

Groups

A **group** is two or more individuals, interacting and interdependent, who have come together to achieve particular objectives.

Groups can be either formal or informal.

Formal group – formally structured or organizationally determined

Informal group A group that is neither formally structured nor organizationally determined; such a group appears in response to the need for social contact.

Temporary Groups with Deadlines

Social identity

Social identity theory proposes that people have emotional reactions to the failure or success of their group because their self-esteem gets tied into the group's performance.

Social identity is important for individuals because they need:

- Similarity
- Distinctiveness
- Status. People are likely to not identify with a low-status organization and will be more likely to quit in order to leave that identity behind
- Uncertainty reduction.

Ingroup favoritism means we see members of our ingroup as better than other people, and people not in our group as all the same.

Stages of Group Development

The Five-Stage Model

- 1. Forming stage** The first stage in group development, characterized by much uncertainty.
- 2. Storming stage** - the second stage in group development, characterized by intragroup conflict.
- 3. Norming stage** characterized by close relationships and cohesiveness.
- 4. Performing stage** - the fourth stage in group development, during which the group is fully functional.
- 5. Adjourning stage** The final stage in group development for temporary groups, characterized by concern with wrapping up activities rather than task performance.

Group Properties

Each group has certain properties. Some of them are:

- **Roles,**
- **Norms,**
- **Status,**
- **Size,**
Cohesiveness,
- **Diversity**

Group Property 1: Roles

We are all required to play a number of roles, and our behavior varies with each. So different groups impose different role requirements on individuals.

Role - a set of expected behavior patterns attributed to someone occupying a given position in a social unit.

Role perception - an individual's view of how he or she is supposed to act in a given situation.

Role expectations are the way others believe you should act in a given context (for example, Management is expected to treat employees justly, provide acceptable working conditions, clearly communicate what is a fair day's work, and give feedback on how well an employee is doing. Employees are expected to respond by demonstrating a good attitude, following directions, and showing loyalty to the organization)

Role conflict A situation in which an individual is confronted by divergent role expectations.

Group Property 2: Norms

All groups have established **norms** —acceptable standards of behavior within a group that are shared by the group's members.

Different groups, communities, and societies have different norms, but they all have them.

They may be:

- *performance norm*, providing explicit cues about how hard members should work, what the level of output should be, etc.
- *appearance norms* (dress codes, unspoken rules about when to look busy),
- *social arrangement norms* (with whom to eat lunch, whether to form friendships on and off the job),
- *resource allocation norms* (assignment of difficult jobs, distribution of resources like pay or equipment).

The norms the group established included a number of “don'ts.” For example: *Don't* squeal on any of your peers.

Group Property

Conformity

As a member of a group, you desire acceptance by the group. Thus you are susceptible to conforming to the group's norms. Not all groups have equal value for individuals. People conform to the important groups to which they belong or hope to belong. These important groups are **reference groups**

Deviant Workplace Behavior (also called *antisocial behavior* or *workplace incivility*) is voluntary behavior that violates significant organizational norms and, in doing so, threatens the well-being of the organization or its members.

Evidence demonstrates deviant workplace behavior is likely to flourish where it's supported by group norms.

Typology of Deviant Workplace Behavior

Category

Examples

Production	Leaving early Intentionally working slowly Wasting resources
Property	Sabotage Lying about hours worked Stealing from the organization
Political	Showing favoritism Gossiping and spreading rumors Blaming co-workers
Personal aggression	Sexual harassment Verbal abuse Stealing from co-workers

Group Property 3: Status

Status – a socially defined position or rank given to groups or group members by others. Status is a significant motivator.

According to **status characteristics theory**, status tends to derive from one of three sources:

- 1. The power a person wields (has) over others.**
- 2. A person's ability to contribute to a group's goals.**
(People whose contributions are critical to the group's success tend to have high status).
- 3. An individual's personal characteristics.** Someone whose personal characteristics are positively valued by the group (good looks, intelligence, money, or a friendly personality) typically has higher status than someone with fewer valued attributes.

Status (continuing)

- **Status and Norms.** High-status individuals are often given more freedom to deviate from norms than are other group members.
- **Status and Group Interaction** High-status people tend to be more assertive group members. They speak out more often, criticize more, state more commands, and interrupt others more often.
- **Status Inequity** It is important for group members to believe the status hierarchy is equitable. Perceived inequity creates disequilibrium, which inspires various types of corrective behavior.

