
UNIT 1 INTRODUCTION TO GROUP DYNAMICS

Structure

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1.0 OBJECTIVES

After completing this unit, you should be able to:

- explain the concept of **group** and group dynamics;
- define group and group dynamics;
- explain the essentials of group formation;
- list the factors effecting individual behaviour; and
- discuss the types of groups.

1 . INTRODUCTION

Groups exist in every organization and they effect the behaviour of people working within. These days hospitals are considered as an Industry and Nursing Service is its component. This component is one of the biggest in a hospital, forming a department. There are many situations when the nurse administrators take decisions alone or rely on other (groups) by forming committees or holding meetings. These committees or meetings can be among colleagues, subordinates or administrators of other departments of the hospital. Groups are sometimes self created and not necessarily created by the nurse administrators. These groups influence in the functioning of the nursing department. Study of group dynamics is an important aspect for a nurse administrator. Therefore, the nurse administrator should update herself to be an effective leader.

of a group. **After** acquiring knowledge of group dynamics you can generate good relationship with all the members in your work place.

The concept of group is as old as civilization. Man is a social animal, and live in families which may be termed as 'group'. This family group live under common circumstances aiming towards a common goal. However, a collection of people in any given situation assembled together do not constitute a group, because though they are physically together, they do not pursue a common objective. But the same people may become a group when they start working for a common cause and striving for a common goal. As an example, when this very group is threatened by an external forcebf attack by anti-social elements, natural calamities, war fares etc., they unite to fight back with the threat. So in general, a collection of people in a group have the following qualities:

- i) A definite membership – affiliation of two or **more** people, identifiable by name or
- ii) Group consciousness – having 'Collective **perception** of unity', i.e., conscious identification with each other.
- iii) A sense of shared purpose – is having same goals or ideals.
- iv) Interdependence in satisfaction of needs.
- v) Interaction – the members communicate, influence and react with one another
- vi) Ability to act in a unified manner, i.e., the group behave as a single organism.

A group can be represented diagrammatically by Fig.1.1 (a, b).

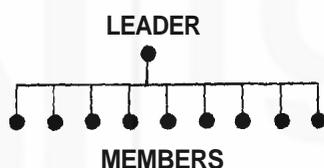


Fig. 1.1(a)

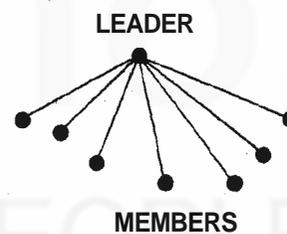


Fig. 1.1(b)

A group consists of **people**, who share common goals, are interdependent, have a stable relationship, recognize the group's existence and are strongly effected by the group membership.

Group Dynamics is concerned with the interaction and forces among group members. In a social situation groups exist when every two or more individuals are aware of one another and are interrelated in some important way. Every individual is a member of many different groups in different settings and they interact differently. This interaction is dynamic in nature e.g, a staff nurse is a member of the health team group and the same staff nurse **assumes** the role of a leader in a group of patients or student nurses. Group dynamics is concerned with formation, and change in structure and functions of psychological grouping of people into self directing roles. This change usually occurs due to the effort of groups members to solve their problems and satisfy their needs. Thus a dynamic group is in a continuous process of restructuring, adjusting and readjusting its members to one another for the purpose of reducing tensions, eliminating conflicts and solving the problems. In common, it is also conceived as a set of techniques used to make the leader and the members effective.

The term Group Dynamics has been used in the following ways:

- i) It is concerned with the interaction and forces among group **members** in a social situation which causes it to behave the way it does.
- ii) Group Dynamics also suggest, how a group is to be organized and conducted e.g. in a democratic leadership, member participation and co-operation is essential. It describes a field of study – to determine why groups **behave the** way they do.
- iii) Group Dynamics is also described as a set of techniques used to make a **group** effective by doing group discussions, brain storming for team building etc. for *individual members and group's growth*.

1.3 DEFINITION OF GROUP AND GROUP DYNAMICS

A group is a number of people, who have a common objective, interacting with each other to achieve a common objective and are aware of the existence of each other and also preview themselves to be a part of the group. According to Kimball Young, 'A group consists of two or more persons in a state of social interaction'.

A group can be defined as a collection of people, working together with each other to achieve common objectives.

