

Lesson:-24
GROUP AND FORMATION OF GROUPS

Welcome students to the module of Group Behaviour. Up till now we have restricted ourselves to check the behavior of individuals within the organization. But individuals may sometimes need to work in groups in the organization. So in this lesson we shall try to understand about group and the influence of behavior of individuals while working in a group .

So students Consider a collection of people waiting at a bus stop for a series of buses. Do these people constitute a group?

No! These people are simply that; a collection of people. As a collection of people waiting for buses, they probably do not interact , they lack cohesion (as they may be heading off in different directions), and, unless they are somehow huddled together against the rain, they are unlikely to see any commonality of interest between them.

Defining a group : Two or more people constitute a group if...

1. they have some common purpose or goal...
2. there exists a relatively stable structure -- a hierarchy (perhaps a leader), an established set of roles, or a standardized pattern of interaction...
3. this collection of people see themselves as being part of that group

So students "Why do groups form?", There are a number of general tendencies within us such as:

The similarity-attraction effect: *we like people who are similar to us in some way*

Exposure: *we like people whom we have been exposed to repeatedly*

Reciprocity: *we like people who like us*

Basking in reflected glory: *we seek to associate with successful, prestigious groups*

Furthermore, we also tend to avoid individuals who possess objectionable characteristics.

Further more there are number of reasons why people join groups which are as follows;

Affiliation

Humans are by nature **gregarious**. Groups provide a natural way for people to gather in order to satisfy their **social needs**.

Goal achievement

Problems and tasks that require the utilization of knowledge tend to give groups an advantage over individuals. There is more information in a group than in any one of its members, and groups tend to provide a greater number of approaches to solving any particular problem

Power

Individuals gain **power** in their relationship with their employers by forming unions.

Status

Membership in a particular service clubs or a political body may be seen to confer status on members. So as to gain that status people join in such groups

Self-esteem

As suggested by Maslow, people have a basic desire for **self-esteem**. Group membership may nurture self-esteem. If one belongs to a successful group, the self-esteem of all members may be boosted.

Security

Sometimes individuals need **protection** from other groups or more powerful individuals -- "there is safety in numbers". These individuals may seek security in group membership. Neighbors may form a "Block Watch" group to ensure the security and protection of their neighborhood.

The important characteristics of groups are as follows:

- ✓ Social interaction. The members of a group affect each other and there is a definite pattern of interaction among them.
- ✓ Stability. Groups also must possess a stable structure. Although groups can change, which often they do, there must be some stable relationship that keeps the group members together and functioning as a unit.
- ✓ **Common interests or goals.** Members of a group must share some common interests or goals that bind the group together.
- ✓ **Recognition as being a group.** It is not just being together would ensure the formation of a proper group. The members of the group must also perceive themselves as a group. They must recognize each other as a member of their group and can distinguish them from nonmembers.

Types of Groups

There can be different types of groups that might exist, which have been depicted in Figure 1 below. The most common way of distinguishing between groups is to categorizing the groups into **formal or informal groups**. *Formal groups* are deliberately created by the organization in order to help the organizational members achieve some of the important the organizational goals. The *informal groups*, in contrast, develop rather spontaneously among an organization's members without any direction from the organizational authorities.

There are various types of **formal groups** that are found in an organization. These are:

- ❖ **Command group** which is determined by the organizational chart depicting the approved formal connections between individuals in an organization. Examples of command group are Director and the faculty members in a business school, school principal and teachers, production manager and supervisors, etc.
- ❖ **Task groups**, comprising some individuals with special interest or expertise, are created by the organizational authorities to work together in order to complete a specific task. Task groups are often not restricted to the organizational hierarchy and can be cross functional in nature. Examples of task group might be people working on a particular project.
- ❖ **Standing committee** is a permanent committee in an organization to deal with some specific types of problems that may arise more or less on a regular basis. Examples of standing committees include the standing committee in a university to discuss various academic and administrative issues.
- ❖ **Task force / ad hoc committee**, in contrast, is a temporary committee formed by organizational members from across various functional areas for a special purpose. Meetings can also come under this category.

Various types of **informal groups** are:

- ❖ **Interest groups** are formed when a group of employees band together to seek some common objectives, like protesting some organizational policy or joining the union to achieve a higher amount of bonus.
- ❖ **Friendship groups** develop among the organizational members when they share some common interest like participating in some sports activities or staging the office drama, etc.
- ❖ **Reference groups** are the groups, with which individuals identify and compare themselves. These could be within the organization when a middle level executive compares himself with the higher level executive and longs for the perks and benefits enjoyed by the latter. The reference group might exist outside the organization as well when an individual compares himself with his batch mates working in other organizations or an ideal group of people he likes to become.

