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# **Introduction to Group Dynamics**

**SOW203**



**University of Ibadan Distance Learning Centre**  
**Open and Distance Learning Course Series Development**





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## **Vice-Chancellor's Message**

The Distance Learning Centre is building on a solid tradition of over two decades of service in the provision of External Studies Programme and now Distance Learning Education in Nigeria and beyond. The Distance Learning mode to which we are committed is providing access to many deserving Nigerians in having access to higher education especially those who by the nature of their engagement do not have the luxury of full time education. Recently, it is contributing in no small measure to providing places for teeming Nigerian youths who for one reason or the other could not get admission into the conventional universities.

These course materials have been written by writers specially trained in ODL course delivery. The writers have made great efforts to provide up to date information, knowledge and skills in the different disciplines and ensure that the materials are user-friendly.

In addition to provision of course materials in print and e-format, a lot of Information Technology input has also gone into the deployment of course materials. Most of them can be downloaded from the DLC website and are available in audio format which you can also download into your mobile phones, IPod, MP3 among other devices to allow you listen to the audio study sessions. Some of the study session materials have been scripted and are being broadcast on the university's Diamond Radio FM 101.1, while others have been delivered and captured in audio-visual format in a classroom environment for use by our students. Detailed information on availability and access is available on the website. We will continue in our efforts to provide and review course materials for our courses.

However, for you to take advantage of these formats, you will need to improve on your I.T. skills and develop requisite distance learning Culture. It is well known that, for efficient and effective provision of Distance learning education, availability of appropriate and relevant course materials is a *sine qua non*. So also, is the availability of multiple plat form for the convenience of our students. It is in fulfilment of this, that series of course materials are being written to enable our students study at their own pace and convenience.

It is our hope that you will put these course materials to the best use.



Prof. Abel Idowu Olayinka

Vice-Chancellor

## **Foreword**

As part of its vision of providing education for “Liberty and Development” for Nigerians and the International Community, the University of Ibadan, Distance Learning Centre has recently embarked on a vigorous repositioning agenda which aimed at embracing a holistic and all encompassing approach to the delivery of its Open Distance Learning (ODL) programmes. Thus we are committed to global best practices in distance learning provision. Apart from providing an efficient administrative and academic support for our students, we are committed to providing educational resource materials for the use of our students. We are convinced that, without an up-to-date, learner-friendly and distance learning compliant course materials, there cannot be any basis to lay claim to being a provider of distance learning education. Indeed, availability of appropriate course materials in multiple formats is the hub of any distance learning provision worldwide.

In view of the above, we are vigorously pursuing as a matter of priority, the provision of credible, learner-friendly and interactive course materials for all our courses. We commissioned the authoring of, and review of course materials to teams of experts and their outputs were subjected to rigorous peer review to ensure standard. The approach not only emphasizes cognitive knowledge, but also skills and humane values which are at the core of education, even in an ICT age.

The development of the materials which is on-going also had input from experienced editors and illustrators who have ensured that they are accurate, current and learner-friendly. They are specially written with distance learners in mind. This is very important because, distance learning involves non-residential students who can often feel isolated from the community of learners.

It is important to note that, for a distance learner to excel there is the need to source and read relevant materials apart from this course material. Therefore, adequate supplementary reading materials as well as other information sources are suggested in the course materials.

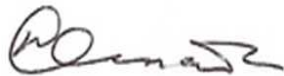
Apart from the responsibility for you to read this course material with others, you are also advised to seek assistance from your course facilitators especially academic advisors during your study even before the interactive session which is by design for revision. Your academic advisors will assist you using convenient technology including Google Hang Out, You Tube, Talk Fusion, etc. but you have to take advantage of these. It is also going to be of immense advantage if you complete assignments as at when due so as to have necessary feedbacks as a guide.

The implication of the above is that, a distance learner has a responsibility to develop requisite distance learning culture which includes diligent and disciplined self-study, seeking available administrative and academic support and acquisition of basic information technology skills. This is why you are encouraged to develop your computer skills by availing yourself the opportunity of training that the Centre’s provide and put these into use.

In conclusion, it is envisaged that the course materials would also be useful for the regular students of tertiary institutions in Nigeria who are faced with a dearth of high quality textbooks. We are therefore, delighted to present these titles to both our distance learning students and the university's regular students. We are confident that the materials will be an invaluable resource to all.

We would like to thank all our authors, reviewers and production staff for the high quality of work.

Best wishes.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bayo Okunade', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Professor Bayo Okunade

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## About this course manual

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Introduction to Group Dynamics SOW203 has been produced by University of Ibadan Distance Learning Centre. All course manuals produced by University of Ibadan Distance Learning Centre are structured in the same way, as outlined below.

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### How this course manual is structured

#### The course overview

The course overview gives you a general introduction to the course. Information contained in the course overview will help you determine:

- If the course is suitable for you.
- What you will already need to know.
- What you can expect from the course.
- How much time you will need to invest to complete the course.

The overview also provides guidance on:

- Study skills.
- Where to get help.
- Course assignments and assessments.
- Margin icons.

We strongly recommend that you read the overview *carefully* before starting your study.

#### The course content

The course is broken down into Study Sessions. Each Study Session comprises:

- An introduction to the Study Session content.
- Study Session outcomes.
- Core content of the Study Session with a variety of learning activities.

- A Study Session summary.
- Assignments and/or assessments, as applicable.
- Bibliography

## Your comments

After completing Introduction to Group Dynamics we would appreciate it if you would take a few moments to give us your feedback on any aspect of this course. Your feedback might include comments on:

- Course content and structure.
- Course reading materials and resources.
- Course assignments.
- Course assessments.
- Course duration.
- Course support (assigned tutors, technical help, etc.)

Your constructive feedback will help us to improve and enhance this course.



# Course Overview

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## Welcome to Introduction to Group Dynamics SOW203

It is imperative that we examine the nature of a group and what constitute group dynamics. This is because a group is always moving, doing something, changing, becoming interacting and acting. You will therefore be introduced to the nature of groups, group dynamics, groups and functions they perform in social work. The course will also include detailed discussions on group goals and personal goals, group development, group cohesion, theories in group dynamics, leadership and leadership roles, decision making in groups, power and influence in groups, communication in groups, conflicts and conflicts resolutions. Finally, we will explore the approaches for resolving controversies and conflicts within group members and between groups.

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## Course outcomes

Upon completion of Introduction to Group Dynamics SOW203 you will be able to:



### Outcomes

- *describe* the properties of a group.
- *appraise* group dynamics.
- *discuss* the guidelines for formulation goals.
- *describe* how a group is formed.
- *explain* the consequences of group cohesion.
- *appraise* the theoretical perspectives in group dynamic.
- *explain* the approaches to leadership.
- *appraise* the effects of unequal power in groups.
- *describe* how to communicate effectively in groups.

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## Timeframe



### How long?

This is a 15 week course. It requires a formal study time of 45 hours. The formal study times are scheduled around online discussions / chats with your course facilitator / academic advisor to facilitate your learning. Kindly see course calendar on your course website for scheduled dates. You will still require independent/personal study time particularly in studying your course materials.

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## How to be successful in this course



As an open and distance learner your approach to learning will be different to that from your school days, where you had onsite education. You will now choose what you want to study, you will have professional and/or personal motivation for doing so and you will most likely be fitting your study activities around other professional or domestic responsibilities.

Essentially you will be taking control of your learning environment. As a consequence, you will need to consider performance issues related to time management, goal setting, stress management, etc. Perhaps you will also need to reacquaint yourself in areas such as essay planning, coping with exams and using the web as a learning resource.

We recommend that you take time now—before starting your self-study—to familiarize yourself with these issues. There are a number of excellent resources on the web. A few suggested links are:

- <http://www.dlc.ui.edu.ng/resources/studyskill.pdf>

This is a resource of the UIDLC pilot course module. You will find sections on building study skills, time scheduling, basic concentration techniques, control of the study environment, note taking, how to read essays for analysis and memory skills (“remembering”).

- [http://www.ivywise.com/newsletter\\_march13\\_how\\_to\\_self\\_study.html](http://www.ivywise.com/newsletter_march13_how_to_self_study.html)

This site provides how to master self-studying, with bias to emerging technologies.

- <http://www.howtostudy.org/resources.php>

Another “How to study” web site with useful links to time management, efficient reading, questioning/listening/observing skills, getting the most out of doing (“hands-on” learning), memory building, tips for staying motivated, developing a learning plan.

The above links are our suggestions to start you on your way. At the time of writing these web links were active. If you want to look for more, go to [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) and type “self-study

basics”, “self-study tips”, “self-study skills” or similar phrases.

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## Need help?



Help

As earlier noted, this course manual complements and supplements SOW203at UI Mobile Class as an online course, which is domiciled at [www.dlc.ui.edu.ng/mc](http://www.dlc.ui.edu.ng/mc).

You may contact any of the following units for information, learning resources and library services.

**Distance Learning Centre Head Office (DLC)**  
Morohundiya Complex,  
University of Ibadan, Nigeria Ibadan-Ilorin Expressway,  
Tel: (+234) 08077593551 – 55 Idi-Ose, Ibadan.  
(Student Support Officers)  
Email: [ssu@dlc.ui.edu.ng](mailto:ssu@dlc.ui.edu.ng)

**Information Centre**  
20 Awolowo Road, Bodija,  
Ibadan.

For technical issues (computer problems, web access, and etcetera), please send mail to [webmaster@dlc.ui.edu.ng](mailto:webmaster@dlc.ui.edu.ng).

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## Academic Support



Help

A course facilitator is commissioned for this course. You have also been assigned an academic advisor to provide learning support. The contacts of your course facilitator and academic advisor for this course are available at [onlineacademicsupport@dlc.ui.edu.ng](mailto:onlineacademicsupport@dlc.ui.edu.ng)

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## Activities



### Activities

This manual features “Activities,” which may present material that is NOT extensively covered in the Study Sessions. When completing these activities, you will demonstrate your understanding of basic material (by answering questions) before you learn more advanced concepts. You will be provided with answers to every activity question. Therefore, your emphasis when working the activities should be on understanding your answers. It is more important that you understand why every answer is correct.

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## Assessments



### Assessments

There are three basic forms of assessment in this course: in-text questions (ITQs) and self assessment questions (SAQs), and tutor marked assessment (TMAs). This manual is essentially filled with ITQs and SAQs. Feedbacks to the ITQs are placed immediately after the questions, while the feedbacks to SAQs are at the back of manual. You will receive your TMAs as part of online class activities at the UI Mobile Class. Feedbacks to TMAs will be provided by your tutor in not more than 2 weeks expected duration. Schedule dates for submitting assignments and engaging in course / class activities is available on the course website. Kindly visit your course website often for updates.

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## Bibliography



### Readings








For those interested in learning more on this subject, we provide you with a list of additional resources at the end of this course manual; these may be books, articles or websites.

# Getting around this course manual

## Margin icons

While working through this course manual you will notice the frequent use of margin icons. These icons serve to “signpost” a particular piece of text, a new task or change in activity; they have been included to help you to find your way around this course manual.

A complete icon set is shown below. We suggest that you familiarize yourself with the icons and their meaning before starting your study.

			
Activity	Assessment	Assignment	Case study
			
Discussion	Group Activity	Help	Outcomes
			
Note	Reflection	Reading	Study skills
			
Summary	Terminology	Time	Tip

## Study Session 1

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# Nature of Groups

## Introduction

In this Study Session, we will examine the meaning of a group and its properties. We will also discuss the various types of group and their functions.

### Learning Outcomes



When you have studied this session, you should be able to:

- 1.1 *define* and use correctly the term “group”.
- 1.2 *describe* five properties of a group.
- 1.3 *discuss* at least four types of group and with their functions.

## 1.1 Meaning of a Group

A **group** simply refers to a collection of people, characterized by a definable membership, group consciousness, and a sense of shared purpose. According to Shaw (1981), a group refers to two or more people who interact and influence one another. It refers to two or more people, who for longer than a few moment, interact with and influence one another and perceive one another as “us” (Myers. 1993). Groups are always essential to human life, for instance, our primal ancestors protected themselves from dangerous animals, human enemies and disasters by joining together in groups. Religious rites, too, have traditionally been group activities (Zander, 1985).

Schaefer and Lamm (1995) defined a group to mean any number of people with similar norms, values, and expectations who regularly and consciously interact. A group, according to Forsyth (1999), refers to two or more interdependent individuals who influence one another through social interaction.

The above definitions point to the fact that members of the group have relationships to one another that make them interdependent to some significant degree.

## 1.2 Properties of Groups

Every group is unique in some ways, but two groups are never the same. Therefore, when we study a group, we must go beyond its unique qualities by considering characteristics common to most groups. These are interaction, structure, cohesiveness, social identity, and goals.

### 1.2.1 Interaction

Group members do things to and with each other. Group interaction comes in many guises, but much of the interaction revolves around the task the group must accomplish. For instance, in most groups, members must coordinate their various skills, resources and motivation so that the group can make a decision, generate a product or achieve a victory. Other interactions come from the interpersonal or socio-emotional side of group life (e.g. if any member of a group – artist, teacher, and so on, need financial support, the others will buoy or raise him up with kind words or money).

### 1.2.2 Structure

This is another property common to most groups. In every group, there is a structure, which is the stable pattern of relationships among members. The structure entails roles and norms. These specify the general behaviour expected of people who occupy different positions within the group.

The roles of leader and follower are fundamental ones in many groups. However, roles like information seeker, information giver, elaborator, encourager, procedural technician, compromizer and harmonizer may emerge in any group (Salazar, 1996).

### 1.2.3 Group Cohesion

The strength of the bonds linking members to one another and to their group is what is known as its group cohesion. This defines the unity, oneness and solidarity of the group.

Groups vary in their level of cohesiveness. However, all groups require some modicum of cohesiveness or else, the group would disintegrate and cease to exist as a group.

It should be mentioned here that increase in cohesiveness generally implies increase in the group's capacity to retain its



members. Therefore, every group must ensure that the bonds linking its members together are very strong.

### **1.2.4 Social Identity**

This amounts to a shared perception of individuals as members of the same group or social category.

Social identity is also called collective identity. This includes all self-conceptions that arise from membership in all kinds of social groups, including clubs, cliques, communities, and religions.

Forsyth (1999) regarded social identity as that part of the self-concept that derives from one's membership in social groups and categories; and as self-conceptions shared by members of the same group or category.

Therefore, in any meaningful group, members should have a sense of belonging to the group and easily identify with it.

### **1.2.5 Goals**

Groups usually exist for a reason. For instance, artists want recognition for their works, doctors, nurses, social workers all comes together as professionals to review patients' cases, and so on.

In each case, members of the group are united in their pursuit of common goals (e.g. generating ideas or plans, solving a problem, resolving a conflict, making decision, forming judgement, etc.).

A goal is an end toward which an individual or group of people is working (Zastrow, 2001). It is an ideal or desired achievement that people value.

A personal goal is a goal held by a member of group, while a group goal is one held by enough members of a group that the group can be working toward achieving it. All groups have goals and every individual who joins a group has personal goals.

Groups generally have both short-range and long-range goals. The short-range goals are usually stepping-stones to the long-range goals.

## 1.3 Types and Functions of Groups

### 1.3.1 Primary/Small Group

Charles Horton Cooley (1902:23-57) coined the term primary group to refer to a small group characterized by intimate, face-to-face association and cooperation, e.g. members of a family living in the same household or members of a street gang (Schaefer and Lamm, 1995).

Primary group (e.g. the family) plays a pivotal role both in the socialization process and in the development of roles and statuses. Indeed, primary group can be instrumental in a person's day-to-day existence.

### 1.3.2 Secondary/Large Groups

These refer to a formal, impersonal group in which there is little social intimacy or mutual understanding. Examples of secondary groups include institutional groups like colleges, universities, agencies, organizations and so on. Secondary groups are large and perform complex functions.

### 1.3.3 Reference Groups

These are groups which individuals use as a standard for evaluating themselves and their own behaviour. For example, a high school student who aspires to join the "Kegite club" will pattern his or her behaviour after that of the group. He will start dressing like "kegites", singing their songs and dancing like them.

Reference groups have two basic purposes. They serve a normative function by setting and enforcing standard of conduct and belief. They also perform a comparison function by setting a standard against which people can measure themselves and others. For instance, a student social worker can evaluate him/herself against a reference group composed of professional social workers, or social work educators, field supervisors and so on.

In many cases, people model their behaviour after groups to which they do not belong. Thus, student social workers can model their behaviours after those of the student nurses, medical students and others.

It is important, therefore, to recognize that individuals are often influenced by two or more reference groups at the same time.

