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COURSE GUIDE DESCRIPTION

You must read this Course Guide carefully from the beginning to the end. It tells you briefly what the course is about and how you can work your way through the course material. It also suggests the amount of time you are likely to spend in order to complete the course successfully. Please refer to the Course Guide as you go through the course material as it will help you to clarify important study components or points that you might miss or overlook.

INTRODUCTION

AMPG5103 Group Dynamics is one of the courses offered by Faculty of Applied Social Sciences at Open University Malaysia (OUM). This course is worth 3 credit hours and should be covered over 8 to 15 weeks.

COURSE AUDIENCE

This course is offered to all learners taking the Masters of Psychology and other Psychology-related programmes.

As an open and distance learner, you should be acquainted with learning independently and being able to optimise the learning modes and environment available to you. Before you begin this course, please ensure that you have the right course material, and understand the course requirements as well as how the course is conducted.
STUDY SCHEDULE

It is a standard OUM practice that learners accumulate 40 study hours for every credit hour. As such, for a three-credit hour course, you are expected to spend 120 study hours. Table 1 gives an estimation of how the 120 study hours could be accumulated.

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<tr>
<td>Study the module</td>
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<td>Attend 3 to 5 tutorial sessions</td>
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<td>Online participation</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL STUDY HOURS ACCUMULATED</strong></td>
<td><strong>120</strong></td>
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COURSE OUTCOMES

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

1. Describe the types, role and function of groups and the developmental stages as well as the forces operating within a group;

2. Apply the skills and suitable approaches in implementing group activities such as group guidance and counselling sessions; and

3. Develop the ability to communicate effectively and handle issues and conflict in group-related activities.
COURSE SYNOPSIS

This course is divided into 10 topics. The synopsis for each topic can be listed as follows:

**Topic 1** introduces learners to the many definitions, characteristics and types of groups. The topic does not only focus on the concept of groups but also the ways to study groups in psychology.

**Topic 2** examines the connection or relationship between the individual and society, including groups, organisations and communities. It explores three aspects of this relationship: inclusion of the individual in the group, the individualism and collectivism continuum and the inclusion of the group in identity transformation.

**Topic 3** discusses the formation of groups. In particular, the discussion involves several important issues such as who join groups, when do people join groups, what are the factors to consider in creating groups and what makes members like each other.

**Topic 4** discusses the nature, development and consequences of group cohesion. In particular, the discussion involves defining the term *cohesion*, identifying its sources, components and consequences as well as describing the ways to develop cohesion.

**Topic 5** highlights the most common structures of a group. These structures involve group norms, roles and inter-member relations. The discussion also highlights the importance of group structures.

**Topic 6** discusses the nature and extent of influence in terms of conformity, non-conformity and sources of social influence.

**Topic 7** discusses social power, the sources of social power and the reaction to the use of power. It also highlights issues on leadership, leadership styles and the orientation of the task-focused and relationship-focused leaderships.

**Topic 8** discusses the group productivity which includes group and individual performance and creativity in groups. The topic highlights the importance of productivity in groups, in particular, how group and individual performance can affect the productivity and how creativity can improve group performance.
Topic 9 explores and discusses the definitions of decision making, models of decision making, the symptoms and causes of groupthink and the strategies to prevent groupthink.

Topic 10 discusses group conflicts, including a discussion on the causes of conflict and the ways to manage the conflict.

TEXT ARRANGEMENT GUIDE

Before you go through this module, it is important that you note the text arrangement. Understanding the text arrangement will help you to organise your study of this course in a more objective and effective way. Generally, the text arrangement for each topic is as follows:

Learning Outcomes: This section refers to what you should achieve after you have completely covered a topic. As you go through each topic, you should frequently refer to these learning outcomes. By doing this, you can continuously gauge your understanding of the topic.

Self-Check: This component of the module is inserted at strategic locations throughout the module. It may be inserted after one sub-section or a few sub-sections. It usually comes in the form of a question. When you come across this component, try to reflect on what you have already learnt thus far. By attempting to answer the question, you should be able to gauge how well you have understood the sub-section(s). Most of the time, the answers to the questions can be found directly from the module itself.

Activity: Like Self-Check, the Activity component is also placed at various locations or junctures throughout the module. This component may require you to solve questions, explore short case studies, or conduct an observation or research. It may even require you to evaluate a given scenario. When you come across an Activity, you should try to reflect on what you have gathered from the module and apply it to real situations. You should, at the same time, engage yourself in higher order thinking where you might be required to analyse, synthesise and evaluate instead of only having to recall and define.

Summary: You will find this component at the end of each topic. This component helps you to recap the whole topic. By going through the summary, you should be able to gauge your knowledge retention level. Should you find points in the summary that you do not fully understand, it would be a good idea for you to revisit the details in the module.
**Key Terms:** This component can be found at the end of each topic. You should go through this component to remind yourself of important terms or jargon used throughout the module. Should you find terms here that you are not able to explain, you should look for the terms in the module.

**References:** The References section is where a list of relevant and useful textbooks, journals, articles, electronic contents or sources can be found. The list can appear in a few locations such as in the Course Guide (at the References section), at the end of every topic or at the back of the module. You are encouraged to read or refer to the suggested sources to obtain the additional information needed and to enhance your overall understanding of the course.

**PRIOR KNOWLEDGE**

No prior knowledge required.

**ASSESSMENT METHOD**

Please refer to myINSPIRE.

**REFERENCES**


**TAN SRI DR ABDULLAH SANUSI (TSDAS) DIGITAL LIBRARY**

The TSDAS Digital Library has a wide range of print and online resources for the use of its learners. This comprehensive digital library, which is accessible through the OUM portal, provides access to more than 30 online databases comprising e-journals, e-theses, e-books and more. Examples of databases available are EBSCOhost, ProQuest, SpringerLink, Books24x7, InfoSci Books, Emerald Management Plus and Ebrary Electronic Books. As an OUM learner, you are encouraged to make full use of the resources available through this library.
A chain is no stronger than its weakest link, and if one of the teams cannot handle the forces, everybody is going to suffer. A ritual lodge is no place for the well-meaning ineffectual.

Dion Fortune in *Psychic Self-Defense* (“Quotes About Group Dynamics” n.d.)

The above quotation is one of the many examples to help us understand the nature of groups and group dynamics. Being in a group has no profound meaning unless the group has certain drivers or forces that can contribute to its growth and development. These drivers and forces are what psychologists call group dynamics.
This topic introduces learners to the many definitions, characteristics and types of groups. The topic does not only focus on the concept of groups but also the ways to study groups in psychology. Therefore, you may sit back, relax and continue reading Topic 1.

Do you want to find out more definitions of the word group? Browse the Internet and use Google search to locate ten definitions of the word group. Tabulate your findings in a table with three columns:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition (Copy and paste the exact definition of the word group)</th>
<th>Central Feature (Identify the emphasis of the definition)</th>
<th>Source (State the source of the extracted definition)</th>
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During your next tutorial session, discuss your findings with your tutor and the rest of the class.

### 1.1 DEFINITION OF GROUP AND GROUP DYNAMICS

A **group** typically refers to a collection of human beings. This definition may be the simplest definition that most people can come up with. How does a psychologist define the word **group**?

#### 1.1.1 Group

According to psychology literature, there are numerous definitions of the word **group** provided by theorists and each definition emphasises the importance of the central feature (Forsyth, 2006). For example, a social and personality psychologist, Dr Forsyth, whose professional work is mostly pertaining to group studies, defined the word group as, “two or more individuals who are connected to one another by social relationships” (p. 3). In his definition, he emphasises the importance of three central features and these are:
(a) **Two or More Individuals**
In defining *group*, there are variations in terminology to conceptualise the meaning of a group. One defining feature is the number of individuals who make up the group (that is, group size). For example, if a group comprises two individuals, it is called a *dyad* (two members). A *triad* is the term used to describe a group with three members. A *quadrad* is a grouping of four individuals. When the group involves very large collections of people, psychologists use various labels to describe it such as *mobs, crowds, congress* and *congregations* (Forsyth, 2006).

Each group, whether it is a very small collective or very large collective, possesses many unique characteristics. This means the size of a group influences its nature in many ways. For example, some groups (except dyads) can be broken up into several subgroups based on their unique qualities. However, if groups increase in size, they tend to have more complex natures and are more structured even though all are still considered groups.

(b) **Who are Connected to One Another**
The individuals in a group are also connected to one another. The connection, or tie, or bond, may be based on strong emotions (such as the strong emotional bond between the members of a family), specific works or tasks (such as the responsibilities and duties of the members of a department), or specific circumstances or situations (such as the flood victims or a support group). The strength of the connection may vary, depending on the membership procedure, the size of the group and the mutual characteristics shared by members of the group.

(c) **By Social Relationships**
Humans are social animals. They tend to prefer being in a group rather than being alone. In fact, most things in this universe are accomplished by groups rather than by single individuals working alone. Therefore, the relationship among members of a group is described as a social one. If the social relationship is meaningful among members of a group, then the group becomes stronger and more cohesive (Jacobs, Masson, & Harvill, 2006). For example, your family is more meaningful and important than your neighbourhood association. Am I right to conclude this?

Can you recall the definition of the word *group*? Now, let us move on to define the term *group process*. 
1.1.2 Group Process

Group process refers to the stages of groups. These stages generally involve three levels: The beginning, middle and ending (or closing stage).

(a) The Beginning Stage
There are several phases in this stage. First, the formation of a group normally involves specifying the group size, type and membership criteria. Second, once the group is formed, members start to build rapport with one another and they go through the orientation process to understand the group better. Third, sometimes during this orientation, there are some issues, misunderstandings or conflicts arising among members in the group. These issues, misunderstandings and conflicts are the indicators that the group is still at the early stage of its development.

(b) The Middle Stage
Sometimes, the middle stage is also called the working stage because the members are expected to focus on the purpose of the group. During this stage, all the emerging issues, misunderstandings and conflicts are identified, assessed and dealt with accordingly. During this stage, many different dynamics can occur because the members are active in interaction with one another.

(c) The Ending Stage
At this stage, group members share what they have learned throughout the group process. They also share how they have changed and how they plan to move on from that point.

1.1.3 Group Dynamics

Group dynamics are the influential interpersonal processes that take place in groups (Forsyth, 2006). This is one example of the definition of group dynamics. In reality, there are many aspects to consider in order to define and describe the nature of group dynamics, not only the processes that occur in social groups as depicted in the given definition.

For example, Jacobs et. al. (2006) argued that any discussion of group dynamics has to take into consideration the kind of group and the style of leadership. They also agreed that the terms group process and group dynamics are similar and both refer to the attitudes and interaction of group members and leaders. Thus, we can conclude that the word group dynamics is a complex concept because it
involves an interplay of several important aspects. Let us look at several definitions of group dynamics and study them closely.

(a) **Classic Definitions**
In the 1950s, group dynamics referred to the way groups and individuals acted and reacted to changing circumstances (Lewin, 1951). Later in the 1960s, a formal definition of group dynamics was introduced by two profound researchers as shown below:

> A field of inquiry dedicated to advancing knowledge about the nature of groups, the laws of their development, and their interrelations with individuals, other groups, and larger institutions.

(Cartwright & Zander, 1968)

In analysing both classic definitions, it seems that the words *group dynamics* can refer to a specialised field of study, a group process and procedure as well as the energy and interaction patterns within a group.

(b) **Modern Definitions**
In defining group dynamics, there are a number of assumptions to be considered when conceptualising the exact meaning. These are:

(i) **Groups are real** – studying groups involves a multilevel orientation to groups. This approach is as real as studying individuals.

(ii) **Group processes are real** – group-based processes are influential determinants of behaviour.

(iii) **Groups are more than the sum of their parts** – the characteristics of groups cannot be deducted from the individual members’ characteristics.

(iv) **Groups are living systems** – in order to grow and develop, groups undergo several stages such as forming, storming, norming, performing and adjourning.

(v) **Groups are influential** – being in groups can alter members’ attitudes, values and perceptions and sometimes can also cause radical alterations in personality and actions.

(vi) **Groups shape society** – groups can contribute to a society’s growth as well as its demise.
In counselling psychology, especially in group counselling, the terms *group process* and *group dynamics* refer to the attitudes and interactions of group members and leaders (Jacobs, Masson, & Harvill, 2006). In order to detect the presence of dynamics in a counselling group, we can check the following:

(a) How members talk to each other;
(b) How members feel about each other;
(c) How members feel about the leader; and
(d) How the leader reacts towards the members.

The dynamics are present in a group if:

(a) The members feel that they are being accepted in the group;
(b) The members feel safe being in the group;
(c) The members know what to be expected from the group; and
(d) The members feel a sense of belonging in that particular group.

With these indicators, it seems that the term *group dynamics* is like a force that helps the group to develop and grow. When there are dynamics in a group, then there is high tendency that the group can progress to achieve its objectives.

**SELF-CHECK 1.1**

Explain the following basic terms in the field of group dynamics:

(a) Groups;
(b) Group processes; and
(c) Group dynamics.
1.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF GROUPS

How would you describe a group? What are some common characteristics of a group? As groups exist in our society, they must possess some key characteristics that allow researchers to describe them. For example, Forsyth (2006) provided five main characteristics and each is discussed as follows:

(a) **Interaction**

The term *interaction* means the social actions of individuals in a group, particularly those that are influenced either directly or indirectly by the group (Forsyth, 2006). This characteristic emphasises interaction with the assumption that people in a group interact with one another. There are two types of interaction that are most common in a group:

(i) **Task interaction** – any sort of action or activities taken by group members that focus on certain tasks, projects or goals.