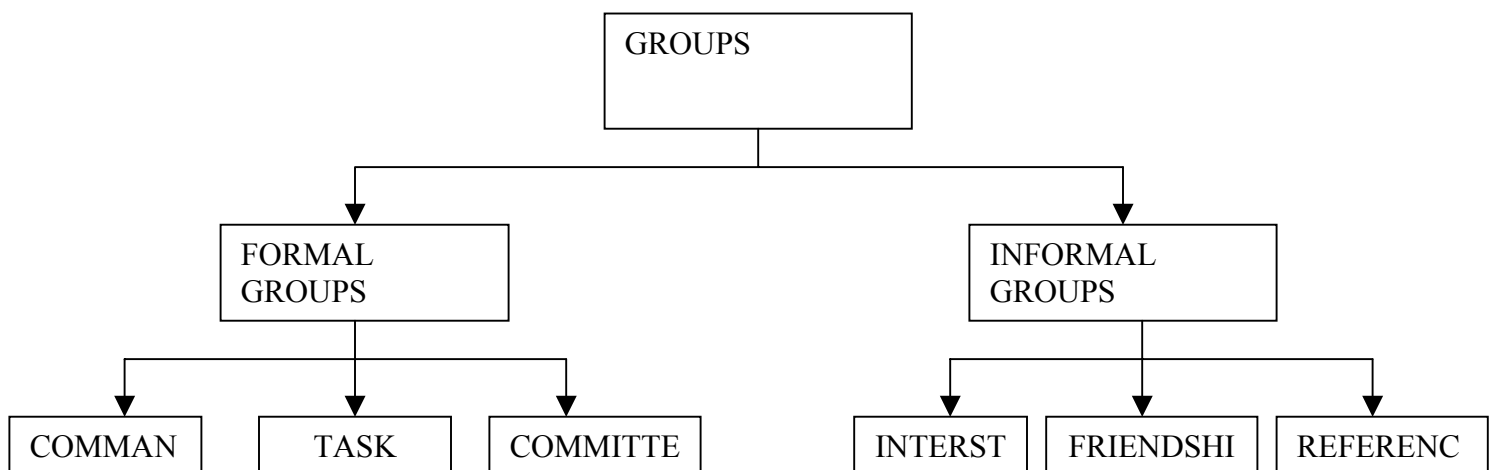


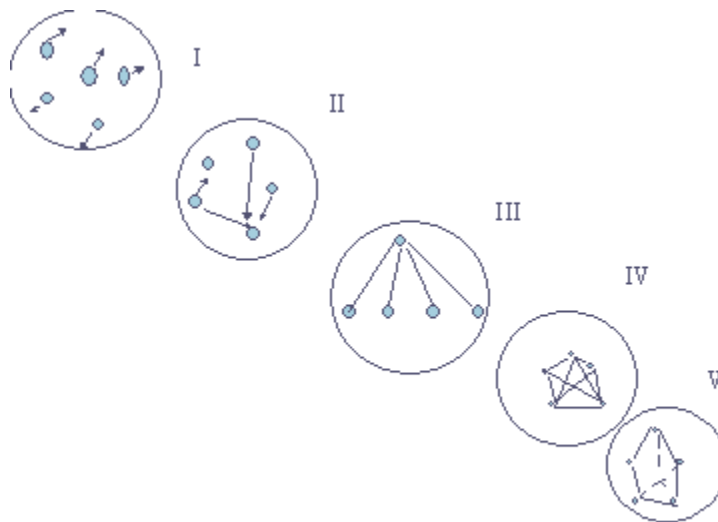
Figure 1: Types of Groups

How Groups Are Formed?

Formation of Groups

Two models of group development have been offered by the researchers in the field of social sciences to explain how groups are formed. These are: a) Five-Stage Model and b) Punctuated Equilibrium Model.

According to the **Five-Stage Model** of group development, groups go through five distinct stages during the process of its development. These are as follows:



Five-Stage Model

- ❖ **Forming** is the initial stage of group development when the group members first come in contact with others and get acquainted with each other. This stage is characterized predominantly by a feeling of uncertainty among the group members as they now try to establish ground rules and pattern of relationship among themselves.
- ❖ **Storming** is the next stage that is characterized by a high degree of conflict among the members. Members often show hostility towards each other and resist the leader's control. If these conflicts are not adequately resolved, the group may even be disbanded.

But, usually the group eventually comes in terms with each other and accepts the leadership role at the end of this stage.