### **1.3.4 Self-Help Groups**

These are groups that aim at helping individuals in difficulties overcome them. Self-help groups constitute one alternative to coping alone by assisting members to meet their specific needs through the understanding and help of others who have had similar experience.

Self-help groups are diverse. Some are small, grassroots affiliation unrelated to external structures, others are part of large, well-organized national organizations (Zastrow, 2001).

Self-help groups can be regarded as a support system, a social movement, a spiritual movement and; secular religion, as an alternative care-giving system adjunct to professional helping systems; and as an organization of the deviant and stigmatized. They consist of people who share common conditions, experiences or problematic situations (e.g. obesity, alcoholism, mental illness, child abuse, rape, single parents, etc.), and mutually seek to assist each other to enhance their coping capacities related to their common factors (Hepworth and Larsen, 1993).

When people help each other in self-help groups, they tend to feel empowered, as they are able to control important aspects of their lives. Empowerment increases motivation, energy, personal growth and an ability to help that goes beyond helping oneself and receiving help.

Self-help groups tend to be self-supporting and thrive largely on donations from friend, and relatives than on government funds, foundation grants, or fees from the public. Forsyth (1999) gave few examples of self-help group as follow:

- a. **Anti-addiction group:** e.g. alcoholics anonymous, gamblers anonymous, weight watchers, etc.
- b. **Family support group:** e.g. adult children of alcoholics.
- c. **Medical and Rehabilitation group:** e.g. national bell's palsy online support group, cancer after care rehabilitation society, etc.
- d. **General social support group:** e.g. association of the childless and childfree, parents without partners.

### 1.3.5 Therapeutic Groups

These are groups that help in improving the psychological adjustment and social relations of individuals or members of the group. They provide members with information, support, and guidance thereby ensuring that their personal and interpersonal problems are resolved when confronted in a group rather than alone. Such groups include:

#### **Psycho-Analytic Groups**

It is a kind of group in which the individual is helped to overcome his inner problems or unconscious conflict. This is based on Freud's psychoanalytic principles of free association, transference, and interpretation.

In such groups, the therapist is very much the leader, for he directs the group's discussion during the session, offers interpretations and summarizes the groups efforts. Most psychoanalytic groups adhere to the principle of shifting attention, whereby the therapists shift their focus from one patient/client/individual to the next during the course of a single group session.

The shift offers each patient to assume different roles (e.g. acting as patient seeking help, observer of others, problems or help by giving counsel to a fellow group).

The group setting allows each patient to work through problems that result from early family conflicts. He or she is helped to gain insights into his/her problem and use the experience gained to solve it.

#### **Gestalt Groups**

This is another kind of therapeutic groups. The groups form the core of gestalt group therapy. It is a kind of group that helps people overcome their emotional difficulties or behavioural problems.

In this group, members observe one another's "work" but they do not interact. More frequently, however, interaction takes place among group members with the therapists actively orchestrating the events.

In this group (gestalt group therapy), the therapist often rely on experiments, which are exercises designed to stimulate emotional understanding. For instance, when a hot seat method is used, one person in the group sits in the centre of

the room and publicly works through his emotional experiences.

The empty chair method involves imagining that another person or a part of oneself is sitting in an empty chair and then carrying on a dialogue with the person.

The above two methods are powerful as individuals often become emotional during the session. There is a great difficulty in trying to understand the emotional experiences of another person; hence, therapists usually resist interpretations to the patients.

### **Cognitive - Behavioural Therapy Groups**

These are groups which help members to overcome their negative thinking, self-defeating statement, and other sorts of cognitive distortions.

The groups are therapeutic groups which help in the treatment of interpersonal and psychological problems through the application of behavioural principles (e.g. reinforcement) in a group setting.

### **Consultation Groups**

This refers to groups that deal more effectively with the interplay of complex forces in a large system. They are very useful when there is a division of labour within an institution among consultees on the same or different professions with respect to a particular group of clients.

An example of this is group of consultation with school administrators, guidance personnel, teachers in secondary schools concerning students' problems. Group consultation can be used to reduce isolation and this has useful effects on the consultees and the whole community.

### **Health and Educational Groups**

The special educational efforts of self-help groups help the professionals in providing useful services to the community. Both the health and educational group act in advisory or policy setting capacity in relation to the professional staff and also interpret their work to the community. The groups keep the public informed about the health services available to the community and also educate them about various health programmes like immunizations for pregnant women, nursing mothers and their babies or infants, and so on.

The groups educate the public on how to remain healthy, prevent or eradicate diseases, control communicable diseases, enhance physical and mental health, prevent mental illness (avoiding drugs, alcohol etc) and shun unprotected sexual intercourse.

### **Remedial Groups**

These are groups that help members change their behaviour, cope with or ameliorate their personal problems or rehabilitate themselves after a social or health trauma (e.g. a drug addiction group).

### **Socialization Groups**

These are groups designed to improve interpersonal relationships or social skills through programmed activities, structured exercises, role plays, and the like (e.g. a social club for ex-mental patients).

### **Educational Groups**

Groups that have the primary purpose of helping members to learn about themselves and their society (e.g. an adolescent sexuality group). Educational groups also teach specialized skills and knowledge such as classes on child-training, stress management, parenting and assertiveness training. Orientations offered by social service organizations to train volunteers fall into this category as well.

Educational groups usually have a classroom atmosphere, involving considerable group interaction and discussion, which is led by a professional person with experience in the area (e.g. a social worker).

### **Recreation/Skill Building Groups**

Recreational groups may be informal recreational groups or skill building recreational groups. A recreational group service agency such as Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) or neighbourhood centre, may offer little more than physical space and the use of equipment to provide activities for enjoyment and exercise. These are in form of play-ground games and informal athletics.

Their objectives are to build character and prevent delinquency among youths by providing an alternative to street life.

The skill-building recreational group has an increased focus on tasks and is guided by an adviser, coach, or instructor. Its objective is to improve a set of skills in an enjoyable way. Examples of activities include arts and crafts and sports like golf, basketball, swimming, and so on, which may develop into competitive team with leagues.

These groups are frequently led by professionals with recreational training (not social workers), and the agencies involved include YMCA, YWCA, Boy Scouts, neighbourhood centers and school recreational departments.

**Other Groups:**

Several other groups relevant to social work practice include sensitivity and encounter training groups, T-training groups, task groups, focus groups, problem solving and decision making groups, boards, advisory committees, citizen groups and research groups.

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## Study Session Summary



### Summary

In this Study Session, you learnt that a group is the collection of people characterized by a definable membership, group consciousness, and a sense of shared purpose. We also examined properties of a group, the various types of group and their functions.

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## Assessment



### Assignment

1. What is a group?
2. Identify at least 5 properties of a group and briefly describe two of them.
3. Distinguish primary group from secondary group
4. How would you describe self-help group?
5. What do you understand by reference group?
6. How would you explain a therapeutic group?

## Study Session 2

# Group Dynamics

## Introduction

In this Study Session, we will discuss the concept of group dynamics, we will also explain how to measure group dynamics.

### Learning Outcomes



When you have studied this session, you should be able to:

2.1 *appraise* group dynamics.

2.2 *measure* group dynamics.

## 2.1 Concept and Nature of Group Dynamics

The term group dynamics refers to both the group process and the field (Forsyth, 1999). Lewin (1951) first used the term to describe the powerful processes that take place in groups. Group dynamics refers to the scientific study of groups or a general term for group processes (Forsyth, 1999).

According to Cartwright and Zander (1968), group dynamics is a field of inquiry dedicated to advancing knowledge about the nature of groups, the law of their development, and their interrelations with individuals, other groups and the larger institutions.

They also pointed out what group dynamic is not. For instance, it is not a therapeutic perspective holding that psychological well-being can be ensured through participation in small groups guided by a skilled therapist. It is not also the communication of certain rules or guidelines that enable individuals to develop the skills needed for smooth and satisfying social interactions.

Group dynamics does not refer to loose collection of maxims connecting how groups should be organized - emphasizing, for example, such niceties as equal participation by all group members, democratic leadership, and high level of members' satisfaction. Rather, group dynamics is an attempt to subject



many aspects of groups to scientific analysis through the construction of theories and vigorous testing of these theories through empirical research.

Malcolm and Knowle gave one description of group dynamics. According to them, group dynamics implies the complex forces that are acting upon every group throughout its existence, which causes it to behave the way it does (e.g. moving or changing).

The dynamic aspect of the group is that it is always moving, doing something, changing, or becoming interacting and acting. The nature and direction of its movement is determined by forces being exerted on it from within and/or from outside. These forces and their resultant effect on the group constitute its dynamics.

Group dynamics is relevant to social work practice. Its relevance is much evident in all social work groups. It is relevant in the sense that its psychodynamic forces are operative in all groups (psychotherapy, therapeutic, mental health, educational group and so on) at all times.

The multiple interactions of the social forces which are generated within the group by the personalities of its members and the characteristics of group functions, together with forces from outside the group pertaining to the environment, constitute the group dynamics.

## **2.2 Measurement in Group Dynamics**

To understand groups, researchers need to find ways to assess group members, interpersonal actions and psychological reactions. To this end, two measurement tools will be discussed in this Study, namely; the observational and self-report measures which give group dynamics a foothold in the scientific tradition.

### **2.2.1 Observational Techniques**

Observational measures are measurement methods that involve watching and recording individual and group actions. It may be participant observation, overt and covert observation or structured observation.

**Participant Observation:** This is a process in which the observer's presence in a social situation is maintained for the purpose of scientific investigation. The observer is in a face-

to-face relationship with the observed, and, by participating with them in their natural life setting, he gathers data. It involves watching and recording interpersonal behaviour while taking part in the social process.

**Overt and Covert Observation:** In overt observation, the researcher acts as an overt observer of the group. The group member knows that the researcher is observing them and recording their behaviour. Such openness means the researcher does not have to mislead the group in any way. However, revealing his purpose, he may indirectly influence the group behaviour. Hence, there is tendency for individuals to act differently when they know they are being observed. Such a tendency is called “Hawthome effect”. That is, a change in behaviour that occurs when individuals know they are being studied by researchers.

Covert observation is a measurement method that records group members, actions without the subjects’ knowledge or group knowledge. Some researchers prefer to use this method, but they may face ethical issues if their observations invade the privacy of the people they are watching.

### **Structured Observational Measures**

These are methods of measurement that involve classifying (coding) subject’s actions under clearly defined categories. An example of such coding system is Bales’s Interaction Process Analysis (IPA). The IPA coding system can be used to classify group behaviour into socio-emotional and task-oriented categories.

### **Self-Report Measures**

These are based on the idea that if you want to know how group members feel about something or why they performed a particular behaviour, asks them to tell you.

How you go about asking vary. You can administer carefully constructed personality tests, distribute attitude questionnaires, or conduct face-to-face interviews. These self-report measures are alike in that they involve asking a question and recording the answer

Self-report measures are assessment devices, such as questionnaires, tests, inventories, or interviews that ask respondents to describe their feelings, attitudes or beliefs (e.g. sociometry, sociogram, anxiety and depression rating scales, etc.).

## **2.2.2 Research Designs in Group Dynamics**

Researchers use many techniques to check the adequacy of their suppositions about groups, but the three most common approaches are:

- case studies of single groups;
- experimental studies that manipulate aspects of the group situation; and
- correlational analyses of the relationship between various aspects of the group.

## **2.2.3 Case Studies**

One of the best ways to understand groups in general is to understand one group in particular. Case study is an in-depth examination of a single group. If the group has not yet disbanded, the researcher may decide to observe it as it carries out functions.

Alternatively, investigators may cull facts about the group from interviews with members, descriptions of the group written by journalists, or members' biographical writings.

Researchers have done case studies of cults, government leaders at an international summit, crisis intervention teams in psychiatric hospitals, families coping with alcoholic members, and so on.

### **Advantages and Disadvantages**

Case studies have both advantages and disadvantages. For instance, by focusing on a limited number of cases, researchers often provide richly detailed descriptions that make fascinating reading. Examination of public records pertaining to the group does not make the study to disrupt or alter naturally occurring group process.

However, case studies yield only limited information about groups in general. Hence, the researcher should bear it in mind that the group studied may be so unique that it tells us little about other groups.

Also, researchers rarely use objective measures of group process when conducting case studies; hence, their interpretations can be influenced by their own assumptions and biases. Not only that, the materials used may be inaccurate or unavailable to the researcher.

## 2.2.4 Experimental Design

This is used for experimental studies. It is a research design in which the investigator manipulates at least one variable by randomly assigning participants to two or more different conditions while measuring at least one other variable.

Two major variables are involved in this design, namely independent and dependent variables.

**Independent Variables:** These are aspects of the situation manipulated by the investigator in an experimental study. They are the causal variable in a cause-effect relationship (e.g. level of anxiety).

**Dependent Variables:** These are the responses of the subject measured by the researcher. They are the effect variables in a cause-effect relationship (e.g. academic performance).

The key characteristics of an experiment are the manipulation of the independent variable, the systematic assessment of the dependent variables and the control of other possible contaminating factors or variables.

### Advantages and Disadvantages

Researchers who design their experiments carefully can make inferences about the causal relationships linking variables. If experiments are conducted properly, they can be used to detect causal relationships among variables. Experiments offer an excellent means of testing hypotheses about the causes of group behaviour.

However, experiments have their logical, methodological and ethical problems. For example, the researchers cannot always control the situation sufficiently to manipulate the independent variable or keep other variables constant.

Experiments often work in laboratories with ad hoc groups that are created just for the research, but these groups may differ in important ways from naturally occurring groups.

## 2.2.5 Correlational Designs

These are used for correlational studies. Correlational designs are non-experimental techniques that use statistical procedures to examine the nature of the relationship between variables of interest. Correlational studies take their names from the statistic correlation coefficient ranging from +1 to -1, with the

distance from zero (0), the neural point, indicating the strength of the relationship.

### **Advantages and Disadvantages**

Researchers use correlational designs whenever they wish to know more about the relationship between variables. When coupled with accurate measurement techniques, correlational studies offer a means of clearly describing these relationships without disrupting or manipulating any aspect of the group.

Correlational studies, however, yield only limited information about the causal relationship between variables because no variables are manipulated by the researcher.

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## **Study Session Summary**



### **Summary**

In this Study Session, we focused on the term group dynamics; we noted that it refers to both the group process and the field. The dynamic aspect of a group is that it is always moving, changing, or becoming interacting and acting.

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## **Assessment**



### **Assignment**

1. Define group dynamics and describe its nature.
2. How would you measure group dynamics?
3. Explain two research designs you are familiar with.

## Study Session3

# Personal Goals and Group Goals

## Introduction

All groups have goals and every member who joins a group has personal goals. Groups generally have both short-range and long-range goals. Group goals are important for several reasons. Therefore, in this Study Session, we will describe the nature of a goal and differentiate between personal goals and group goals.

### Learning Outcomes



When you have studied this session, you should be able to:

- 3.1 *define* personal goal.
- 3.2 *explain* group goal.
- 3.3 *discuss* the guidelines for formulation goals.
- 3.4 *highlight* the process of establishing a goal.

## 3.1 Defining Personal Goals

A **personal goal** is a goal held by a member of a group. The personal goals of members may be diverse. For instance in a stress management group, some members may join because they want to relax, others because they are lonely and want companionship (Zastrow, 2001). A personal goal is a goal held by a member of a group, while a group goal is a goal held by enough members of a group that the group can be said to be working toward achieving it.

Some may join the group because they have heard good things about the group leader and want to “check it out”. The more similarity there is between the personal goals of members and the goals of the group, the more attracted to the group the members are likely to be and the more willing to provide their resources and energies to the group.

Thus, if the personal goals of the group are homogeneous (alike), members are more apt to agree on group goals to work together toward achieving these goals, and to be happier with the group.

When members have heterogeneous (not-alike) personal goals, hidden agenda are more likely to develop. A hidden agenda is a personal goal held by a member, but unknown to other group members, which interferes with the group efforts. At times, hidden agenda can be very destructive.

## 3.2 Group Goals

A group goal is a goal held by enough members of a group that the group can be said to be working toward achieving it.

A group goal may be short-range or long-range. The short-range goals should be stepping stone to the long-range goals.

Group goals are important for several reasons, among which are:

- (i) the effectiveness and efficiency of the group and its procedures can be measured by the extent to which goals are achieved;
- (ii) goals guide groups and their members by giving the groups, programmes and efforts direction;
- (iii) conflicts between group members are often resolved according to which position is most helpful in achieving group goals;
- (iv) group goals are also a strong motivating force that stimulates members to work together; and
- (v) once members make a commitment to achieve a certain goal, they will feel an obligation to put forth their abilities, efforts, and resources to achieve it.

