
UNIT 6 NATURE OF GROUP DYNAMICS*

Structure

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6.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you should be able to:

- Know the meaning, objectives and principles of group dynamics;
- Explain the nature of groups and factors affecting group behaviour; and
- Understand the theories of group formation and types of groups.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Human beings continuously struggle with their environment and try to gain control over it. The quest for progress is basic to human nature. Every individual needs the cooperation of other human beings for their security and progress. Efforts in this direction lead to the formation of social organisations. Similarly, a number of sub-groups are found within an organisation. Individuals join groups in organisations, which may be formal or informal.

Groups set standards of productivity and enforce them on all members. Group standards are a major influence on the behaviour of individuals. Employees do not act or react as individuals, but they do so as members of the group. Elton Mayo's human relations approach is a key theoretical construct intended to establish harmony between formal and informal groups. In other words, an internal equilibrium has to be established and maintained in the organisation. Chester Barnard has further elaborated on this concept. It should be remembered that formal organisations are created first and only afterwards, informal organisations evolve. Then, both co-exist. To adopt a correct approach for interacting with the groups, managers need to understand group dynamics.

6.2 NATURE OF GROUP DYNAMICS

A group can be defined as several individuals who come together to accomplish a particular task or goal. It is an important sociological unit of analysis in the study of organisational behaviour. Group dynamics refers to the attitudinal and behavioural characteristics of a group. Further, it is concerned with groups' formation, their structure, process and function. When group dynamics is applied to the study of organisational behaviour, the focus is on the dynamics of formal as well as informal work groups in the organisation.

Social psychologists Kurt Lewin coined and popularised the term 'group dynamics' in the 1930s. After that, various connotations have been attached to this term. A normative view is that group dynamics describes how a group should be organised and conducted. Another view is that group dynamics consists of a set of techniques like role playing, brainstorming, sensitivity training, team building etc. The third view of group dynamics is related to the internal structure of groups, including their formation, structure, processes and functions. The present Unit discusses group dynamic in this perspective.

6.2.1 Meaning and definition of group dynamics

The term group dynamics contains two terms viz Group and Dynamics. Group is generally a collectively of two or more persons. Dynamics comes from a Greek word meaning 'force'. Thus, Group Dynamics refers to the interaction of forces between group members in a social situation. Group Dynamics encompasses the dynamics of interaction patterns within the group, the subtle and the non-subtle pressures exerted by group members, the manner in which decisions are made in the group, how work gets done and how members' needs are satisfied. Understanding of all these enable managers to manage groups effectively, leading to organisational effectiveness. Cartwright and Zander(1968) observe that "group dynamics is a set of behavioural and psychological processes that occur within a social group or between groups. It refers to the nature of groups, the laws of their development, and their interactions with individuals, other groups and larger institutions". Eminent theorists on group dynamics are Gustave LeBon, William Mc Dougall, Sigmund Freud, Jacob L, Moreno, Kurt Lewin, William Schutz, Bruce Tuckman, M.Scott Peek and Richard Hackman.

The following are the objectives and principles of group dynamics:

Objectives

- To identify and analyse the social processes of groups and their impact on development and performance.
- To develop skills for the improvement of the individual and group performance.
- To apply techniques for goal achievement and build successful organisations.

Principles

- The members of the group must have a strong sense of belongingness.

- Changes in the group should not create stress among group members.
- Groups form, survive and function in order to achieve common collective objectives.
- Information pertaining to changes to be made in a group should be shared among its members.
- Group structure, intergroup relations and participation of members are requisites for group effectiveness.

Groups are a common phenomenon in all organisations, whether governmental, private, military, judicial or educational.

6.2.2 Factors affecting group behaviour

The success or failure of a group depends on a number of factors, salient of which are as follows:

1. Knowledge, abilities, skills and personality characteristics are resources the group members bring in with them to the organisation.
2. Small groups are more effective than large groups in achieving cohesion.
3. Group roles can be classified into three types viz. work roles, maintenance roles and blocking roles. Work roles are task-oriented activities that involve specific roles such as those of initiator, informer, clarifier, summariser and reality-tester. Maintenance roles are social-emotional activities that help to raise their involvement and commitment in the group.
4. Each group establishes its own set of norms. Norms are acceptable standards of behaviour. The norms often reflect the level of commitment, motivation and performance of the group. The majority of members in the group must agree that the norms are appropriate in order for the behaviour to be accepted. Group members who do not conform to the norms will be punished by being excluded, ignored, or asked to leave the group.
5. Groups tend to become cohesive when they are in intense competition with other groups or face a serious external threat to survive. Cohesiveness refers to the bonding of group members and their desire to remain part of the group. Cohesiveness in work groups has several positive effects, including work satisfaction, low turnover and absenteeism and higher productivity. However, highly cohesive groups may be detrimental to organisational performance if their goals are not aligned appropriately with organisational goals. They are more vulnerable to groupthink.
6. Processes like decision-making, communication, conflict management, leadership etc. are better through group dynamics than made by an individual.