Group Dynamics is defined as complex forces that are constantly acting upon every group member throughout its existence dictating a duration. Group Dynamics can be also defined as the interaction of the forces and their resultant effects on a group.

1.4 FACTORS AFFECTING THE INDIVIDUAL BEHAVIOUR

Group is a collection of individuals. Therefore, for understanding of groups it is important to understand the behaviour of individuals. There are many factors which cause individuals to behave in a particular manner in a group. The following factors affect the behaviour of an individual.

1.4.1 Past Experience Forces

The individual's past experiences in life may strongly affect his behaviour because the attitudes, values and habits are developed in a person's life from these experiences. The family also strongly influence his formation of behaviour, which in turn is exhibited in his dealing towards leaders, authorities and other group members.

1.4.2 Psychological Forces

Psychological needs are common to all human beings. These needs include need for security, need for belongingness, need for recognition of status, need for new experiences etc. These needs are not of the same strength for all people. For example, on becoming a member of a new group, a person has a need for acceptance, security and recognition. In order to fulfil these needs a person may be holding himself herself back till he/she is accepted or choose an alternative by being over talkative in the process of seeking acceptance. This helps the group to be more tolerant in accepting other's behaviour and to react to them constructively and appropriately.

1.4.3 Associated Forces

Associated forces are certain invisible factors which influence the behaviour of an individual. These factors may be the geographical habitation, professional affiliation, family influence, neighbourhood, religious beliefs and existing customs and traditions. So every time an individual resounds to his environment, these forces pressurize him/her to act in a certain way. Hence, the individual acts accordingly, because he is guided by the feeling that he is being judged by these reference groups as per their laid down standards, values, goals and norms.

1.4.4 Goals and Ideology Forces

Forces from goals and ideologies are an individual's own goals, standards and values laid down by himself, based on his perception of self image and self ideal. These forces further grow with gradual influence of other factors in life. If a situation permits an individual to be himself, his behaviour will be normal, constructive and creative according to his capabilities. On the contrary, being under pressure and stress he may fail to achieve what is desired and is likely to become a problematic person.

1.4.5 Effect of Forces on Individual Behaviour of a Nurse

... of a nurse group in a hospital. Her individual behaviour has an

If a nurse has had a warm relationship with her parents, family members and friends, she will be warm and co-operative to her seniors, colleagues and patients. Due to the past experiences one tend to respond to similar situations in consistent ways. The personality tendencies (valencies) especially relevant to group behaviour include fight, flight, pairing and dependency.

A nurse having valency to flight has hostile behaviour towards her patients, juniors, seniors and subordinates. Having strong valency of fight, she always tends to avoid unpleasant or interactive situations. A nurse with valency for pairing expresses warmth and establishes measured and balanced relationship with her clients, subordinates, seniors etc. On the other hand a nurse with valency for dependence, can not take independent decisions in patient care and always requires support and: direction from others.

- A nurse who understands the forces based on psychological needs can help a patient to adjust to his newly diagnosed illness in a better way by understanding his reaction to illness positively and constructively rather than with irritation and rejection.
- A nurse who understands the effect of associated forces on the behaviour of an individual, is able to understand her patient in a better way. For example, a nurse being a member of a profession and being guided by her professional ethics will attend a client who is a member of alcoholic anonymous group, more professionally.
- A nurse's own goals, standards and values laid down and accepted by herself, guides her action in various groups to which she is a member.

Check Your Progress 1

What are the factors influencing individual behaviour?

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1.5 ESSENTIALS OF GROUP FORMATION

The essentials of group formation are as follows:

- **Interaction:** It is on the basis of interaction and communication that two or more persons come together and form groups.
- **Common needs:** The interaction helps the group members to meet the common needs. A group may evolve to meet such need which may also lead to a common action. The needs of the members are not static, they grow and develop as the individual changes. The group provides new experiences inducing new needs. But the group serves to meet the current needs of its members. All the group serves to meet the power needs of some of its members and belonging needs to most of its members.
- **Common Goals:** The goals which will satisfy the wants of its members are accepted well by the groups and which will work towards it's achievement.
- **Group Ideology:** In the course of interaction the members of the group come to develop group ideology commonly accepted by all its members. The group ideology consists of group's beliefs, values and norms. The role of ideology is to direct the action designed to satisfy the wants of group members.
- **Group structure:** When individuals with common needs, interact with each other for a long time, the group structure emerges. The differences in the ability and

within the group as well as taking up of definite roles in a group, e.g., emergence of leader, co-operation and successful attainment of goal by taking up roles by each member of the group. With the emergence of group structure the group formation is successful. When this structure continues for a long period of time, pursuing common goals, successfully achieving them and **satisfying** the common needs of its members on various occasions, leads to **stabilization** of groups.