## 3.3 Guidelines for Formulating Goals

In social work, goals serve several vital functions, hence, it is important to select and define them with care. According to Hepworth and Larsen (1993) the following guidelines will assist you in formulating goals.

- 1) ***Goals must be relative to the desired end results sought by the clients.*** To be adequately motivated, clients must believe that accomplishing selected goals will enhance their life situations by resolving or mitigating their problems.
- 2) ***Goals should be defined in explicit and measurable terms.*** To provide directions in the helping process, goals must specifically define the desired end results so that all

participants are clear about changes to be accomplished within the problem systems. In other words, each actor should be able to specify what he or she will be doing differently or what environmental factors will be changed. Goals should thus be defined in specific rather than general terms.

- 3) ***Goals must be feasible.*** Selecting in achievable goals sets clients up for failure that may produce discouragement, disillusionment and a sense of defeat. Hence, it is vital to consider the capacity of the client for accomplishing goals and possible environmental constraints that militate against goal accomplishment (e.g. economic and employment conditions, group and community attitudes, etc).
- 4) ***Goals should be commensurate with the knowledge and skill of the practitioner.*** The practitioner should agree to join clients in working toward only those goals for which he/she has requisite knowledge and skill.
- 5) ***Goals should be stated in positive terms that emphasize growth.*** Defining goals in ways that stress growth highlights beneficial changes or gains that will accrue in the lives of clients as a result of attaining goals. Psychologically, defining goals in terms of gains rather than losses tend to enhance motivation and encourages the opposition to change.
- 6) ***Goals must be consistent with the functions of the agency.*** Exploration of problems and clients' wants sometimes discloses desired changes that are incompatible with the functions of the agency. For instance, in hospital settings, patients often manifest problems that require services beyond the scope of agency's (hospital) function, such as marital therapy. In such instances it is appropriate to assist the patient by referring him/her to another agency (welfare agency) where he/she will be helped out.

### 3.4 Process of Establishing Group Goals

The process for establishing group goals must be one that involve group members in the decision making process.

According to Zastrow (2001), the following procedure could be followed.



- a) After the leader shares his/her views on the goals of the group, members are asked to explain their own reasons for joining (i.e. their personal goals)
- b) Working together, the leader and group members discuss the merits of the goals presented, discuss additional goals, refining and rewarding them until a final list is developed.
- c) Decision is made, conflict resolved and agreement attained.
- d) The final list should be typed and distributed to each member for reference.

Alternatively, the group leader may adopt the following method.

- a) Interview each member before the first meeting about personal and group goals.
- b) Develop a compromise list to present at the first meeting of the group.
- c) The list is then discussed and amended until a majority of members are satisfied.

Effective groups usually follow a variation of the following format:

- a) Long-range goals are set first, and efforts are made to state these goals in operational and measurable terms. Operational goals are those that can be directly translated into courses of actions to achieve the goals. Measurable goals are goals that can be measured.
- b) Short-range goals are established and prioritized as to their importance in achieving the long-range goals.
- c) Tasks are also identified to achieve short-range goals and then ranked according to their importance.
- d) For high-priority tasks, specific responsibilities are assigned to group members and deadlines are set for their completion.
- e) Future evaluations are made so as to identify the progress being made in achieving the tasks and the goals.

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## Study Session Summary



### Summary

In this Study Session, we discussed personal goal as a goal held by a member of a group while a group goal is a goal held by enough members of a group; a group goal may be short-range or long-range. We discussed the guidelines for formulating groups, and the process of establishing group goals.

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## Assessment



### Assignment

1. What is a goal?
2. How is a personal goal different from a group goal?
3. Enumerate at least five functions of group goals.
4. How would you set up a group goal?

## Study Session 4

# Group Development

## Introduction

In this Study Session, we will examine how a group is formed. We will also explain the stages of group membership.

### Learning Outcomes



When you have studied this session, you should be able to:

4.1 *describe* how a group is formed.

4.2 *highlight* the stages of group membership.

## 4.1 Initial Development of Group

The process of establishing and conducting groups varies significantly on the type of group and the specific purposes to be achieved (Zastrow, 2001).

However, for a group to reach its maximum potential, there are common elements to be addressed prior to establishing the group. Hence the following elements must be given careful consideration, namely; group objectives, size, status (open-ended or close-ended) and duration.

### 4.1.1 Elements of Group Development

#### Determining Objectives

Careful consideration must be given to the objectives of a group being formed in order to select effective members. For instance, problem-solving groups often require the expertise of professionals in other disciplines whose skills and knowledge directly contribute to the accomplishment of group goals.

They may have background, training and perceptions that differ from those of the social worker. Though this approach produces a group with a wealth of expertise, it creates additional demands on the leader.

Educational groups on the other hand, are usually composed of members who share a common interest in a particular area, such as child-rearing skills. Individuals with similar needs join an educational group primarily to gain, rather than dispense information. This tends to make leadership easier.

It is essential that the objectives or purposes of each group be established at the beginning, as they have significant impact on the process of membership selection and other aspects of functioning.

### **Size**

The size of the group affects members' satisfactions, interactions, and amount of output per member. Although smaller groups are generally rated more favourably, larger groups are often more successful in resolving complex problems. Despite the fact that members in larger groups experience more stress and greater communication difficulties, they usually bring a greater number of problem-solving skills and resources to the group as a whole.

In his research on group size, Slater (1938) found that groups of five persons were considered most satisfactory by members themselves, and most effective in dealing with an individual task involving the collection and exchange of information about a situation. It is also the most effective in coordination, analysis, and evaluation of this information and a group decision regarding the appropriate administrative action to be taken.

In groups of more than five, members were inhibited from expressing their ideas through fear of alienating one another and thereby destroying the group. They also participated less often. Groups with an even number of members tend to have higher rates of disagreement and antagonism than those with odd numbers, because of the possibility of dividing the group into two equal subdivisions.

However, a group should be large enough to allow members to speak freely without being inhibited, and small enough to permit a moderate level of intimacy and involvement.

### **Open-Ended and Closed-Ended Groups**

Another consideration before establishing a group is to determine whether the group will be open-ended (i.e. which allows new members to be added as old members leave) or

closed ended (i.e. which allows old members to remain constant until termination).

Open-ended group provide a measure of synergism through the addition of new members who may provide a different viewpoint as they join the group. It should be noted here that constant change in membership may inhibit openness and detract from the sense of trust needed before certain subjects are broached.

A close-ended group can often function more effectively as it has a relatively constant population and often operates with a specified time frame. In close-ended group, there is always premature loss of members, which can affect the effectiveness of the group. The group leader must deal with members termination in both groups and plan for this eventually.

### **Duration**

The duration of a group has two related components, namely; the number of sessions and the length of each session.

Many groups meet for one to two hours once or twice a week for a specified number of weeks. Meeting for one to two hours tends to optimize productive activity and behaviours. Any meetings short of this do not always allow sufficient time to thoroughly discuss the issues that are raised.

However, any meeting that last longer than three hours, members tend to become drowsy, frustrated and unable to concentrate.

## **4.2 Stages of Group Development**

The steps involved in planning and implementing educational, therapeutic and socialization groups are similar to the procedures followed by social workers who deal with individual clients. The stages are: intake; selection of members; assessment and planning; group development and planning; group development and intervention; and evaluation and termination.

### **4.2.1 Intake**

This is a stage, in which the present concerns and needs of prospective members are identified. It is also a stage where judgement is made concerning how some or all members could benefit from a group approach.

Agreement is often formulated at this stage between the members of the group and the group leader about tentative group goals. The stage can also be called the contact stage, as both the leaders and the members make a commitment to pursue the situation to the next step.

### **4.2.2 Membership Selection**

This is a stage where members are selected into the group, based on age, sex, level of education, value, interests, contribution to the group, and other characteristics.

Individuals most likely to benefit from a group should be selected as members. Selecting group members require attention to both descriptive and behavioural factors as indicated above.

### **4.2.3 Assessment and Planning**

This is a stage where a more in-depth assessment and statement of goals and plans for action is made.

Goals should be time-limited (e.g. 1 month, 1 year, five years, etc) with a reasonable chance of attainment. The leaders at this stage should ensure that all goals are clearly stated for easy evaluation in the future. A clearly stated goal eliminates hidden agendas.

### **4.2.4 Group Development and Intervention**

This is a stage where the leader of the group determines how the group will be formed. Different models of group development have evolved. Three of such models are briefly discussed here, namely: the Garland, Jones, and Kolodny model; the Tuckman model; and the Bales model.

#### **Garland, Jones and Kolodny Model**

The model was developed by Garland et al (1965). The model identifies five stages of development in social work groups. By describing and understanding the various kinds of developmental problems in groups, leaders can more effectively anticipate and respond to the reactions of group members.

The model appears particularly applicable to socialization, therapeutic, and encounter groups. However, it is less applicable to self-help, the problem-solving, decision making, educational and recreational/skills groups.

Emotional closeness among members is the central focus of the model. This is reflected in struggles that occur at the five stages of the model as describe below.

i. **Pre-affiliation** –is the first stage in which members are ambivalent about joining the group, and interaction is guarded. At this stage, members test out, often through approach and avoidance behaviour, whether they really want to belong. During this stage, the leader tries to make the group appear as attractive as possible by allowing and supporting distance, gently inviting trust, facilitating exploration of the physical and psychological milieu and by providing activities if necessary and initiating group structure. This stage ends gradually as members begin to feel safe and comfortable within the group.

ii. **Power and control** –the second stage is the power and control stage. At this stage the character of the group begins to emerge. Patterns of communication, alliances, and subgroups begin to develop.

Individuals assume certain roles and responsibilities establish norms and methods for handling group tasks and begin to ask questions. Although these processes are necessary to conduct meetings, they also lead to a power struggle in which each member attempt to gain greater control over the gratifications and rewards to be received from the group.

At this point, members realize that the group is becoming important to them. The stage is transitional with certain issues requiring resolution. For instance, the issue as to whether or not the leader has primary control, the limit of the power of the group and of the leader and to what extent the leader can use his power surfaces. During this struggle, the leader has to help members understand the nature of the struggle.

iii. **Intimacy** –the third stage is the intimacy stage. At this stage, the likes and dislikes of intimate relationships are expressed. The group becomes more like a family, with sibling rivalry exhibited and with the leader sometimes referred to as a parent. Feelings are more openly expressed and discussed, and the group is viewed as a place where growth and change take place. Individuals feel free to examine and make efforts to change personal attitudes, concerns, and problems and there is a feeling of oneness or cohesiveness.

iv. **Differentiation** – during this stage, members are freer to experiment with new and alternative behavioural patterns because they recognize individual rights, and needs, and they communicate more effectively.

Leadership is more evenly shared, roles are more functional, and the organization itself is more efficient. At this stage, power problems are now minimal and decisions are made and carried out on a less emotional and more objective basis.

v. **Separation** –is the final stage of this model. It is a stage in which the group objectives have been achieved and members have learned new behavioural patterns to enable them move on to other social experiences.

Termination is not always easily accomplished, as members may be reluctant to move on and may display regressive behaviour to prolong the existence of the group. Hence, members may express anger or may psychologically deny that termination is approaching. At this stage, the leader (social worker) can facilitate separation by willing to let go, concentration on group and individual mobility, help with the expression of ambivalence about termination, and recognition of the progress that has been made as his major tasks. Acceptance of termination is facilitated by active guidance of members as individuals to other ongoing sources of support and assistance.

### **Tukman Model**

Tukman (1965) model identified five predictable developmental stages. These are forming, storming, norming, performing and adjourning. Each stage is briefly described below:

- i. **Forming** –is the first stage of group development as given by Tuckman. At this stage, members become oriented toward each other, work on being accepted and learn more about the group. This stage is marked by a period of uncertainty in which members try to determine their places in the group and learn the group rules and procedures.
- ii. **Storming** –is the stage in which conflicts begin to rise as members resist the influence of the group and rebel against accomplishing their tasks. It is a stage when members confront their various differences and



management of conflict often becomes the focus of attention.

- iii. **Norming** – at this stage, the group establishes cohesiveness and commitment. In the process the members discover new ways to work together. Norms are also set for appropriate behaviour.
- iv. **Performing** – is the stage in which the group works as a unit to achieve group goals. Members develop proficiency in achieving goals and become more flexible in their patterns of working together.
- v. **Adjourning** – is a stage in which the group disbands. The feelings that members experience are similar to those in the “separation stage” in Garland’s model.

### **Bales Model**

The two models described above are sequential stage models, as both specify sequential stages of group development.

Bales (1965) developed a recurring phase model. He asserted that groups continue to seek equilibrium between task-oriented work and emotional expressions in order to build relationships among group members.

He also asserted that groups tend to oscillate between these two concerns. Sometimes, a group focuses on identifying and performing the tasks that will lead to achievement of its goals and at other times, the group focuses on building the morale and improving the social/emotional atmosphere of the group.

The first two models (sequential-stage perspectives) and the third model (the recurring-phase perspective) are useful or helpful in understanding group development.

The **sequential-stage perspectives** assume that group moves more through various stages while dealing with a series of basic themes that surface when they are relevant to the group’s work.

The **recurring-phase perspective** assumes that the issues underlying the basic themes are never completely resolved and tend to recur later.

## **4.2.5 Evaluation and termination**

Evaluation of the group is not necessarily a last thing to be done. It is an on-going process.

The decision to terminate a group may be based on the accomplishment of group or individual goals, the expiration of

a predetermined period of time, the failure of the group to achieve desired ends, the leader of the group re-locating or a shortage of funds to keep the group going.

It should be noted here that the termination of a group always brings about the same reactions that characterize the termination of other significant relationships, including the feeling of being rejected. Hence, the group leader (e.g. social worker) must be aware of these potential feelings and help the group members terminate with a minimum of difficulty.

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## Study Session Summary



### Summary

In this Study Session, we discussed that the process of establishing and conducting a group, varies significantly on the type of group and the specific purposes to be achieved. Prior to the establishment of groups, we noted that the following elements must be considered, namely; the objectives of establishing the group, size of the group, status of the group, and duration of the group. We explained that group development is in stages; hence, the following steps have to be followed while establishing a group. These are; intake, selection of members, assessment and planning, group development and intervention, as well as evaluation and termination.

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## Assessment



### Assignment

1. Describe the process of group formation.
2. What are the stages of group development?
3. Describe a model of group development you are familiar with.

## Study Session 5

# Group Cohesion

## Introduction

In this Study Session, we will examine the concept of cohesion and group cohesion. We will also explore how group cohesion can be measured and the consequences of group cohesion.

### Learning Outcomes



When you have studied this session, you should be able to:

- 5.1 *explain* the concept of cohesion.
- 5.2 *describe* the nature of group cohesion.
- 5.3 *describe* how group cohesion can be measured.
- 5.4 *explain* four consequences of group cohesion.

## 5.1 Concept of Cohesion

The word “cohesion” is derived from Latin and can be translated literally as the “act of sticking together” (Zastrow, 2001). Cohesion has been defined differently as it implies different things to many authors and scholars. For instance it implies binding force, group unity, attraction, teamwork and multidimensional construct.

***Cohesion is a binding force.*** Lewin as early as 1943, used the term cohesion to describe the forces that keep groups intact by pushing members together and countering forces that push them apart. According to Festinger et al (1950), cohesion is the total field of forces which act on members to keep them in the group

***Cohesion is group unity.*** Many theorists feel that sense of belongingness or “we-ness” is the essence of group cohesion (Fine and Holyfield, 1996). They define cohesiveness as a strong sense of belonging. Members of cohesive groups have a heightened sense of belonging to the group as a whole and they recognize their similarity with other group members. They also show signs of a shared social identity for as “we-ness” emerge, members tend to categorize themselves as

group members and define themselves in terms of their group membership (Hogg, 1992).

***Cohesion is attraction.*** Some theorist considers cohesion as a special kind of interpersonal attraction (Lott and Lott, 1965). At the individual level, members of cohesive groups like one another. At the group level, members are attracted to the group itself, rather than by any specific members. Members may not be friends, but are very positive about the group (Carron et al 1988).

***Cohesion is teamwork.*** Many theorists believe that cohesion has to do with members, willingness to work together to accomplish their objectives than it does with positive interpersonal relations or feelings of unity. Studies of sports teams, for example, find that most players, when asked to describe their team's cohesiveness, stress the quality of their teamwork.

