

## 22

# GROUP PROCESSES

### 22.1 Introduction

Human beings are said to be social animals. We are born and remain dependent upon other human beings for satisfaction of various needs throughout our lives. We spent most of our time interacting with people. A child is born in a family, goes to the school, makes friends. An adult works in an organisation, looks after the needs of family members and indulges in various kinds of activities in relation to the other person (s). His interaction with different types of people is to a large extent determined by the type of people and the context in which the interaction takes place. In this lesson you will be learning about the group, how these groups are formed, the processes involved in group formation and advantages and disadvantages of being a member of a group.

### 22.2 Objectives

After reading this lesson you should be able to :

- Define a group and the ways of group formation;
- Reason out the advantages of groups in accomplishing tasks;
- Describe some of the influences of group on individual behaviours.

### 22.3 The Nature of Group

When two or more persons interact, we say that a group has come into existence. The reasons for interaction between people and forming social relationships are many. For example, students might interact to collaborate on their studies outside the classroom. Others might interact as

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they live at one place and have some common goal. They may want to play together, need companionship, etc. Some people might meet by chance but continue to interact because they find each other's company rewarding. Thus it is clear that each group has a goal. The more explicit a goal is, there would be more interaction and co-operation among the members of the group.

At the physical or concrete level any collectivity with a purpose can be called a group. A class of fifth grade is a group, a committee of bank officials is a group, two carpenters manning a saw to cut a large piece of timber form a group, a team playing football is a group, and so on. All these groups exist at the physical level and have direct or face to face interaction. Such groups are called *primary groups*.

In these primary groups direct and immediate communication between the members of the group is possible and usually takes place.

Persons possessing certain common characteristics, too, are conceived to form a group. For example, all Sikh students in a class may be conceived to form a group, all left-handed students in the small class form another set; all elements in the set possess at least one common characteristic, which non-members may lack. There need not be any face-to-face communication between the members in such sets. One member may not necessarily know another member.

A group is a sub-population within a larger population with which individual persons may be identified as included in it and belonging to it.

The most important characteristic of a group is interdependence. It may be related to behaviours, task and outcome. Let us examine these type of interdependencies.

The interdependence of behaviour refers to the fact that the behaviour of one member gives rise to another member's behaviour and which in turn forces the entire group to perform certain things. For example, an intelligent child may motivate others in the class to study and subsequently help them in their studies.

The interdependence of outcome refers to the fact that each member's outcome (received reward) is not the result of his/her behaviour alone but is also dependent upon the behaviour of other group members. For example, while walking on a road, you are safe till someone does not hit you from the back or the front side. It also implies shared fate-that is, the outcome of an event has more or less equal implications for the welfare of every member of the group.

Task interdependence refers to the fact that to achieve a goal, group members need to coordinate their activities. For example, in playing

football or cricket, coordination of activities of different players is essential for winning the game.

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### Intext Questions 22.1

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1. Define a group ?
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## 22.4 The Nature of Group Processes

After knowing the nature of group, you may be interested in knowing why do people join groups, how groups are formed, and what are the experiences of joining a group. Let us examine these questions.

### Reasons for joining the group

People join a group primarily for the reason that it enables them to receive certain benefits or need satisfaction. For example, a football player would like to be member of the football team as it would enable him to play football. A group can be helpful to the individual in several ways :

First, people join a group because they feel that some members of the group may be *beneficial* to him. For example, you join a group because your friend or teacher is a member of the group.

Second, you join a group because you feel that the group members have *resources* (economic or otherwise) which can at times be helpful to you.

Third, people often join a group to *share the responsibilities* inherent in accomplishing a task.

Some members in a group are more dominating type, active and become prominent by their activities; while the remaining are submissive and passive. While all groups do have goals some members show agreement with the goals of the group, others show rebelliousness and demand for redefining the group goals.

People join groups because

- ★ groups are beneficial for them.
- ★ group members have resources.
- ★ responsibilities can be shared.