- ❖ **Norming** is the third stage of the group development process during which the group members become closer to each other and the group starts functioning as a cohesive unit. The group members now identify themselves with the group and share responsibility for achieving the desired level of performance of the group. Norming stage is complete when the group members can set a common target and agree on the way of achieving this.
- ❖ **Performing** is the fourth stage when the group is finally ready to start working. As the group is now fully formed after resolving their internal conflicts of acceptance and sharing responsibility, they can now devote energy to achieve its objectives.
- ❖ **Adjourning** is the final stage when the group, after achieving the objectives for which it was created, starts to gradually dissolve itself.

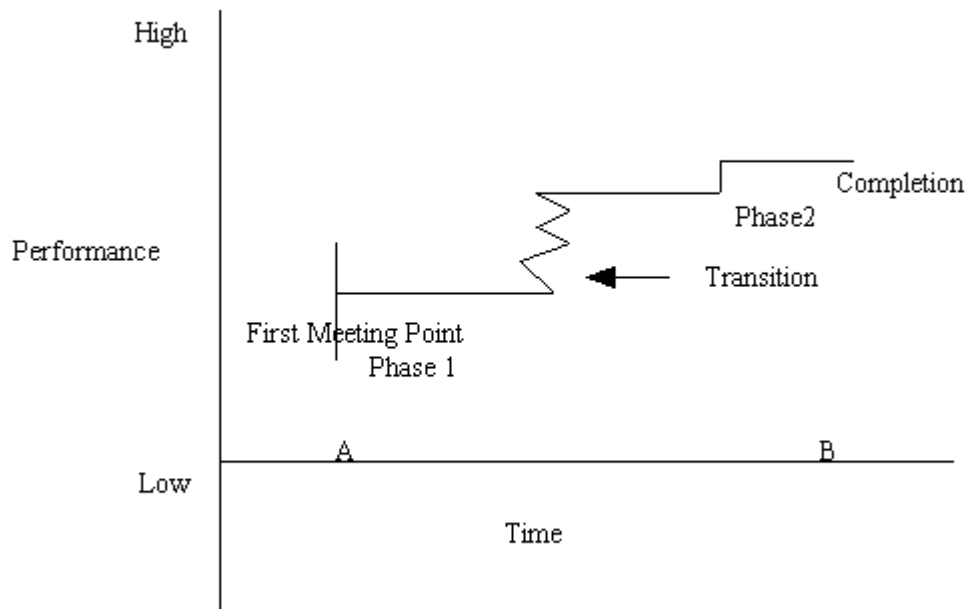
Many interpreters of the five-stage model have assumed that a group becomes more effective as it progresses through the first four stages. While this assumption may be generally true, what makes a group effective is more complex than this model acknowledges. Under some conditions, high levels of conflict are conducive to high group performance. So we might expect to find situations in which groups in Stage II outperform those in Stages III or IV. Similarly, groups do not always proceed clearly from one stage to the next. Sometimes, in fact, several stages go on simultaneously, as when groups are storming and performing at the same time. Groups even occasionally regress to previous stages. Therefore, even the strongest proponents of this model do not assume that all groups follow its five-stage process precisely or that Stage IV is always the most preferable.

Another problem with the five-stage model, in terms of understanding work-related behavior, is that it ignores organizational context.⁴ For instance, a study of a cockpit crew in an airliner found that, within 10 minutes, three strangers assigned to fly together for the first time had become a high-performing group. What allowed for this speedy group development was the strong organizational context surrounding the tasks of the cockpit crew. This context provided the rules, task definitions, information, and resources needed for the group to perform. They didn't need to develop plans, assign roles, determine and allocate resources, resolve conflicts, and set norms the way the five-stage model predicts.

An Alternative Model: For Temporary Groups With Deadlines

Temporary groups with deadlines don't seem to follow the previous model. Studies indicate that they have their own unique sequencing of actions (or inaction): (1) Their first meeting sets the group's direction; (2) this first phase of group activity is one of inertia; (3) a transition takes place at the end of this first phase, which occurs exactly when the group has used up half its allotted time; (4) a transition initiates major changes; (5) a second phase of inertia follows the transition; and (6) the group's last meeting is characterized by markedly accelerated activity. This pattern is called the **punctuated equilibrium model** and is shown below.

Figure: Punctuated equilibrium Model



The first meeting sets the group's direction. A framework of behavioral patterns and assumptions through which the group will approach its project emerges in this first meeting. These lasting patterns can appear as early as the first few seconds of the group's life.

Once set, the group's direction becomes "written in stone" and is unlikely to be reexamined throughout the first half of the group's life. This is a period of inertia that is, the group tends to stand still or become locked into a fixed course of action. Even if it gains new insights that challenge initial patterns and assumptions, the group is incapable of acting on these new insights in Phase 1.