***Cohesion is multidimensional.*** Different group dynamicists have conceptualized cohesiveness in different ways. Hence, it is a relative term for multi-dimensional construct. It is defined along the following dimensions as tabulated below:

Dimension	Definition
<b>1. Social force</b>	The total field of forces that act on members to remain in the group (Festinger et 1950 P. 164)
<b>2 Group unity</b>	A synthesis of individuals sense of belonging to a group and their sense of morale associated with membership in the group (Hoyle and Crawford, 1994 pp. 477-478)
<b>3. Attraction</b>	That group property that is inferred from the number and strength of mutual positive attitudes among the members of a group (Lott and Lott, 1965, P. 259).
<b>4. Teamwork</b>	A dynamic process that is reflected in the tendency for a group to stick together and remain united in pursuit of its goals and objectives (Carron, 1982, P. 124).

## 5.2 Nature of Group Cohesion

Zastrow (2001) defined group cohesion as the sum of all the variables influencing members to stay in a group. It occurs when the positive attractions of a group outweigh negative implications a member might encounter.

According to Forsyth (1999), group cohesion implies the strength of the bonds linking group members to the group; the unity (or we-ness) of a group, feelings of attraction for specific group members and the group itself, and the degree to which the group members coordinate their efforts to achieve goals.

Cohesive groups are unified. *An esprit de corps* permeates the group and morale is high. Members enjoy interacting with one another, and they remain in the group for prolonged periods of time. They have commitment to the group as a whole.

Cohesion is the strength of the bonds linking individual's members to one another and to their group as a whole. People in cohesive groups "stick together", whereas the members of groups that lack cohesion drift away from one another.

Indeed, all groups must be somewhat cohesive to exist. If the ties that bind members to the group are not firm, the group will exist only momentarily and may be more accurately labeled an "aggregate of individuals" rather than a "group".

Two types of attraction may influence a group, cohesion in different ways. Although cohesive groups tend to retain their best members for longer periods of time than non-cohesive groups, this connection between cohesion and membership stability is strongest when cohesion is based on members' attraction to the group as a unit rather than their attraction towards individual members.

Cohesive groups that pursue their chosen goals with great intensity are characterized by considerable interdependence of members, stability of members, feelings of responsibility for the group's outcomes, reduced absenteeism, and resistance to disruptions.

## 5.3 Measuring Group Cohesion

Just as theorists have defined cohesiveness in many different ways conceptually, so researchers have developed many

different ways to measure cohesiveness empirically. Among such measures are:

### **5.3.1 Observation Method**

Observational strategies have been used to index group cohesion with considerable success. Researchers have used observation to index the cohesiveness of adolescent peer group (Adler and Adler, 1995) and therapy groups (Budman et al, 1993). Further studies are also available on the use of this method.

### **5.3.2 Self-Report Approaches**

Self-report method offer yet another means of operationally defining cohesiveness. Leo Festinger and his colleagues used sociometry in their study of groups of people living in the same court of housing projects. They found out that the greater the ratio of in-court choices to outside-court choices, the greater the cohesiveness of the court. The use of variety of questions and multi-item scales that include many questions yielded a single index of cohesiveness. Therefore, scales like the group environment scale (GES), the group attitude scale (GAS), the group environment questionnaire (GEQ) and the perceived cohesion scale (PES) are of good self-report measure of cohesion. Under this approval, the following questions may be put to members of the group to find out whether the group is cohesive or not.

- a. There is feeling of unity in this group? Yes/No
- b. Members put a lot of energy into this group? Yes/No
- c. Do you want to remain a member of this group? Yes/No
- d. Do members like the group, its members, and the way it goes about accomplishing its tasks? Yes/No
- e. Are you happy to belong to this group? Yes/No

## **5.4 Consequences of Cohesion**

A cohesive group is an intense group, and this intensely affects the members, the group's dynamics and group performance in both positive and negative ways. These consequences are briefly discussed below.

### **5.4.1 Positive Consequences**

1. People are usually more satisfied with their groups when the group is cohesive rather than non-cohesive.

Across a range of groups in athletic, industrial, and educational settings, people who are members of highly compatible, cohesive subgroups report more satisfaction and enjoyment than members of non-cohesive groups.

2. A cohesive group creates a healthier workplace, at least at the psychological level. Because people in cohesive groups respond to one another in a more positive fashion than members of non-cohesive groups, they experience less anxiety and nervousness when they work in cohesive groups.
3. As cohesion increases, the internal dynamics of the group intensifies. People in cohesive group more readily accept the group's goals, decisions, and norms.

Also, pressures to conform are greater in cohesive groups, and individual's resistance to these pressures is weaker.

4. Performance is strongest in cohesive groups. Relationships are stronger in non-laboratory groups, such as military units, sports teams and small groups. Cohesiveness and productivity are positively related. Therefore, the more cohesive the group, the greater its productivity.
5. When the group norms emphasise the value of cooperation and agreement among members, members of highly cohesive groups avoid disagreement more than members of non-cohesive groups.

### **5.4.2 Negative Consequences**

Membership in a cohesive group can prove problematic for members,

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## Study Session Summary



### Summary

In this Study Session, we discussed that Group cohesion refers to the sum of all the variables influencing members to stay in a group. It occurs when the positive attractions of a group outweigh negative implications a member might encounter.

We noted also that Cohesion has both positive and negative consequences. Its positive consequence among other things is that, it brings about emotional satisfaction and good adjustment to the members. The negative consequences of cohesion are that membership in a cohesive group can prove problematic and some groups are not always productive as members may not be committed to the group's performance goals.

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## Assessment



### Assignment

1. How would you define group cohesion?
2. Briefly describe the nature of group cohesion
3. In what ways would you measure group cohesion?



## Study Session 6

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# Theories in Group Dynamics

## Introduction

In this Study Session, we will examine the theoretical perspectives in group dynamic. We will also discuss the theories of group dynamic.

### Learning Outcomes



When you have studied this session, you should be able to:  
6.1 *appraise* the theoretical perspectives in group dynamic.  
6.2 *describe* at least three theories of group dynamics.

## 6.1 Theoretical Perspectives in Group Dynamics

Successful researchers do not just develop ingenious methods for measuring group processes and test their hypothesis; in addition, they also develop compelling theoretical explanations for group phenomena.

Theories provide the means of organizing known facts about groups and so create orderly knowledge out of discrete bit of information. Theories also yield suggestion for future research.

A theory is a systematic set of interrelated statements intended to explain some aspects of social life or enrich our sense of how people conduct and find meaning in their daily lives (Rubin and Babble, 1997).

According to Baker (1999), a theory is a proposed explanation for a set of coordinated occurrences or relationships. It is a set of related statements that explain and predict phenomena (Schweigert, 1994). The statements used in theory can be laws, principles or beliefs.

## 6.2 Theories of Group Dynamics

The following theories serve as bases for group dynamics. They are:

### 6.2.1 Motivational Models

Some people vie for leadership in their groups, while others remain content with less prominent roles. Similarly, some groups struggle against adversity, while others give up at the first set back. The force behind these behaviours is simply motivational force.

According to Geen (1995), habits, goals, instincts, expectations and drives prompt group members to take actions. Therefore, motivations such as wants, needs and other psychological processes energize certain responses prompting people to respond in one way rather than other.

One of the motivational theories that are discussed here is Kurt Lewin's level of aspiration theory.

**Kurt Lewin's Aspiration Theory (LOA Theory)** -is at core, a motivational model, for it explains how people set goals for themselves and their group (Lewin et al 1944).

The theory assumes that people enter achievement situations with an ideal outcome in mind. For example, earning high grade (A) or scoring high mark in a course of study or making huge amount of money overtime. However, people may revise their expectations as they repeatedly fail o succeeded in reaching their ideals.

Lewin used the term "Level of Aspiration" (LOA) to describe this compromise between ideal goals and more realistic expectations. The LOA theory has been applied to groups (Zarder 1996). He applied the theory to groups by studying how individual members set goals for their groups, and how they revise their goals after each group success or failure. He found that when group members complete a task, they expend considerable mental energy reviewing their efforts and outcomes. They gather and weigh information about their performance and determine if they met the group's standards.

They review the strategies they used to accomplish their tasks and determine if these strategies require revision. They also plan their future undertakings, ever mindful of the long-term goals they have set for themselves. Zander (1996) found that a

group's LOA often slightly exceeds individual members' LOA. Groups also raise their LOA more after success than they lower it after failure and that some group members set themselves up for failure by setting overly optimistic goals.

### **6.2.2 Behavioural Approaches**

Many theories of group behaviour are consistent with B.F. Skinner's (1953, 1971) behaviourism. Skinner believed that psychological processes, such as motives and drives may shape people's reactions in groups. He also believed that such psychological processes are too difficult to index accurately.

As a result of this, he recommended studying the things that people actually do rather than the psychological states that may have instigated the action. He believed that actions tend to be consistent with the law of effect; that is, behaviours that are followed by positive consequences such as rewards will occur more frequently, whereas behaviours that are followed by negative consequences will become rarer.

Thibaut and Kelley's (1959) social exchange theory extended Skinner's behaviourism to groups. They agreed that individuals hedonistically strive to maximize their rewards and minimize their cost. However, when individuals join groups, they no longer control their outcomes.

Groups create interdependence among members, so that the actions of each group member potentially influence the outcomes and actions of every other group member.

### **6.2.3 System Theories**

A system is a set of interacting units with relationships among them. The system approach assumes that groups are systems of interacting individuals. Just as a system receives inputs from the environment, processes this information through internal communication, and then outputs its products, groups likewise gather information, review that information, and generate products.

Groups are also capable of formulating goals and working towards these goals through united action; and group members are responsive to environmental feedback concerning the efficacy of other actions. The communication of information (a key concept in system theory) plays a central role in groups that must analyse inputs, provide

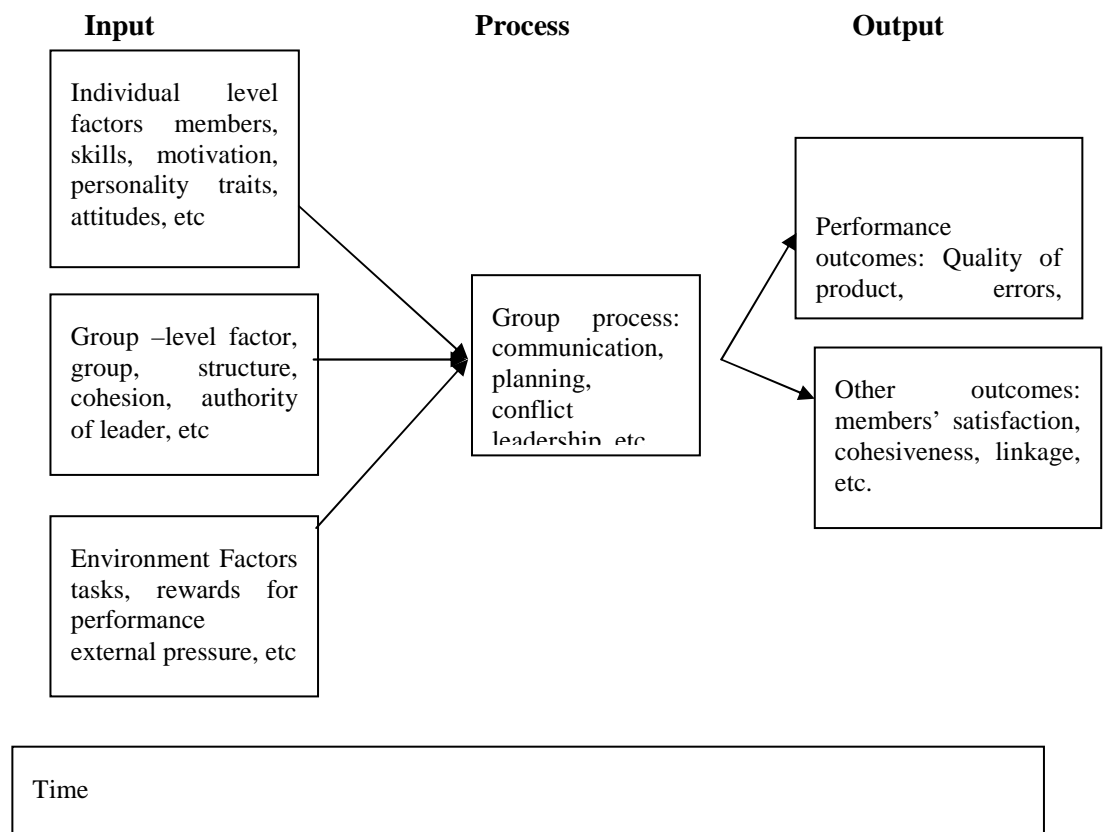
feedback to members, and formulate decisions regarding group action.

System theory provides a model for understanding a range of group-level process including group development, productivity and interpersonal conflicts (Tubbs, 1995).

A systems approach to group productivity assumes that the multiple components of a group interact with one another over time.

The model as shown in the figure below identifies those factors that act as inputs to the group, group process that respond to those inputs, and the outputs generated by those processes.

**Fig. 1 System Theory**



Wadsworth.

The system theory is a general theoretical approach that assumes that groups are systems, that is, collection of individual units that combine to form an integrated, complex whole.

### **6.2.4 Cognitive Approach**

Group dynamics becomes more understandable when we consider the cognitive processes (e.g. thinking, wisdom, reasoning, perceptual abilities, value judgements, etc) that occur within each individual in the group.

For example, when people form a group for the first time, they immediately begin to form an impression of the group. This perceptual work prompts them to search for information about other group members, rapidly identifying those who are ongoing, shy, and intelligent (Albright et al 1988). Group members also search their memories for stored information about the group and the tasks it must face and retrieve that information before they can use it. They must also take note of the actions of others and try to understand what caused the other person to act the way he/she does.

Thus, group members' perceiving, judging, reasoning and remembering are mental activities that influence their understanding of one another, the group and themselves (Fiske and Goodwin, 1994).

A cognitive based theory of group dynamic is the Expectation-States Theory

#### **Expectation – States Theory:**

The theory was proposed by Berger et al (1992). The theory is a cognitive analysis of who will rise to the top of a group's status hierarchy and who will fall to the bottom.

The theory assumes that group members, while interacting with one another, intuitively take note of two types of cues as they allocate status within the group. The theory assumes that group members allocate status to members of the group who display positively valued, rather than negatively valued, status characteristics.

There are status characteristics. These are:

- a. Specific-status characteristics, which are qualities that attest to each individual's level of ability to perform the specific task at hand.
- b. Diffuse-status characteristics are general qualities that group members think are relevant to ability and evaluation. Any characteristics (e.g. sex, age, ethnicity, etc) can serve as a diffuse-status characteristic if people associate that quality with certain skills.

- c. Status-earning characteristics – some members of the group may possess numerous status-earning characteristics. Such are identified and permitted to perform more numerous and varied group actions, to provide greater input and guidance for the group, to influence others by evaluating their ideas, and to reject the influence attempts of others.

### 6.2.5 Biological Models

Group members can solve complex problems, communicate with one another using spoken and written language, build and operate massive machines, and plan their group's future. However, they are also living creatures whose responses are often shaped by biological, biochemical, and genetic characteristics.

One biological theory of group dynamics is the evolution theory or sociobiology.

- **Evolution Theory (Sociobiology)** – is a biological approach to understanding behaviour. The theory argues that in the last 15 million years, the human species has evolved socially as well as physically.

The theory assumes that through the process of natural selection, individuals who were even slightly predisposed to engage in adaptive social behaviours tend to survive longer and to be more successful in passing their genes along to future generations. However, over countless generations, this selection process weeded out individuals who lacked these predispositions, while those who possessed them prospered.

The theory offers insight into a range of group prices, including affiliation, intergroup conflict, and aggression. It gives explanation of the tendency for many groups to struggle to maintain control over specific geographical areas.

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## Study Session Summary



### Summary

In this Study Session, we discussed that a theory can be defined as a systematic set of interrelated statements intended to explain some aspects of social life or enrich our sense of how people conduct or find meaning in their daily living. We also discussed some theories; motivational models, behavioural models, system theories, cognitive approach and

biological models.

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## Assessment



### Assignment

1. How would you define a theory?
2. Identify at least three theories of group dynamics you are familiar with
3. Briefly explain a theory of group dynamics and discuss its importance.

## Study Session7

# Leadership

## Introduction

In this Study Session, we will examine the concept of leadership, qualities of a good leader, and approaches to leadership. We will also examine different functions performed by a good leader.

### Learning Outcomes



When you have studied this session, you should be able to:

- 7.1 *define* and use correctly the term “leadership”.
- 7.2 *enumerate* five qualities of a good leader.
- 7.3 *explain* two approaches to leadership.
- 7.4 *identify* different functions performed by a leader.

## 7.1 Concept of Leadership

Many people, including some prominent political leaders assume that good leaders are capable of manipulating, controlling, and forcing their followers into obedience (Forsyth, 1999). Hitler, for example, defined leadership as the ability to move the masses, whether through persuasion or violence. But people who use domination and coercion to influence others (e.g. kings, presidents, bosses or managers) are not leaders.