- **Stages of Group Formation:** Observations by group theorist and researches indicate that groups go through predictable developmental stages in the course of their existence. Tuckman and Genson (1977) gave five stages of group formation:
 - i) **Forming:** Formation stage is characterized by uncertainty felt by group members about their place in the group. The members test to identify boundaries in interpersonal behaviours, establish dependent relationship with leaders and other members and determine acceptable behaviour.
 - ii) **Storming:** This stage is characterized by resistance to group influence displayed by the members of sub-groups leading to conflicts. This is so since the tolerance is less and emotions are high among the members. The group must evolve a way to deal with these conflicts and develop a functional pattern of interaction.
 - iii) **Norming:** The group matures to a highly functional unit finally. Consensus evolves and group cohesion and group norms develop.
 - iv) **Performing:** In this stage interpersonal structure focuses on the task and its completion; roles become flexible and functional. Energies of group are directed towards task performance.
 - v) **Adjourning:** This is the termination stage. In this stage the leader guides the members to summarize, express feelings of misunderstanding and differences of opinion and come to a closure as the group goal is achieved.

Check Your Progress 2

List the essentials of group formation.

1.6 TYPES OF GROUPS

Groups may be classified according to various qualities:

- According to Intimacy:
 - i) Primary Intimacy – When group members have face to face contact, and have constant interaction, emotional bond and interdependent role, e.g. family or peer group.
 - ii) Secondary Intimacy – Groups are larger and more impersonal and do not have emotional bonds as in primary intimacy groups, e.g. political party.
- According to organisational structure:
 - i) Formal groups: These have structure and line of authority. These are created by the organisation to accomplish specific tasks. These groups include command groups consisting of managers and their direct subordinates e.g. teachers in a School of Nursing; Committees and Task forces which are created to carry out specific assignments or activities e.g., student and administrator in a school of Nursing.
 - ii) Informal Groups – These groups are formed within the structure of the

- iii) Membership Groups – These are groups to which an individual actually belongs e.g. clubs, co-operative societies, unions, religious groups, etc.
- According to **degree** of organisation:
 - i) Highly developed organisation e.g. Parliament
 - ii) Largely unorganised group e.g. temporary crowd going for a cinema.
- According to the nature of formation
 - i) Voluntary Group
 - ii) Involuntary Group
 - iii) Delegate Group

1.7 CHARACTERISTICS OF GROUP

The characteristics of a group depend upon the original purpose or background of the formation. The group may be temporary if its purpose is achieved quickly. But, if the group exists for a longer time for the achievement of original goals or if additional goals develop in the course of time, the group becomes relatively permanent. The members become relatively better acquainted with each other and work more **effectively** in such cases.

- **Atmosphere:** It usually refers to the social climate of the group with such characterisation as warmth, friendly, relaxed, informal, permissive and free in contrast to cold, rigid, hostile, formal and restrained. In **warm** environment the group develops creativity with positive relations among the members.
- **Communication:** This property explains how well the group members are understanding one another and how clearly their ideas, values and feelings are communicated through verbal and non-verbal communication.
- **Cohesion:** It means the feeling of belongingness. The group's cohesiveness is determined by the strength of the bonds that bind the individual parts together into a unified whole. This indicates morale, team spirit and the strength of attraction and interest of the group within the members.
- **Participation pattern/Communication pattern:** The **communication/participation** may be one way, two way or multidirectional in the group. Every group has a particular participation pattern, which can be observed, as it tends to be quite consistent in a group.
- **Standards:** Every group tends to develop a code of ethics or standard about what is proper and acceptable behaviour. They provide a framework or guideline for adjusting individual needs and resources to the action of the groups and contribute to its cohesiveness.
- **Structure and organisation:** Every group has both a visible and an invisible **organisational** structure. The visible structure may be highly formal, making it possible to achieve a division of labour **among** the members to carry out their roles and functions in the manner, which helps them to achieve the group goals. The invisible structure is however felt by the group members by nature of the positions held by the members.
- **Group goals:** All groups have goals which may range from long term to short term including intermediate term. At times goals are defined clearly, **publically** and specifically. At other times they are vague and general. To be effective the group must continually check the clarity and validity of goals.
- **Sub grouping:** These are often referred as 'cliques'. Cliques develop due to some common **problems**, interests, the individual's rank in the hierarchy, or antipathy or opposition to the **direction** of the group felt commonly by a few members at a given time. These **are overcome** as per the change in issues and tasks of the group.
- **Leadership:** Once the group becomes relatively permanent, formation of a leader becomes evident in informal groups. Leader of a nursing group is the director of nursing or chief nursing officer. Nursing leader should give emphasis in group