One of the more interesting discoveries made in these studies was that each group experienced its transition at the same point in its calendar—precisely halfway between its first meeting and its official deadline—despite the fact that some groups spent as little as an hour on their project while others spent six months. It was as if the groups universally experienced a midlife crisis at this point. The midpoint appears to work like an alarm clock, heightening members' awareness that their time is limited and that they need to "get moving."

This transition ends Phase 1 and is characterized by a concentrated burst of changes in which old patterns are dropped and new perspectives are adopted. The transition sets a revised direction for Phase 2.

Phase 2 is a new equilibrium or period of inertia. In this phase, the group executes plans created during the transition period.

The group's last meeting is characterized by a final burst of activity to finish its work.

In summary, the punctuated-equilibrium model characterizes groups as exhibiting long periods of inertia interspersed with brief revolutionary changes triggered primarily by their members' awareness of time and deadlines. Keep in mind, however, that this model doesn't apply to all groups. It's essentially limited to temporary task groups that are working under a time-constrained completion deadline.

Group Structure refers to the pattern of interrelationship that exists among the group members, and makes the group functioning orderly and predictable. Four important aspects of group's structure are:

- ❖ **Role** or the typical part played by an individual group member in accordance with the expectations of other members from him. Role expectations refer to the behaviours that are expected from the person playing the role. The person holding the role is known as the role incumbent. Role ambiguity takes place when the person holding the role feels confused and does not know what is being expected from him. The role incumbent is said to suffer from the problem role identity when he faces difficulty in accepting the assigned role.
- ❖ **Norms** or the rules and mutual expectations that develop within the group. This refers to the generally agreed upon rules that guide the group members' behaviour. Norms have profound effect on members' behaviour as it ensures conformity among them. Norms can be of two types: *prescriptive* when it dictates behaviours that should be performed and *proscriptive* when it dictates specific behaviours that should be avoided by the group members.
- ❖ **Status** or the relative prestige or social position given to groups or individuals by others. People often join the core group or a renowned club because of the prestige associated with these groups.
- ❖ **Group cohesiveness** referring to the strength of group members' desires to remain a part of the group. This also refers to the degree of attraction of the group members for each other and the 'we-feeling' among the members. The degree of cohesiveness has been found to depend on external threats, the difficulty in getting included in the group, the amount of time spent by the group members with each other and the success of the group.

Individual's Performance in Groups

Groups are formed with individuals, but the output of the groups is not just the sum-total of individual's contribution towards the group. The term *group synergy* refers to the fact the action of two or more group members result in an effect that is different from the individual summation of their contributions. This occurs because of the *social facilitation effect* which refers to the tendency for performance of an individual group member to improve in response to the presence of other members. However, the group performance is not always guaranteed to improve as often group members are found to exert less individual effort. This is known as *social loafing* when members are found to enjoy a 'free ride' which tends to increase with group's size.

Groups and Teams

Do you still remember the excitement during the last world cup and the way the Indian team performed? No matter what they could finally achieve or not, we all used to comment on spirit of the Indian team. A team can be defined as a special type of group whose members have complementary skills and are committed to a common purpose or set of goals for which they hold themselves mutually accountable. In the recent times, a lot of emphasis is being given on developing teams. The importance of teams has long been appreciated in the world of sports, and now it is being used increasingly in the realm of business and industry as well. Though there are similarities between groups and teams and these two terms are often used interchangeably, there are in fact a few striking differences between the two. The following table will help to summarize this.