The term leader should be reserved for those who act in the best interests of a group with the consent of that group. Leadership is a form of power, but such a power is with people rather than over people. It is reciprocal relationship between the leader and the led. Although, a leader may control the source of power within the group, he or she distributes this power to other members (Hollander and Offerman, 1990; Sankowsky 1995).

Leadership occurs when one person in a group influences other members to help the group reach its goals. Because all



group members influence each other at various times, each individual exerts leadership (Zastrow 2001). However, a difference exists between being a designated leader (e.g. A president or chairperson) and engaging in leadership behaviour.

A designated leader has certain responsibilities, such as calling meetings, and leading discussions, while leadership refers to influential behaviour in general.

Pointing out what leadership is not is easier than pointing out what it is. Leadership is not the power to coerce others, an inborn trait or a mysterious capacity to heal sick groups. There are many definitions given to leadership. Most definers agree, however that leadership is a specialized form of social interaction, a reciprocal, transactional, and sometimes transformational process in which cooperating individuals are permitted to influence and motivate others to promote the attainment of group and individual goals. The above definition is somehow cumbersome, it emphasizes several features which are summarized below.

1. Leadership is a reciprocal process involving the leader, the follower and the group situation.
2. Leadership is a transactional, social exchange process. Leaders and members work together; exchanging their times, energies and skills to increase their joint rewards.
3. Leadership is often a transformational process. The transformational leader heightens group members' motivation, confidence and satisfaction by uniting members and changing their beliefs, values and needs.
4. Leadership is a cooperative process of legitimate influence rather than sheer power. In a small group, for example, the individual who influences others the most is often designated the leader and the right to lead is, in most instances, voluntarily conferred on the leader by some or all members of the group.
5. Leadership is an adaptive, goal-seeking process, for it organizes and motivates group members' attempts to attain personal and group goals.

## 7.2 Personal Qualities of a Leader

A leader is someone who influences other people to achieve personal or group goals. Such a person has certain qualities or characteristics that distinguish him/her from other group members or that set him/her apart from others.

A leader is expected to possess the following qualities.

### 7.2.1 Height, Weight and Age

Leaders tend to differ physically from their subordinates. They are often older, taller, and heavier than the average group member.

According to Stogdill (1974), the correlation between weight and leadership varies from  $-.13$  to  $+.71$ , but the average is about  $.30$ . Though group members seem to associate height with power, the relationship is not so strong that height is a pre-requisite for leadership (e.g. Napoleon managed to reach position of leadership, despite being short). Also, age may or may not matter for leadership position. For instance, leadership in informal discussion groups vary in age, whereas political or business leaders are often older than their subordinates.

### 7.2.2 Intelligence

Groups appear to prefer leaders who are more intelligent than the average group members. Such a leader must also be able to make superior judgement with greater decisiveness, be more knowledgeable and speak more fluently.

### 7.2.3 Gender

Studies have shown that men are five times more likely to enact leadership behaviours than women in small, mixed-sex leadership groups, and so are more likely to emerge as leaders (Walker et al 1996). Both leaders and subordinates perceive female leaders to be less dominant male more leaders.

### 7.2.4 Ethnic diversity

Leaders emerge all over the world, no matter what the culture, ethnicity, or race of the group members (Hunt and Petterson, 1997). Leadership may even be more common in cultures and subcultures that stress collectivistic, group-centred values. For example in African – American group, leadership is often

centred around strong leaders, while Africentric groups stress harmony and unity than Euro-American groups.

### 7.2.5 Personality

Early leadership researchers believed that leaders possess certain personality traits that set them apart from others. Big five dimensions of personality of a leader have been identified. These, according to Digman (1990), are:

- a. **Extraversion:** outgoing, sociable, interpersonal, expressive, gregarious.
- b. **Agreeableness:** friendly, warm, likeable, generous, kind.
- c. **Conscientiousness** – responsible, achievement-oriented, dependable, self-controlled.
- d. **Stability:** emotionally controlled, assured, not anxious, balanced.
- e. **Intelligence** – intellectually able, open to new ideas and experience, cultured.

Going beyond traditional personality traits, Zaccaro et al (1991) believe that leaders also tend to be higher in social intelligence which is the ability to perceive the needs and goals of the group members and then adjust to meet these varying situational demands.

- f. **Expertise:** a leader is expected to have adequate knowledge and skills for achieving the group goals.

When groups work collectively on tasks, individuals with more expertise usually rise higher in the group's leadership hierarchy. Hence, groups are more accepting of leaders who have previously demonstrated task ability, and are more willing to follow the directions of a task-competent person than those of an incompetent person.

Field studies of leadership in organizational and military settings also suggest that individuals who possess valued skills are more often recognized as leaders.

- g. **Participation:** leaders emerge within the group based on their active participation in group's activities or involvement in discussions on how to solve group's problems. High participation rates imply that the individual has great interest in the group or its problem.

## 7.3 Approaches to Leadership

Four major approaches to leadership are discussed in this section. These are trait, position, leadership style and distributed – functions approaches.

### 7.3.1 The Trait Approach

This approach to leadership has existed for centuries. It assumes that leaders have inherent personal characteristics, or traits that distinguish them from followers.

The approach asserts that leaders are born, not made, and emerge naturally instead of being trained. Based on this approach, leaders can be characterized by being better adjusted and more dominant, extroverted, masculine, and interpersonally sensitive than their followers.

They also possess other traits, such as intelligence, enthusiasm, dominance, self-confidence, egalitarianism and charisma. The trait approach to leadership has given rise to two types of leaders, namely charismatic and Machiavellian leaders.

a. **Charismatic leader:** charisma has been defined as an extraordinary power, as of working miracles. According to Johnson and Johnson (1987), a charismatic leader is somebody with a sense of mission, a belief in the social change movement he or she leads. He or she is a person who has confidence in him or herself as the chosen instrument to lead the movement to its destination.

A charismatic leader must appear extremely self-confident in order to inspire others with the faith that the movement he or she leads will, without fail, prevail and ultimately reduce their distress. Some charismatic leaders appear to inspire their followers to love and be fully committed to them, others offer their followers the hope and promise of deliverance from distress. Good examples of charismatic leaders are John. F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King Jr., Julius Caesar and Chief Obafemi Awolowo to mention a few.

One major problem with the charisma approach is that people who are viewed as having charisma tend to express this quality in a variety of ways (Zastrow, 2001).

b. **Machiavellian leaders** this type of leadership was based on the ideas of an Italian statesman, Micolò Machiavelli

(1469-1527) who advocated cunning, deceit and duplicity as political methods that rulers should use for increasing their power and control.

Machiavellian leadership is based on the concepts that people (1) are basically fallible, gullible, untrustworthy and weak; (2) are impersonal objects; and (3) should be manipulated so that a leader can achieve his goals.

Christie and Gels (1970) observed that Machiavellian leaders have four characteristics, namely:

- i. they have little emotional involvement in interpersonal relationships;
- ii. they are not concerned about conventional morality; that is, they take a utilitarian view (what they can get out of it), rather than a moral view of their interaction with others;
- iii. they have a fairly accurate perception of the needs of their followers, which facilitates their capacity to manipulate them; and
- iv. they have a low degree of ideological commitment. They focus on manipulating others for personal benefit, rather than on achieving long term ideological goals.

While a few leaders may have Machiavellian characteristics, most do not. Today, very few groups would function effectively or efficiently with Machiavellian leaders.

### **7.3.2 The Position Approach**

This approach defines leadership in terms of authority of a particular position. It focuses on studying behaviour, training, and personal background of leaders in high level positions. Individuals become leaders with little related training (e.g. in family business) while others spend years developing their skills. Also, individuals in different leadership positions display a variety of appropriate behaviours. For an example, a drill sergeant in basic military training is not expected to be empathic like a sensitivity group leader.

The position approach shows that what constitute leadership behaviour depends on the particular requirements of the position e.g. president, vice-president, manager, supervisor etc).

### 7.3.3 The Leadership-style Approach

By this approach to leadership, three types of leaders emerge. These are:

- a. **Authoritarian Leaders:** these are leaders who have more absolute power than the democratic leaders. They set goals and policies, dictate the activities of the members and develop major plans. Authoritarian leadership is generally efficient and decisive. However, group members may respond out of necessity and not because of commitment to group goals. Authoritarian leadership also gives room for backbiting, bickering, factionalism, behind-the-scenes jockeying for position among members, and a decline in morale (Zastrow, 2001).
- b. **Democratic Leaders:** these are leaders that seek the maximum involvement and participation of every member in all decision affecting the group and attempt to spread responsibility rather than concentrate it. Unlike the authoritarian leadership, democratic leadership is more effective because of the strong cooperation that emerges from group participation. Interpersonal hostilities between members, dissatisfactions with the leader and concern for personal advancement are easily discussed and resolved. However, this type of leadership can lead to slow decision making and confusion.
- c. **Laissez-Faire leaders:** these leaders participate very little and group members are generally left to function (or flounder) with little input. Under this type of leadership, the group members do not normally function well. They only function effectively when they are committed to a course of action, have resources to implement it and need minimal leadership to reach their goals. This may work well in a college department.
- d. **The Distributed-functions Approach** – This approach disagrees sharply with trait theory of leadership and asserts that every member of a group will be a leader at times by taking actions that serve group functions. Leadership is defined as the performance of acts that help the group maintain itself and reach its goals. Leadership functions include setting goals, selecting, and implementing tasks, and providing resources to accomplish group goals while maintaining the group's

cohesion and satisfying the needs of individual members. The functional approach involves determining what tasks, or functions are essential to achieve groups' goals and how different group members should participate. The demand of a leadership according to this approach is viewed as being specific to a particular group in a particular situation (e.g. cracking a joke may be a useful leadership tactic in certain situations). Functional leadership involves a learned set of skills that anyone with certain minimal capabilities can acquire.

## **7.4 Roles Performed by Leaders**

There are two specific leadership roles or functions. According to Zastrow (2001), these are task and maintenance roles. All groups, whether organized for therapeutic reasons, problem solving or other purposes, rely on members performing task roles and group maintenance roles satisfactorily. The two major roles performed by the leaders are discussed as follows.

### **7.4.1 Task Roles**

These are roles needed to accomplish specific goals set by the group. According to David and Johnson (1975), the task roles performed by the leader include that he:

- a. offers facts, opinions, ideas, suggestions and relevant information to help group discussion;
- b. asks for facts, information, opinions, ideas and feelings from other members to help group discussion;
- c. proposes goals, and tasks to initiate action within the group;
- d. develops plans on how to proceed and focuses attention on the task to be done;
- e. pulls together related ideas or suggestions and restates and summarizes major points discussed;
- f. shows relationships among various ideas by pulling them together and harmonizes activities of various subgroups and members;
- g. figures out sources of difficulties the group has in working effectively and the blocks to progress in accomplishing the group's goals;
- h. stimulates a high quality of work from the group;

- i. examines the practicality and workability of ideas, evaluates alternative solutions, and applies them to real situations to see how they will work; and
- j. compares group decisions and accomplishments with group standards and goals.

### **7.4.2 Group Maintenance Roles**

These are roles which strengthen social and emotional bonds within the group. Such roles performed by the leader include that he:

- a. warmly encourages everyone to participate, giving recognition for contributions, demonstrating acceptance and openness to ideas of others. The leader is friendly and responsive to group members;
- b. persuades members to analyse constructively their differences in opinions, searches for common elements in conflicts, and tries to reconcile disagreements;
- c. eases tensions and increases the enjoyment of group members by joking, suggesting breaks, and proposing fun approaches to group work;
- d. shows good communication skills and makes sure that each group member understands what other members are saying;
- e. asks members how they feel about the way in which the group is working and about each other, and shares own feelings about both;
- f. watches the process by which the group is working and uses the observations to help examine group effectiveness;
- g. expresses group standards and goals to make members aware of the direction of the work and the progress being made toward the goal, and to get open acceptance of group norms and procedures;
- h. listens and serves as an interested audience for other members. The leader is receptive to others ideas, goes along with the group when not in disagreement;
- i. accepts and supports openness of other group members, reinforcing risk taking and encouraging individuality; and



- j. promotes open discussion of conflicts between group members in order to resolve them.

It should be noted that each of the task and maintenance functions discussed above may be used occasionally in a group.

### **Roles Performed by the Group Leader**

Apart from the task and maintenance roles, the group leader also performs the following roles; the leader:

- a. co-ordinates the activities of the group;
- b. establishes group goals and policies;
- c. decides the means by which the group shall achieve its goals;
- d. offers ready source of information and skills;
- e. serves as official spokesperson;
- f. controls the group structure and in-group relations;
- g. promotes, demotes, and assigns pleasant or unpleasant tasks;
- h. acts as both judge and conciliator, and has the power to reduce or increase factionalism within the group;
- i. serves as a model of behaviour for other members;
- j. serves as the source of group beliefs and values; and
- k. serves as the target for members' frustrations and disappointments.

## **Study Session Summary**



### **Summary**

In this Study Session, you learnt that leadership is the ability to move the masses, whether through persuasion or violence. It is a transactional, social exchange process. Leadership occurs when one person in a group influences other members to help the group reach its goals. We defined a leader as someone who influences other people to achieve personal or group goals. Such a person is recognized by the following characteristics; height, weight, age, intelligence, gender, personality traits, expertise. We identified the four major approaches to leadership; trait, position, leadership style and distributed-functions approaches.

## Assessment

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### Assignment

1. Explain the concept of leadership.
2. Describe briefly, any approach to leadership you are familiar with.
3. What are the various types of leaders you are familiar with?
4. What do you understand by leadership role?
5. How would you explain task roles and maintenance roles?
6. Explain other roles performed by a group leader.

## Study Session 8

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# Decision Making in a Group

## Introduction

In this Study Session, we will differentiate between decision and decision making. We will also discuss some decision making approaches.

### Learning Outcomes



When you have studied this session, you should be able to:

*8.1 differentiate between decision and decision making.*

*8.2 outline decision making approaches.*

## 8.1 Decision and Decision Making

The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (1995) defined decision as a choice or judgement that you make after a period of discussion or thought. It also defined decision making as the process of thinking about a problem, idea, etc, and then making a choice or judgement.

Decision making is an accepted part of everyday human life (Cole, 1996). As individuals, we may make decisions on the spur of the moment or after much thought and deliberation, or at some point between these two extremes. Our decisions may be influenced by emotions, by reasoning or by a combination of both. Decisions are based on objective facts, figures, values and assumptions.

As members of groups we may find ourselves making decisions on a group basis, where our own views and feelings have to be tested and criticized along with other members.

In any organisation or group, people with managerial roles are expected, among other things, to make decisions as an important part of their responsibilities.

Decisions are made on several issues in a group. Thus, according to Forsyth (1999), groups make decisions on the following problems.

1. poor communication skills;
2. egocentric behaviour;
3. non-participation;
4. interruptions;
5. negative leader behaviour;
6. attitudes and emotion; and
7. failure to stay focused (tendency to become side-tracked).

## **8.2 Approaches to Decision Making**

Six decision making approaches have been identified by Zastrow (2001). They are:

1. consensus of the group;
2. simple majority vote;
3. two-thirds or three-fourths majority vote;
4. delegated decisions;
5. multiple voting; and
6. averaging individual opinions.

### **8.2.1 Consensus of the Group**

According to Johnson and Johnson (1987), consensus is more commonly defined as collective opinion arrived at by a group of people working together under conditions that permit communications to be sufficiently open and the group climate to be sufficiently supportive so that everyone in the group feels he has had his fair chance to influence the decision.

When a decision is made by consensus, all members understand the decision and are prepared to support it. Consensus is the most effective for motivating all groups' members to support and work for the decision because everyone comes to agree with the final decision. It resolves controversies and conflicts, thereby increasing the group's ability to make high-quality decisions in the future.

However, consensus is the most time consuming, since the concerns of each member have to be recognized. It is also

difficult to achieve because it requires that members be flexible.

### **8.2.2 Simple Majority Vote**

In this approach, issues are discussed until they are clarified and a vote is then taken. Most groups use a simple –majority vote approach.

This decision making approach has several advantages, among which are:

1. decision are arrived at much faster;
2. most decisions do not warrant the full support of all members;
3. makes groups in which members have little trust in one another become operational;
4. works in groups in which communication among members lacks openness; and
5. works in group in which some members are unwilling to give up their favourite positions.

