
UNIT 9 SMALL GROUP BEHAVIOUR

Structure

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9.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit you will be able to:

- understand the categorisation of a group,
- explain the characteristics of a small group,
- a list out the influences of small groups on **behaviour**,
- appreciate internal operations of small groups, and
- a explain the conditions affecting the interaction among the members of the small group.

9.1 INTRODUCTION

People in a group behave differently in comparison to when they are alone. Understanding of group dynamics is necessary to understand organisational behaviour. Groups are important to improve organisational out-puts and to influence the attitudes and behaviour of members of the organisation. The importance of groups and its values and norms in influencing behaviour in an organisation, has been duly recognised in "modern management. Whether it is a travel agency, a hotel or a museum, an understanding of the nature of groups, groups behaviour and interaction within the group is essential to improve the organisational performance. In this Unit we will explain the behaviour of a small group, its internal operations as well as conditions affecting the interaction among small group members.

9.2 CATEGORISATION OF GROUPS

A group comprises two or more individuals who interact and are interdependent on each other to attain some specific objectives. When we speak of a group, we mean something more than just a number of persons **having** opportunities for close and **frequent** contacts. Groups can be classified in many ways. There are formal groups which are deliberately created by the legal and formal authorities in order to achieve specific end results or to undertake delegated tasks. On the basis of duration, formal groups can either be permanent or temporary. Informal groups are the ones which are not intentionally planned to be in existence. These are created to fulfil such needs which the formal authority fails to meet. Groups to which an individual really belongs, is called Membership Group, while a Reference group is the one with which **he/she** identifies or to which one would wish to belong. The groups in which the **contacts** are impersonal and infrequent and where interaction is on a remote plane **are known** as secondary groups. Correspondingly, a group characterized by intimate, face-to-face association and **co-operation** is known as a primary group.

The terms small group and primary group are often used interchangeably. Other than being small in size, a primary group ought to possess "a feeling of comradeship, loyalty and a common sense of values among its members". Such characteristics are not there in a small

group which is not a primary group.- Thus, all small groups are not primary but all primary groups are small. A tourist group is a small group because it has certain features namely, intimacy, face-to-face association and co-operation, even though for a limited amount of time i.e. till' the tourists group is on tour. It is believable that there is no such necessity for a tourist group to have traits like comradeship, loyalty, and common values. In other words, the small tourist groups get into formation for fulfilment of needs like security, companionship, etc.

9.3 SMALL GROUP CHARACTERISTICS

A group is one which has some cohesiveness in the activity of the group members. The behaviour of group members must reveal a regularity showing that the members recognise a guiding set of principles of interaction. In keeping with the phenomenon of tourism and tourists, one finds an understanding of the following characteristics of a small group, especially a tourist group, to be of great help in order to have qualitative grasp over small group behaviour dynamics:

- an association of a limited number of persons willing to have frequent face-to-face interaction over a fixed span of time,
- members having like minded approach and intentions, preferably positive ones towards each other,
- members differentiating with members of other sub-groups in some regard,
- group members being mutually aware of their membership of the group and thus having regard for the accepted moves and norms, and
- free-flowing, both ways, communication without injuring the feelings of others and also recognising the group sanctity.

9.4 FORMATION OF SMALL GROUPS

Groups are usually formed to achieve specific tasks. From the tourist's point of view the tasks and objectives could be intimacy with each other, or frequent face-to-face interaction and association. From the point of view of a tourist operating organisation, it is an instrument to perform complex and interdependent tasks, which group members working together can often accomplish more easily than the **individuals** working on their own.

Small groups rest on shared values and shared contacts. It is believed that more the members associate with one another under similar conditions, the more they share and relish **common** values, and develop liking and affinity for each other. What the group members value is not only something "good" or "desirable", it is "good for all in the group" and so ought to be viewed in the same sense by each of the members. The groups are formed deliberately to achieve a given purpose.