Check Your Progress 1

- Note:**
- i) Use the space given below for your answers.
 - ii) Check your answers with those given at the end of the Unit.

1. Explain the meaning and definition of group dynamics.

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2. Write the objectives and principles of group dynamics?

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6.3 THEORIES OF GROUP FORMATION

Joining a group is determined by a number of factors, including an individual's personal traits, gender, social motives like the need for affiliation, need for power, need for intimacy, and prior group experiences. Groups can offer some advantages to its members that would not be possible if an individual decided to remain alone, including gaining social support in the forms of emotional support, instrumental support, and informational support. It also offers friendship, involvement in new interest, learning new skills, and enhancing self-esteem.

George Homans in his eminent work, *The Human Group* (1950), developed a classical theory on group formation based on activities, interactions, and sentiments. According to this theory, activities, interactions and sentiments are directly related to one another. The theory assumes that when individuals share common activities, they will have substantial interactions and will develop more positive or negative attitudes toward each other. This theory contributes a great deal to the understanding of group formation and process.

One of the more comprehensive theories of group formation is 'balance' theory. It states that persons are attracted to each another on the basis of similar attitudes toward commonly relevant objects and goals. For example A will interact and form a relationship with B because of shared attitudes and values —these may be religion, politics, lifestyle, marriage, work, authority etc. Once a relationship is formed, the group members strive to maintain a balance between the attraction and the common attitudes. In case an imbalance occurs, they would make an attempt to restore the balance. The relationship dissolves when they fail to restore it.

John Thibaut and Harold Kelley have developed another theoretical approach to group formation namely, 'social exchange' theory. It is based up on cost-reward outcomes of interaction. According to this theory, individuals form relationships based on the implicit expectation of mutually beneficial exchanges based on trust and felt obligations. This theory explains that group membership will be more satisfying to a new prospective member if the group's outcomes in terms of costs and rewards are above the individual's expectation level. Group

membership will be unsatisfying to a new prospective member if the outcomes are below the individual's expectation level. The Mini-Max Principle is a part of social exchange theory that states that people will join and remain in a group that can provide them with the maximum amount of rewards while at the same time, ensuring the minimum amount of costs to them.

Social Identity theory offers another explanation for group formation. Simply put, this theory suggests that individuals get a sense of identity and self-esteem based on their membership in salient groups. The nature of the group may be demographically based, culturally based, or organisationally based. Individuals are motivated to belong to and contribute to identity groups because of the sense of belongingness and self-worth that the membership in the group provides.

Bruce Tuckman (1965) proposed the five stage model called Tuckman's stages for a group. Tuckman's model states that the ideal group decision-making process should occur in five stages.

1. **Forming:** This initial stage is marked by confusion and uncertainty. The major goals of the group have not been established and the group members are not sure about the purpose, structure, task or leadership of the group. Thus, forming is an orientation period when members getting to know one another and share expectations about the group. Members learn the purpose of the group as well as the rules to be followed. The forming stage should not be rushed because trust and openness must be developed in the initial stage of group formation. These feelings get strengthened in the later stages of group development. Individuals are often confused during this stage because their roles are not sufficiently clear and there may not be a strong leader at this stage.
2. **Storming:** This stage is characterised by conflict and confrontation. The group is likely to see the highest level of disagreement and conflict. Members often challenge the group goals and mutually struggle for power. Individuals often aspire for leadership position during this stage of development. Members often voice concern and criticism during this phase. If members are not able to resolve conflict, then the group might disband or continue in existence ineffectively.
3. **Norming:** This stage is characterised by the recognition of the individual differences and shared expectations. During this stage the group members will begin to develop a feeling of group cohesion and identify. Cooperative effort should begin to yield results. Responsibilities are divided among members and the group decides how it will evaluate progress.
4. **Performing:** Performing occurs when the group matures and attains a sense of cohesiveness. During this stage of development, individuals start accepting one another and conflict is resolved through group discussion. Members of the group make decisions through a rational process that is focused on relevant goals rather than on emotional issues.
5. **Adjourning:** Not all groups experience this stage of development because it is characterised by the disbanding of the group. Some groups are relatively permanent. Reasons that groups disband vary, with common reasons being

the accomplishment of the task or individuals deciding to go their own ways. Members of the group often experience feelings of closure or saturation as they prepare to leave.