(ii) **Relationship interaction** – any sort of action or activities taken by group members that relate to or influence the emotional and interpersonal bonds within the group. These actions or activities can either be positive (for example, social support and mutual consideration) or negative (for example, social criticism and conflicts).

(b) **Interdependence**

Groups mostly create a state of interdependence, that is, mutual dependence or influence as when one’s outcomes, actions, thoughts, feelings and experiences are determined in whole or in part by others.

(c) **Structure**

Members in a group are connected to one another in organised and predictable patterns. The structure in a group is determined by the norms, roles and stable patterns of relations among the members.

(i) **Norms** – consensual standards that describe what behaviours should and should not be performed in a given context. For example, Malaysian norms prohibit the gay and lesbian lifestyle as such practices violate the religious values of most Malaysians.

(ii) **Roles** – a coherent set of behaviours expected of people who occupy specific positions within a group.
(d) **Goals**
The emergence of groups must be for a reason. So the fourth characteristic in describing groups is group goals – the aim or outcome sought by the group and its members. In striving to meet a goal, groups undergo several group tasks such as generating tasks (planning, creativity), choosing tasks (intellective, decision making), and negotiating tasks (cognitive conflict, mixed-motive), and executing tasks (contests or battles, performances).

(e) **Cohesiveness**
What is the difference between a family and a study group? The quality of relationship among members of a group refers to group cohesiveness. Forsyth (2006) defines the term as the strength of the bonds linking individuals to the group, feelings of attraction for specific group members and the group itself, the unity of a group and the degree to which the group members coordinate their efforts to achieve goals.

It should be noted that these characteristics can be found in all groups, but the group performance and productivity depend on the quality of each characteristic. These characteristics are also the determinants to the formation of different kinds of groups. Let us continue reading in order to understand more about the different types of groups.

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**SELF-CHECK 1.2**

1. List and explain five basic characteristics of groups.
2. Define task interaction and relationship interaction.

**ACTIVITY 1.2**

Make a list of all the groups you belong to now. List as many as possible, including primary groups, social groups, collectives and categories. Then, try to answer the following questions:

(a) What general conclusions can you draw about the groups you listed earlier?

(b) Which group has changed the most over time? Describe the change briefly.
**1.3 DIFFERENT TYPES OF GROUPS**

Groups come in many forms (Forsyth, 2006). Some scholars argue that there are four clusters of groups and these are primary groups, social groups, collectives and categories. Table 1.1 presents basic characteristics of these four clusters of groups.

**Table 1.1: Basic Features of Primary Groups, Social Groups, Collectives and Categories**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary groups</td>
<td>Small, long-term groups characterised by face-to-face interaction and high level of cohesiveness, solidarity and member identification.</td>
<td>Families, close friends, tight-knit peer groups, gangs, elite military squads, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social groups</td>
<td>Larger, less intimate (public-related) groups characterised by mutual goals, projects, tasks and responsibilities.</td>
<td>Association of single mothers, political parties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collectives</td>
<td>Emergent, short-term, unplanned groups that are formed when external, situational forces set the platform for people to join together, often only temporarily, in a unified group.</td>
<td>Flood-rescue volunteers, crowds, mobs, audiences, bystanders, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Categories</td>
<td>Aggregations of individuals who share certain qualities such as personality traits, physical features or behavioural regularities. They are similar in terms of gender, ethnicity, religion and nationality.</td>
<td>Introverts (individuals who are quiet and shy), gamblers, New Yorkers, disabled people, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although there are four clusters of groups, there are many forms of groups emerging from these four. The following describes in detail some examples of groups.
1.3.1 Primary Groups

What does a primary group mean? According to Forsyth (2006), a primary group is a small, long-term group characterised by face-to-face interaction, solidarity and high levels of member-to-group interdependence and identification (for example, families or friendship cliques). In normal circumstances, a primary group serves as the primary source of socialisation for members by shaping their attitudes, values and social orientation.

Individuals are born into a primary group (for example, a family). Families serve many functions such as:

(a) Providing for the members’ well-being until they can join other social groups;

(b) Protecting members from harm;

(c) Caring for them when they are ill; and

(d) Providing them with shelter and sustenance.

Overall, the most important function is in creating a bridge between the individual and society at large.

1.3.2 Secondary Groups

We have understood the meaning of primary groups. As societies become more complex, more secondary groups are formed and emerge. A secondary group is defined as a relatively large, often formally organised social group common in more complex societies such as work groups, clubs and congregations. Such a group influences members’ attitudes, beliefs and actions but acts as a supplement to the influence of smaller primary groups.

In comparing primary and secondary groups, four conclusions can be drawn which include:

(a) Secondary groups are larger than primary groups;

(b) Secondary groups are more formally organised than primary groups;

(c) Secondary groups tend to be shorter in duration than primary groups; and

(d) Secondary groups are less psychologically influential and less emotionally involving than primary groups.
1.3.3 Planned Groups

In general, planned groups are deliberately formed by their members or by an external authority for some purpose. Such a group serves a specific function, that is, to achieve the purposes, goals or objectives set by the members or external authority. Some examples of planned groups are:

(a) Civil rights groups;
(b) Expedition;
(c) Musical groups;
(d) Sports teams;
(e) Study groups;
(f) Task forces; and
(g) Therapy groups.

Two types of planned groups are:

(a) **Concocted groups** – are planned by individuals or authorities outside the group. This means that the creators of those groups are not actually members of the groups. Some examples of concocted groups are the flight crew of an airplane, mine diggers and a military squad.

(b) **Founded groups** – are planned by one or more individuals who remain members of the group. This means that the founders of those groups are actually members of the group. Some examples of founded groups are a study group, an expedition team and a community-security action group.

1.3.4 Emergent Groups

An emergent group refers to a group that comes into existence gradually as individuals repeatedly interact with the same subset of individuals or when they join together in the same physical location. Such a group does not serve a specific function or the same goal but they share some central features such as:

(a) Groups are not explicitly organised;
(b) Develop elements of structure based on members’ interactions and behaviours;
(c) Groups have unclear boundaries, no written rules; and
(d) Membership is not a planned agenda.

Members of emergent groups do not join to gain some goal but they find satisfaction by being together and interacting with each other. Some examples of planned groups are:
(a) Audiences at events;
(b) Bystanders of a crime scene;
(c) Customers at a club;
(d) Gangs and mobs; and
(e) People queuing and lining up.

Two types of emergent groups are:
(a) **Circumstantial groups** – are emergent, unplanned groups that arise when external, situational forces set the platform for people to join together (often temporarily) in a unified group.

(b) **Self-organising groups** – are emergent, unplanned groups when interacting individuals gradually align their activities in a cooperative system of interdependence (for example, reunion parties or gatherings).

Beside the four types of groups – primary, secondary, planned and emergent groups – there are other basic types of groups such as intimate groups (for example, romantic couples, close friends), task-focused groups (for example, teams, neighbourhood associations), loose association (for example, crowds, audiences), and more general social categories (for example, Asian women, Malaysian citizens). These groups have their own characteristics which are distinctive from one another.

**SELF-CHECK 1.3**

Compare and contrast these four basic types of groups: primary groups, social groups, collectives and categories.

(a) What are the differences between primary and secondary groups?
(b) What are the differences between planned and emergent groups?
RESEARCH METHODS IN STUDYING GROUPS

Scientific methods refer to empirical investigations that are based on systematic observation of phenomena. Their purposes are:

(a) To describe the phenomena (that is, to reach the goal of description);

(b) To detect orderly relationships (laws) governing interrelationships of variables (that is, to reach the goal of prediction); or

(c) To determine the cause-effect relationships between two or more variables (that is, to reach the goal of understanding and control or influence).

This means a scientific research involves description as its most simple tool and experimentation as its most complex tool.

There is no one absolute way to conduct research, but most scientific methods require:

(a) Measuring group and individual-level processes;

(b) Testing hypotheses in case studies, experimental and nonexperimental designs; and

(c) Developing theories that explain group processes.

ACTIVITY 1.3

1. Find an aggregate of individuals in public places. Observe the grouping of people for at least 20 minutes, and be sure to take notes on group-level processes, group interactions and the characteristics of the group as well as the people in the group. What possible conclusions can you draw?

2. How could you have increased the scientific accuracy and value of your observations? Did anything about the group puzzle or surprise you? Did your observation raise questions that could be answered through research?
The methods of a scientific research can be descriptive, correlative or experimental.

(a) **Descriptive methods** include:

(i) **Survey method** – the use of interviews and questionnaires in studying human behaviour.

(ii) **Naturalistic observation** – involves the careful observation and recording of behaviour in real-life settings.

(iii) **Clinical method** – observation of people while a psychologist is helping them with a problem in a clinic.

(b) **Correlations methods** involve the examination of the quantitative relationships between two or more variables to address the following research questions:

(i) How does one group behaviour relate to the occurrence of another behaviour? (for example, social conformity and stress coping behaviour?)

(ii) If we know the group’s behaviour pattern, can we then, in turn, predict the pattern of occurrence of other behaviours? (for example, dreaming and sleep walking?)

(c) **Formal experiments** will determine precise cause-effect relationships between variables. There are many experimental designs that psychologists use such as:

(i) Simple True Experimental;

(ii) Complex True Experimental;

(iii) Quasi-Experimental; and

(iv) Pre-Experimental.

Psychologists must be competent in conducting scientific research. The selection of a proper scientific method depends on the purpose of undertaking a research project. Therefore, it is better to know more than one scientific method in psychology!
The term group refers to two or more individuals who are connected to one another by social relationships.

The term group processes refers to the stages of groups, which include the beginning, middle and ending (or closing stage).

The term group dynamics refers to the influential interpersonal processes that take place in groups.

There are five common characteristics of groups and these are interaction, interdependence, structure, goals and cohesiveness.

There are four clusters of groups when trying to classify them. These clusters include primary groups, social groups, collectives and categories. However, each cluster has several forms of groups that are characterised by their size, strength of relationship, duration, formation and purposes.

Some examples of different types of groups are primary and secondary groups, planned and emergent groups, as well as intimate, task-focused, and more general social categories.

In the field of group dynamics, there are several scientific inquiries that can be used to study groups. Some examples of these scientific methods are observation, case study, survey, experimental, nonexperimental (correlational) and clinical methods.
KEY TERMS

Circumstantial groups
Concocted groups
Dyad
Emergent groups
Experimental design
Founded groups
Group cohesiveness
Group dynamics
Group goals
Group process
Group structure
Interaction
Interdependence
Nonexperimental design
Planned groups
Primary groups
Quadrad
Secondary groups
Self-organising groups
Social relationships
Triad

REFERENCES


Humans have a fundamental need to belong to groups. This statement is consistent with the third stage of Maslows’ hierarchy of needs theory, that is, the need to feel a sense of belonging to someone, some groups, organisations or communities. Although humans have high tendencies to belong in groups, they are faced by the reality that “being in groups has many advantages as well as disadvantages”. Thus, it is very important for us to learn the connection between the individual and society, including groups, organisations and communities.

This topic examines this connection or relationship in more detail. In particular, there are three aspects of this relationship: inclusion of the individual in the group, the individualism and collectivism continuum and the inclusion of the group in identity transformation. Before these aspects are explored further, let us understand some basic definitions of the key terms first. Are you ready?
## 2.1 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Is it true that humans, in general, have a fundamental need to belong to groups? What would happen to an individual if he is excluded (or ostracised) from a group? Would a person in solitude survive in a social context? These questions have some basic terms regarding social inclusion that are worth exploring. Let us study the meaning of each term.

### 2.1.1 Isolation

According to Dictionary.com (http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/isolation), there are six meanings for the term “isolation”. The second meaning, the state of being isolated, captures the disconnection between an individual and a group. There are people who prefer to be in isolation rather than be in groups even though the percentage is very small. Indeed, some people are capable of surviving independently but, in general, individual human beings do not do so. It is a rare scenario to find an individual who keeps fully apart from others.
Figure 2.1: Loneliness and social isolation linked to early mortality
Source: https://www.wikiyeah.com/loneliness-social-isolation-linked-early-mortality/

Do you prefer to be alone, or to live alone?

Do you prefer the company of other people instead of being alone?

2.1.2 Inclusion

Google provides a good definition of the term inclusion:

The action or state of including or of being included within a group or structure.

(“Inclusion”, n.d.)

So, when individuals join groups, they become part of a larger life. They will experience a transition in perspectives, from “me” to “we”. The individual’s need to have a sense of belonging will be fulfilled if he is included in groups, organisations or communities. Forsyth (2014) refers to this need as “the need to belong” and he argues that “humans are a group-seeking species, for most prefer group membership to isolation”. The match between individuals’ needs and social inclusion can trigger a range of positive psychological and social reactions.

How would you feel if you are included in a prestigious club in Malaysia?
2.1.3 Exclusion

Now, imagine that you are already a member of a prestigious club for several years. One day, you received a letter notifying you that your membership is no longer welcome. How would you feel when you are excluded (or ostracised) from the club?

The term exclusion is not a negative one but its meaning can trigger a range of negative psychological and social reactions in most people. According to Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary (“Exclusion”, n.d.), exclusion refers to the act or the state of being excluded. In a social context, when a person is being excluded from a group, a company or a community, it also means that the person is being ostracised. The term ostracism means exclusion by general consent from common privileges or social acceptance.

