

Social Influence and Group Processes

Group: An organized system of two or more individuals who are interacting and are interdependent, who have common motives, have set role relationships amongst the members and have norms that regulate the behaviour of members. Salient features:

- Sense of belonging to the group
- Common motive/goal
- Interdependence amongst members/group
- Satisfying a need through the association
- Ability to influence each other
- Governed by set of norms/rules

Crowd: is also a collection of people but by chance not with a purpose or a specific role and responsibility like in a structured group.

Team: is a special kind of group in which in addition to all the salient features of a group, members have:

- Complimentary skills
- Committed to a common goal/purpose
- Mutual accountability towards the purpose
- Collective and coordinated responsibility
- Teamwork and synergy

Audience: is also collection of people who have assembled for a special purpose. May be to watch theatre or cricket match. features:

- Generally passive
- No inter-involvement
- Only under frenzy, behaves like mob and gets polarized

Q: Why do people join groups?

- **Security-** Sense of comfort and protection. Less vulnerable to threats.
- **Status-** Associating to an important/powerful group gives one a sense of pride and power.

- **Self-esteem**– feeling of self worth, positive social identity
- **Satisfaction of social/psychological needs**– Sense of belonging, needs of attention, love and power.
- **Share knowledge** and information- groups supplement knowledge by providing a forum to share and exchange thoughts.
- **Goal achievement**– Power of majority, support on meeting goal.

Group formation:

Groups are formed due to contact and some form of interaction under the following conditions:

Proximity: Repeated interactions with same set of individuals, a chance to know them, their interests, attitude. Common interests and attitudes bring people together causing groups.

Similarity: People group up with people with similar interests, due to two reasons (as explained by psychologists). 1. Similar views and interests makes it easier for people to connect and get closer. 2. It also helps individuals in validating their own views and that makes them feel self-assured of their interests and choices.

Common Motives and Goals: When people have common goals to achieve which they cannot pursue alone, they get together and form a group. This helps them in their goal achievement.

Stages of group formation:

As per Tuckman groups pass five developmental sequences:

1. **Forming-** Group members first meet, try to know each other, go through uncertainty about achievement of goal.
2. **Storming-** Deals with conflict among the members on how and what all needs to be done to achieve the target. Who will control what all, roles, hierarchy and leadership.
3. **Norming-** In this stage group forms norms related to behaviour. This leads to develop a positive group identity.
4. **Performing-** By this stage structure of the group is evolved, moving towards goal achievement. This could be a last stage as may complete with goal meeting.



5. **Adjourning-** is the last stage in formal groups where the groups are disbanded formally after the task is accomplished.

Structure of a Group:

4 important elements of group structure:

Roles- responsibilities defined for individual members to fulfil under specific conditions.

Norms- expected standards of behaviour and beliefs established/agreed upon or enforced to the members of the group.

Status- is the relative social status given to the group members by virtue of their role, seniority or skill set relevant to the group goal.

Cohesiveness- Togetherness, binding, mutual attraction among group members. More people think, feel and act alike in a group, more cohesive it is. (the phenomenon is called Groupthink)

Type of Groups:

1. Primary and Secondary groups
2. Formal and Informal
3. Ingroup and Outgroup

Primary and Secondary

1. **Primary groups** are **pre-existing** formations which are given to the individuals whereas the **Secondary groups** are those an individual **joins by his/her own choice**.
2. **Primary-** more face to face, direct interaction, close proximity and bond. **Secondary** –relationships are impersonal, indirect and less frequent.
3. **Primary** – group plays an important role in the development of values and beliefs of individual. **Secondary-** groups do not contribute much to the individual.
4. **Primary group**– Individuals do not have the option to choose the group or members. **Secondary**– It is relatively easier to choose to join and exit the group.

Eg: **Primary**– Family, religion, caste groups etc

Secondary– Political party, club

Formal and Informal Groups:

Formal- **Functions** of the group are **explicitly stated** as in case of an organization.

Roles assigned to members are well defined in explicit manner.

Are **more structured**.

Informal- No rules, laws or a formal structure. Members share an informal and close relationship.

Ingroup and Outgroup

The term Ingroup refers to one's own group and Outgroup refers to another group. The members of ingroup refer to themselves as 'We' and for outgroup members are referred as 'They'.