### Outcomes of Group Experiences

A number of outcomes occur when people come together over a period of time. For example, being a member of a group provides satisfaction to the group member. We all feel proud of being an Indian, or studying in a

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particular school, or working with a particular organisation. Thus sense of satisfaction leads to *cohesiveness* in the group.

A cohesive group has a higher level of solidarity. There are forces that act on the member to remain in the group.

Cohesiveness refers to the belief of the individuals that being a member of a particular group would be rewarding. For instance, students join the company of those students who are good in studies thinking that these students will help them in studies. Becoming the member of a group also helps in behaving with members of other groups in a definite way. For example, you show respect to the senior students and command respect from the junior students.

Cohesiveness refers to the belief of the individuals that being a member of a particular group would be rewarding

### 22.5 Stages in Formation

The formation of a group follows four stages. These are :

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|---------|---|---------------|
| Stage 1 | — | Orientation   |
| Stage 2 | — | Focus         |
| Stage 3 | — | Regulation    |
| Stage 4 | — | Formalization |

Let us study about these stages :-

#### Stage 1— Orientation

In the initial stage of group formation, the potential or would-be-members make an attempt to assess their gains or losses for working together and interacting over a period of time. At this stage individuals judge about their potentialities and the goals of the group. Individuals are more concerned about their benefits or losses in joining a particular group. People spend much time in asking and answering questions about one another's interests, abilities, knowledge and so on. They are also concerned about the resources available for performing a task, for example, persons interested to make a football team consider about the playing abilities of other individuals and also are concerned about the resources so that they can buy essential items for playing the game.

#### Stage 2-Focus

You must have observed in football game that some players think that they should win the match even at the cost of adopting unfair means, while others may be contrary to the strength of their team so as in future they emerge as a strong team.

When some individuals decide that it is in their interest to form a group to achieve a specific goal, their focus gets centred on the means (or

how) to achieve the goal . At this point the members become clear about their contribution to achieve the group goal, the other available resources, and the likely benefit to be received by members of the group. This is the time when some members show more concern toward short-term goals while others want to work for the long-term goals of the group and thus a conflict among the members arises.

### Stage 3-Regulation

Due to interaction for a longer period of time, a pattern in the social exchange of the group members emerges. The roles and functions of each member are defined. It is at this stage that one member becomes the leader of the group and starts playing a decisive role in shaping the activities of the group. Other members look at the leader for guidance.

### Stage 4-Formalization

During this phase, the norms and roles that emerge during the third stage become formalized. Members of the group, either in writing or in their speech, acknowledge the existence of these rules and show their willingness to comply with them.

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## Intext Questions 22.1

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1. Why do people join groups ?

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2. Name the four stages in formation of groups.

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## 22.6 Types of Groups

There are generally two types of groups :

- (i) Primary Groups and
- (ii) Secondary Groups.

The primary groups are characterized by more or less continued, intimate face-to face association and cooperation. The most important example of primary group is the family, where one can observe close face-to-face interaction among the family groups. This is also

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sometimes called intact group. The other examples of primary groups are peer groups and caste groups. More often referred to as 'we' expression, the members of a primary group have a **common fate**. Primary group is the nucleus of all social organizations. It exerts a profound influence on shaping the personality of an individual.

Secondary groups, in contrast, are special interest groups. For example, you are the citizen of a country (national group), may have some religious identity (religious group), may be a member of a professional group such as doctors, engineers, teachers, artists and so forth. The members of these groups do not necessarily have face-to-face contact although there may be direct interaction among the members. The Secondary groups are relatively casual and members have impersonal relationship among themselves and a competitive attitude toward each other. They are not interested in helping each other in achieving a goal.

Many behaviour patterns displayed in a Secondary group are rooted in the habits, attitudes and roles displayed in a primary group. The child, for example, who expresses hostility and aggression toward the authority figure (usually parents) at home may show hostility toward the teacher in the classroom and the team-coach on the playground. People become members of a secondary group to satisfy their psychological needs such as prestige, companionship, etc. When their needs are satisfied by the group, the individuals take on the Secondary group attitudes more readily than they might otherwise.