Besides the above conceptual explanations for group formation and development, there are practical reasons for joining and / or forming a group. For instance, employees in an organisation may form a group for economic, security or social reasons. The most important practical reason because of which individuals join or form groups is that group tends to satisfy the intense social needs of most people. Research going as far back as the Hawthorne studies has found the affiliation motive to have a major impact on human behaviour in organisations.

6.4 TYPES OF GROUPS

Organisation is a collection of groups that are focused towards achieving the mutual goal of achieving success for the organisation. There are numerous types of groups. The theories of group formation discussed above are based on the attraction between two persons - dyad group. In the real world, however, groups are usually much more complex than a dyad. There are small and large groups, primary and secondary groups, coalitions, membership and reference groups, in and out groups, and formal and informal groups. Each type has different characteristics and varying effects on its members.

- (i) **Primary groups:** Often the terms 'small group' and 'primary group' are used interchangeably. Technically, however, there is a difference. A small group has to meet only the criterion of small size. The group must be small enough for face-to-face interaction and communication to occur. A primary group, in addition to being small, must have a feeling of comradeship, loyalty and a common sense of values among its member. Thus, all primary groups are small groups, but not all small groups are primary groups. Two examples of a primary group are the family and the peer group.
- (ii) **Secondary groups** are characterised by large size, individual identification with values and beliefs prevailing in them, rather than cultural interaction.
- (iii) **Social groups** refer to an integrated system of interrelated psychological groups formed to accomplish defined objectives.
- (iv) **Coalitions** are very relevant to organisations. These are constructed deliberately by the members for a specific purpose. These groups do not have formal internal structure. The members possess mutual perception. In simple terms, these are issue-oriented. Coalitions usually are powerful and effective entities in organisations.
- (v) **Membership and reference groups:** Besides primary groups and coalitions, there are also other groups that are important to the study of organisational behaviour. We can find distinctions between membership and reference groups. Membership groups are those to which the individual actually belongs. Reference groups are those to which an individual would like to belong and to which he or she identifies with.
- (vi) **In groups and out groups:** In groups are groups the members of which share dominant values, and out groups are on the outside, looking in.

(vii) **Formal groups:** One way to classify the groups is by way of formality – formal and informal. While formal groups are established by an organisation to achieve its goals, informal groups emerge spontaneously. A formal group is established under the legal or formal authority with the view to achieve particular end results. Formal groups may take the form of command groups, task groups and functional groups.

- a. **Command groups** are specified in the organisational chart and often consist of a supervisor and the subordinates in a hierarchical relationship. An example of a command group is a market research firm Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and the research associates under him.
- b. **Task groups** consist of people who work together to achieve a common task. Members are brought together to accomplish a specific range of goals within a given time period. Task groups are also commonly referred to as ‘task-force’. The organisation appoints members and assigns them the goals and tasks to be accomplished by them. Examples of assigned tasks are the development of a new product, the improvement of a production process, or designing the syllabus under the semester system. Other common task groups are ad hoc committees, project groups, and standing committees.
- c. **Functional groups** are created by the organisation to accomplish specific goals within an unspecified time-frame. Functional groups remain in existence even after the achievement of current goals and objectives. Examples of functional groups would be a marketing department, a customer service department or an accounting department.

(viii) **Informal groups:** In contrast to formal groups, informal groups are formed naturally and in response to the common interests and shared values of individuals. These groups refer to the aggregate of personal contact and interactions and network of relationship among individuals. These are created for purposes other than the accomplishment of organisational goals and do not have a specified time-frame. Informal groups are not appointed by the organisation; its members can even invite others to join them from time to time. Informal groups can have a strong positive or negative influences in organisations. These groups can take the form of interest groups, pressure groups, friendship groups, or reference groups. Informal groups play a significant role in the dynamics of organisational behaviour. Informal roles vary widely and may be volatile.

All these types of groups have relevance to the study of organisational behaviour, but the formal and informal types are most directly pertinent. The study of these groups and their impact on organisations is an interesting area in organisational behaviour.

6.5 IMPLICATIONS ON GROUP DYNAMICS

Starting with Hawthorne studies, there has been an abundance of significant research on groups that has implications for organisational behaviour and management. Besides the Hawthorne studies, there have been numerous

research studies on group dynamics that have directly contributed to the better understanding of organisational behaviour. It can be appreciated from research over the years that groups have a positive impact on both individual employee effectiveness and organisations effectiveness. The seminal work of social psychologist Stanley Schechter and his associates seems important for the application of group dynamics. The study tested under highly controlled conditions the effect that group cohesiveness and influence have on productivity. The results of Schechter's study contain some interesting implications for the study of organisation behaviour. The study highlighted that cohesive groups have very powerful dynamics, both positive and negative, for human resource management.