The simple-majority vote has the following shortcomings:

- a. minority opinions are not always safeguarded;
- b. some people or groups of people (e.g. ethnic/racial groups, gays and lesbians, women, and persons with disability) have received the brunt of many adverse decisions made by simple majority voting;
- c. majority voting frequently splits a group into winners, who can represent as much as 49 percent of the vote;
- d. losers may feel their concerns are not receiving attention, hence, they may refuse to support group efforts and work to subvert or overturn the decision; and
- e. majority voting alienates a minority, the future effectiveness of the group is diminished.

### **8.2.3 Two-Thirds or Three-Fourths Majority Vote**

This is a high percentage majority vote for decision making.

It is used primarily for decisions of substantial or great consequence (e.g. enacting amendment to a country's constitution, or changing the bylaws and constitution of an organization).

It is also often used by governmental decision-making units to pass emergency requests for special funds. This type of vote is a compromise between the consensus and simple majority approaches. It takes more time than a simple majority because more votes are needed, but less time than consensus because not everyone must agree. A small minority can block a decision, so a small majority cannot force its views on them. However, a small minority can be controlled and manipulated by a majority rule.

It should be realized that a high percentage majority vote will generally draw stronger support from group members than a simple majority, but may not generate as much support as consensus. For instance, the losing side on a 76 to 24 per cent vote under a three-fourths majority system is more apt to go along with the winning side than if the winning side won by 51 per cent under a simple majority system.

### 8.2.4 Delegated Decisions

This approach is adopted when large groups cannot carefully debate and make all daily decisions. As a result of this inability, many groups delegate less important decisions to an expert, the group leader or a subgroup.

a. **Expert:** authority can be delegated to the person in the group with the most expertise in a particular area. The expert then reviews the issues and inform the group of the decision. However, it has some problems, which include:

- i. difficulty in determining which member has the most expertise;
- ii. personal popularity and power often interfere with the accurate selection of the most expert member;
- iii. since the decision is left to a single member, there is often little or no discussion of options; and
- iv. a decision made by one person may not receive the support of other members to implement it.

b. **Group Leader:** a group may allow the leader to make certain decisions after he might have called a meeting, and describe or discuss the issues with the group members.

A chancellor or president of a university often uses this approach by seeking the advice and suggestions of various subgroups. The most time-efficient method is when the leader makes a decision without any group discussion. This works

best for uncomplicated and less important issues, but may not be effective.

The approach has the following shortcomings:

- i. by not making issues properly known to the group, members may disagree with the decision made by the leader and withhold resources to implement it; and
- ii. members may retaliate by limiting authority or by replacing the leader, if they feel he is overstepping his authority.

However, by involving the group, the leader will hear a variety of options from members.

c. **Subgroup:** another approach to delegating decision is to allow a subgroup (e.g. an executive committee, a temporary committee or standing committee) to make certain decisions.

When a subgroup makes a decision it should consider the views of the larger group because unpopular decisions are generally not supported. If the subgroup continually makes unpopular decisions, the larger group can review the decisions, change the membership of the subgroup, reduce its decision-making power or disband it.

Subgroups are effective when a group has a large number of minor decisions to make and limited time.

### 8.2.5 Multiple Voting

If an organization or group has a number of alternatives before it, a series of ballot may be taken until one alternative receives the required number of winning votes.

Multiple voting may be done in a variety of ways which among others include:

- a. balloting until one candidate receives a majority; and
- b. narrowing the number of choices. For instance if there are fifty options, each member may vote for five options. The ten options receiving the most votes are considered in second round, with members voting for three options. In the third round, the top four options are considered, with members voting for five options each. In the fourth and final round, the top two options are considered, and members vote for one option.

With this type of multiple voting, members have to agree on the voting rules before voting.

### 8.2.6 Averaging Individual Opinion

This approach is applicable in an emergency, when it is not possible to assemble the members for a meeting. In this situation, the group leader may contact each individual member to obtain his or her vote. The alternative chosen is the one receiving the most votes.

In this approach, fewer than 50 percent of the votes could pass the motion, since the other votes may be spread over a variety of options. This approach is useful in making decisions the leader does not believe are important enough for a group meeting. Its shortcomings are as follow:

- a. without group discussion, many of the members may not be fully aware of all the issues, alternatives or consequences of the proposal;
- b. a poor decision may result because the votes of the least informed members may cancel out the votes of the most knowledgeable;
- c. with little involvement, members are unlikely to have much commitment toward implementing the decision;
- d. There is also a danger that a subgroup opposed to the decision may feel it has been left out and may work hard to overturn the decision or impede its implementation; and
- e. the person conducting vote may influence the members to vote for his position.

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## Study Session Summary



### Summary

In this Study Session, we discussed both the concepts of Decision and Decision making; but we noted that Decision is a choice or judgement one makes after a period of discussion or thought. While Decision making is a process of thinking about a problem or idea and then making a choice or judgement. We explained that our decisions are usually based on objective facts, figures, values and assumptions. They are influenced by emotions, reasoning or by a combination of both. We added that decision can be made, using four approaches; consensus, simple majority vote, two-thirds or three-fourths majority vote, delegated decisions, multiple



voting and averaging individual opinions.

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## Assessment



### Assignment

1. How would you explain the following two terms?
    - a. decision
    - b. decision making
  2. As a group leader in social work, what strategies would you employ in making decisions?
-

## Study Session 9

# Power and Influence in a Group

## Introduction

In this Study Session, we will examine the difference between power and influence, the bases of power. We will also discuss the effects of unequal power in groups.

### Learning Outcomes



When you have studied this session, you should be able to:

9.1 *differentiate* between power and influence.

9.2 *discuss* four bases of power.

9.3 *appraise* the effects of unequal power in groups.

## 9.1 Difference between Power and Influence

The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (1995) defined power to mean ability or right to control people or events. It defined influence as power to have an effect on the way someone or something develops, behaves, thinks and so forth, without using direct force or command. That is, without directly forcing or commanding them.

The terms power and influence can be used interchangeably (Zastrow, 2001). Both terms refer to the capacity of an individual to motivate others to carry out certain actions or to behave in a particular way.

In many groups, members influence each other to commit their time and resources to the group. Controversies are usually settled through mutual influence, as members seek acceptable compromises or solutions.

The use of power is indeed a necessary component of effective group functioning, and it is natural and generally desirable for every member to influence other members in the pursuit of both personal and group goals.

When group members are cooperating, power is asserted in the same direction and members encourage each other to put forth greater effort, as they would on a sports team. However, their

assertions of power conflict, when members are competitive or have incompatible goals.

## **9.2 Power Bases in Groups**

French and Raven (1968) developed a framework for understanding the extent to which one group member influences another by identifying five bases of power, namely; reward, coercive, legitimate, referent and expert power.

This framework allows group members to analyse the source of their power and offers suggestions on when, and when not to use their power to influence others. The power bases in groups are discussed as follow:

### **9.2.1 Reward Power**

Reward is something that brings satisfaction to an individual. It is simply an incentive or a motivating agent. It includes such things as promotions, pay increase, days off and praise.

Reward power is based on a members' perception that another member or the entire group has the ability to dispense rewards or remove negative consequences in response to his behaviour.

This power is greater if the group members value the reward and believe they cannot get it from anyone else. Group members usually work hard for someone whom they believe has high reward power and communicate effectively with them. Reward power tends to increase the attraction of one person (B) to another person (A). However, it should be mentioned here that reward power can back-fire, if group members feel they are being conned or bribed. For instance, using reward power by A in a conflict situation with B. B is apt to feel he is being bribed and controlled, hence, he may refuse to cooperate with A.

### **9.2.2 Coercive Power**

This involves the use of force on other people. The ability to fire a worker who falls below a given level of production is a common example of this type of power.

Coercive power is based on the perception of one person (B) that another person (A) can dispense punishments or remove positive consequences. Coercive power comes from the

expectation on the part of B that he will be punished by A if he fails to conform to the required standard set by A.

Coercive power always decrease attraction of one person (B) to another (A), it often increases B's hostility, resentment and anger, if coercive power is used by A to attempt to settle a conflict between them. Threats often lead to aggression and counter threats. Coercive power exacerbates conflicts, by leading two people in dispute or conflicts to distrust each other and retaliate against each other. Therefore, whenever possible, it should not be used to settle conflict.

### **9.2.3 Legitimate Power**

This is directly related to an internalized value or norm and is probably the most complex of the five power bases.

It is based on the perception by one person (B) that another person (A) has a legitimate right to prescribe what constitute proper behaviour for him and that B has an obligation to accept this influence.

Cultural values constitute one common basis for legitimate power and include, intelligence, age, caste, and physical characteristics as factors determining power (e.g. in some cultures, the aged are highly respected and are granted the right to prescribe behaviour for others).

In a formal organization, legitimate power is generally determined by a relationship between positions rather than between persons. For instance, in a factory, a supervisor has the inherent right to assign work.

A third basis for legitimate power is a legitimizing agent (e.g. an election). The election process legitimate a person's right to a position that already had a legitimate range of power associated with it. The limits of legitimate power are generally specified at the time the power is assigned (as in a job description). Therefore, any attempt to use that power outside of this range will decrease the legitimate power of the authority figure and decrease his attractiveness and influence.

### **9.2.4 Referent Power**

This occurs when one individual (A) influences another individual (B) as a result of identification. Here, identification means either a feeling of oneness with A or a desire for an identity such as A's does.

The stronger the identification of B with A, the greater the attraction to A and the greater the referent power of A. Verbalization of referent power include statements such as:

- I am like A, therefore I will believe or behave as A does.
- I want to be like A or will be more like A; I believe or behave as A does.

Some individuals in a group may like to be like their leaders (e.g. politicians willing to be like Late Chief Obafemi Awolowo and others).

### **9.2.5 Expert Power**

This is based on the perception that a person has adequate knowledge, skill, or expertise which is the source of power. Accepting a physician's advice in medical matters or accepting a counsellors' suggestion are good examples of expert power.

Experts can influence B (the responder) only if B thinks that A (the expert) has the right answer and B trusts A. The range of expert power is more limited than that of referent power because the expert is seen as having superior knowledge or ability only in specific areas. Therefore, exertion of expert power outside the perceived range reduces the power as confidence in the expert seems to be undermined.

For all five types of power described above, the stronger the basis of power, the greater the power. Referent power has the broadest range; however, any attempt to use the power outside the prescribed range can reduce the power.

## **9.3 Effects of Unequal Power in Groups**

The effectiveness of a group is improved when power is based upon expertise and competence, and is relatively equal among members. Also, members are more committed to implementing decisions when they feel they have had a fair say in making a decision. When power is relatively balanced, members are generally more cooperative with each other.

If a group is dominated by a few powerful members, the low-power members are likely to feel less committed to carrying out the decisions they perceived as being made by the powerful members.

Therefore, unequal power often leads to distrust between the high-and low-power members. The low-power members fear they will be manipulated and are reluctant to share their thoughts completely with the high-power members, because they believe that if they express views in opposition to the views of the high-power members, they are apt to receive fewer rewards and may be coerced.

High-power members avoid revealing weaknesses because they fear the low-power members may come to think they are underserving of their power and seek to grasp it.

The effect of unequal power is best seen in the relationships between high- and low-power people. For instance, when threatened, high-power people may maintain power by instituting rules or norms that legitimate their power and make it illegal to change the status quo, they may also maintain their position by creating severe penalties for attempting to change the status quo.

In addition, high-power members may seek to deter low-power members from rebelling by dispensing a variety of rewards to those low-power members who support the status quo.

Low-power people can use a variety of strategies in relating with high-power people in groups. These strategies include:

1. emphasizing and exaggerating the degree to which high-power people like them, overestimating their good will;
2. becoming apathetic and submissive. An authoritarian leadership often breeds this reaction; and
3. they can also become angry and rebellious.

Low-power people can use a variety of strategies to change the distribution of power. In doing this they can employ the following strategies:

- i. endearing themselves by frequently complimenting high-power people and agreeing with them;
- ii. develop personal resources and organizations so that they are less vulnerable to exploitation and less dependent upon high-power people;
- iii. build coalitions with other parties;
- iv. using existing legal procedures to bring pressures for change; and

- v. organizing and using confrontation techniques to force the power structure to change.

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## Study Session Summary



### Summary

In this Study Session, we discussed that Power refers to the ability to control people or events. We explained that influence implies power to have an effect on the way someone or something develops, behaves, and thinks. We noted that both refer to the capacity of an individual to motivate others to carry out certain actions or to behave in a particular way. We discussed five bases of power in a group; These are reward power, coercive power, legitimate power, referent power, and expert power. We also noted that unequal power in a group often leads to distrust between high and low-power members.

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## Assessment



### Assignment

1. How would you define power and influence?
2. How is influence different from power?
3. Explain two types of power you are familiar with.
4. How is power distributed in your group?

## Study Session 10

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# Verbal Communication in Group

## Introduction

In this Study Session, we will examine the concept of communication, the important models, characteristics, types. We will also discuss how to communicate effectively in groups.

### Learning Outcomes

When you have studied this session, you should be able to:

- 10.1 *define* the concept of communication.
- 10.2 *analyse* the models of communication.
- 10.3 *highlight* five characteristics of communication.
- 10.4 *discuss* two types of communication.
- 10.5 *describe* how to communicate effectively in groups.

## 10.1 Concept of Communication

Communication refers to the process by which people exchange information or express their thoughts and feelings. It is simply exchange of meaningful messages.

According to Payne (2001), communication is the negotiation of a shared meaning. In other words, the presence of meaning means that communication must have taken place. Therefore, if a work of art has meaning for us, then a form of communication has taken place. The artist is a “sender” and we are “receivers”. If an object has special meaning for us, communication is taking or has taken place. Perhaps the communication is within the one person for whom the object has meaning, but the creation of meaning, even within a single person, is a form of communication.



## 10.2 Model of Communication

A model is a way of reducing a complex object or process to a simpler representation (Payne 2001). A good model reveals the essence of its subject but does so in a way that allows easier understanding. Zastrow (2001) identified two models of communication, namely, a model of one-way communication and a model of two-way communication.

### 10.2.1 A Model of One-Way Communication

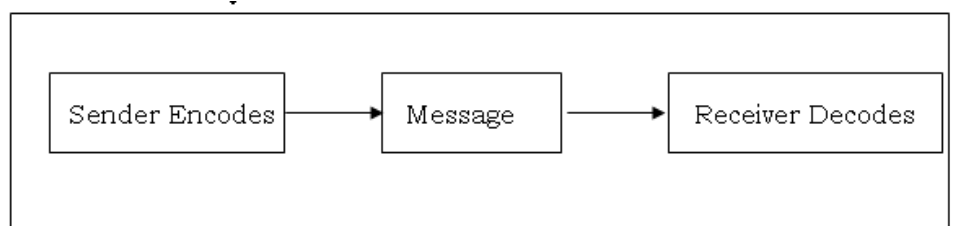
When a sender wants to express a thought or feeling, the first thing he does is to translate that thought and feeling into symbols (spoken words or non-verbal signals) that others can understand. This process is called encoding. However, finding the precise symbols to express what you think or feel can be difficult.

The next step is to send the message, which may be by letter, e-mail, telephone, note, spoken word, touch, posture, gesture, and facial expressions.

When the message reaches a receiver, the receiver decodes the message by interpreting it in terms, thoughts or feelings that mean something to the receiver. The completed process is shown in Figure 1 below. This process is one-way communication in which the sender directs a message to the receiver.

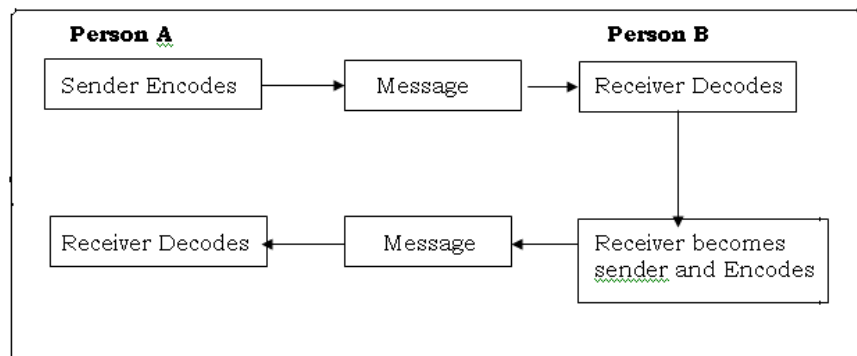
**Fig. 1**

**A Model of one-way communication**



### 2. A Model of two-way communication

Most communication is a two-way process. For instance, the initial sender directs a message to a receiver and the receiver responds. This is illustrated in Figure 2 below.

**Fig. 2****A Model of two-way Communication**

**Source:** Zastrow, C. (2001)

It should be mentioned here, that with effective communication, what the receiver decodes is what the sender sends.