Influence of Group on Individual behaviour

Group Influence is of 2 types:

Social Facilitation- When a person is doing a job alone in presence of others.

The theory suggests that the presence of others leads to arousal and motivates individuals to enhance their performance , especially when they are individually evaluated.

Social Loafing- is a phenomenon of *Diffusion of responsibility* in which individuals start making less effort when working in a group than as individual. .i.e one in which outputs are pooled with those of other group members.

e.g. tug of war. You can never identify who's making how much effort.

Such situations give opportunity to individuals to relax and become free riders.

Reasons of same: Social loafing can happen if

- Group members feel less responsible for the overall task and exert less.
- Motivation of members decreases when they know their contribution will not be evaluated individually.
- The performance of one group is not to be compared with other.
- There is improper coordination or no coordination in the group



- When belonging of same group is not important for members.

Q: How to reduce social loafing?

- Making the efforts of each member identifiable.
- Increasing the pressure to work hard
- Making group members committed to successful task performance
- Increasing the apparent importance or value of a task
- Making people feel that their individual contribution is important
- Strengthening group cohesiveness which increases the motivation for successful group outcome.

Group Polarization:

We all know important decisions are taken by groups and not by individuals. But there is also a phenomenon observed that groups are more likely to take extreme decisions than individuals alone. This is referred as group polarization.

Reasons

- If you have a certain view of a situation and the group members also share the similar opinion, this makes you more strongly favourable towards your belief.
- If group shares your opinion you feel you also have public validation. This is a sort of bandwagon effect.
- With conformity of your views by majority, your own views become strengthened.

Conformity, compliance and Obedience:

Groups and individuals exert influence on us of different kinds:

Social Influence: those processes whereby our attitudes and behaviours are influenced by the real or imagined presence of other people.

On certain occasions we are able to defy influence and in return may influence them to adopt our viewpoint.

This together describes three important group influence processes:

Conformity



Compliance

Obedience

Conformity: Is when you conform to something despite alternate view because of social or peer pressure. E.g. Class friends asking you to sign on a request to allow mobile phones in school. You may agree to do so in order to lose friends, even if you feel it is not a good norm to comply/conform.

Reasons of conformity-

- Following unwritten social norms without questioning as they have been prevalent since generations.
- Not seen as a rebel or different from social group, avoiding disapproval that makes people uncomfortable- answering question- What will people say?
- When you don't have your own perspective on anything, you go by majority populous view.

Compliance: is a scenario when you agree to do something because you approve of the norm and hence comply. E.g. If your society group requests you to put a sticker on- Say No to Plastic bags, on your bike. You would comply and stick it as you believe it is a good cause to spread.

Identification- is when you comply or conform in order to associate yourself to a group you want to identify with for enhancing your social stature. E.g. You join a group of vegans and promote veganism even if you don't believe in it as this group is referred as an elite group in your society.

Information-seeking: Another reason to conform/agree is to get knowledge about a certain field/rule etc.

Obedience: is when you comply with some norm because of an order from a senior and powerful member. E.g. your senior teacher gives orders to stop bringing mobiles to school.

From all three- enforcement under Obedience more direct and explicit followed by compliance which is more by choice because of a request you concur which is less direct. Least direct and hence has probability of refusal in conformity as you may not even believe in the norm group/society tries to impose.

Q- What determines the extent of Conformity in a group?



1. **Size of the group:** Greater conformity in a smaller group and Lower conformity in a large group. Because it's easy to spot a non conformist in a smaller group.
2. **Size of the minority:** Smaller the minority, easy to conform to the majority view due to pressure of being singled out. Applies **Asch's Experiment**, where a single non conformist after a few rounds changes his view to the groups view even if he/she is right.
3. **Nature of the task:** More verifiable the outcome of the group task, lower is the conformity as people like to stick to their view/response. Less verifiable/subjective is the outcome expected, more is the conformity.
4. **Public/Private expression of behaviour:** Public responses lead to more conformity and private expression can result in lower conformity as people have freedom to express their view without coming under public pressure or being admissible openly.
5. **Personality:** People who are easy to change their views and gullible are susceptible to conform than those who are independent and intelligent and have confidence in themselves are less likely to change their views or conform easily.