Group dynamics faces the following common problems:

- **Weak leadership:** When a team lacks a stronger leader, a more dominant member of the group can often take charge in his place. This can lead to a lack of direction, infighting, or a focus on wrong priorities.
- **Excessive obedience to authority:** This can happen when people want to be seen to agree with a leader and hold back from expressing their own opinions.
- **Blocking:** This happens when team members behave in a way that disrupts the flow of information in the group. Members can adopt the following blocking roles:
 - (i) **The aggressor:** He often disagrees with others or is occasionally inappropriately out-spoken.
 - (ii) **The negator:** This member is often critical of others' ideas.
 - (iii) **The withdrawer:** This person does not participate in the discussion.
 - (iv) **The recognition-seeker:** This group member is boastful or dominates the discussion.
 - (v) **The Joker:** This person introduces humour at inappropriate times.
 - (vi) **Group think:** This happens when people place a desire for consensus above their own desires to reach the right decision. This prevents people from fully exploring alternative solutions.
 - (vii) **Free riding:** Some group members take it easy, and leave their colleagues to do all the work. Free riders may work hard on their own, but often, they limit their contributions in group situations.
 - (viii) **Evaluation apprehension:** Team members' perceptions can also create a negative group dynamics. Evaluation apprehension happens when people feel that they are being judged in an unduly harsh manner by other group members, and they hold back their opinions as a result.

Check Your Progress 2

- Note:**
- i) Use the space given below for your answers.
 - ii) Check your answers with those given at the end of the Unit.

1. Explain Bruce Tuckman’s five stages model.

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2. Discuss the different types of groups.

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6.6 CONCLUSION

A group is a crucial component of an organisation. Groups are found in each and every organisation, whether big or small. Groups effectively influence individual and organisational development. They are extremely significant to the understanding of organisational behaviour.

The term ‘group dynamics’ contains two terms, viz Group and Dynamics. Group is generally a collectivity of two or more persons. Dynamics comes from the Greek word meaning force. Thus, group dynamics refers to the interaction of forces between group members in a social situation. The success or failure of a group depends on several factors. Joining a group is also determined by a number of factors which have been explained above.

There are quite a few theories that explain the process of group formation. George Homans activities, interactions and sentiments theory, balance theory, social exchange theory, social identity theory etc are some of the well-known theories on group formation. There are different types of groups such as small, large, primary, coalitions, formal and informal groups. As has been seen, groups have a positive impact on achieving both individual and organisational effectiveness.

6.7 GLOSSARY

Group Dynamics	: It describes the way in which people in a group interact with one another.
Group Think	: A deterioration of mental efficiency, reality testing and moral judgement that results from in-group pressures.
Informal Groups	: Informal groups do not have prescribed goals and relationships.
Cohesiveness	: The average resultant force acting on members in a group.

6.8 REFERENCES

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6.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1. Your answer should include the following points:

- Group dynamics refers to the interaction of forces between group members in a social situation.
- It encompasses the dynamics of interaction patterns within the group, the subtle and the non-subtle pressures exerted by group members, the manner in which decisions are made in the group, how work gets done and how members' needs are satisfied.

2. Your answer should include the following points:

- Objectives of group dynamics.
- Principles of group dynamics.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

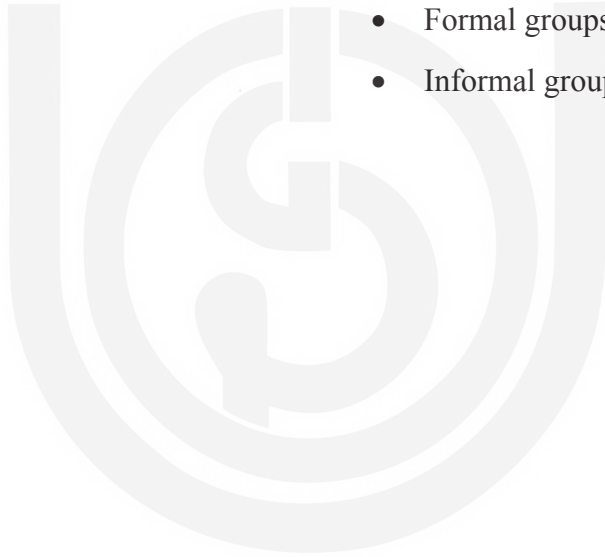
1. Your answer should include the following points:

**Organisational
Behaviour: Major
Facets**

- Forming
- Storming
- Norming
- Performing
- Adjourning

2. Your answer should include the following points:

- Primary groups
- Secondary groups
- Social groups
- Coalitions
- Membership and reference groups
- In groups and out groups
- Formal groups
- Informal groups



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