

Unit 7

GROUP PROCESSES AND SOCIAL INFLUENCE

After reading this chapter, you will –

- understand the meaning of group
- understand the process of group formation
- know types of groups
- understand the methods of social influence
- know the meaning of conflict and learn the ways to overcome them

Chapter Outline

Introduction

Meaning of Group

Group Formation

Types of Groups

Primary and Secondary groups

Formal and Informal groups

Inclusive and Exclusive groups

Incidental and purposive groups

Social Influence

Conformity

Compliance

Obedience

Group Conflict

Conflict resolution strategies

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Introduction

We interact with other persons in our day to day lives. Sometimes we are with our family, sometimes with friends and sometimes with the peer group. Those peoples who are working somewhere are with their office colleagues. We become a part of a team with other players while playing in the evening. It means that we continuously form groups and perform various activities while living in a society. Being a social animal, we do become part of different groups. Our behaviour is influenced by these groups. Our behaviour also influences these groups. The first part of this chapter will describe the meaning of group, the process of group formation and the types of groups. The second part of this chapter will explain social influence and its various techniques.

The word 'group' has been used in various meanings. Usually, we consider the passengers travelling together in a bus or train a part of a group. Sometimes the groups are named on the basis of various categories such as a group of

students, group of teachers etc., but the psychological meaning of a group is different.

Meaning of Group

In Psychology, a group is defined as a social unit of two or more than two persons. All the members of the group are associated with each other for fulfilling a common purpose, work or goal. A group has a definite size. According to psychologists Krech, Crutchfield and Ballachey, from psychological point of view, a group is called a group when the members of the groups have interdependence on each other. The members of the group are linked by common thoughts processes, belief systems, values etc. These criteria determine the behaviour of the group members. The passengers of a bus or a car cannot be called a group because they are not associated with each other although they have a common goal of travelling together. The social interaction among these travellers is relatively temporary.

The following characteristics of a group can be determined –

- A group is a social unit of two or more than two persons. The group members consider themselves to be a part of the group.
- The members of the group have similar motives or goals.
- The members of the group are dependent on each other. The functions of one group member influence the other members of the group. For example a player drops an important catch in a cricket match; it influences entire team including other players.

- A group has well determined norms which form the basis for the expected behaviour from the group members.
- A group has a leader who controls or conducts the activities of the other members so that the group goals can be achieved. A leader coordinates between the activities of the group members.

Group Formation

A person becomes part of a group with other persons for various reasons. Group formation has a purpose of providing feeling of relief and safety to the members. Some group memberships are considered prestigious and increase the member's power or worth also. The other reasons of becoming a group member can be to increase self esteem, to fulfil psychological and social needs, to achieve goals, to acquire information or knowledge etc. A person does not become a part of the group as soon as he comes in contact with other persons. According to Tuckman, a group is formed by passing through the following five developmental stages.

Forming Stage

In this stage, when people meet for the first time, they are uncertain about the goals. People try to know each other in this stage. They evaluate the relevance of each other to become the member of the group which is to be formed.

Storming Stage

In this stage, the group members think about certain key questions: What will be the goals of the group, how the goals will be achieved, who will control the group, what will be the functions of group members. Group members

discuss with each other to resolve any such issues. The differences of opinions among members also emerge. Therefore, this stage is named as storming stage.

Norming stage

In this stage, some decisions are finally taken as an outcome of the storming that happened in the second stage. These decisions of the group and the rules formed become group norms. These norms form the basis for determining the behaviour of the group members.

Performing stage

The structure of a group is well developed till this stage. Now it is the time to perform. All members play their predetermined role and fulfil responsibilities so as to achieve the group goals.

Adjourning stage

In this stage, the group is ended or adjourned after the functions of the groups are complete and the group goals are achieved.

Types of groups

Human groups are of different types. The following types of groups have been explained on the basis of different criteria.

Primary and Secondary group

Primary group is the group in which the members have close relationship or bonding with each other. The primary group has fewer members. Its size is small. Group members have deep feelings of love and help for each other. Such groups are informal. Family and friends are its examples. Primary group's existence is relatively stable in comparison to the other group types.

Secondary group is completely unlike primary group in characteristics. There is less personal bonding in the secondary group members. They

do not have close relation with each other. The size of secondary group is big. It has more group members. The employees of a government office, a factory or a school are examples of secondary group. These groups have a definite purpose or goal. The relations between the group members are informal.