Group Property 4: Size

Group productivity often depend on group size.

Smaller groups are faster at completing tasks than larger ones, and individuals perform better in smaller groups. Smaller groups of about seven members are better at doing something productive with that input. In problem solving large groups consistently get better marks than their smaller counterparts.

Group performance increases with group size, but the addition of new members has diminishing returns on productivity. So more may be better in that total productivity of a group of **four** is greater than that of three, but the individual productivity of each member declines. This tendency was called **social loafing**

Social loafing

Social loafing - the tendency for individuals to expend less effort when working collectively than when working individually.

There are several ways to prevent social loafing:

- (1) Set group goals, so the group has a common purpose to strive toward;
- (2) increase intergroup competition, which again focuses on the shared outcome;
- (3) engage in peer evaluation so each person evaluates each other person's contribution;
- (4) select members who have high motivation and prefer to work in groups, and
- (5) if possible, base group rewards in part on each member's unique contributions.

Group Property 5: Cohesiveness

Cohesiveness —the degree to which members are attracted to each other and motivated to stay in the group.

Some work groups are cohesive because the members have spent a great deal of time together, or the group's small size facilitates high interaction, or external threats have brought members close together.

Cohesiveness affects group productivity

Relationship Between Group Cohesiveness, Performance Norms, and Productivity

Cohesiveness		High	Low
Performance Norms	High	High productivity	Moderate productivity
	Low	Low productivity	Moderate to low productivity

Group Decision Making

Are group decisions preferable to those made by an individual alone? The answer depends on a number of factors.

Strengths of Group Decision Making.

- more complete information and knowledge.
- diversity of views, more approaches and alternatives (more creative)
- increased acceptance of a solution.

Weaknesses of Group Decision Making.

- take more time to reach a solution.
- conformity pressures
- group's overall effectiveness will suffer, if leaders are low- and medium-ability members
- ambiguous responsibility.

Two by-products of group decision making

Groupthink - a phenomenon in which the norm for consensus overrides the realistic appraisal of alternative courses of action.

Groupshift - a change between a group's decision and an individual decision that a member within the group would make; the shift can be toward either conservatism or greater risk but it generally is toward a more extreme version of the group's original position.

Symptoms of groupthink

1. Group members rationalize any resistance to the assumptions they've made. No matter how strongly the evidence may contradict their basic assumptions, they behave so as to reinforce them.
2. Members apply direct pressures on those who momentarily express doubts about any of the group's shared views, or who question the validity of arguments supporting the alternative favored by the majority.
3. Members who have doubts or differing points of view seek to avoid deviating from what appears to be group consensus by keeping silent about misgivings and even minimizing to themselves the importance of their doubts.
4. There is an illusion of unanimity. If someone doesn't speak, it's assumed he or she is in full accord. Abstention becomes a "yes" vote.

Group Decision-Making Techniques

- **Interacting groups.** Members meet face to face and rely on both verbal and nonverbal interaction to communicate.
- **Brainstorming** - an idea-generation process that specifically encourages any and all alternatives while withholding any criticism of those alternatives.
- **Nominal group technique** - a group decision-making method in which individual members meet face to face to pool their judgments in a systematic but independent fashion.
- **Electronic meeting** - a meeting in which members interact on computers, allowing for anonymity of comments and aggregation of votes.

Strengths and weaknesses.

- Each of the four group-decision techniques has its own set of strengths and weaknesses.

an interacting group is good for achieving commitment to a solution,

brainstorming develops group cohesiveness,

the nominal group technique is an inexpensive means for generating a large number of ideas,

electronic meetings minimize social pressures and conflicts.

The nominal group technique

Group members are all physically present, as in a traditional committee meeting, but they operate independently. Specifically, a problem is presented and then the group takes the following steps:

1. Before any discussion takes place, each member independently writes down ideas on the problem.
2. After this silent period, each member presents one idea to the group. No discussion takes place until all ideas have been presented and recorded.
3. The group discusses the ideas for clarity and evaluates them.
4. Each group member silently and independently rank-orders the ideas. The idea with the highest aggregate ranking determines the final decision.