Work Groups

Work Teams

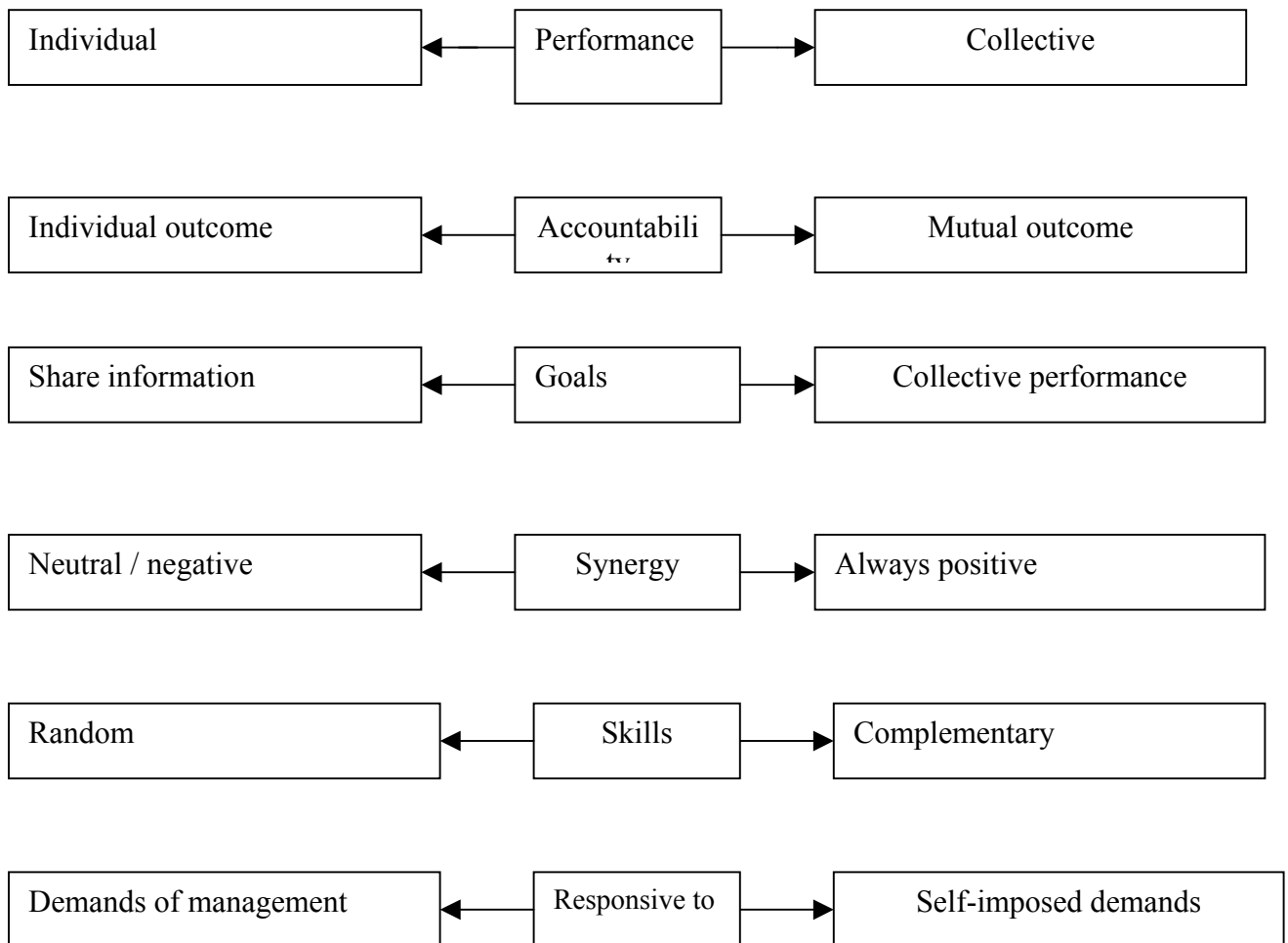
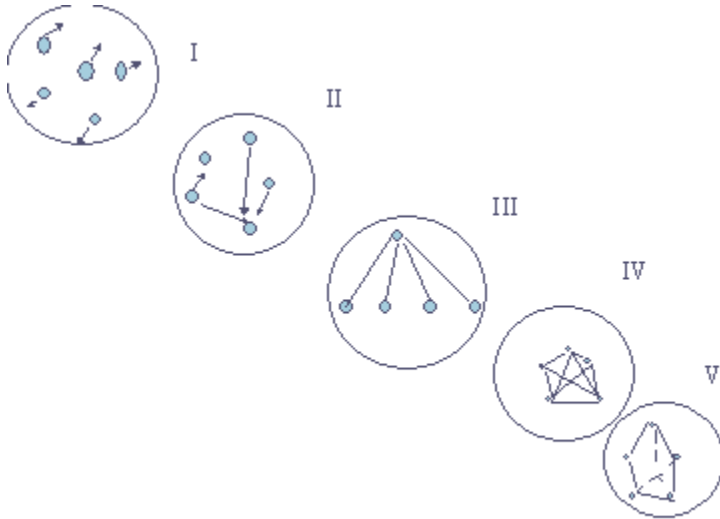


Table 1: Groups and Teams

Implications for Managers

The recognition of the existence of both formal and informal groups in any organization and an understanding of the basic processes involved have created a profound effect on the functioning and outlook of the managers in today's workplace. Understandably, there is now a great deal of concern in developing groups and effective teams as there is ample evidence to support the view that organizational performance improved when the employees are encouraged to work in groups rather than working as an individual member.



Five-stage group development model