We would feel devastated if we are excluded (or ostracised) from a group without us knowing the real causes for such an act happening to us. Do you not think so?

2.1.4 Belonging

Social belonging is a powerful term because it also means social bonding. When we are in a cohesive group, it means that the members of the group have strong bonding with each other. Each member has a sense of belonging in the group because they have developed interdependence in roles, functions and activities related to the group. The need to belong in a group and the feeling that arises when we know that we belong to the group can trigger many positive psychological and social reactions. This means that the term a sense of belonging refers to the feeling or the state when:

(a) We are rightly placed in a specific group; or

(b) We fit in a specific place, environment or group.
The photograph in Figure 2.2 captures such feelings in a group photo where the close and intimate relationship is clearly seen from the gesture of holding hands together.

Overall, the above definitions have sharpened our understanding about the individual and the group. With this understanding, let us move our discussion to something more complex: the connection or relationship between individuals and groups.

**SELF-CHECK 2.1**

Explain these three basic terms:

(a) Isolation;

(b) Inclusion; and

(c) Exclusion.
The relationship between the individual and the group is one of the major topics in the field of group dynamics. This topic raises several issues that are worth exploring in detail such as:

(a) Do humans, as a species, prefer inclusion to exclusion?
(b) Do humans, as a species, prefer group membership to isolation?
(c) How do groups combine individuals collectively?

Let us discuss these issues one by one.

### 2.2.1 Isolation versus Inclusion

Do you know somebody who has lived by himself for the most part of his life? It is a rare case for humans to live their lives independently, without the company of other people. Forsyth (2014) argued that isolation can be rejuvenating, but there are situations where it does not contribute to human growth. For example, he identified two situations:

(a) There are studies that show isolated individuals such as stranded explorers reporting negative effects; and
(b) Many people agree that solitary confinement is recognised as a severe punishment.
There are many real-life situations that provide evidence regarding solitary confinement. In most prisons, a prisoner who has behaved badly and violated the prison rules can be subjected to solitary confinement by excluding him from his inmates and placing him in a closed dark room, alone and far away from the other prison cells. This is the form of severe punishment practised by most correctional and rehabilitation centres in Malaysia and overseas.

Now that we know isolation is mostly linked with negative consequences, we can better understand the need to belong, to be included in groups, as part of human nature. Forsyth (2014) proposed the belonging hypothesis to unfold this fundamental need: The need to belong. According to research findings, people prize experiences that satisfy their need for autonomy as well as their need for relatedness, connection and intimacy with others (Sheldon, Elliot, Kim, & Kasser, 2001). An earlier study by Baumeister and Leary (1995) also provided evidence in support of the hypothesis: The Need to Belong: Desire for Interpersonal Attachments as a Fundamental Human Motivation.

Such a need makes people seek membership in a variety of groups. Most adolescents seek membership in their peer groups. Most younger children seek membership in families and sometimes in play groups. Most adults seek membership in company activities where they can mingle with other co-workers and staff. When people cannot find the company of other people in their face-to-face relationships and surrounding environment, then they would build their “social capital” by creating online relationships with the use of social media such as Whatsapp groups, facebook, twitter and many others.

To summarise, people prefer inclusion to isolation because the prospect of facing life alone is very disturbing and distressing. The lyrics of the song entitled, All by Myself, by Celine Dion, clearly depicts the gist of solitude and loneliness (Refer to http://www.metrolyrics.com/all-by-myself-lyrics-celine-dion. html). Here is an excerpt of the lyrics:

All by myself, don’t wanna be, all by myself, anymore, hard to be sure, sometimes I feel so insecure, and love so distant and obscure, remains the cure...
2.2.2 Inclusion versus Exclusion

Seeking inclusion in groups does bring many positive psychological and social reactions. As such, when people are being deliberately excluded from a social group, they become distressed. Hence, the experience of exclusion brings a range of negative cognitive, emotional and behavioural reactions. These reactions are consistent with the quotation given by Evelyn Scott, a famous American novelist, playwright and poet, who said:

To have one’s individuality completely ignored is like being pushed quite out of life – like being blown out as one blows out a light.

In this regard, people prefer inclusion to exclusion because the prospect of being deliberately excluded by a social group can be very distressing and detrimental. In comparing the feelings that are triggered from those who experience being included in the group versus those who experience exclusion or ostracism, we can refer to Table 2.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feelings</th>
<th>Inclusion</th>
<th>Exclusion or Ostracism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Value their experiences in the group</td>
<td>More positive towards others</td>
<td>More negative towards others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beliefs and Attitudes</td>
<td>Increase in self-worth</td>
<td>Decrease in self-worth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reactions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-esteem</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Based on this table, we now know that exclusion and ostracism could trigger powerful negative experiences and reactions. Many forms of exclusion are being used by societies as punishment for certain misbehaviours. For example, Forsyth (2006) reported that shunning – systematic ostracism of an individual by a group, usually taking the form of minimised physical or social contact with the outcast – is normally used by many religious groups to punish members who have broken or violated certain rules or traditions. Other groups or societies use different terms but with a similar meaning to shunning to act as a punishment for rule-breakers such as being rejected, ignored or subjected to “silent treatment”. One of the negative experiences of exclusion is loneliness. Loneliness refers to feelings of desperation, boredom, self-deprecation and depression experienced when individuals feel their personal relationships are too few or too unsatisfying (Forsyth, 2006). Different types of groups create different types of loneliness:

(a) **Social Loneliness** – caused by collective types of groups because collectives create only temporary, superficial alliances among members.

To reduce social loneliness, the nature of groups should be structured to organise and integrate connections with other individuals.

(b) **Emotional Loneliness** – caused by disengaged families, friendships or lack of intimacy dyads or triads because social bonding is not present.

To reduce emotional loneliness, the nature of groups should be more emotionally intimate such as romantic dyads or loving families because such groups promote the development of close, intimate relations among members.

To reduce both social and emotional loneliness, we need more close-knit structured groups because these types of groups connect members in close, organised relations.

To view the meaning of loneliness from a different perspective, visit https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=djU4Lq_5EaM (Mr Lonely by Bobby Vinton).
2.2.3  Individualism versus Collectivism

In psychology and counselling, subjective culture has become the main and only focus of scientific inquiry over the last three decades. One example of a dimension of subjective culture is the much-studied notion of “individualism-collectivism” (McAuliffe, 2008; Lehman, Chiu, & Shaller, 2004; Snider, 2003), which has also become a research interest among researchers in group dynamics. What is meant by individualism and collectivism? Forsyth (2006) provided the following definitions:

**INDIVIDUALISM**
A tradition, ideology or personal outlook that emphasises the primacy of the individual and his or her rights, independence and relationships with other individuals.

**COLLECTIVISM**
A tradition, ideology or personal outlook that emphasises the primacy of the group or community rather than each individual person.

In some ethnic cultures, the needs and rights of the autonomous self are highly valued (individualism). In others, individual needs are secondary to those of the group (collectivism). Some scholars reported that the European North American, Anglo Caucasian Australian and Anglo Germanic cultures value individualism more than collectivism, with an emphasis on rights, freedom and independence (Hofstede, 2001; Lehman et al., 2004).

In contrast, the Latin American, South and East Asian cultures including Malaysians are, in general, more collectivist (Hofstede, 2001); they emphasise the social networks to which the group belongs and social rules for behaviour. Collectivist cultures are often hierarchical; they value adherence to authorities such as elders, husbands, religious leaders and fathers (Pope, Musa, Singaravelu, Bringaze, & Russell, 2002; Lehman et al., 2004).

To understand the characteristics of individualism and collectivism and to explore the differences between the two traditions, look at Table 2.2, which was taken from Forsyth (2006). The table summarises the major attributes between the two domains in terms of the variations in the nature of interpersonal relationships, norms and roles, motivations and self-conceptions.
Table 2.2: Common Attributes of Individualism and Collectivism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribute</th>
<th>Individualism</th>
<th>Collectivism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationships, memberships and associations</td>
<td>Concern for maintaining relations that yield personal benefits and few costs <em>(exchange orientation)</em>; membership is limited to family and close personal friendships</td>
<td>Concern for nurturing and maintaining harmonious relations with others <em>(communal orientation)</em>; membership includes family, tribes, villages, organisations and social clubs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norms, roles and actions</td>
<td>Behaviour is guided by personal attitudes and preferences; context is not as important as personal attitudes</td>
<td>Behaviour is guided by group norms and roles; decisions are made by leaders and the group <em>(hierarchy and conformity)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motives and goals</td>
<td>Striving for personal success; satisfaction comes from personal triumphs in competition with others <em>(self-serving and equity norm)</em></td>
<td>Concern for group success; cooperation among group members; group is protected at all costs; strong sense of duty and pride in group’s success <em>(group serving and equality norm)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-conceptions</td>
<td>The independent self is based on one’s personal, idiosyncratic characteristics; each self is autonomous and unique <em>(personal identity)</em></td>
<td>The interdependent self is based on group-level relationships, roles and social identities rather than on individual personal qualities <em>(social identity)</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Forsyth (2006)

The notion of individualism-collectivism seems to dichotomise the world and makes generalisation about some cultures (Hofstede, 2001). However, it is important to note that there is significant variability both across the various cultures and within cultures. For example, in Western cultures, women tend to be more interdependent (that is, putting their groups’ goals and needs above their own), but men more independent (individualistic). In most cultures, every individual has both individualistic and collectivistic natures but the dominant one emerges depending on the situation and context. This observation leads us to the next theory, which is discussed in the next subtopic.
2.2.4 Brewer’s Optimal Distinctiveness Theory

In trying to understand the differences between individualism and collectivism, Brewer proposed the optimal distinctiveness theory to highlight the continuous dimensions of personality that vary in their influence across time and situations. This theory suggests that most people have at least three fundamental needs:

(a) The need to be assimilated by the group;
(b) The need to be connected to friends and loved ones; and
(c) The need for autonomy and differentiation.

The theory hypothesises that individuals are most satisfied if they achieve optimal distinctiveness. The term optimal distinctiveness refers to a state when people’s unique personal qualities are noted and appreciated, then they feel emotionally bonded with inmates, and they feel similar to other group members in many respects. To summarise, this theory suggests that individuals strive to maintain an optimal balance between their personal and collective identities. Let us study these two identities in detail in the next subtopic.

**SELF-CHECK 2.2**

1. List and explain four basic characteristics of individualism.
2. List and explain four basic characteristics of collectivism.
3. Discuss Brewer’s optimal distinctiveness theory.
TOPIC 2  INCLUSION AND IDENTITY

GROUP PROCESSES IN IDENTITY FORMATION

Once we have understood the characteristics of individualism and collectivism, we can focus our attention to the shift from individualism to collectivism in most cultures, groups and society as well as the shift from personal self to collective self among human beings. In particular, in this subtopic, we are going to tackle this issue: What processes transform an individual’s sense of self into a collective, social identity?

2.3.1 From Personal Identity to Social Identity

Forsyth (2006) defined the terms personal and social identities as follows:

**PERSONAL IDENTITY**
The “me” component of the self-concept that derives from individualistic qualities such as traits, beliefs, and skills.

**SOCIAL IDENTITY**
That “we” component of the self-concept that includes all those qualities based on relationships with other people, groups, and society.

ACTIVITY 2.3

The following URL links you to a video lecture on inclusion and identity. Watch the video (Part C), and try to answer the following questions. Be ready to discuss them with your coursemates during the next tutorial meeting.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XPIJjQlUw7w&index=2&list=PL5vxtLJ0fJThVtp-FjTbotZnGRIpH9nW

(a) Does membership in a group change a person’s self-concept and social identity?

(b) What is the basic assumption of the social identity theory?
In group dynamics, scholars are interested in studying the shift from individuals’ personal identity to social identity transformation, which leads to the emergence of the collective self. The self is made up of both personal and interpersonal elements. In order to understand the process of identity transformation – from personal identity to social identity – let us look closer at the social identity theory.

So, sit back, relax and enjoy your reading.

2.3.2 Social Identity Theory

According to Forsyth (2014), the social identity theory is “a theoretical analysis of group processes and intergroup relations that assume groups influence their members’ self-concepts and self-esteem, particularly when individuals categorise themselves as group members and identify with the group.”

The theory has one basic assumption; it assumes that self-concept is determined by group memberships. According to the theory, personal identity refers to one’s personal self, whereas social identity refers to one’s collective self. For example, if a person provides an answer to the question, “Who am I?” by simply stating, “I am Rafidah”, that means the person is concerned only with herself and her needs.

However, when she joins with others, say a women’s club, she starts acting differently. The way she thinks, feels and acts are consistent with the ways that the group favours rather than in ways she thought were best. How does a group (club) become a part of one’s social identity? In particular, what impact does this identity transformation (from self to social identity) have on one’s self-concept and self-esteem?

Social identity theory suggests that the transformation from a group membership into a collective identity are due to two cognitive processes, namely; categorisation in groups and identification with groups:

(a) Through **social categorisation**, individuals automatically classify people, including themselves, into groups.