In a tourist organisation, groups are **formed** for generating new ideas or creative solutions continuously because of the constant interaction among the members. Besides, they can be a means of utilising up-to-date knowledge. In situations where the members of the group are concentrated at one place instead of being scattered over different places, they would be in close touch and thus draw inspiration from one another. People in a group interact with one another to solve problems, achieve goals, make the way for co-ordination, reduce tension and accomplish a balance.

Check Your Progress-1

1) What are the different types of groups?

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2) What is the need for group formation?

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9.5 SMALL GROUPS INFLUENCES ON BEHAVIOUR

The small group strongly influences the behaviour of its members by setting and enforcing standards for proper behaviour by its members. This includes standards for a variety of situations not directly involved with the activities of the group itself. For example:

- It is in a small group that a great deal of human behaviour including the correct way to behaviour is learned and enforced. The group can set standards for a range of behaviour beyond its own jurisdiction.
- The more stable and cohesive the group is, and the more attached the members are to it, the more influential it is in setting standards for their behaviour.
- The less certain the group is about the right standards, the less amount of control, it can exercise over its members.
- In case the small group's activities are imposed from outside, the norms set by the group are likely to be limited in character. If they are determined from within, they are more likely to take on the character of ideal goals.
- People in a group tend to agree with the opinions of people they like and they tend to think that the people they like agree with them and the ones whom they dislike do not agree with them.
- a The group strongly influences the behaviour of its members by providing them support, reinforcement, security, encouragement, protection, rationale, etc. When an individual is genuinely attached to a group, and is in close and continuous contact with it, his group anchored behaviour and beliefs are extremely resistant to change. In such circumstances the group can exercise firm 'control' over him.
- The small groups are able to have **uniformity** in values and behavioural norms of the members under the following conditions:
 - i) In case the members feel that the group is committed to pursue the commonly agreed goals, the members would be attracted towards the group. The greater the importance of goals, the stronger is the desire of the members to stay in the group.
 - ii) The degree of personal interaction within the group on the basis of equality leads to a lesser amount of personal competition in the group.
 - iii) Direct and meaningful participation encourages members to act for the attainment of set goals.
 - iv) The members are regarded by one another more favourably.

9.6 SMALL GROUPS INTERNAL OPERATIONS

Every culture contains a large number of guidelines which direct the conduct in particular situations. Such guidelines are known as norms. This is true for a small group also. A norm is a specific guide to action which defines acceptable and appropriate behaviour in a particular situation. All groups have established **norms** and values which are generally shared by the group members. In the same way, every group has its internal operations where the objective is to achieve the set goals on the basis of specified norms, values, ethos, etc. The group members have to abide by these in order to ensure group functioning as per its basic philosophy or line of action. We are clear that there are a number of individuals in a group. The more the group members would **adhere to** the accepted norms, values, and guidelines of the group, the higher would be their ranking in the group. The ranking in a way is essential also because it leads to more systematic operationalisation of the group's plans and activities. In case the group norms are not properly defined, it is not possible to have a clear ranking. Conformity to the group's **norms** and values is closely related to the rank, status, prestige, etc., in the group. The members who are more influential in the

group and thus ranked higher can afford to express their disagreement with the group **and** or with some members, in private as well as in public. This is not the case with the lowest ranked members. They express their disagreement only in private and not in public.

Check Your Progress-2

1) How can a small group influence the **behaviour** of its members?

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2) What are group norms and values?

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9.7 LEADERSHIP IN A SMALL GROUP

In a small **group,for** maintaining group cohesiveness, authoritarian leadership is less effective than democratic leadership. Such a leadership facilitates in getting the group goals achieved. Besides, democratic leadership is more effective with respect to the durability of the group, the members' satisfaction, their independence and their productivity on the task.

The leaders of small groups have to simultaneously satisfy two necessary but often conflicting needs of the group, namely:

- 1) The need for initiative, guidance, contribution of ideas etc. and
- 2) The need for harmony, liking, mutual acceptance etc.

