

# LESSON 21

## GROUP PROCESSES

### SUMMARY

Human life primarily depends on various kinds of groups. After we are born, we remain dependent upon fellow human beings to achieve various goals. We spend most of our time interacting with people.

#### 21.1 The nature of group

When two or more persons interact, we say that a group has come into existence. Each group strives to achieve a goal. The more explicit a goal is, the greater the interaction and cooperation among the group members. The relationship among group members remains stable or continues for some time (months, or years). The group also has a structure and members think that they are part of a group or have a feeling of belongingness.

**At the physical level any collectivity, with a purpose can be called a group.** In these groups direct and immediate communication among the members of group is possible and usually takes place.

**Persons possessing certain common characteristics, too, are conceived to form a group.** All elements in the set possess at least one common characteristic which non-members may lack. One member may not necessarily know another member.

The most important characteristic of a group is **interdependence**. It may be related to behaviours, outcomes and tasks.

#### Interdependence of behaviour

- the behaviour of one member gives rise to another member's behaviour and which in turn forces the entire group to perform certain functions

#### Interdependence of outcome

- 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

#### Task interdependence

- to achieve a goal, group members need to coordinate their activities

#### 21.2 How groups operate?

Important aspects of group functioning are the group norms (rules), roles and status of members. Finally, a group may be highly integrated and members may share cohesiveness or may lack it.

#### Norms

- In any group different members are required to perform different roles.

#### Roles

- Each group functions according to certain rules. These rules constitute the norms.

#### Status

- The different roles carry a specific rank or standing in the group and is related to nature of task assigned and power to influence decision making.

#### 21.3 The nature of group processes

A group can be helpful to individual in at least four ways:

to achieve those goals that one cannot attain individually

the group members have resources (economic or otherwise)

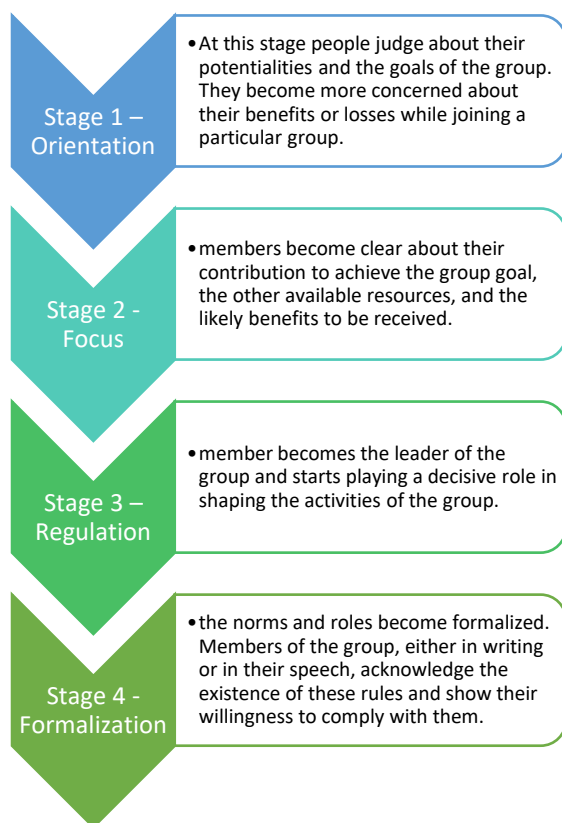
to meet the need for security

to provide positive social identity

## Outcome of Group Experiences: Cohesiveness

A sense of satisfaction leads to cohesiveness in the group. A cohesive group has a higher level of solidarity and consensus. There are forces in the structure of the group that act on the members to remain in the group.

### 21.4 Stages in Group formation



### 21.5 Types of Groups



Primary groups - more or less continued, intimate, face-to-face association and cooperation. Members have a common fate. This group is nucleus of all social organizations.

Secondary groups - special interest groups. Members of these groups do not necessarily have face-to-face contact although there may be direct interaction among them. People become members of this group to satisfy their psychological needs such as prestige, companionship, etc.



### 21.6 Effects of group on individual's behaviour

#### Decision Making

**Risky shift** - It has been found that while taking decisions an individual, when left alone, takes less risk. On the other hand, when he or she is present in a group, there appears a tendency on the part of an individual to take greater amount of risk. The group as a whole takes greater risk than the individual. It is believed that it is due to the spread of responsibility and from persuasive communication.

**Social Facilitation** - It refers to the influence of the presence of others persons on one's performance. When performing an easy task, there is a possibility that other group members evaluate an individual's work, they try to show their best performance. On the other hand, such awareness interferes with your ability to perform when the task is complex and your performance decreases.

#### Evaluate yourself

1. Discuss the different stages of group formation.
2. Define norms, status and roles in context of group.
3. What are the effects of group on individual behaviour?