(b) Through **social identification**, individuals identify strongly with the group (depersonalisation), accepting as self-descriptive the characteristics of their groups (self-stereotyping).
Self-esteem is shaped both by individuals’ personal qualities and by the value of the groups to which they belong. Previous researchers have come up with the term collective self-esteem to conceptualise the relationship between people’s self-esteem and their feelings about the groups to which they belong (Crocker & Luhtanen, 1990). Forsyth (2014) defines the term “collective self-esteem” as a person’s overall assessment of that portion of their self-concept that is based on their relationships with others and membership in social groups (p. 95). According to him, there are four components of collective self-esteem and these are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components</th>
<th>Exemplary Statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Membership esteem</td>
<td>“I am a worthy member of the social groups I belong to”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private collective self-esteem</td>
<td>“I feel good about the social groups I belong to”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public collective self-esteem</td>
<td>“In general, others respect the social groups that I am a member of”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity</td>
<td>“In general, belonging to social groups is an important part of my self-image”.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At this stage, what is your level of understanding regarding social identity theory? Does it make sense to you?
2.3.3 Self and Social Identity

Collective self-esteem is one example of understanding the self and social identity. Individuals who join prestigious and popular groups often have higher collective self-esteem than those who belong to less positively valued groups. There are other group processes that also play a role in identity transformation and the basic concepts are summarised as follows:

(a) **Ingroup-outgroup Bias**
   Rating one’s own group more positively than other groups. Individuals who are members of less popular or failing groups often protect their collective self-esteem by rejecting negative information or comments about their groups, highlighting the relative superiority and positive elements of their own groups to other groups.

(b) **Social Creativity**
   Restricting comparisons between the ingroup and other groups to stress the ingroup’s relative strengths

(c) **Basking in Reflected Glory**
   Seeking direct or indirect association with prestigious or successful groups or individuals. By basking in reflected glory, individuals can stress their association with successful groups, such as sport fans who experience the group’s winning outcome as their own glory.

(d) **Cutting Off Reflected Failure**
   Distancing oneself from a group that performs poorly. By cutting off reflected failure, individuals minimise their association to failing groups.

(e) **Stereotype Threat**
   Anxiety-provoking (and self-confirming) belief that others are biased against one’s group.

(f) **Social Mobility**
   Leaving the group. In some cases, individuals will choose to promote their own personal interests over their group’s, especially with groups that are stigmatised and performing badly. Later on, they will resign from the group as a sign of individual mobility.

In conclusion, there are many connections between individuals and groups as discussed in subtopic 2.2. There are also many group processes involved in the transformation from personal self to collective self. The interplay of these processes stresses the importance of group dynamics in multicultural societies, organisations and populations.
The term isolation refers to the state of being isolated.

The term inclusion refers to the action or state of including or of being included within a group or structure.

The term exclusion refers to the act or the state of being excluded from social groups.

The need to belong is a fundamental motivation of human nature in a social context.

Most humans prefer inclusion to groups to isolation or exclusion.

The term individualism refers to a tradition, ideology or personal outlook that emphasises the primacy of the individual and his rights, independence, and relationships with other individuals.

The term collectivism refers to a tradition, ideology or personal outlook that emphasizes the primacy of the group or community rather than each individual person.

There are four clusters of major differences between individualism and collectivism: the nature of interpersonal relationships, norms and roles, motivation and self-conceptions.

Optimal distinctiveness theory highlights the continuous dimensions of personality that vary in their influence across time and situations.
• Social identity theory assumes that groups influence their members’ self-concepts and self-esteem, particularly when individuals categorise themselves as group members and identify with the group.

• There are many group processes involved in identity transformation including social categorisation, identification, comparison in self-esteem, social creativity, mobility and many others.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KEY TERMS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collective self-esteem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collectivism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communal relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional loneliness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exchange relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group serving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

REFERENCES


Introduction

In the previous topics, we have learned about the foundations of group dynamics. These foundations become the pre-requisites of groups, especially in the aspect of “knowing what” pertaining to group dynamics. To master the knowledge in the field of group dynamics, we also need the other aspect, that is, the “knowing how”. The “knowing how” aspects of group dynamics involves topics that are related to the development of groups. How do groups exist? How do groups develop? What makes members like each other? What is the structure of groups? These are among the major issues emerging in the discussion about group development.

This topic discusses the formation of groups. In particular, the discussion covers several important issues such as who joins groups, when do people join groups, what are the factors to consider in creating groups, and what makes members like each other? Let us tackle these issues one by one. Stay tuned!
GROUP MEMBERSHIP

In reality, humans have some similarities and differences in their personal qualities. Their mutual interests may become one of the factors for them to form groups. Their different likings may also become one of the reasons for them to remain apart. Group membership is complex because it depends on who joins the groups, when they join the groups and what types of relationship members have.

3.1.1 Who Joins Groups?

It is tricky to draw conclusions about who should join groups and who should remain apart. However, there are some factors that can be considered to draw the line between those who join groups and those who remain apart. These factors stem from individuals’ personal qualities (for example, traits, sex, social motives, etc.). Certain personal qualities are consistently associated with seeking out membership in groups. Forsyth (2014) suggested five factors:

(a) **Personality**

Is there a specific personality type for those who prefer to join groups (joiners) or those who prefer independence over association (loners)? We do know that individuals are different and they differ in terms of personality, preferences and past experiences. For example, in a Big Five Personality Model, the personality trait introversion-extroversion can be used to predict people’s tendency to like people and join groups or dislike others and be a loner. Forsyth (2006) defined the introversion-extroversion dimension as the degree to which an individual tends to withdraw from or seek out

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**ACTIVITY 3.1**

In a group of three (triad), assign each member to become an interviewer, an interviewee and a note-taker cum a non-participant observer. Interview each other for two to three minutes each to get details regarding each member’s personal background, major interests, education history and likes/dislikes. Compile the notes on the interviews and analyse the interview data to look for similarities and differences among members of the triad. What are your findings?

During your next tutorial session, discuss your findings with your tutor and coursemates.
social contacts. What are the specific characteristics of introverts and extroverts?

![Characteristics of introverts and extroverts]

Based on the characteristics illustrated in Figure 3.1, it is clear that extroverts are more likely to seek out groups because they value stimulating experiences through social connections and interactions (high relationality). The term relationality refers to the degree to which one adopts a set of values, attitudes and outlooks that emphasise and facilitate establishing and maintaining connections with others.

Introverts tend to avoid groups because they prefer inner perceptions and judgement of concepts and ideas compared to social experiences. Based on this distinction, perhaps extroverts have higher tendency to be happy in life than introverts. Do you agree with this statement?

**(b) Men and Women**

Men and women are two different individuals in terms of physical characteristics, outlook, ways of thinking, behaving and expressing feelings. Are men more likely to join groups or are women the more sociable sex? Studies have investigated the tendency of both sexes to join groups and their findings are not consistent.

For example, Costa, Terraciano and McCrae (2001) found that women tend to be somewhat more extroverted than men, particularly in aspects concerned with interpersonal warmth and gregariousness. Women put more value on their relationships and hence they tend to adopt more collectivistic, interdependent orientations than men. As such, women tend to be higher than men in relationality. Other studies found evidence to question the magnitude and meaning of these differences.
For example, survey studies have found that men affiliated with more professional groups, governing bodies, political parties and military organisations than women. Men had more friends than women but women reported having closer ties with members of their family and groups, and even spent more time in their groups. These findings seem to suggest that women seek membership in smaller, informal and intimate groups, whereas men seek membership in larger, more formal, task-focused groups.

These differences seem subtle but they may reflect women’s and men’s differing interpersonal orientations, which are entangled with role differences and cultural stereotypes.

(c) Social Motivation
Social motives are humans’ fundamental needs in a social context. The term social motive means a want or need that is satisfied through social interactions with other people, including the need for affiliation, intimacy and power. The strength of social motives can also predict who joins groups and who remains apart. Of interest in group behaviours and dynamics are the following three social motives:

(i) Need for Affiliation
This term refers to the dispositional tendency to seek out others. People with a high need for affiliation tend to join groups more frequently, spend more time in groups, interact more with other group members, and readily accept other group members. However, they are more fearful of being rejected or excluded from groups. When they experience negative treatment in social situations, they tend to avoid people.

(ii) Need for Intimacy
This term refers to the dispositional tendency to seek warm, positive relationships with others. Similarly, people with a high need for intimacy prefer to join groups. They frequently seek close, warm relations and are more likely to express care and concern for other members. Unlike those who have a high need for affiliation, individuals with a high need for intimacy do not fear rejection but they are more focused on friendship and close ties with others.
(iii) **Need for Power**

This term refers to the dispositional tendency to seek control over others. People with a high need for power also tend to seek out others. Joining groups can satisfy their need for power because group interactions provide many rooms to influence other people. Once they are able to influence others, they may exercise more control in groups through organised and initiated activities, tasks and persuasion.

A theory of group formation and development named **Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientations (FIRO)** by Schutz (1992) explains how people use groups to satisfy their need to receive and express inclusion (similar to the need for affiliation), control (similar to the need for power), and affection/openness (similar to the need for intimacy).

(d) **Anxiety and Attachment**

Humans are social animals. Being in social situations can sometimes make them feel shy and experience social anxiety. The term **social anxiety** refers to a feeling of apprehension and embarrassment experienced when anticipating or actually interacting with other people. Some may develop various attachment styles as an expression of their feelings of liking with other members. The term attachment style refers to one’s characteristic approach to relationships with other people (Forsyth, 2006). Developmental psychologists have identified three basic attachment styles and these are:

(i) **Secure Type**

This type refers to individuals who are comfortable with intimacy. They enjoy having close relationships with other people. People with secure attachment type tend to join groups more frequently, spend more time in groups, interact more with other group members and readily accept other group members. They do not worry about being abandoned by their loved ones and are not fearful of being rejected or excluded from groups.

(ii) **Avoidant Type**

This type refers to individuals who evade intimacy with others. They are uncomfortable relying on other people, and they are not able to provide adequate intimacy if demanded from them by their loved ones or partners. People with avoidant group attachment styles prefer to leave the group because they feel that the group is less important to them.
(iii) **Anxious Type**
This type refers to individuals who desire intimacy, but they are nonetheless worried that their loved ones will reject them. People of the anxious attachment type tend to seek out others, but they feel as if they are unworthy of membership. They worry about being abandoned by their loved ones or fear being rejected or excluded from groups.

In sum, differences in attachment style also can predict one’s willingness to join groups or remain apart.

(e) **Attitudes, Experiences and Expectations**
Humans’ beliefs and attitudes, past experiences and future expectations are also useful in predicting group membership. If individuals have the following beliefs, then they tend to seek out group membership:

(i) I am more comfortable working in groups rather than by myself;
(ii) I prefer group work than individual work;
(iii) Generally speaking, groups are highly effective; and
(iv) Groups often produce much higher quality work than individuals.

Individuals who have had prior positive experiences in groups tend to seek out memberships, whereas those with little prior experience or with negative experiences in groups avoid membership in groups. Similarly, individuals who have expectations of positive outcomes from groups tend to seek more opportunities to join groups than those who expected no favourable outcomes at all from group membership.

At this stage, can you recall all the personal qualities that make people seek out membership in groups? If you do, then try to summarise by documenting it into a mind-map.
3.1.2 Reasons for Joining Groups

There are many reasons for people to join groups. Besides acknowledging that certain personal qualities are consistently associated with seeking out membership in groups, there are several possible reasons that emerge from the group counselling field to provide answers on why people join groups (Jacobs, Masson, Harvill, & Schimmel, 2012). These reasons are listed as follows:

(a) **Efficiency**
People tend to seek out groups, especially prestigious ones, because they want to enhance their efficiency level to match the standards of the groups.

(b) **Experience of Commonality**
People tend to seek out others because they want a reassurance that their personal experience is not totally unique but shares some similarities with other people.

(c) **Greater Variety of Resources**
People tend to seek out groups because they can get various input, feedback and information from others. Having pooled resources from various people is better than having resources from a single source.

(d) **Sense of Belonging**
As discussed in Topic 2, people seek out groups because they want to fulfil their fundamental need to belong to others. A sense of belonging is a powerful experience that can enhance individuals’ development to become an actualised person.

(e) **Skills Practice**
People tend to join groups because they can exercise several new skills in a safe environment. For example, members feel safer practising skills in handling conflicts with each other in the comfort of their group culture rather than practising them with out-group members.

(f) **Feedback**
People tend to seek out memberships because they can get feedback regarding their efforts or activities. Members are readily available to give suggestions for improvement for another member of the group.

(g) **Vicarious Learning**
People tend to seek out others because they can learn new ideas, skills and behaviours while observing other members in the same group. Group experiences promote learning among individuals through interaction or simply being present in any group activity.
(h) **Real-life Approximation**
People tend to join dyads, triads or larger groups because the experiences gained from group activities and discussion resemble a real-life experience. Thus, being in groups helps them to experience the gist of being in the social world.

(i) **Commitment**
People tend to seek out groups because they want to commit themselves to group work and activities. Such individuals are normally those who have positive beliefs about group performance and they value their experiences in the group.

The reasons listed above are only examples given by individuals who seek groups for education, guidance, task-specific programmes and therapy. In truth, there are many other reasons that each individual can give answers to the question: why do you join groups? Let us unfold a deeper discussion in the next subtopic on group affiliation.

### SELF-CHECK 3.1

1. Briefly discuss three qualities of a person that can predict his tendency to join groups.
2. List five common reasons why people tend to seek out groups.

### ACTIVITY 3.2

The following URL links you to a video lecture on *Formation: Affiliation*. Watch the video, and try to answer the following questions. Be ready to discuss them with your coursemates during the next tutorial meeting.

URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fm5kNwMjtIA

(a) When do people seek out others?

(b) What aspects of the situation prompt an individual to seek out group membership?
3.2 FACTORS IN CREATING GROUPS

When do people seek out others? What aspects of the situation prompt an individual to seek out group membership? In subtopic 3.1, we discussed the internal factors or intrinsic motivation (that comes from within the members themselves) that prompt people to join with others in groups. What about the situation itself?