However, frequently, something goes wrong. That is, there may be areas in which misinterpretations may occur. These include the following:

1. the sender may have difficulty in putting into symbolic form, the thoughts or feelings he or she wishes to express;
2. the message may not be sent effectively;
3. there may be too much noise for the sender to be fully heard or the sender may not speak loudly enough;
4. words may have a variety of meanings and may connote something different from what the sender intends; and
5. during the decoding process, the receiver may misunderstand the sender's message as a result of several factors including physiological factors, individual attitudes, values, beliefs, defense mechanisms, stereotypes and perceptual factors as not listening.

## 10.3 Characteristics of Communication

Payne (2001) gave the nature or characteristics of communication as follows:

*Communication is On-going.* It is on-going because it is a process. Even when we stop talking we are communicating with our silence. Therefore, for human beings communication never stops.

*Communication is Dynamic.* It is dynamic because it is always changing. In the simplest of conversation, we naturally move from one thought, idea, or topic to another.

*Communication has Many Parts.* There are many parts to an action of communication. A change in any one of these parts brings about a change in the communication action itself.

*Communication is all around us.* It is around us because we cannot avoid being part of communication process. Everywhere we turn, meaning is created within us, and we are creating meaning in others.

*Communication is Complex.* It is complex because it is made up of many parts. Even a simple act of communication involves many parts or pieces.

*Communication is Multilevel.* It is multilevel because it takes place at different levels. In other words there are different levels of communication. For instance, we create shared meaning within ourselves or within others. We can communicate in a very large group. We can communicate directly or via a mass medium such as television or the internet. The different levels of communication as described by Payne (2001) include:

## Intrapersonal Communication

- The meaning we create within ourselves is called intrapersonal communication. Intrapersonal communication takes place when we think about the messages others send to us.

## Interpersonal Communication

- This occurs in contexts where two or more people actively participate in exchanging messages. A conversation, a small discussion group, an interview are good examples of interpersonal communication. The largest group that allows interpersonal communication among all members is about 10-14 people.

## Person-to-Group Communication

- This is called public speaking. In this level of communication, one person is typically labeled the “speaker” and the other people are called the “audience”. The members of the audience are typically not addressed as individuals. Instead, the speaker tends to address them as one “receiver”. Lectures, reports, speeches and so forth are examples of person-to-group communication.

## Mass Media

- This uses technology to communicate the same message to very large groups of people. Printing enables thousands and millions of people to receive the same message, while electronic media allows several people to receive the same message at the same time. The internet allows an audience to interact with the developer of the message.

## 10.4 Types of Communication in Groups

In groups, two major types of communication are used. These are one-way communication and two-way communication.

### 10.4.1 One-Way Communication

Some groups and many corporations use one-way communication. The boss or group leader gives instructions and orders or makes announcements to the other group members who are not allowed to respond with their thoughts, feelings, and ideas.

In one-way communication, the listener’s role is only to receive the sender’s message and to carry out instructions and orders. The advantages of one-way communication are that:

- a. Messages and instructions are given quickly and the boss does not have to deal with the questions and concerns of the listeners; and
- b. in authority hierarchies, messages are often passed down through several levels.

One-way communication has many problems or disadvantages, especially when information is passed through several people. Such problems or disadvantages include:

- a. as the message is passed along, it tends to become more simplified and distorted because of the three psychological processes of leveling, sharpening, and assimilation;
- b. receivers reduce or level the amount of information because they recall less information than they receive. In successive messages, fewer details are mentioned, and fewer words are used;
- c. a few high points become dominant and readily remembered or sharpened, while much of the remainder is forgotten;
- d. The receiver interprets or assimilates much of the message in term of their own unique personalities and reference frame. By this, they change the unfamiliar to some known context, leaving out materials that seem irrelevant, and substituting material that gives meaning in terms of the receiver frame of reference;
- e. group members may have valuable information that could improve the group's productivity, but because the information is not communicated to the chair, it is never considered;
- f. details of original information are lost and the original message is distorted as it is passed from one level to another;
- g. the distortions reduce the coordination between hierarchy levels and sometimes result in ineffective implementation of the chair's directive; and
- h. the moral of the group and the commitment of members to carry out the directives are substantially reduced when the members have no input into the decision-making process.

### 10.4.2 Two-way Communication

This is a type of communication in which minority opinions are encouraged and expressed. Two-way communication improves cohesion, group morale, trust, and openness. It helps in resolving conflicts and controversies through high quality solutions as the resources and ideas of all members are pooled.

It is more effective and productive than one-way communication. However, it has the following shortcomings:

- a. it is much time-consuming;
- b. authority hierarchy affects two-way communication because high-status people tend to talk more and most messages are directed to high-status members;
- c. often, members with little power take few risks and avoid frank remarks because they fear the consequences; and
- d. high authority members are often reluctant to reveal their limitations and vulnerabilities for fear of appearing weak and underserving of their status. This tendency of high-authority members also reduces honest and open communication.

To avoid these problems, a cooperative atmosphere should be established to encourage the full participation of all members when there are sharp differences in status and authority among members. Also, to make the group effective, group norms must indicate that the ideas and opinions of all group members are valuable and essential.

## 10.5 How to Communicate Effectively

A number of suggestions are given for improving communication for both a sender and a receiver. According to Zastrow (2001), they include;

### 10.5.1 Sender

For a sender to communicate his message effectively to the receiver, he or she must take note of the following:

- a. verbal and non-verbal messages should match each other to avoid double and contradictory messages;
- b. messages should be complete and specific; if you have to request a special favour of someone, it is desirable to

explain why. Also, it is important to specify your request, as vague or incomplete messages are often misinterpreted;

- c. “own” your messages by using personal pronouns such as ‘I’ to show that you are clearly taking responsibility for your thoughts and feelings;
- d. each message should be phrased in a way that is appropriate to the receiver’s frame of reference (e.g. the words used for a child should not be used for an adult);
- e. support your messages with handouts, pictures, and written messages as these will help the receiver understand them;
- f. always ask for feedback when you are not sure whether the receiver has accurately perceived the message; and
- g. express your concerns to others in non-blaming rather than judgemental or evaluative terms.

A lot of physical factors interfere with effective communication. These are barriers to communication and include chairs in a row rather than in a circle, poor acoustics, loud outside noises, an unacceptable room temperature, ineffective lighting, uncomfortable chairs, and too little time allotted to discuss issues.

### **10.5.2 Receiver**

- a. communication becomes halted if the receiver takes the message personally. Therefore, instead of jumping to a wrong conclusion, a receiver should ask questions that will clarify the sender’s intentions and reasoning (e.g. are you saying ....? Or are you feeling ...?);
- b. the receiver should restate the ideas and feelings of the sender accurately and to the sender’s satisfaction before proceeding to present his own views;
- c. the receiver should express the sender’s feelings and ideas in his own words rather than parroting or mimicking the words of the sender. In other words, before indicating approval or disapproval, a receiver should place himself or herself in the sender’s shoes in order to understand what the sender is thinking or feeling; and

- d. to communicate effectively, the receiver should develop good listening skills.

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## Study Session Summary



### Summary

In this Study Session, we described the concepts of as the exchange of meaningful messages or express their thoughts and feelings. We defined a model as a way of reducing a complex. Communication model may be a model for one-way or two-way communication. Also effective communication requires a sender and a receiver.

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## Assessment



### Assignment

1. How would you define communication?
2. What do you understand by a model?
3. Explain a typical model of communication.
4. Describe the nature of communication.
5. How would you classify communication?



## Study Session 11

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# Non-Verbal Communication in Group

## Introduction

In this Study Session, we will focus on non-verbal communication. We will also explore the functions of non-verbal communication in groups.

### Learning Outcomes



When you have studied this session, you should be able to:

- 11.1 *describe* non-verbal communication.
- 11.2 *identify* five types of non-verbal communication.
- 11.3 *explain* functions of non-verbal communication

## 11.1 Non-Verbal Communication

This is a type of communication in which messages are exchanged without using any word (i.e. without speaking out).

Non-verbal communication may take many forms. We communicate by the way we move, the expression we make, the clothes we wear, even by the way we arrange our homes and offices.

## 11.2 Forms of Non-Verbal Communication

According to Zastrow (2001), non-verbal communication or expression may be in form of:

### 11.2.1 Posture

People tend to be relaxed in nonthreatening situations and to tighten up when under stress. Some people never relax, and their rigid posture shows it. The degree of physical tenseness can reveal status differences. In interaction between a higher- and a lower-status person, the higher-status person is usually more relaxed the lower-status person more rigid and tense.

The overall posture communicates different messages to people. For instance, in a class, students' position may tell us whether the lesson or lecture is well received or not. If students are leaning forward in their chairs, it is a sign that the presentation is going well. If the students are slumping in their chairs, it suggests that the presentation is becoming boring.

### **11.2.2 Body Orientation**

This is the extent to which we face toward or away from someone with our head, body, and feet. Facing someone signals an interest in starting or continuing a conversation, while facing away signals a desire to end or avoid conversation.

Therefore, the phrase "turning your back" concisely summarizes the message that is sent when you turn away from someone.

### **11.2.3 Facial Expressions**

The face and eyes are generally selected as the primary source of non-verbal communication because facial expressions often are mirrors that reflect thoughts and feelings.

Ekman and Friesen (1975) identified six basic emotions that facial expressions reflect. These are fear, surprise, anger, happiness, disgust, and sadness.

### **11.2.4 Eye Contact**

The eyes communicate different messages to people. For instance, when you want to end a conversation or avoid it, you look away from the other person's eyes. If you want to start a conversation, you often seek out the receiver's eyes. You wait until the receiver looks at you, and when he does, it is a signal that he is ready to begin talking.

The eyes also communicate dominance and submission. For instance, when a high-status person and a low-status person are looking at each other, the low-status person tends to look away at first. Downcast eyes often signal submission or giving in. It may also signal sadness, boredom, fatigue, remorse or disgust.

Eye expressions suggest a wide range of human feelings. Wide-open eyes imply wonder, terror, frankness or naiveté. Lowered eyelids may mean displeasure, a constant stare

connotes coldness, and eyes rolled up suggest the person believes another's behaviour is strange or unusual.

### **11.2.5 Gestures**

These provide clues to a person's thought and feelings. They are used in relation to verbal messages to repeat, substitute, accent, contradict and regulate.

Some people literally speak with their hands, arms and head movement. People who are nervous tend to fidget. They may bite their fingernails, tap their fingers, rub their eyes or other parts of their body, bend paper clips or tap a pencil. They may cross and uncross their legs and so on.

Other gestures that provide clues to a person's thought and feelings are: clenched fists, whitened knuckles and pointing (fingers signaling anger; hugs, hand shaking and so forth.

A person's sexual feelings can be signaled through gestures. According to Schefflen (1974) the preening behaviour of women which sends a message that the sender is attracted to the receiver include re-arranging one's clothing, combing or stroking one's hair, and glancing in a mirror.

Other invitational preening gestures that are specific to women are exposing a thigh, protruding a breast, placing a hand on a hip, exhibiting a wrists or palm or stroking a thigh.

### **11.2.6 Touching**

Touching someone is an excellent way of conveying a variety of messages. This, however, depends on the context in which it happens. For instance, a hug at a funeral will connote sympathy, while a hug when meeting someone implies "it is good to see you". A hug between parent and child means "I love you", while a hug on a date may have sexual meanings.

Touch is crucial for the survival and development of children. It is also crucial for adults to assure them they are worthwhile and loved. As young children need direct physical contact such as being cuddled, held and soothed, adults also need physical contact. Therefore, touching (through holding hands, hugging, and pats on the back) are ways of communicating warmth and caring.

### **11.2.7 Voice**

Messages are also exchanged through voice. Depending on emphasis, a word or phrase may carry many meanings.

Usually, a person raises his voice at the end of a question and lowers it at the end of a declarative statement. Sometimes an individual intentionally manipulates his voices to contradict the verbal message. When we emphasize particular words, our voices communicate in other ways. These include length of pauses, tones, pitch speed, volume and disfluences (e.g. stammering or saying “un”, “um” and “er”).

### **11.2.8 Clothing**

People intentionally and unintentionally send messages about themselves by what they wear: clothes give meaning about occupation, personalities, interests, groups norms, values, mood, religious beliefs and so on. Other non-verbal cues are:

- a. physical appearance;
- b. breathing pattern of a group member;
- c. change in muscle tension; and
- d. emotional excitement

## **11.3 Functions of Non-Verbal Communication**

Non-verbal communication serves several functions. It interacts with verbal communication and can repeat, substitute for, accent, regulate, or contradict what is spoken.

### **11.3.1 Repetition**

Non-verbal messages may repeat verbal messages. For example, a husband may say he is really looking forward to becoming a father and repeat this happy anticipation with glowing facial expressions.

### **11.3.2 Substitution**

Non-verbal messages may substitute for verbal messages. If a close friend has just failed an examination (though he may not talk about it), you can get a good idea what he is thinking and feeling by watching him or her.

### **11.3.3 Accentuation**

Non-verbal messages may accent verbal messages. If you disappoint a friend by your action, he or she may emphasize the depth of his or her feelings by pounding a fist or banging the table etc.

### 11.3.4 Regulation

Non-verbal messages may serve to regulate verbal behaviour. For instance, looking away from someone who is talking to you indicates that you are not interested in talking.

### 11.3.5 Contradiction

Non-verbal messages may contradict verbal messages. An example is someone with a red face, bulging veins and a frown yelling, “Angry I? Hello no, what makes you think I am angry?”

When non-verbal messages contradict verbal messages, the non-verbal messages are often more accurate. When receivers perceive a contradiction between non-verbal and verbal messages, they usually believe the non-verbal.

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## Study Session Summary



### Summary

In this Study Session, we discussed that Non-verbal communication is an exchange of meaningful messages without using or speaking out any word. Non-verbal communication or expression may be in form of posture, body orientation, facial expressions, eye contact, gestures, touching, voice and other forms. Some functions include: repetition, substitution, accentuation, regulation and contradiction.

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## Assessment



### Assignment

1. How would you define non-verbal communication?
2. What is the difference between non-verbal and verbal communication?
3. Does non-verbal communication perform any useful function?

## Study Session 12

# Group Conflict and Its Resolution

## Introduction

In this Study Session, we will discuss the nature of conflicts in groups, types of group conflicts. We will also identify some techniques of resolving conflict in groups.

### Learning Outcomes



When you have studied this session, you should be able to:

- 12.1 *appraise* the nature of conflicts in groups.
- 12.2 *describe* two types of group conflict.
- 12.3 *use* techniques of resolving conflict in groups.
- 12.4 *discuss* at least three approaches to resolving conflicts.

## 12.1 Nature of Conflicts in Groups

Conflict is an antagonistic state of action involving divergent ideas or interests (Zastrow, 2001). It is inevitable in a group. Conflicts are not only a natural part of any relationship within a group, they are also desirable because, when handled effectively, they have a number of payoffs.

Without conflicts, members may become bored, and disagreements often spark the interest and curiosity of group members and produce lively discussion. Conflict motivates members to define issues more sharply, search harder for resolution strategies, and work harder implementing solutions.

Conflicts can also lead to greater commitment, cohesion, communication, and cooperation and can revitalize stagnant groups. By expressing and working out their dissatisfactions, group members can assess their beliefs, values and opinions. Therefore, verbal conflicts can also lead to personal growth and encourage innovation and creativity.

Conflict also produce negative results and should be avoided. Such negative results are divorce, low work morale, deterioration of friendships, psychological trauma, violence, physical injuries, social disorder and even death.

A conflict among the group is a test of group's health, a crisis that can weaken or strengthen the group, a critical event that may bring creative insight and close relationships among members or a lasting resentment, smouldering hostility and psychological scars.

Conflict can push members away from one another or pull them into close and more cooperative relationships. It may contain the seeds of group destruction or the seeds of a more unified and cooperative unit. Conflicts have the potential for producing both highly constructive and highly destructive consequences for group functioning (Johnson and Johnson, 1975).

## **12.2 Types of Group Conflicts**

Conflicts may occur within and between groups. Hence, there are intragroup and intergroup conflicts. Competition has been found to be the cause of both intragroup conflict and intergroup conflict.

### **12.2.1 Intra-group Conflict**

This refers to conflict within a particular group. It is a type of conflict between group members. Many conflicts in groups occur when group members compete with each other, for money power, position, time, prestige or materials (Forsyth, 1999).

### **12.2.2 Intergroup Conflict**

Conflict that arises between groups is called intergroup conflict. Within a single organization, various groups are often forced to vie for funding, human resources, and power. For example in a university, members of different department within a faculty (e.g. social work, adult education, educational management etc) may have conflict over which department in the Faculty of Education will receive authorization to add a new course, or begin a new programme.