- **Tradition:** Over a period of time group develops a rich body of experience which is passed on to new members through generations, thus establishing a tradition.
- **Morale:** Through their experiences group members develop a marked feeling of unity, understanding and confidence so that they withstand difficulties together. It is said the group morale or spirit has emerged and is high.
- **Induction** of new members: All permanent groups develop a pattern of attracting, selecting, initiating and assimilating new members.

1.8 NURSES AND GROUP DYNAMICS

Group affiliation is important in the life of every human being. All of one's time is spent interacting with groups which may comprise of peers, patients, seniors etc. One learns to interact within the group in which he/she works. Nurses have to know about group dynamics so that they can make formal organisation for their profession. In order to occupy important position in the health care system by virtue of (hierarchy) formal structure of an organisation, the nurse, by having knowledge of group dynamics, can increase the productivity of her group members and thereby improve patient care.

She assumes a role of a **leader/member** in various groups of the health care system. She can interact with others effectively. For example, when a nurse is delivering a health talk to a group of patients she is the group leader and the patients become the group members. Her interactive behaviour can be a motivating factor for the change in the health habits of the patients.

- She learns to work by forming small group i.e. working committees or a team by selecting suitable members depending upon their knowledge and expertise e.g. a team formed to provide rehabilitative services may become a source of satisfaction and support for its members. It may also develop social significance if members realize that they enjoy spending time together, during and after work.
- Group dynamics knowledge also helps the nurse to be a good observer, listener and supporter. She can effectively work as a liason between patients and other health team members and community.
- Knowledge of groups also helps a nurse to be effective member of a group, which provides self development and satisfaction to the nurse.
- Knowledge of group dynamics helps a nurse to gain self-satisfaction by being a member or leader of a group, depending on the situation.
- This also provides an opportunity for self development as an individual.

Check Your Progress 3

1) Differentiate between formal and informal groups.

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2) What are membership groups?

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3) List the characteristics of a group.

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1.9 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have discussed about **group/group** formation, factors affecting individual and group behaviour. It is important for the nurse administrator to acquire knowledge on group formation and behaviour because she should appreciate that members of a group **seek** to satisfy their need of security, social power and esteem needs through the group.

The different types of groups which exist in the health care setting are important for the nursing department, because the nurse is involved in each group while caring a patient. The knowledge of group dynamics, characteristics of effective group such as group cohesiveness and leadership etc. will help the nurse administrator to **manage** the group committees effectively.

1.10 KEY WORDS

Formal : Groups created by organisation has a definite structure and authority and is created for specific tasks.

Group Dynamics : Interaction of forces and its resultant **effect** on a group.

Ideology : Belief, values and norms.

1.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- Past experience forces
- Psychological forces
- Associated forces
- Goals and ideology forces

Check your Progress 2

Interaction, **common** needs, common goals, group ideology and group structure.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Formal groups have **structure, authority** and are created by organisation for specific purpose. Informal groups are the groups formed within the **structure** of the organisation by the members to satisfy their social **needs**.
- 2) Membership groups are the groups to which an individual actually **belongs**.
- 3)
 - Original purpose
 - Atmosphere
 - Communication
 - Cohesion
 - Standard
 - Structure and organisation
 - Group goals
 - Subgrouping
 - Leadership
 - **Tradition**
 - Morale
 - Induction of new members