The tendency to affiliate with others also comes from extrinsic motivation – the situation or circumstance. In this subtopic, we are going to find answers to the previous two questions. In particular, we are going to first understand the term affiliation. Then we are going to discuss the situations that motivate people to affiliate with others in groups: social comparison, social support and collaboration.

3.2.1 Affiliation

According to Google ("Affiliation", n.d.), the word affiliation means the following:

af·fil·i·a·tion
əˈfilēəSH(ə)n/
noun
the state or process of affiliating or being affiliated.
“he had no particular affiliation, no close associates”

synonyms: association with, connection with/to, alliance with/to, alignment with, link with/to, attachment to, tie with/to, relationship with/to, fellowship with, partnership with, coalition with, union with;
amalgamation with, incorporation into, integration into, federation with, confederation with
“the project’s affiliation with the town’s welfare department”
In group dynamics, affiliation refers to the gathering together of members in one location. People’s tendency to affiliate with others becomes more likely in certain situations and less likely in others. Group affiliation becomes more likely to happen in the following situations:

(a) Uncertain or bewildering conditions;

(b) Stressul circumstances; and

(c) Fearful environments.

In sum, people often seek out others in groups when they find themselves in ambiguous, frightening and difficult circumstances (Forsyth, 2006). By joining groups, they can gain the information and social support they need to help them cope with these uncertain and confusing situations.

### 3.2.2 Social Comparison

How do people respond when they find themselves in ambiguous, frightening and difficult circumstances? What do they do when they are uncertain and confused? Many decades ago, a social comparison theory by Leon Festinger (1954), assumes that people seek out others because they rely on others for information about themselves and the environment. The term social comparison means comparing oneself to others in order to evaluate the accuracy of one’s personal beliefs and attitudes. Festinger’s (1954) theory is diagrammatically presented in Figure 3.2 to explain people’s reactions to difficult circumstances.

![Figure 3.2: Social comparison theory](source: Festinger (1954))

According to the theory, people engage in social comparison to determine whether their beliefs, opinions or attitudes are consistent with the interpretations of appropriate others. Although Festinger’s theory holds some truth, other researchers now believe that there is more to social comparison other than just being guided by the need for accurate information. They also believe that people engage in social comparison for a variety of other reasons such as:
(a) To evaluate their own qualities;
(b) To set personal goals;
(c) To help other people; and
(d) To discover that they are superior to the people around them.

For example, another theorist, Schachter (1959) also provided his explanation on why and when people join groups. He also believes that people who face an ambiguous situation affiliate with others to acquire information through social comparison. However, there are specific situations to describe group affiliation from his theoretical perspective:

(a) When people worry that they will be embarrassed when they affiliate with a group, they are more likely to not join others;
(b) When people compare themselves with selected targets who are performing more poorly than themselves, they bask and bolster their own competence. This process is known as **downward social comparison**;
(c) When people compare themselves with superior targets who are performing better than themselves, they refine their expectations. This process is known as **upward social comparison**; and
(d) People maintain and enhance self-esteem by affiliating with high-achieving individuals who excel in areas that are not relevant to their own sense of self-esteem. However, they tend to avoid affiliating with high-achieving individuals who excel in areas that are important to their sense of self-esteem. This theory is known as Tesser’s Self-Evaluation Maintenance (SEM) Model (Tesser, 1988).

![Figure 3.3: Types of social comparison](image)
Comparing oneself to others for whatever reasons is a popular means to form groups. Let us have a look at a different perspectives to explain when and why people affiliate with others.

### 3.2.3 Social Support

According to Forsyth (2006), social support refers to “emotional support, advice, guidance, tangible assistance and spiritual perspective given to others when they experience stress, daily hassles and more significant life crises” . When people are in a crisis, they tend to affiliate with others for social support. Sometimes, when they are facing frightening and stressful situations, affiliation with others plays an important role in both “fight-or-flight” responses and “tend-and-befriend” responses (Forsyth, 2006).

These types of internal and external responses are described as follows:

(a) **Fight-or-flight Response**
   This is a physiological response to stressful events characterised by the activation of the sympathetic nervous system such as increased heart rate, pupil dilation and clammy hands. Once these symptoms appear, it means that the body is ready to face and deal with the stressor or threat (fight) or to avoid and escape the threat (flight).

(b) **Tend-and-befriend Response**
   This is an interpersonal response to stressful situations characterised by increased nurturing, protective and supportive behaviours (tending) and by seeking out associations with other people (befriending).

Groups or group behaviours do not only facilitate both the fight-or-flight and the tend-and-befriend responses to stress, but they can also be useful sources of social support. During times of crises or stress, social support from others are sought by individuals to act as a protective buffer. Forsyth (2006) identified five types of support that groups provide for their members to cope with stressful experiences. These types are presented in Table 3.1.
Table 3.1: Some Forms of Social Support Provided by Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Support</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Approval        | • Expressing acceptance of person.  
                  • Expressing approval for entire group.  
                  • Demonstrating friendship. |
| Emotional       | • Complimenting and encouraging others.  
                  • Showing respect for abilities or skills.  
                  • Listening to others’ problems.  
                  • Sharing feelings.  
                  • Responding nonverbally to others’ disclosures (for example, hugging, nodding). |
| Informational   | • Providing information.  
                  • Giving directions, advice and suggestions.  
                  • Demonstrating a way to perform a task.  
                  • Explaining problems, approaches. |
| Instrumental    | • Helping one another with work.  
                  • Doing favours.  
                  • Lending money. |
| Spiritual       | • Providing explanations for challenging events.  
                  • Allaying existential anxiety, fear of death. |

Source: Forsyth (2006)

3.2.4 Collaboration

A famous saying, “two heads are better than one”, is a very good example of why people join groups. Sometimes, when there are specific tasks or jobs that need to be done in the nick of time, people tend to rely on their members of the groups to delegate the work and share job responsibilities. So, groups are useful for a practical purpose such as when individuals confront an obstacle, a problem or a task that they wish to overcome, solve or complete, but they realise that the solution is beyond their own capability and competency.
In such situations, there is only one thing to do: collaboration among individuals. By forming collaborative groups with a purpose, all individuals combine their personal energies, efforts and resources in joint activities to attain both individual and group goals. The tendency for people to form collaborative groups to accomplish a certain task depends on several factors:

(a) How difficult is the task;
(b) How complex is the task; and
(c) How important is the task?

In general, when the task becomes more difficult, complex and important, the more likely people will prefer to accomplish it through collaborative activity rather than individual action.

Now, let us move on to understand why people are attracted to one another in groups.

**SELF-CHECK 3.2**

1. List the three key social motives that influence the tendency to join a group.
2. Discuss the impact of one’s general beliefs about groups and one’s prior experiences in groups on decisions to join groups in the future.
3. List five types of social support and give a detailed example of each type.
4. Compare and contrast downward and upward social comparison.
3.3 PROCESSES IN INTERPERSONAL BONDING

How are relationships among group members formed? What are the principles that make people attracted to one another? This subtopic looks at group attraction especially to understand the processes and principles involved in interpersonal bonding or attraction.

3.3.1 Group Attraction

There are several key terms that need to be defined before we unfold every layer of the discussion in this and the following subtopic.

(a) **Group Attraction**

The term *group attraction* means that the members in the group like one another and form interpersonal relationships among them to bond with one another.

---

**ACTIVITY 3.3**

Arrange to meet your coursemates in a group of four and review the following article *Competition And The Dynamics Of Group Affiliation* by Nicholas Geard and Seth Bullock from the *Advances in Complex Systems*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (2010) 501-517.

After the meeting, discuss to identify patterns of interpersonal attraction that developed within your groups. Reflect on the processes that unfolded as you got to know the other group members. Make notes of each members’ feelings and experiences and try to reason out the causes of your reactions, satisfactions and emotions. Share the notes with all your coursemates.
(b) **Interpersonal Attraction**
The term *interpersonal attraction* refers to a process of forming relationships between two or more people that tend to draw them together and resist separation. It can be perceived as a magnetic force because the quality or strength of friendship or relationship depends on both the qualities of the attractor and the attracted individuals.

(c) **Interpersonal Bonding**
When two or more people are strongly attracted to one another, their friendship or relationship become strong bonds. This is what interpersonal bonding means. When individuals in groups develop strong bonds among themselves, we can assume that the members are socially attached to one another.

In sum, we now know that people who like one another often bond together to form a group. What drives them to one another? Let us explore the principles that underline this attraction.
3.3.2 Principles of Attraction

The study of group attraction has discovered many principles that can be considered to explain attraction patterns in groups. Forsyth (2006) identified six principles as illustrated in Figure 3.5:

- People are more likely to affiliate with certain people such as:
  
  (a) Those who are nearby (proximity principle);
  
  (b) Those who express similar attitudes and values (similarity principle); and
  
  (c) Those who respond positively to them.

These affiliations often culminate in the formation of a group.
Table 3.2 presents the definitions and selected examples of each principle of attraction to help us better understand interpersonal attraction in groups.

**Table 3.2: Definitions and Examples of Attraction Principles**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proximity</td>
<td>The tendency for individuals to form interpersonal relations with those who are close by.</td>
<td>Neighbourhood watch group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Clique of pupils in adjacent seats.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaboration</td>
<td>The tendency for groups to expand as members form dyadic associations with someone who is not in the group and thereby draws the non-member into the group.</td>
<td>Couples become families.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dyad → triad → quadrat → larger</td>
<td>Clique becomes a gang.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Similarity</td>
<td>The tendency to affiliate with or be attracted to similar others. This principle assumes that groups are composed of individuals who are similar to one another rather than dissimilar.</td>
<td>Cheer-leading groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sports fans groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complementarity</td>
<td>The tendency for group members to like people who are dissimilar to them in ways that complement their personal qualities.</td>
<td>Men and women in a group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Musicians and a singer in a band.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reciprocity</td>
<td>The tendency for liking to be met with liking in return.</td>
<td>A student who has a crush on her teacher; the teacher tends to like her more.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimax</td>
<td>The tendency to prefer relationships and group memberships that provide the maximum number of valued rewards and incur the fewest number of possible costs.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Attraction patterns are generally consistent with the previous principles. In some cases, there are some emerging principles within a certain principle of attraction discussed in Table 3.2. For example, homophily is a subprinciple of similarity. It refers to the tendency for group members to display certain similarities in personal qualities such as demographic background, attitudes, values, preferences and so forth.

### 3.3.3 The Economics of Membership

In general, how do we determine satisfaction with group membership? This is surely a tricky question to answer because group membership is just a surface matter. The most important determinant of group satisfaction is the quality of interpersonal bonding that members in the group have in comparison with other existing groups. This leads us to one particular theory by John Thibaut and Harold Kelley (1959) – *social exchange theory* – which argues that our decision to actually join any group is based on two factors:

(a) **Comparison level (CL)**

One factor to consider in evaluating the quality of any social relationship is the level of comparison. Individuals whose prior relationships yielded positive rewards with few costs will have higher CLs than those who experienced fewer rewards and more cost in prior relationships. CL allows individuals to judge whether their group membership is “satisfying” and “attractive”, or “unsatisfying” and “unattractive”.

(b) **Comparison Level for Alternatives (CLalt)**

Another factor to consider in evaluating the quality of other groups that they may join lies in the notion of CLalt. Thus, CLalt determines whether people will join groups, stay or leave them.

In conclusion, we now understand the types of personal qualities that prompt people to join groups, when and why they join groups and what makes them attracted to members in the groups. We also know how to predict people’s satisfaction in group membership as well as predict their likelihood of future joining, remaining or leaving for other groups. This understanding is crucial because in the next topic, we are going to focus on group cohesion and development.
The types of people who tend to join groups are those who are extroverts rather than introverts, those who have high social motives, those who can be easily attached with others and those who believe that group experiences are better in promoting performance and productivity.

There are many reasons why people join groups and these reasons can be driven by factors such as efficiency, experience of commonality, greater variety of resources, sense of belonging, skills practice, feedback, vicarious learning, real-life approximation and commitment.

When and why people join groups depend on certain situations, not just their personal qualities.

People tend to join groups when they are in ambiguous, frightening and difficult circumstances. They join groups because they require information about themselves, need social support for increasing their self-esteem and want to accomplish certain tasks that they cannot attain working alone.
There are six principles of group attraction and these are: proximity, elaboration, complementarity, similarity, reciprocity and minimax.

There are certain methods to predict people’s satisfaction when in groups as well as the likelihood to predict whether they will join, stay or leave for other groups.

### KEY TERMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comparison level (CL)</td>
<td>Need for intimacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison level for alternatives</td>
<td>Need for power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complementarity principle</td>
<td>Proximity principle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downward social comparison</td>
<td>Reciprocity principle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaboration principle</td>
<td>Similarity principle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundamental interpersonal relations</td>
<td>Social comparison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>orientations</td>
<td>Social motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimax principle</td>
<td>Upward social comparison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need for affiliation</td>
<td>Vicarious learning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### REFERENCES


**Topic 4**

**Cohesion and Development**

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

By the end of this topic, you should be able to:

1. Define group cohesion;
2. Identify the sources for group cohesion;
3. Describe the causes of group cohesion;
4. Describe the positive and negative consequences of cohesion; and
5. Explain how cohesion develops over time.