Formal and Informal group

Formal group is the group which is formed according to some specific rule or legislation. Every member of the group has specific role to play in the group. Industrial organization, University, Public Service Commissions are examples of formal group. The formal groups are formed with a specific purpose. Formal groups are somewhat similar to secondary groups in its characteristics.

Informal group is the group which needs no definite rule or law for its formation. These groups are formed naturally. The group members have more 'we' feeling. The size of such groups is small. Informal groups are somewhat similar to primary groups in its characteristics.

Exclusive and Inclusive group

Exclusive groups are the groups, where the membership is limited to a particular category of people. The examples of such groups are a group of doctors, a group of engineers, or a group of University teachers etc.

Inclusive group is the group in which the membership is open for all the people. It is not necessary to belong to particular category or class to be a part of such groups. Political party is an example of an inclusive group. The size of an inclusive group is bigger than the size of an exclusive group.

Incidental group or Purposive group

Incidental groups are those groups which are formed due to emergent situational needs. It is not formed with predetermined objectives or purposes. For example if some strangers get functionally associated with each other to solve a situational problem and they try to help somebody who has, for example, met with an accident on a crossway/road to take that person to the hospital, it will be an example of incidental group.

Purposive groups are those groups which are formed keeping a predetermined objective in mind. For example schools are examples of purposive group because they are created with a purpose of providing education.

Social Influence

Man is a social animal. Every person influences the behaviour of another person through social interaction. A teacher influences the behaviour of the students, similarly parents influence their children's behaviour and salesmen influence their customers' behaviour. It is known as social influence. Social influence refers to the change in the psyche and behaviour of an individual which is caused by other persons. Social influence can occur both by actual or implied presence of other persons. Our teachers, friends and advertisements on radio, television etc also cause some kind of social influence.

A person is socially influenced by the following three ways:

1. Conformity
2. Compliance
3. Obedience

Conformity

Every person is expected to behave according to social norms or rules determined by the society. If a person behaves as per the norms of the society, it is called conformity. Conformity occurs when a person behaves according to the norms set by the society, group or its members. For example we follow all traffic rules while driving a vehicle so that the road traffic can be maintained. This is an example of conformity. All the people make a queue and wait for their turn when they buy household items from a grocery shop. This is also an example of conformity. In these examples, a person follows the rules of traffic or the rules to get household items from a grocery shop. It may not always happen that a person willingly accepts these social norms, sometimes a person follows these norms because the other persons are also doing so. It means that sometimes a person willingly accepts these social norms and sometimes he has to do so unwillingly also. A person faces mental conflict and pressure while taking decisions by conformity. Such conflict arises due to the difference in person's own thoughts and the norms set by the society. A person's tendency to unwillingly support the group decisions due to pressure on him/her is termed as 'group pressure' in Psychology.

Different psychologists such as Sherif, Solomon Asch and Crutchfield have conducted experiments to explain conformity. We will study the experiments conducted by Asch on group pressure.

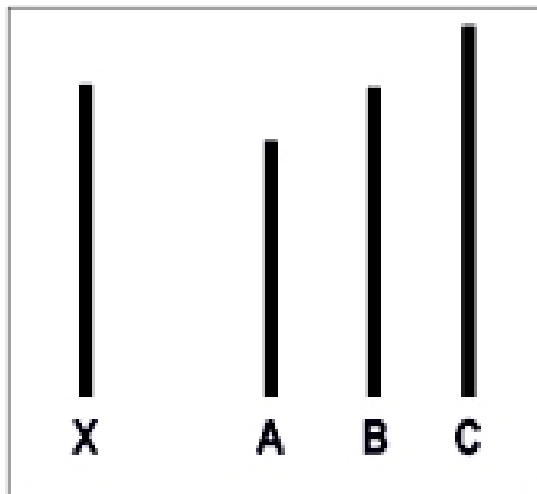


Figure 7.1: Standard Line (X) and three comparable lines in Solomon Asch's experiment

Solomon Asch conducted an experiment in which all the members of a group (except one person who was the real subject) chose similar (but wrong) answer among the available alternatives in a situation. Asch wanted to study the effect of similar wrong responses by other group members on the response given by the real subject. Does the real participant choose wrong response due to group pressure? There were total 7 participants in Asch's experiments, among them one person was the real subject, and remaining 6 persons were the confederates of the experimenter. All the participants were shown a standard line, which was to be compared to three lines of varying length (A, B, and C) and were asked to decide which of three lines is equal in length to the standard line. All the participants, who were already taken in confidence by the experimenter, gave wrong but similar response in a predetermined manner. After this, the real participant's response was taken. such 12 trials were conducted in the same way. Although the real subject knew that the response chosen by the group was wrong, will

the subject show conformity to the group decision or not? Does the subject rely more on own decision against the group decision? Asch found in his experiment that almost 67% subjects showed conformity and accepted the group pressure thereby giving similar response as given by the whole group.

