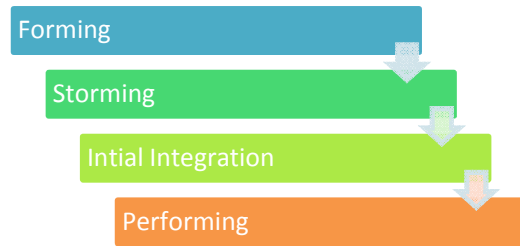
Formal and Informal groups

Groups that are established for a specific purpose are called **formal groups**. This type of group is usually formed to meet clearly defined goals.

Informal groups on the other hand form naturally out of interaction among individual's overtime. Informal groups may emerge out of formal groups with members having similar ideas, values, belief and social needs.

Group development

Groups progress through the following stages:



Forming stage - In the first stage the group defines its behaviour for the members and finalise the goals of the group.

Storming stage - In this stage members feel comfortable to express their feelings. Differences in attitudes and needs are widely noticed during this stage.

Initial Integration stage - The members in this stage develop an initial sense of closeness and belonging. By this stage the rules are finalised through which group members will operate.

Performing Stage - In this stage the group starts functioning as an effective unit. The roles of members are decided and the leadership issues are settled by now. The group starts pursuing its goals.

Leadership

Leadership is defined as ability to influence others to achieve certain goals. A good leader can significantly influence the behaviour, attitude and performance of the followers.

Qualities of a leader

Initiative and dominance are important in the leadership process. Leaders are heard and

accepted by a sizeable number of the people. Successful leadership in a particular field and leadership of the mass social spectrum are different. The main psychological attributes of a leader are as follows:

Attributes of a leader	leaders are aware of the abilities of their followers
	leaders have good communication skills, both verbal and non-verbal
	leaders accept personal responsibilities and set examples for group members.
	leaders have ability to understand the situation
	leaders are good planners, visionary and trustworthy

Theories of Leadership

Trait approach - This approach attempts to tell which personal characteristics lead to effective leadership. Following are major traits of leaders - belief in oneself (self-confidence), along with openness to the ideas of others, a passion for the job and a drive that set an example for others, love of people, acceptance of others, maturity and responsibility and desire to achieve goals.

Behavioural Approach - Successful leaders exhibit two types of behaviours - task centred (relate to the quality and the quantity of work.) and employee-centred (meeting the personal needs of the group members).

Situational Approach - The effectiveness of a particular style of leadership behaviour depends on

the situation. As situation changes different leadership styles become appropriate.

Path goal Approach - leader behaviour is acceptable when followers view it as a source of satisfaction or showing the way to future satisfaction. Four styles of leadership identified by path-goal theory are -

Directive style	It provides guidance to followers about what should be done and how to do it.
Supportive style	It is concerned with establishing interpersonal relations with the followers.
Participative style	It believes that follower participation improves the quality of decisions.
Achievement oriented style	It sets challenging goals for the followers. Minimal supervision is required with this style of leadership.

Charismatic Leadership - This kind of leadership focuses on the interpersonal transaction between leaders and followers. Leaders are engaged in behaviours that maintain a quality interaction between themselves and followers. The main characteristics of charismatic leaders are as follows:

Charismatic leadership	They offer an unusual or far-out vision of reality.
	They make sacrifices or take risks to further their vision.
	They use unconventional methods to achieve their goals.
	They communicate with confidence.

Charismatic leadership transforms followers by creating changes in their goals, values, needs, belief

and aspirations. They accomplish this transformation by appealing to followers' selves.

Evaluate yourself

1. Mention any four characteristics of a group.
2. Describe different theories of leadership.
3. What are the steps in group formation?