**INTRODUCTION**

Intimate attachments to other human beings are the hub around which a person’s life revolves, not only when he is an infant or a toddler or a schoolchild but throughout his adolescence and his years of maturity as well, and on into old age. From these intimate attachments a person draws his strength and enjoyment of life and, through what he contributes, he gives strength and enjoyment to others.

*(John Bowlby, 1980)*

In group development, we have discussed how a group is formed in Topic 3. By forming a group, we have reached the first milestone in group dynamics. The second milestone in group development is when we are able to form not just a group but a cohesive and developed group. In reaching this milestone, there are several issues that need to be addressed first such as the following:
This topic discusses the nature, development and consequences of group cohesion. In particular, the discussion involves defining the term cohesion, identifying its sources, components and consequences as well as describing the ways to developing cohesion. Enjoy your reading!

4.1 GROUP COHESION

Cohesion is generally perceived as a highly valuable quality in a group. To form a cohesive group is more difficult than forming a typical group.

4.1.1 Defining Cohesion

According to Dictionary.Com, cohesion means “the act or state of cohering, uniting, or sticking together” (“Cohesion”, n.d.). Cohesion refers to the bond that links the members of a group. The term cohesion has been variously defined by scholars and theorists in group dynamics. For example, Lewin (1943) used the term cohesion to describe the forces that keep groups intact by pushing members together and countering forces that push them apart.

In defining cohesion, Forsyth (2014) suggested three components as its defining features: attraction, unity and teamwork.

(a) **Cohesion is Attraction**
Cohesion can be considered as a form of attraction.

(b) **Cohesion is Unity**
A cohesive group is a unified one. Literally speaking, the members normally “stick together”. They stand closer together and they defend their group together from nonmembers’ intrusion.

(c) **Cohesion is Teamwork**
Cohesion is not just members who have interpersonal relations or feelings of unity but it is also to do with members’ willingness to work together to accomplish group tasks and objectives.
To summarise, Forsyth (2014) defines the term cohesion to refer to the solidarity, unity and integrity of the group. At this stage, you are able to define cohesion and identify its main components or defining features. What are the sources of cohesion?

### 4.1.2 Sources of Group Cohesion

Group cohesion emerges from a number of interrelated sources including interpersonal attraction, a sense of unity and the collaborative pursuit of shared goals.

(a) **Interpersonal Attraction**

Group cohesion springs from two types of interpersonal attractions:

(i) **Personal attraction** – members of cohesive groups tend to like their fellow members (attraction between members).

(ii) **Social attraction** – members of cohesive groups tend to like the group as a whole.

(b) **A Sense of Unity**

Cohesive groups tend to be unified. The members of a cohesion-as-unity group are more likely to express a sense of “we-ness” through statements such as:

(i) There is a feeling of unity and cohesion in this group;

(ii) I spend time when not on duty with people in this group; and

(iii) The group members stick together even after the completion of a group project.

The members are also more likely to express their sense of belonging through statements such as:

(i) I feel a sense of belonging to this group;

(ii) I think of this group as part of who I am; and

(iii) I feel included in this group.

Hazing (that is, an initiation into a group that subjects the new member to mental and physical discomfort, harassment, embarrassment, ridicule or humiliation) can contribute to increased commitment to a group. However, severe initiations can also harm members and in some groups, these activities have been banned in many jurisdictions.
(c) **Collaborative Pursuit of Shared Goals**

Cohesive groups coordinate their efforts to achieve goals (teamwork). The term *teamwork* refers to the combined activities of two or more individuals who coordinate their efforts to make or do something. Through teamwork, cohesiveness is often associated with increases in **collective efficacy** and *esprit de corps*.

(i) **Collective efficacy** – the beliefs shared among a substantial portion of the group members that the group is capable of organising and executing the actions required to attain the group’s goals and successfully complete its tasks.

(ii) **Esprit de corps** – a feeling of unity, commitment, confidence and enthusiasm for the group shared by most or all of the members.

Based on the above discussion, we summarise various types of cohesion in Table 4.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Cohesion as attraction</strong> <em>(social cohesion)</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) Member-to-member attraction</td>
<td>Number of friends in the groups; strength of friendship bonds between members.</td>
<td>I have many friends in this group. We are close friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Attraction to the group</td>
<td>Liking for the group as a whole; group pride (in some models).</td>
<td>I am proud to be in this group. I like my group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Cohesion as Unity</strong> <em>(collective cohesion)</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) Unity</td>
<td>The coherence of the group; the extent to which it is, or is seen to be, a single entity; entitativity.</td>
<td>This group is unified. We are one. United we stand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Belonging</td>
<td>A sense of community with the group.</td>
<td>I belong to this group I am one with this group.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. **Cohesion as teamwork**

   (a) **(Task cohesion)**

   Capacity to perform successfully as a coordinated unit.
   
   This group is effective.
   
   I do my best for this group.

   (b) **(Emotional cohesion) Esprit de corps**

   Emotional intensity of the group; team spirit.
   
   This group has tremendous energy.
   
   The group has team spirit.

*Source: Forsyth (2014)*

Now, let us move on to the next topic on how to measure cohesion.

### 4.1.3 Measuring Cohesion

Researchers have developed a number of operational definitions of cohesion using observation, structured observation and self-report measures. Cohesion as a multilevel concept can also be measured at multiple levels (Forsyth, 2006). For example, *The BCI: Basic Cohesion Index* measures cohesion, here defined as group unity (The even items are to be reverse scored).

Instructions. Is this a cohesive group? Please indicate your perceptions of the group by answering each statement with one of the following:

Strongly Agree (5) Agree (4) Uncertain or Neutral (3) Disagree (2) Strongly Disagree (1)

(a) This group is cohesive.

(b) Members tend to drift away from the group.

(c) This group is unified.

(d) This group is just a collection of individuals.

(e) This is a close-knit group.

(f) This group is not very unified.

(g) This group is not just separate individuals, but a unified whole.

(h) This group is not cohesive.

(i) This group is a “we” rather than just a collection of “me’s”.
(j) This group lacks solidarity.
(k) Members of this group are fused together to form a whole.
(l) This is a group in name only.

You can also demonstrate the many components of cohesion by asking learners to rate a group that they belong to currently, or have belonged to in the past. Alternatively, you can ask learners to rate the class as a group or to just identify the items that they think are indicators of cohesiveness.

Let us delve into a deeper discussion on the causes and consequences of cohesion.

**SELF-CHECK 4.1**

1. Define the term cohesion.
2. Briefly discuss three sources of cohesion.

**ACTIVITY 4.2**

The following URL links you to a video lecture on *Cohesion and Development: Cohesion Consequences*. Watch the video, and try to answer the following questions. Be ready to discuss them with your coursemates during the next tutorial meeting.

URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=92DVFwDlXhY

(a) What causes a group to be cohesive?
(b) Identify the positive and negative consequences of high levels of cohesion.
4.2 CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES

What does cohesion do for a group? Most people, if asked to choose between two groups – one that is cohesive and another that is not – would likely pick the cohesive group. Unfortunately, cohesiveness has its drawbacks. A cohesive group is an intense group, and this intensity affects the members, the group’s dynamics and the group’s performance in both positive and negative ways. Cohesion leads to a range of consequences – not all of them desirable.

4.2.1 Causes of Cohesion

Much of the confusion about the concept of cohesion arises because researchers and theorists confound the causes of cohesion with the definition of cohesion. Cohesion arises from many sources, but it is at root, just the unity, integrity and solidarity of a group. What are the causes of cohesion that could lead to desirable consequences? There are several factors that can be considered as potential causes for cohesion. For example, Jacobs, Masson, Harvill and Schimmel (2012) discuss six factors:

(a) **Membership**
Careful selection of members – homogenous versus heterogenous. Between the two types of groups, the homogenous has more tendencies to contribute to group cohesion as the members share many similarities compared to differences in their attributes.

(b) **Group Goal**
Establishing mutually agreed goals for the group.

(c) **Activities and Tasks**
Stimulating members’ thoughts through careful selection of activities and tasks.

(d) **Format**
Varying the format can sometimes contribute to group cohesion.

(e) **Leadership**
Changing leadership style, if warranted can be useful for cohesion.

(f) **Structure**
Changing the structure of the group, if warranted can also be helpful for developing cohesion.
In addition, Forsyth (2014) also presented several causes for cohesion in groups. There are different forms (or causes) of cohesion and these include:

(a) **Social cohesion** – refers to attraction between members and attraction to the group as a whole.

(b) **Task cohesion** – refers to shared commitment to group goals, collective efficacy and group potency.

(c) **Collective cohesion** – refers to group unity, “we”, and group belonging, “in-group”.

(d) **Emotional cohesion** – refers to morale and *esprit de corps*. The relational cohesion theory states that cohesion increases as the group becomes a source of positive emotions (that is, behavioural synchrony).

(e) **Structural cohesion** – open groups tend to be less cohesive than closed ones (for example, e-groups).

Details of these causes are presented in Table 4.2.

**Table 4.2: Causes/Sources for Cohesion**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causes/Sources</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social cohesion</td>
<td>Attraction of members to one another and to the group as a whole.</td>
<td>• I have many friends in this group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• People get along well in this group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• I love this group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task cohesion</td>
<td>Commitment to working together as a coordinated unit in a pursuit of group goals.</td>
<td>• We work well together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• We pull together to get the job done.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• I do my best for this group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective cohesion</td>
<td>Consensual identification with the group; unity based on shared identity and belonging.</td>
<td>• United we stand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• We are like family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• I identify with this group and its members.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Emotional cohesion | Emotional intensity of the group and individuals when in the group. | • This group has tremendous energy.  
• This group has team spirit.  
• I get excited just being in this group.

Structural cohesion | Intensity based on structural features (for example, norms, roles, and intermember relations). | • The group fits together to make a whole.  
• All group members feel accepted by the group.  
• We are tight-knit.

Source: Forsyth (n.d.)

Other possible causes for cohesion may come from factors such as structure, influence, power, performance, decision making, leadership, conflict and intra- and intergroup relations. These factors are discussed in the upcoming topics.

### 4.2.2 Positive Consequences

We now understand the meaning, sources and components of cohesion. In most instances, cohesion is associated with positive consequences. Forsyth (2006, 2014) presented five positive consequences of cohesion and these are summarised as follows:

(a) **Enhanced Member Satisfaction**
In general, cohesion is associated with increase in member satisfaction. If the group is cohesive, it means that the members can get along with each other and thus the members’ satisfaction is enhanced.

(b) **Reduced Tension and Stress**
In general, cohesion is associated with decreases in tension and stress. If the group is cohesive, it means that the members can cope well with the demands of their tasks and thus the members’ tension and stress is reduced.
(c) **Higher Group Engagement**
In most instances, cohesion intensifies group engagement and processes. In most cohesive groups, members tend to have shared goals and tasks and thus their engagement with the group is enhanced.

(d) **Reduced Turnover**
In general, cohesion is associated with decrease in turnover. If the group is cohesive, the members will stay longer in the group and perhaps would not have any intention to leave the group. Thus, turnover rate is reduced.

(e) **Longer Duration of Membership**
This is similar with point (d) because members who come from a cohesive group tend to stay longer in the group. They have developed mutual liking for other members and for the group as a whole and they also can cope well with the demands and tasks of the group. Thus, they tend to stay longer in their group.

So, striving to develop cohesive groups is a worthy effort because cohesive groups have many positive consequences as discussed previously. Now, let us investigate whether cohesion is also associated with negative consequences. Stay tuned!

### 4.2.3 Negative Consequences

Cohesion is not only associated with positive consequences but it is also associated with negative consequences. Some of the negative consequences of cohesion are described as follows:

(a) **Intensification of Emotional and Social Processes**
Cohesion intensifies group psychological processes. In particular, cohesive groups can be so emotionally and socially demanding that they can cause intense emotional problems for members, for example, the “old sergeant’s syndrome”. According to Forsyth (2006), this syndrome refers to symptoms of psychological disturbance, including depression, anxiety and guilt, exhibited by noncommissioned officers in cohesive units that suffer heavy casualties. Strongly loyal to their unit and its members, these leaders feel so responsible for their unit’s losses that they withdraw psychologically from the group.
(b) **Increased Influence, Pressure**
Cohesion intensifies group influences and pressures. Dependence, pressure to conform and acceptance of influence are greater in cohesive groups and individuals’ resistance to these pressures are weaker.

(c) **Hostility**
Cohesion can also increase negative group processes, including hostility and scapegoating. In particular, cohesive groups tend to vent their frustrations through interpersonal aggression such as overt hostility, joking hostility, scapegoating and domination of subordinate members (Forsyth, 2006).

(d) **Groupthink**
Cohesive groups tend to avoid confrontation and disagreement among members. In consequence, the decision-making process in cohesive groups becomes deteriorated. Irving Janis’s (1982) theory of groupthink suggests that group pressures in cohesive groups undermine a group’s willingness to critically analyse its decision.

In discussing group productivity, there are many issues that need to be addressed. For example, consider the following:

(a) Do cohesive groups outperform less unified groups?

(b) Are cohesion and performance causally connected?

(c) What is it about cohesive groups that makes them more effective?

Many people argue that cohesion and performance are linked because of two reasons:

(a) Success increases a group’s cohesion; and

(b) Cohesive groups tend to outperform less cohesive groups.

Even though cohesive groups tend to outperform less cohesive groups, the relationship between cohesion and performance is strongest when members are committed to the group’s tasks.
On the other hand, cohesion and productivity are not positively related when the following situations occur:

(a) If group norms do not encourage high productivity; or
(b) If the group members are working in a stressful situation.