Compliance

When a person behaves as per the requests made by others, it is known as compliance. The behaviour shown by a salesman who visits our house is an example of compliance. A politician requesting the public to vote for him/her is also an example of compliance. The following techniques are used to get others accept one's requests.

Ingratiation

In this technique, a person shows agreement to the target person in every way. The person heaps direct praise to the target person. By doing so, the target person develops liking for that person and accepts the desires and requests made by the person who is ingratiating.

Reciprocity

The basis of this technique is the hypothesis that when we give some benefit to other person, the person will also provide some benefits to us in future. In this technique, when a person wants another target person to do something for him/her, first he/she will accept the smaller requests of the target person, as a result of which the target person can also accept the requests made by him/her.

Multiple Requests

This method includes many techniques which have been explained here.

The-Foot-in-the-door technique

In this technique, smaller requests are made initially to the target person, which are easily accepted by him. When the target person accepts these requests and takes the necessary steps to help, bigger requests are made to the target person. That means bigger requests are made to the target person only after he accepts and fulfils the smaller requests. The target person usually accepts the bigger request also to maintain consistency in his behaviour.

The-door-on-the-face technique

In this technique, the target person is presented with a big request which he usually cannot fulfil because such requests required more efforts on the part of the target person. After that, the target person is presented with a smaller request, which is the actual desired request. This technique assumes that when a person once says 'no' to a bigger requests, he/she will feel that he/she should at least accept the smaller request. This happens to be true in many instances.

Low-ball technique

In this technique, the target person is not provided with all the details related to the desired task. Here, an important detail of the request is kept hidden from the target person. Hence, the request appear appealing to the target person, and he/she accepts the request. Once the person accepts this request, he/she is provided with the hidden information also. This technique assumes that once the person accepts a request, then he feels committed to fulfil that request. The person sticks to the decision even after knowing the hidden details of the task. Many times, sellers use this technique to sell their products. For example, a seller attracts the

customers to their shop counter by offering some item free of cost, but later they are told that these items will be provided free of cost only when they shop for a minimum amount from their shop counter.

Obedience

Obedience is the third method of social influence. In this method, direct order is given to the concerned person/s for getting a task done. For example district collectors give orders to their subordinates. It is necessary to follow the orders in obedience whereas in other two methods previously discussed; conformity and compliance; an individual has freedom whether to accept the requests or not.

Stanley Milgram conducted an experiment in Psychology to study the phenomenon of obedience. In Milgram's experiment, a person, who was the real subject, was asked to deliver electric shock to another person by turning on a switch on the equipment provided in the experiment. Actually no shocks were delivered to anybody. But the subject was made to feel as if he is delivering the electric shock by turning the switch on. For doing so, another person who was receiving the electric shock was asked to act as if he is really getting electric shocks. He was asked to shout loudly and to show some body signs such as throwing legs away etc. The real subject was asked to gradually increase the intensity of electric shock. He was also told that it is necessary for the experiment that he keeps on delivering electric shocks. It was found in the experiment that many subjects followed the orders given by Milgram. This experiment led Milgram to conclude that obedience is an effective technique to get some work done by a person.

Now you have understood that there are various methods/techniques available to get some work done from a person and make him comply with the social norms. A person's behaviour can be influenced by using these methods in various situations.

Group Conflict

Group conflict is created among group members when there are difference of opinions regarding some matters, goals, division of work, and the decisions of choosing/becoming group leader. Different members form subgroups in the group itself. The members become competitive and aggressive. Such competition can be for division/allocation of physical and social resources. The members compare their personal contributions in the group with respect to how much they have been benefitted from the group. If there is incongruence, it leads to group conflict. It also leads to lack of interpersonal trust among group members. Communication among the group members is also worsened. Resolution of group conflict is necessary for existence and goal attainment of the group. Some strategies can be helpful in resolving these conflicts.