As with intragroup conflict, the sides involved in intergroup or between group conflict can use either a win-lose approach or a no-lose problem-solving approach to attempt to resolve the conflict.

## 12.3 Techniques for Resolving Group Conflicts

The techniques that have value in resolving conflicts are role reversal, empathy, inquiry, I – messages, disarming, stroking and mediation.

### 12.3.1 Role Reversal

This is a useful strategy for resolving both intragroup and intergroup conflict. The basic rule for role reversal is that each person expresses his or her opinion or views only after re-stating the ideas or feelings of the opposing person.

These ideas and feelings should be re-stated in one's own words rather than parroted or mimicked in the exact words of the other person. It is advisable to begin the restatement with words such as “your position is ---” You seem to be saying --” or “you apparently feel ---”. Approval or disapproval, blaming, giving advice, interpreting or persuading should be avoided.

In addition, non-verbal messages should be consistent with the verbal paraphrasing and convey interest, openness, and attentiveness to the opposition's ideas and feelings. The role reversal should be the expression of a sincere interest in understanding the other person's feelings, ideas, and position.

The technique has the following merits:

- a. it can result in a re-evaluation and a change of attitude concerning the issue by both parties because the group members involved are apt to be perceived as people who are understanding, willing to compromise, cooperative and trustworthy; and
- b. it has been found to increase cooperative behaviour between role reversers, to clarify misunderstanding, to change win-lose situation into problem-solving situation, to allow the issue to be perceived from the opponent frame of reference. The major problem with this technique is that some people do not like being forced to repeat the words spoken by the person they are in conflict with. Other people do not like hearing the words they have just spoken repeated.



### **12.3.2 Empathy**

This is closely related to role reversal. It involves putting yourself in the shoes of the person you are in conflict with and expressing your understanding of what he or she is thinking and saying.

When expressing empathy the following phrases are very useful.

- a. “What you seem to be saying is ---”
- b. “I take it that you think ---”
- c. “I sense that you feel --- about this issue”

It is essential to mirror what was said in a non-judgemental way. This will help to grasp the essence of what other people is thinking or feeling.

Empathy is also used to facilitate open communication, assist in clarifying misunderstanding, increase cooperative behaviour, and facilitate the process of no-loose problem solving.

### **12.3.3 Inquiry**

This technique is used when somebody is in conflict with another person and he or she is confused regarding the thought and feeling of the person he or she is in conflict with.

The technique involves using gentle, probing questions to learn more about what the other person is thinking and feeling. Tone of voice is very crucial in inquiry. The tone of voice must not be too sarcastic or defensive as this can draw defensive responses from the person one is in conflict with.

### **12.3.4 I-Messages**

This technique of using I-messages (e.g. I feel ---) facilitates more open and honest communication between parties in conflict. In contrast you-messages (e.g. you should know better, you stop that ---) tend to increase defensiveness between parties in conflict.

### **12.3.5 Disarming**

This is an effective strategy in resolving conflict. It involves finding some truth in what other person or side is saying and then expressing your agreement, even if you feel that the person is largely wrong, unreasonable, irrational or unfair.

There is always a grain of truth in what the other persons says, even if it sounds obnoxious and insulting. When you disarm the other person with this technique, he/she will recognize that you respect him or her. That person will not feel dogmatic and is apt to be more willing to examine the merits of your point of view.

In using this technique, it is important to be genuine in what you say and to express your agreement sincerely.

### **12.3.6 Stroking**

This is simply saying something genuinely positive to the person or side you are in conflict with, even in the heat of battle.

Stroking tells the other person that you respect him, even though both of you may be angry. During an argument or conflict, you are apt to feel the need to reject the other person before you get rejected in order to save face. Often people over react and differences of opinions are blown out of proportion. To prevent this rejection, let the other person know that, although you are at odds, you still think highly of him or her.

This makes it easier for him or her to open up and listen, because he or she will feel less threatened.

### **12.3.7 Mediation**

According to Moore (1986), mediation involves the intervention of an acceptable, impartial and neutral third party who has no authoritative decision-making power to assist contending parties in voluntarily reaching their own mutually acceptable settlement of issues in dispute.

Mediation leaves the decision-making power in the hands of the people in conflict. It is a voluntary process in that the participants must be willing to accept the assistance of the interviewer if the dispute is to be resolved.

Mediation is usually initiated when the partners no longer believe that they can handle the conflict on their own and when the only means of resolution appear to involve impartial third-party assistance.

***Mediation process*** – There are various models of the mediation process. According to Blades (1985), the mediation process involves five stages.

- a. **Introduction/commitment:** is the first stage of mediation process. It is usually accomplished in a one-to-two-hour session.

The mediator sets ground rules, described fees, and seeks to gain a commitment to the process from the two parties. The mediator also seeks to develop an understanding of the more pressing issues, gains a sense of the personal dynamics of the two parties and tries to ascertain whether they are ready and willing to mediate.

If one or both of the parties are not willing to mediate, the mediation should not proceed. If one or both of the parties are hesitant to proceed, alternatives to mediation such as lengthy and expensive court battle may be the best line of action.

- b. **Definition:** the two parties with the assistance of the mediator define the areas in which they already agree and disagree. In this regard adequate or considerable amount of information must be provided.

- c. **Negotiation:** once the two parties agree on the issues in conflict, and relevant factual information on the issues is obtained, the two parties are ready to begin negotiating.

At this stage, the mediator seeks to have the parties focus on one issue at a time. A problem-solving approach is used in which the needs of each party are first identified and alternatives are generated.

The mediator recedes into the background when discussions are proceeding well and steps in when emotions intensify or when the two parties are overlooking creative solutions that will meet their needs.

- d. **Agreement:** once alternatives are generated and related facts are evaluated the two parties are ready to begin making agreements on the issues

The roles of the mediator among others include:

- i. to maintain a cooperative atmosphere and to keep the two parties focused on a manageable number of issues;
- ii. to summarize areas of agreement and provide legal or other information necessary to a discussion;
- iii. to help the two parties examine the merits and demerits of the options;

- iv. to praise the parties for the progress they are making and get them to praise themselves for progress made; and
  - v. seeks to crease a positive atmosphere.
- e. **Contracting:** this is the final stage of mediation in which the two parties review the agreements and clarify any ambiguities.

The agreement is always written in the form of a contract, which is available for future reference.

Either party, the mediator or all of them do the actual writing of the contract. The contract expresses what each party agrees to do and may set deadlines for the diverse tasks to be completed.

It also specifies consequences if either party fails to meet the terms of the contract. Mediators seek to have specific agreement stated in concrete form to prevent future controversies. The ultimate goal of mediation is a contract in which no one is a loser and which both parties willingly abide by.

## 12.4 Approaches to Resolving Conflicts

### 12.4.1 Controversy Approach

Controversy is a debate, dispute or discussion involving differences in beliefs, information, opinions, ideas or assumptions among group members (Zastrow, 2001).

The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (1995) defined controversy as a serious argument or disagreement, especially about something such as a plan or decision that continues for a long time.

Emotional reactions to controversy may be positive (e.g. curiosity, friendship with other members, excitement, exhilaration, stimulation, involvement and commitment) or negative (e.g. frustration, disgust, anger, fear, resentment, rejection, apathy and paranoia) depending on how the group handles the controversy.

People react differently to controversy, for instance, some shy away from it. Others take a difference of opinion personally and are hurt or angered. Others find controversies to be stimulating and fun, and hope to find a few each day.

Controversy in groups is a constructive way for members of each side to express themselves, ventilate concerns and work out differences.

When handled effectively, controversy can be healthy and invigorating. However, ineffective groups do not manage controversy well and, therefore, tend to suppress and withdraw from it. When controversy arises in ineffective groups, members may view the opposing positions in terms of “right or wrong” or “us vs them”. Here, the best way of resolving controversy is by win-lose approach.

### **12.4.2 Win-Lose Approach**

In ineffective groups, resolution of controversy between opposing positions becomes win-lose situations. In many competitive fields (e.g. sports, business, politics) individuals or teams are pitted against each other.

In groups controversies are often cast in the same competitive mold. Because each side denies the legitimacy of the other’s interests and concerns, members attempt to support one position against another. The original goals and objectives of the group may fade into the background as only a “win” on issues becomes the objective of the warring sides.

In win-lose situation, the group as a whole loses because it fails to achieve its long range goals and objectives. The losing side is not motivated to carry out the winning decision. The losers resent the winners and may attempt to reverse the decision or impede its implementation.

In such an atmosphere, distrust increases between opposing sides, communication becomes more limited and inaccurate, and group cohesion decreases. Members’ unresolved feelings often results in biased judgements and actions. Members may frequently refuse to vote for a good idea simply because they dislike the person who suggested it. Other shortcomings of this approach are that:

1. communication is severely hampered in groups that handle controversy in a win-lose fashion;
2. conflict in win-lose situations leads to the denial or distortion of unpleasant facts and information as each side is apt to deny, hide, or distort information inconsistent with its position in an effort to win;

3. members misinterpret the ideas, and actions of those perceived as opponents, causing “blind spots” in communication;
4. a win-lose approach leads to deceitful expression of ideas and feelings because winning sometimes receives higher priority than honesty; and
5. disagreement tends to be interpreted as personal rejection on the part of opposing group members, and the group’s future decisions are generally poor.

### **12.4.3 Problem-Solving Approach**

A more effective approach to use in resolving conflicts is the problem-solving approach. Through the use of this approach, members tend to listen to one another, recognize the legitimacy of another’s interests, and influence one another with rational arguments. Instead of a competitive environment, problem-solving encourages an atmosphere of cooperation.

Problem-solving is the process of resolving the unsettled matters, or finding an answer to a difficulty. It is a process that results in a solution to a problem, and it involves changing the actual state of affairs until it is identical with the desired state of affairs (Johnson and Johnson, 1975).

Problem-solving can be broken down into six steps as follow:

#### **Identification and Definition of the Problem**

The problem identified must be precise and accurately defined. When using the problem-solving approach, the group should initially (a) determine the actual or current state of affairs; and (b) specify the desired state of affairs.

The difference between the actual and desired state of affairs should be thoroughly discussed and agreed upon. Brainstorming can be used to arrive at a group definition of a workable problem.

#### **Assessment of Size and Causes**

Once the workable problem is defined, the group next gathers information to help assess the magnitude and causes of the problem. In assessing the magnitude, the following questions arise.

- a. who is affected?
- b. how many people are affected?

- c. how seriously are they affected?
- d. where are they affected?

Often, identifying the causes of a problem will suggest strategies for resolving it.

### **Development of Alternative Strategies**

The third problem-solving step is to formulate alternative ways to solve the problem. Brainstorming is a useful technique for generating a wide range of strategies.

Sometimes, the wildest suggestions may stimulate other members to come up with one or more pragmatic alternatives.

The group can consult outside experts as an alternative to brainstorming if they cannot produce workable strategies.

### **Assessment of Strategies**

The fourth step is assessment of strategies. Here, the merits and demerits of each strategy must be assessed, and often a cost-benefit analysis of each strategy is done.

Cost includes time, material resources, and professional fees. Although, the actual costs and benefits of each strategy are often difficult to assess objectively, reasoned assessments must be made as to what resources will be needed and what the outcomes of applying these resources will be.

### **Selection and Implementation**

The fifth step involves two separate processes, namely:

- a. decision making – in which the group selects one of the proposed alternatives; and
- b. implementation – after a strategy is selected, the group must implement it. Generally, the more solid the group supports for the selected strategy, the greater the chances for its successful implementation.

Required tasks must be identified, jobs assigned, and deadlines set for starting and completing each task.

### **Evaluation**

Once implementation is complete, evaluating the strategy's success in two areas is necessary. These two areas are on full implementation of the strategy and its effects.

If the strategy is not fully implemented, then additional efforts may be required. If the strategy has been fully implemented without achieving the desired state of affairs, perhaps new

strategies are in order. In addition, implementation of strategy may expose other problems.

The evaluation phase should demonstrate the extent to which the problem has been resolved, what remains to be resolved, and what new problems have been identified.

This phase often leads to other problem-solving efforts. The old problem is redefined or another problem is identified.

### **Barriers to Effective Problem-Solving**

There are several barriers to effective problem-solving, among which are inadequate definitions, invalid hypotheses, poor communication, lack of skills, resources and motivation within the group.

#### **Inadequate Definitions**

Individual group members are apt to vary in their interpretations of a problem that is stated imprecisely. For example, a problem stated as “children are under too much pressure in our school system” may be interpreted in many ways. Too much pressure can mean academic pressure, pressure to use alcohol and drugs and so forth. Unless the problem is defined more precisely, group members will probably disagree on how to solve it.

#### **Invalid Hypotheses**

Invalid hypotheses and theories about the causes of a problem also erects a formidable barrier. Emotionally disturbed people were once thought to be possessed by demons and in the early 1900s criminals were considered to be mentally retarded. Nowadays, mental illness is associated to several factors (biological, psychological, and environmental).

If a group has faulty theories about the causes of a problem, the members are apt to develop ineffective strategies to solve it.

For instance, seeking to drive out demons out of someone with emotional problems will not solve it or alleviate emotional trauma; and leeches do not heal.

#### **Poor Communication**

Poor communication in the group may exist for a variety of reasons. Group members may not possess well-developed communication skills or some may withhold information in an attempt to manipulate others in the group.



Interpersonal conflicts between group members may inhibit them from participating effectively. With poor communication, a group will generate fewer alternative strategies and inadequately assess their potential consequence. Enthusiasm and commitment to implement the proposed group strategy will also be diminished.

#### **Lack of Skills**

A group may lack the skills to define and solve a problem. It may not have the expertise to design and conduct a necessary research study. It may not have the skills to write a grant proposal to obtain needed resources.

When the group lacks essential skill, it must acquire the skill by recruiting appropriate new members or retaining an outside consultant.

#### **Lack of Resources**

There never seem to be sufficient financial resources to accomplish everything that is desired.

For instance, a planning group to combat the homeless problem may be partially stifled by lack of funds to build a sufficient number of low-cost housing units for the homeless.

#### **Lack of Motivation**

Some groups fail to solve problems because their members are not motivated to do so. By creating a supportive, trusting, cooperative atmosphere, a leader can encourage unmotivated members to participate. Relatively easy tasks could be delegated to these individuals, who should be complimented for their efforts.

### **Differences between Win-Lose Approach and Problem-solving Approach to Conflict Resolution**

S/N	Win-Lose Approach	Problem-Solving Approach
1.	The conflict is defined as a win-lose situation.	The conflict is viewed as a problem.
2.	Each side seeks solution to meet only its needs.	Each person seeks to find solutions to meet the needs of all members.
3.	Each side attempts to force the other side into	Each person cooperates with others to find mutually acceptable

	submission.	compromises.
4.	Each side increases its power by emphasizing its independence from the other, and the other's dependence upon itself.	Each person equalizes power by emphasizing interdependence.
5.	Each side inaccurately, deceitfully communicates its goals needs, and ideas information inconsistent or harmful to one's position is not shared.	Each person honestly and openly communicates goals, needs and ideas.
6.	No expression of empathy or understanding made of the views, values, and opinions of the other side.	Efforts are made to convey empathy and understanding of the views, values and opinions of others.
7.	Threats are used to attempt to force the other side into submission.	Threats are avoided to reduce the defensiveness of others.
8.	Rigid adherence to one's position is expressed	A willingness to be flexible is expressed.
9.	Changes in position are made very slowly in an effort to force.	Positions are changed readily to help in problem-solving.
10.	No suggestions are sought from third parties as the focus is on forcing the other side to give in.	Third parties are sought to help in problem solving.

## Study Session Summary



### Summary

In this Study Session, we observed that conflict is an antagonistic state of action involving divergent ideas or interests. It is inevitable in a group. We also discussed that conflicts have both negative and positive dimensions. In the

positive dimension, it motivates members to define issues more sharply, and leads to greater commitment, cohesion, and cooperation. However, we explained that conflict leads to negative results such as divorce, low work morale, deterioration of friendship, violence, physical injuries and other problems. We finally added that the techniques of resolving conflicts are role reversal, empathy, inquiry, I-messages, stroking and mediation.

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## Assessment



### Assignment

1. What is conflict?
2. How would you explain its nature?
3. What are the differences between intra-group conflict and intergroup conflict?
4. How would you resolve conflict in your group?
5. Explain the terms controversy and conflicts.
6. How is controversy different from conflict?
7. Explain win-lose approach.
8. Describe problem-solving process or approach.
9. Identify *five* differences between win-lose and problem-solving approaches.

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