Overall, we have explored the positive and negative consequences of cohesion. What is your theoretical stance on this matter?

### DEVELOPMENT OF COHESION

Groups, like all living creatures, develop over time. The group may start as a collection of total strangers but sooner or later members become bound to their group, its other members and its tasks. This subtopic looks at several theories and group processes to understand how group cohesion develops over time.

#### 4.3.1 Theories of Group Development

What are the stages involved in the developmental progression of groups? The answer to this question lies in the mind of the theories because the number and names of the stages vary according to the theorist and discipline. In group counselling, Jacobs, Masson, Harvill and Schimmel (2012) simply provided three basic stages: beginning, middle and ending stage. In a similar field, Corey, Corey and Corey (2014) provided a four-stage process: initial, transition, working and ending. Table 4.3 presents several theories of group process based on a variety of theorists’ perspectives.
### Table 4.3: Stages of Group Development from Selected Perspectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theorist</th>
<th>Stage 1</th>
<th>Stage 2</th>
<th>Stage 3</th>
<th>Stage 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cohen (1961)</strong></td>
<td>Structuring the theme</td>
<td>Dynamic balancing of individual, group and theme</td>
<td>Theme as connecting link to which individual and group relate</td>
<td>Relating group experience to the “real world”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tuckman (1965)</strong></td>
<td>Forming</td>
<td>Storming/Norming</td>
<td>Performing</td>
<td>Adjourning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yalom (1995)</strong></td>
<td>Orientation and hesitant participation</td>
<td>Conflict, dominance and rebellion</td>
<td>Intimacy, closeness, and cohesiveness</td>
<td>Termination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gazda (1971)</strong></td>
<td>Exploration</td>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Termination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Corey (2000)</strong></td>
<td>Initial</td>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>Working</td>
<td>Ending</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: “Stages of Group” (n.d.)

In sum, we now know that there are many theories of developmental sequences of groups. Let us explore one of them in detail.

### 4.3.2 Five-stage Process

Indeed, there are many theories of group development. Of particular interest to this topic is Bruce W. Tuckman (1965) 5-stage group development model, which comprises the stages illustrated in Figure 4.1:
Figure 4.1: The stages in Tuckman’s (1965) model
Source: Tuckman (1965)

Table 4.4: Stages of Group Development and Their Associated Processes and Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Major Processes</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orientation: Forming</td>
<td>Members become familiar with each other and the group; dependency and inclusion issues; acceptance of leader and group consensus.</td>
<td>Communications are tentative, polite; concern for ambiguity, group’s goals; leader is active; members are compliant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict: Storming</td>
<td>Disagreement over procedures; expression of dissatisfaction; tension among members; antagonism toward leader.</td>
<td>Criticism of ideas; poor attendance; hostility; polarisation and coalition formation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure: Norming</td>
<td>Growth of cohesiveness and unity; establishment of roles, standards and relationships; increased trust, communication.</td>
<td>Agreement on procedures; reduction in role ambiguity; increased “we-feeling”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work: Performing</td>
<td>Goal achievement; high task orientation; emphasis on performance and production.</td>
<td>Decision making; problem solving; mutual cooperation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissolution: Adjourning</td>
<td>Termination of roles; completion of tasks; reduction of dependency.</td>
<td>Disintegration and withdrawal; increased independence and emotionality; regret.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Tuckman (1965)
Table 4.4 presents the major processes and characteristics associated with each stage in the Tuckman’s model.

Tuckman’s 5-stage model becomes an influential model for many theorists. The model is a successive-stage theory. It provides specification for each order of the phases of group development.

(a) **Orientation (Forming) Stage**
At this stage, members experience tentative interactions, tension, concern over ambiguity, growing interdependence and attempts to identify the nature of the situation. The membership criteria also play a role in facilitating group interactions. If the group is a closed one, then interactions among members are facilitative. But, if the group is an open one, then more negative forces tend to dominate the group development.

(b) **Conflict (Storming) Stage**
At this stage, members normally portray their true self, feelings and expectations towards other members of the whole group. They express dissatisfaction with the group, respond emotionally, criticise one another and sometime form cliques or coalitions.

(c) **Structure Development (Norming) Stage**
At this stage, members realise that they are part of the group. Thus, unity increases, membership stabilises, members report increased satisfaction and the group’s internal dynamics intensifies. Each member starts to understand the role and influences that he has and how such role and influences can impact the group.

(d) **Work (Performing) Stage**
At this stage, the group’s focus shifts to the performance of tasks and goal attainment. Members are now working together to reach their group’s goals and shared expectations. Performance and productivity become the main agenda for group activity. Not all groups reach this stage, for even highly cohesive groups are not necessarily productive.

(e) **Dissolution (Adjourning) Stage**
The group has reached its final destination. This means that the group has attained its goals and each member has gained the utmost benefits from group membership and participation. The group disbands. A group’s entry into the dissolution stage can be either planned or spontaneous, depending on context and situation. One thing to note is that even a planned dissolution can create problems for members as they work to reduce their depency on the group.
Based on Tuckman’s model, we now can describe any changes that take place in the group over time. Let us explore a different perspective on group development – a cyclical model.

### 4.3.3 Cycles of Development

Another perspective of group development is based on cyclical models. Many theorists from this perspective believe that groups repeat the cycles through stages during their lifetime, rather than just moving through each stage once (Forsyth, 2014). They agree that certain issues tend to dominate group interaction during various phases of a group’s development. They also add that these issues can resurface later in the life of the group. In this subtopic, we are going to examine two cyclical models: Bales’s equilibrium model and punctuated equilibrium models.

(a) **Bales’ Equilibrium Model**

According to Forsyth (2006), this model refers to a conceptual analysis of group development, proposed by Robert Bales, that assumes the focus of a group shifts back and forth between the group’s tasks and the interpersonal relationships among group members.

(b) **Punctuated Equilibrium Model**

Another cyclical model agrees with Bales’ view but adds that groups often go through periods of relatively rapid change. These changes may be precipitated by some internal crisis, such as the loss of a leader, or by changes in the type of task the group is attempting (Forsyth, 2014).

In sum, we now know that developing cohesion does not necessarily follow a successive-stage theory. Cyclical models, such as Bales’s equilibrium model, maintain that groups cycle through various stages repeatedly. Punctuated equilibrium models suggest that groups sometimes move through periods of accelerated change.

**SELF-CHECK 4.3**

1. Name at least three theories of group development.
2. Summarise Tuckman’s theory of group development.
3. Compare successive stage theories of group development to cyclical models. Provide examples, if necessary.
Group cohesion refers to the solidarity, unity and integrity of the group. The three main components of group cohesion are unity, attraction and teamwork.

Group cohesion emerges from a number of interrelated sources including interpersonal attraction, a sense of unity and the collaborative pursuit of shared goals.

Cohesion as a multilevel concept can also be measured at multiple levels such as using The BCI: Basic Cohesion Index.
There are several factors that can be considered as potential causes for cohesion. These include social cohesion, task cohesion, collective cohesion, emotional cohesion and structural cohesion.

There are five positive consequences of cohesion discussed in this topic which include:
- Enhanced member satisfaction;
- Reduced tension and stress;
- Higher group engagement;
- Reduced turnover; and
- Longer duration of membership.

There are four negative consequences of cohesion discussed in this topic which include:
- Intensification of emotional and social processes;
- Increased influence and pressure;
- Hostility; and
- Groupthink.

Cohesion develops over time and its development can be explained by several theories and group processes such as those proposed by Corey (2000), Yalom (1995) and Gazda (1971).

This topic has described Bruce W. Tuckman’s (1965) 5-stage group development model, which comprises the following stages:
- Orientation (forming) stage;
- Conflict (storming) stage;
- Structure (norming) stage;
- Work (performing) stage; and
- Dissolution (adjourning) stage.

Cohesion development also can be explained by cyclical models. There are two cyclical models discussed in this topic: Bales’ equilibrium model and the punctuated equilibrium models.
KEY TERMS

Bales’s equilibrium model  Interpersonal attraction
Basic Cohesion Index  \textit{Old sergeant's syndrome}
Clyclical models  Orientation (forming) stage
Cohesion  Personal attraction
Collaborative pursuit  Punctuated equilibrium models
Collective cohesion  Sense of unity
Collective efficacy  Shared goals
Conflict (storming) stage  Social attraction
Dissolution (adjourning) stage  Social cohesion
Emotional cohesion  Solidarity
Esprit de corps  Structural cohesion
Group engagement  Structure (norming) stage
Groupthink  Task cohesion
Hazing  Teamwork
Hostility  Unity
Integrity  Work (performing) stage

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*Stages of groups*. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1aU2bcSfP19iaP0MDUdq9plcePIxyG2NuG1dpv4dN6Fk/htmlpresent?hl=en


You might belong to a formal and/or informal group in your community and also your workplace. However, are you aware of the common structures of your group? Group structures are important as they regulate and organise the group. The common structures of your group are the group norms, roles and relationships. Although you might not be aware of the importance of group structures, as a member of a group you are expected to understand and observe the structures of your group. By observing the groups structures you are expected to play your role in the group effectively.

The purpose of Topic 5 is to discuss and share the most common structures of a group. These are the group norms, roles and intermember relations. This discussion also highlights the importance of these groups structures. It is hoped that by reading this Topic 5, you would have broadened your knowledge regarding group structures.
5.1 NORMS

The first group structure is norms. Do you know what a norm is? In group context, norms refer to the emergent, consensual standards that regulate members’ behaviours or how they should behave in a group (Forsyth, 2006, 2014). In reality, some group members might not be aware of the presence of certain norms; the norms come into the attention when certain group norms are being violated by certain group members.

Although social norms are applicable to various contexts and cultures, group norms are only meant to regulate behaviours of a specific group and might not be applicable to other groups (Forsyth, 2006; 2014). In fact, it is important to understand the common types of norms, the roles of norms and how the norms developed.

There are various forms or types of norms. These are the prescriptive norms, proscriptive norms, descriptive norms and injunctive norms. The following are the definitions of various types of norms as proposed by Forsyth (2006):

(a) **Prescriptive Norm**
A consensual standard that identifies preferable, positively sanctioned behaviours, that is, the socially appropriate behaviours of members to respond in a social situation. For instance, the norm of sharing food with members or to be cooperative with other members.

(b) **Proscriptive Norm**
A consensual standard that identifies prohibited, negatively sanctioned behaviours, that is, the behaviours which should be avoided by members. For instance, the norms of not to litter in meeting rooms or making jokes in a meeting.

(c) **Descriptive Norm**
A consensual standard that describes how people typically act, feel and think in a given situation. For instance, the norms of arriving on time at a meeting and not to sleep during the meeting.

(d) **Injunctive Norm**
A consensual standard that describes how people should act, feel and think in a given situation rather than how people do act, feel and think in this situation, for instance, the norms of not to cheat other members and not to steal from other members. These behaviours are considered as immoral and members who break these rules or norms are usually punished.
There are at least three important roles of group norms. These are (Forsyth, 2006, 2014):

(a) To provide direction and motivation for group members;

(b) To organise social interaction in group and among members; and

(c) To make other people’s responses predictable and meaningful.

### 5.1.1 Norms Development

As group norms are implicit rather than explicit standards of behaviour, most frequently the rules are not written down formally. Members will slowly learn and align their behaviours to match the standard behaviour of the groups. Sometimes members are not aware of this process or how their behaviour affected by the norm in a given group and they tend to comply with the norms automatically (Arts, Dijksterhuis, & Custers, 2003). Being acceptable and positively perceived in the group is important for members to meet the standard behaviour of the group (Forsyth, 2006; 2014).

Generally the development of norms can be considered through a self-generating process. Although initially members come to group with little internal consensus and great variability, despite the individual differences, members reach consensus about the acceptable norms for the group as time goes by. This consensus is reached through reciprocal influence (that is, the process where members influence other members reciprocally).

Group members use responses from other members to modify or revise their behaviours, opinion and beliefs in the process of norms development. The group norms emerged when the group situation lacks stability or orderliness and then each member mutually contributes to the mode of orderliness to establish their group norms (Forsyth, 2006; 2014).

### 5.1.2 Norms Transition

The transition of norms occurs through the process of internalisation of norms among members. During the internalisation process the entire group tends to adopt the same standard. This is because members personally accept the group norms. As members internalise the norms, they tend to obey the group norms (although the external pressure does not exist). This means that members accept the norms as their own norms (Forsyth, 2006; Kelmen, 1961).
As norms are consensual and internalised, they become the stable structure of the groups. Although older members who formed the group norms might be no longer in the groups, the group norms remain with the groups. As the norms become the organisation’s traditions, the new members who join the group have to adapt to that tradition (Forsyth, 2006; MacNeil & Sherif, 1976). These norms help groups to organise interactions, increase predictability and enhance solidarity (Forsyth, 2006, 2014).

**ACTIVITY 5.1**

Borrow a textbook related to group dynamics from a library or an acquaintance and read the book to get detailed information on the group’s structures and group’s norms.

Did you detect any common group structure and common types of group norms?

**SELF-CHECK 5.1**

1. Briefly explain the four types of norms.
   (a) Prescriptive norm;
   (b) Proscriptive norm;
   (c) Descriptive norm; and
   (d) Injunctive norm.

2. Discuss the process of the development and transition of norms.
The second structure of group is roles. Do you know what we mean by roles in a group context? Roles refer to “coherent set of behaviours expected of people in specific positions within a group or a social setting” (Forsyth, 2006). The purpose of roles is to specify the expected behaviour of individuals who are in particular positions within the group.