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### **Intext Questions 22.3**

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1. What are the two types of groups ?

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2. Give an example of a secondary group ?

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### **22.7 Effects of Group on the Individuals behaviour**

Becoming a member of a group on the part of an individual appears to influence our behaviours in many ways. Let us examine some of the influence in detail.

#### **Decision Making in Groups**

A whole new class of studies are concerned with influence of a new type of behaviour. These are called "risk-taking behaviour". Imagine

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that you are working with a company where your salary is moderate; the company is reputed and well established, your job is permanent and you will be promoted to the new post as and when it falls vacant. Now a new company comes into being in your locality, offers a very attractive salary with the prospect of quick promotion. However, it is not sure whether the company will survive in the market? Now, you have to say what would be the chance of the survival of the company that you would leave your earlier job and join the new one. For example, you may say that even if there is 10% chance or 20%, 30%, 40%, 50%, and so on I would take up the new assignment. Some may say that until there is 100% chance of the survival of the new company I will not leave my earlier job. In the former there is a great risk and the amount of risk decreases with increase in the percentage survival of the new company.

Now imagine a situation

- (a) where you have to take this decision alone
- (b) where there are other individuals (for example family members) to help you in taking decision. The individual when left alone takes lesser risk. On the other hand, when he is left in group situation, there is a tendency on the part of the individual to take greater risk. The group as a whole takes greater risk, than the individual. This phenomenon is known as *risky shift* phenomenon.

The question arises that why groups take greater risk than individuals? It is believed that it is due to spread of responsibility. The fact that there are others to share the blame if failure occurs make each group member feel less personal blame for a possible failure. The risky shift also results in part from persuasive communication. If most members of the group agree that risk is the correct value for the problem under consideration, then most of the reasons and justifications brought out in the discussion will favour risk.

### **Social Facilitation**

Related to this is the *social facilitation* effect. Try to recall your own behaviour. When you are performing an easy task or something which you know very well and there is a possibility that other group members such as parents or teachers will evaluate your work, you try to show your best performance. On the other hand, such awareness interferes with your ability to carry out a phenomenon which is known as social facilitation effect.

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### **Intext Question 22.4**

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1. Why does groups take greater risk than individual?  
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  2. What is social factitation effort ?  
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### **What you have learnt**

- ★ Persons possessing certain characteristics with a common goal often form a group.
- ★ A group is a subpopulation within a large population with which individual persons may be indentified as included and belonging to it.
- ★ Inter dependence is an important characteristics of a group. It means that the behaviour of one member gives rise to another members behaviour which results in forcing the group to perform certain things.
- ★ People join groups for different reason because groups are benefictial, group members have resources and responsibilities can be shared.
- ★ Cohesiveness refers to the belief of the individuals that being a member of a particular-group would be rewarding.
- ★ The formation of a group follows four stages, which are Orientation, Focus, Regulation, Formalization.
- ★ There are two types of groups : Primary and Secondary group.
- ★ Group effects on individuals behaviour like decision making in groups and social facilitation.

### **Terminal Exercises**

1. Define a group.
  2. List down the characteristics of a group.
  3. Describe briefly the four stages in the evolution of group ?
  4. How does group effect an individual behaviour ?
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## Key to Intext Questions

### 22.1

1. A group is a subpopulation within a large population with which individual persons may be identified as included and belonging in it.

### 22.2

1. People join groups because
  - groups are beneficial for them
  - groups members have resources
  - responsibilities can be shared.
2. The four stages in formation of groups are :  
Orientation, Focus, Regulation, Formalization.

### 22.3

1. Primary group and secondary group.
2. Being the citizen of a country.

### 22.4

1. Due to spread of responsibility.
2. Awareness that interferes with your ability to carry out a phenomenon.

### Hints to Terminal Exercises

1. Refer Section 22.3
  2. Refer Section 22.3
  3. Refer Section 22.5
  4. Refer Section 22.7
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