These two demands are difficult and rarely combined in the same person. Most of the leaders of groups give up the instrumental **role** in favour of popularity. When groups have established norms and a new leader joins, it becomes extremely **difficult** for the new leader to shift the activities of the group even if **he/she** is highly capable. Usually the leaders of small groups tend to direct the group's activities along lines which they themselves are proficient at and away from the areas in which they are less competent.

9.8 INTERACTION WITHIN THE GROUP

The following conditions affect the interaction among members of a small group:

- As the cohesiveness of the group grows the interaction also increases among the group members.
- When there is difference of opinion among the group members the interaction decreases.
- The interaction in small group increases as the members perceive that there is disagreement within the group on a particular subject because of the emotional attachment that people have in small groups, and
- In a small group communications are received by its members roughly in the same proportion as made by each of the other members. Communications within the group are more likely to be directed from equal to equal and from the higher ranking members to the lower ranking members.

The effectiveness of the group coupled with the satisfaction of individual members are on an increase when **the** members perceive their personal goals being in harmony with group goals.

Active discussion by small **groups** to determine goals, to choose methods of work, to reshape operations or to solve other problems is more effective in changing group practice. It also helps in bringing about better motivation and support for the change and better implementation and productivity of the new practice.

A small group which is composed of relatively **less/limited** number of members having common **goals/aims** has the capacity of providing better solutions to a problem especially in comparison to the problem being attempted to by the individual members. This could be the case under the following conditions:

- When the problem has a definite and identifiable solution. In other words, when it is a technical and not **attitudinal** problem,
- When the initial judgement of the individuals in the group is not homogenous and a range of possible solutions are available initially to the group for its considerations;
- When the task requires that each member of the group makes a **judgement** about the same matter,
- When rewards and punishments are given to the group as a whole, rather than to individuals within the group,
- When the information or skills required for the solution could be more, and
- When the task can be sub-divided.

Within a task oriented group the communication network also affects the group's behaviour and the member's satisfaction in the following ways:

- a) One way communication is considerably faster than two way communication but the members of the group feel less confident.
- b) Two way communication is more accurate because the receivers of communications **are** more sure of themselves and make more correct judgements of how right or wrong they are in the two ways system.
- c) The two way method is relatively noisy with people interrupting the sender and one another. The one way method appears neat and **efficient** to an outside observer but such communication is generally less accurate.

Check Your Progress3

1) Why is democratic leadership desirable in **small** group?

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2) Explain two factors which are important for effective functions of a group.

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9.9 LET US SUM UP

An organisation is decidedly an aggregate of a number of groups both small and large. In this Unit we have explained the meaning, types and formation of small groups, small group's internal operations and the conditions affecting the interaction among the members of the small group. The study of groups is vital for an understanding of behaviour. Behaviour takes place within a group, even if that group consists of not more than two persons. Finally, groups serve a wide range of useful functions both for their members and organisations. These are:

- Groups help in generating new ideas or creative solutions.
- Group members working together can accomplish more than the individual working alone.
- Groups facilitate co-ordination.
- Groups facilitate the implementation of complex decisions.
- Groups can provide emotional support to its members.
- Groups provide companionship and a source of mutual understanding and support from colleagues.

In tourism related services you will come across a variety of situations (either as a manager, owner, or an employee) where small group behaviour is dominant. It is not necessary that the behavioural aspects are the same in each situation. However, the issues discussed in this Unit provide you with a broad understanding.

9.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress-1

- 1) See **Sec. 9.2**
- 2) For complex, interdependent works, groups are important to achieve better results. See **Sec. 9.4.**

Check Your Progress-2

- 1) In a group an individual has to function within the set norms and behavioural pattern of the group. See **Sec. 9.5.**
- 2) See **Sec. 9.6**

Check Your Progress3

- 1) Democratic leadership provides space to an individual for collective responsibility. Individuals identify their goal with the goal of the organisation. See **Sec.9.7**
- 2) See **Sec. 9.8**