Conflict resolution strategies

The first necessity to resolve conflict is to know the causes of conflicts. Then only the group processes leading to these causes can be controlled. Group conflict can be resolved by the following efforts.

Group discussion among its members can be organized where they discuss the issues related to the reasons of conflicts. It enables the group members to understand each other's viewpoints. Group norms should be made specific. Group

conflicts can also be reduced by making specific rules and norms for allocation and division of resources, benefits, profits etc. All the members should be made committed to follow these norms.

If the conflict arises due to some specific issue, negotiation meeting among the group members can be arranged. This meeting can be conducted in presence of a third or neutral party. It is tried to find a solution which is acceptable to both the parties.

Group limitations should be determined again so that every member understands one's responsibilities, rights and limitations. If somebody disobeys/crosses these limitations, an appropriate decision can be taken jointly by others group members so that other members do not repeat such behaviour.

Important Points

In Psychology, a group is defined as a social unit of two or more than two persons. All the members of the group are associated with each other for fulfilling a common purpose, work or goal.

A group has well set norms which form the basis for the expected behaviour from the group members.

A group is formed through a process. According to Tuckman, there are five stages of group formation: forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning.

Group can be of different types. Primary group is the group in which the members have close relationship or bonding with each other. Family and friends are examples of such groups. In secondary group, there is less personal bonding in the members. The employees of a

government office, a factory or a school are examples of secondary group.

Formal group is the group which is formed according to some specific rule or legislation. Informal group is the group which needs no definite rule or law for its formation. These groups are formed naturally.

Exclusive group is the group in which the membership is limited to a particular category of people for example a group of doctors.

Inclusive group is the groups in which the membership is open for all the people. It is not necessary to belong to particular category or class to be a part of such groups. Political party is an example of an inclusive group.

Incidental groups are those groups which are formed due to emergent situational needs. For example if some strangers get united to help some stranger on a crossway.

Purposive groups are those groups which are formed keeping a predetermined objective in mind. For example schools are created with a purpose of providing education.

Every person influences the behaviour of another person through social interaction. It is called social influence.

Social influence refers to the change in the psyche and behaviour of an individual which is caused by other persons.

A person is socially influenced by the following three ways: Conformity, Compliance and Obedience.

Conformity occurs when a person behaves according to the norms set by the society or a group or by its members. For example we follow all traffic rules while driving a vehicle.

When a person behaves as per the requests made by others, it is known as compliance. To accept the requests made by a salesman is compliance.

In obedience, direct orders are given to the concerned person/s for getting a task done.

Group conflict is created among group members when there are difference of opinions regarding some matters, goals, division of work, and the decisions of choosing/becoming group leader.

Group discussion among its members can be organized where they discuss the issues related to the reasons of conflicts. Other efforts should also be made.

Practice Questions

Multiple-Choice Questions

1. Which type of group is family?
 - A. Incidental
 - B. Formal
 - C. Primary
 - D. Secondary
2. When some strangers form a group to help a person who has met with an accident, this is an example of which type of group?
 - A. Primary
 - B. Incidental
 - C. Purposive
 - D. Inclusive
3. Which of the following is NOT a stage of group formation?
 - A. Performing stage
 - B. Forming stage
 - C. Dormant stage
 - D. Norming stage

4. The stage of group formation in which the norms or rules of a group are determined is called:
 - A. Storming stage
 - B. Forming stage
 - C. Adjourning stage
 - D. Norming stage
5. The-Foot-in-the-door technique is an example of which type of social influence?
 - A. Conformity
 - B. Compliance
 - C. Ingratiation
 - D. Obedience

Short-Answer Questions

6. What is group?
7. Define primary group.
8. What is the difference between incidental and purposive group?
9. Give examples of formal groups.
10. Explain the storming stage of group formation.
11. Name the stages of group formation.
12. What is social influence?
13. What is ingratiation?
14. Define compliance.
15. Differentiate between conformity and compliance.

Long-Answer Questions

16. What is a group? Explain the characteristics of a group.
17. Explain different types of groups by giving examples.
18. Explain the process of group formation.
19. What is group pressure? Explain the experiment done on group pressure.

20. What are main methods of social influence? Explain the techniques of compliance with examples.
21. Explain the types of multiple requests technique with examples.
22. What is obedience? Explain the experiment conducted by Milgram on obedience.
23. What is group conflict? How group conflict can be resolved?

Answers to Multiple Choice Questions

1. C 2. B 3. C 4. D 5. B