Q- Compliance: Factors why we comply:

1. **The foot in the door technique:** This technique is widely used by groups to sell their products or ideas to make people comply with that. E.g. offering a small free gift which a person would accept, later making a bigger sales offer to which he could not refuse due to **courtesy**.
2. **The deadline technique:** Using last date and deadline fear/**anxiety** to make people comply with the decisions they may not want to miss.
3. **The door in the face technique:** This technique is about making a bigger/large request even when it is likely to be turned down, then later making the smaller/actual request which is then accepted due to **sympathy**.

Q- How Obedience actually works? Why do people obey even when they know its actually going to harm others/them?

1. When people obey orders, they feel since it may not have their compliance and they are simply **following instructions**, they may **not be responsible for those actions**.



2. Authority **comes from symbols, designations** which people find difficult to challenge.
3. Authority **increases from lesser to greater levels gradually**. When you obey smaller orders, it establishes a certain amount of authority. Which later leads to obeying bigger orders too.
4. **Situation/time**: when **events happening at a fast pace** in a situation at times you just obey along the way.

Autokinetic

The Asch Experiment

Shariff's Summer Camp

Cooperation and Competition:

Behaviour in most social situations is either Cooperative or Competitive.

Cooperation: When groups work together to achieve shared goals they cooperate. Also when the rewards are also group rewards

Competition: When members in a group have individual goals and are rewarded accordingly they individually maximize their benefits and work for the realisation of self-interest.

Competition between individuals within a group may result in conflict and disharmony, while competition between the groups may increase harmony, cohesion and solidarity within the group.

Q: Factors that determine whether behaviour would be cooperative or competitive?

1. **Reward Structure:** Cooperative reward structure which promotes interdependence of members and each is beneficiary of reward.

And group wins reward if all contribute. Competitive reward structure is when one can win it only if others lose/don't get it.

1. **Interpersonal Communication:** Good interpersonal communication helps forge better cooperation as it encourages connect, discussion and convincing each other.

2. **Reciprocity:** People cooperate to reciprocate for other's favour as a gesture of paying back.

Social Identity: is an answer to the question we may ask ourselves- "Who am I"

Each individual perceives himself as a unique individual and also as a part of society s/he belongs. So our perception about ourselves as a unique individual and as perceived by society we belong is what sums up as our identity.

Social identity is thus that aspect of our self-concept which is based on our membership to a group.

Our identification to a group is means a great deal and is very important. Our social identity places us where and what we are in the larger social context.

e.g. When Indian cricket team wins the cup we feel elated as we associate ourselves with India as a citizen of the country.

As a student you identify yourself as a member of school and also try to imbibe the values of institute as your own values. This also helps to coordinate and regulate your attitudes and behaviour.

Intergroup conflict: Nature and Cause

The negative impact of being members of group is that while people feel affiliated to their own group (ingroup) they start referring to other groups (Outgroups)as opponents.

This leads to intergroup conflicts which can cost societies and individuals a lot.

E,g, Conflict between countries, religions, castes etc.

Reasons of conflict:

1. Lack of communication/faulty communication– by members of both parties. Leading to suspicion. Lack of trust.
2. Deprivation of one group Vs others– in form of resources, power, influence in overall larger society.
3. Group's self-acclaimed supremacy: when one group believes that they and their values are better than the other group. E.g religious groups and political parties.
4. Difference or contradicting beliefs/values. Don't respect the other group and hence conflict
5. Retaliation : to one group's negative action



6. Biased perceptions: they Vs we
7. Groupism leads to competitiveness
8. Inequity in benefits/rewards

Conflict Resolution Strategy:

1. Introduction of Superordinate goals: Larger mutually beneficial goals to encourage cooperation.
2. Altering Perception: by persuasion, educational and media appeals.
3. Increasing intergroup contact/communication
4. Redrawing group boundaries: to make them feel part of the one larger group
5. Negotiations: Trying to find mutually acceptable solutions with help of mediators.
6. Structural Solutions: Removing biases, redistributing the resources, equality according to principles of justice. E.g Upper caste Vs Backward underprivileged castes. Men Vs Women
7. Respect for other group's norms: Different ethnic, religious groups.