Members who want to take charge of the group may seek the role of leader and members who wish to be the ordinary members may seek out role of followers. Although roles tend to remain existing in the group, the vacant roles tend to be replaced by any members. For instance, when the role is vacant as the occupant departs, the roles will be replaced by other members (Forsyth, 2006, 2014).

### 5.2.1 Roles Differentiation

What is the important task in understanding group roles? The most important task is to understand the concept of role differentiation. Role differentiation refers to “an increase in the number of roles in a group, accompanied by the gradual decrease in the scope of these roles as each one becomes more narrowly defined and specialized” (Forsyth, 2006).

In fact, the roles are created to organise the group in order to attain the group’s goals. The roles are commonly developed as informal role structures. Over time members will begin to perform a specific task or action and interact with other members in a particular way and then the roles become narrowly defined and specialised (Forsyth, 2006, 2014).

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**ACTIVITY 5.2**

What are the potential roles played by group members? To answer this question, conduct an interview with a leader of a small organisation. Explore the possible roles of group members during the interview process. Do you detect any common roles of group members? In particular, try to generate list of roles and group them into categories. Document the findings from your interview. Please do not forget to share your findings with your coursemates.
There are at least three major types of roles as proposed by Forsyth (2006). These are task roles, relationship roles and individual roles. While the task role is important to facilitate group to attain goals, the relationship roles help in reducing interpersonal strains and stress among members in the group (Forsyth, 2006). Table 5.1 indicates the types and definitions of roles, while Table 5.2 specifies the functions of various types of roles in groups.

**Table 5.1: Types and Definitions of Roles**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Roles</th>
<th>Definitions and Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.  Task role</td>
<td>“Any position in a group occupied by a member who performs behaviours that promote completion of tasks and activities, such as initiating structure, providing task-related feedback, and setting goals” (Forsyth, 2006). Some examples of the task roles are initiator, information seeker, opinion seeker, opinion giver etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.  Relationship role (also known as socioemotional role)</td>
<td>“Any position in a group occupied by a member who performs behaviours that improve the nature and quality of interpersonal relations among members, such as showing concern for the feelings of others, reducing conflict, and enhancing feelings of satisfaction and trust in the group” (Forsyth, 2006). Some examples of the relationship roles are encourager, harmoniser, compromiser, gatekeeper, follower, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.  Individual role</td>
<td>“Any role which emphasise the individual’s own needs over the group’s needs. They are doing less (or fewer) jobs for the group but demanding other members to take care of them. These roles are also known as dysfunctional roles” (Forsyth, 2006). Some examples of the individual roles are aggressor, blocker, dominator, help seeker, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Forsyth (2006)
### Table 5.2: Types of Roles in Groups and Their Functions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Task roles</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiator/contributor</td>
<td>Recommends novel ideas about the problem at hand, new ways to approach the problem, or possible solutions not yet considered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information seeker</td>
<td>Emphasises getting the facts by calling for background information from others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinion seeker</td>
<td>Asks for more qualitative types of data, such as attitudes, values and feelings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information giver</td>
<td>Provides data for forming decision, including facts that are derived from expertise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinion giver</td>
<td>Provides opinions, values and feelings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaborator</td>
<td>Gives additional information—for example, rephrasings, implications—about points made by others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinator</td>
<td>Shows the relevance of each idea and its relationship to the overall problem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orienter</td>
<td>Refocuses discussion on the topic whenever necessary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluator/critic</td>
<td>Appraises the quality of the group’s methods, logic and results.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energiser</td>
<td>Stimulates the group to continue working when discussion flags.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedural technician</td>
<td>Cares for operational details, such as material, machinery and so on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recorder</td>
<td>Takes notes and maintains records.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. **Relationship roles**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Encourager</td>
<td>Rewards other through agreement, warmth and praise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harmoniser</td>
<td>Mediates conflicts among group members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compromiser</td>
<td>Shifts his position on an issue in order to reduce conflict in the group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gatekeeper/expeditor</td>
<td>Smooths communication by setting up procedures and ensuring equal participation from members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard setter</td>
<td>Expresses or calls for discussion of standards for evaluating the quality of the group process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group observer/commentator</td>
<td>Points out the positive and negative aspects of the group’s dynamics and calls for change if necessary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follower</td>
<td>Accepts the ideas offered by others and serves as an audience for the group.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. **Individual roles**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aggressor</td>
<td>Expresses disproval of acts, ideas and feelings of others; attacks the group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blocker</td>
<td>Negativistic: resists the group’s influence; opposes the group unnecessarily.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominator</td>
<td>Asserts authority or superiority; manipulative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evader/self-confessor</td>
<td>Expresses personal interests, feelings and opinions unrelated to group goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help seeker</td>
<td>Expresses insecurity, confusion and self-depreciation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition seeker</td>
<td>Calls attention to him-or herself; self-aggrandising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playboy/girl</td>
<td>Uninvolved in the group; cynical, nonchalant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special-interest pleader</td>
<td>Remains apart from the group by acting as representative of another social group or category.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Forsyth (2006)
5.2.2 Roles Related Issues (Role Ambiguity, Role Conflict, Person-role Conflict, Role Conflict and Group Performance)

In fact, there are various issues related to roles in a group. Some of the issues are role ambiguity, role conflict, person-role conflict and the relationship between role conflict and group performance (Forsyth, 2006; 2014).

(a) **Role Ambiguity**

There is a tendency of members to experience role ambiguity (House, Schuler, & Levanoni, 1983). Role ambiguity refers to “unclear expectations about the behaviours to be performed by an individual occupying a particular position within the group, caused by a lack of clarity in the role itself, a lack of consensus within the group regarding the behaviours associated with the role, or the individual role taker’s uncertainty with regard to the types of behaviours expected of them” (Forsyth, 2006).

To overcome this, it is important for the role to be defined clearly and to get the consensus from members about their expectations on the specific role. It is important also for the people who are in charge of specific roles to welcome feedback from other members about the roles and the fulfilment of the role (Forsyth, 2006; 2014).

(b) **Role Conflict**

Members also may experience role conflict if they occupy various roles in the group (Brief, Schuler, & Van Sell, 1981). Role conflict refers to “a state of tension, distress, or uncertainty caused by inconsistent or discordant expectations associated with one’s role in the group” (Forsyth, 2006). There are two types of role conflicts. These are the inter-role conflict and intra-role conflict. The further definition of these role conflicts are in the following Table 5.3.
Table 5.3: Definition of Role Conflicts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Role Conflicts</th>
<th>Definitions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Inter-role conflict</td>
<td>A form of role conflict that occurs when individuals occupy multiple roles within the group and the expectations and behaviours associated with one of their roles are not consistent with the expectations and behaviours associated with another of their roles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Intra-role conflict</td>
<td>A form of role conflict that occurs when the behaviours that make up a single role are incongruous, often resulting from inconsistent expectations on the part of the person who occupies the roles and other members of the group.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Forsyth (2006)

(c) **Role Fit**
To overcome issues related to the person and their role conflicts, it is important to assess members’ role fit. The role fit refers to “the degree on congruence between the demands of a specific role and the attitudes, values, skills, and other characteristics of the individual who occupies the role” (Forsyth, 2006). Role conflicts can be overcome when the demands or the expectations of a particular role fit or are congruent with the characteristics of the individuals (for example being warm, sensitive, easy-going, can work under pressure, etc.). If the role fit is poor or low, members may experience that they do not feel they can “be themselves” in performing their roles (Forsyth, 2006).

(d) **Role Conflict and Group Performance**
Any issues related to role ambiguity, role conflict and role fit should be overcome accordingly. If not, role ambiguity, role conflict and role fit potentially affect group performance. Research shows that role ambiguity, role conflict and role fit predict decreased satisfaction, reduced productivity and increased stress (Forsyth, 2006). The increase of role ambiguity and conflict are associated with an increase in desire to leave the organisation and decreased commitment with the organisation and participation in decision making (Forsyth, 2006; Tubre & Collins, 2000).
The intermember relation is the third component of group structure. It specifies the linkages between members. It also defines who has the most authority and how the information flows from one member to other members (Forsyth, 2006, 2014). The linkages between members are understood from group’s status relations, attraction relations and communication relations or networks.

5.3.1 Status Relations

The first feature of intermember relations is status relations. This level of authority exists in groups. Members who are the power holders (at the top of group hierarchy) make decisions, take on more responsibilities and are the focus of communication compared to members of low hierarchy. Below the top level of authority, are the members of the second level of hierarchy. This second stratum has less power compared to the leaders. However, they are more prestigious than the members of the lower hierarchy. At the lower level of hierarchy, the authority tends to diminished and number of members at the lower level of hierarchy increased (Forsyth, 2006, 2014).

SELF-CHECK 5.2

1. Describe three major types of roles as proposed by Forsyth (2006).
2. Discuss the nature of role ambiguity and how role ambiguity can be overcome.
3. What is role conflict?
4. Explain the types of role conflicts.

ACTIVITY 5.3

Do an online search on a group’s intermember relations. Identify the common linkages of intermember relations. What are the three linkages of intermember relations? Specify and discuss each with suitable examples.
The status differentiation may occur in groups. Status differentiation refers to “the gradual rise of some group members to positions of greater authority, accompanied by decreases in the authority excised by other members” (Forsyth, 2006). Besides that, members may compete with other members for status in group which result in some members becoming dominant and other members becoming submissive. This is known as “pecking order” – which refers to “a stable, ordered pattern of individual variations in prestige, status, and authority among group members” (Forsyth, 2006).

In addition, members also tend to perceive the status of other members. Their perceptions of other members’ status are based on specific status characteristics and diffuse status characteristics. Based on status characteristics theory, specific status characteristics refer to “task-specific behavioural and personal characteristics that people consider when estimating the relative competency, ability and social values of themselves and others” (Forsyth, 2006). Some examples of the specific status qualities which are required by specific tasks such as among a group of climbers are: strength, determination, health and maturity.

The diffuse status characteristics refer to “general personal qualities such as age, race, and ethnicity that people consider when estimating the relative competency, ability and social value of themselves and others” (Forsyth, 2006). For instance, members of a a group of climbers may perceive age as an important quality and being young might be negatively valued (Forsyth, 2006; 2014).

### 5.3.2 Attraction Relations

The second feature of intermember relations is attraction relations. In any group, there is a tendency for members to like or dislike other members and the tendency to be friends or enemies with each other. This is called as attraction network. Attraction network refers to “patterns of liking-disliking, acceptance-rejection, and inclusion-exclusion among members of a group” (Forsyth, 2006).

The attraction patterns among members are a form of stable social relationship. In fact, it is common for members to develop stronger and more positive interpersonal ties between some members of the group. This is followed by the decreases in quality of relations between other members of the group at the same time. This is known as sociometric differentiation (Forsyth, 2006; 2014; Maassen, Akkermans, & van der Linden, 1996).

In addition, attraction relations among members tend to be reciprocal or mutual. However, exceptions to reciprocity of attraction may occur sometimes (and relatively rare). The coalitions among members often exist within the group that are higher in homophily compared to the group as a whole (Thorne, 1993). The
Homophily refers to the situation where “members of cliques tend to be more similar to one another than they are to the members of the total group” (Forsyth, 2006).

There is a possibility for members to reach a state of equilibrium in attraction relations. As proposed by the balance theory, attraction relations achieves it balance or equilibrium state when members fit together to form a coherent and unified group. For instance the attraction relation is balanced when members like each other reciprocally (Forsyth, 2006, 2014). In contrast, it is possible for a group to experience imbalanced sociometric structure. The imbalanced sociometric structure may create tension and conflict to the group. Therefore, it is important for members to correct the imbalance and to restore the group equilibrium (Forsyth, 2006, 2014).

There are a few interpersonal factors which determine the attraction structure among members. These are similarity, complementary, reciprocity, personal qualities and physical attractiveness which can determine members’ attraction or popularity. In addition, sociometric differentiation generally favours individuals with socially attractive qualities (for example, cooperative or physical appeal).

However, the social standing or popularity of members also depends on the degree to which the individual’s attributes match the qualities valued by the group (person-group fit which refers to “the degree to which individuals’ attributes match the qualities valued by the group to which they belong” [Forsyth, 2006]). However, the popularity of an individual member in a group does not guarantee his popularity in other groups, as he can be an outcast or stranger to other groups (Hubbard, Dodge, Cillessen, Coie, & Schwartz, 2001).

### 5.3.3 Communication Relations

Communication relations is the third feature of intermember relations. Generally members communicate or exchange information in a regular pattern among group members. This is known as a communication network. A communication network refer to “patterns of information transmission and exchange that describe who communicates most frequently and to what extent with whom” (Forsyth, 2006).

A communication network can be more varied and complex as the number of group members increase. As indicated in Figure 5.1, the communication network can be distinguished by a centralised communication network and a decentralised network. The examples of centralised communication network are wheel, the kite and the Y. The examples of decentralised communication network are circle and the comcon (Forsyth, 2006; 2014; Shaw, 1964).
The following are the explanations for each type of communication network (Shaw, 1964).

(a) **Wheel network** – all group members communicate with just one individual;

(b) **Comcon network** – all members can and do communicate with all other members;

(c) **Circle network** – is a closed chain;
(d) **Chain network** – communication flows from one person to the next in a line; and

(e) **Pinwell network** – is a circle where information flows in only one direction

In a centralised communication network, there is a hub (centre) of information. Groups with this type of communication structure use hub position as a data processing centre. Members will collect the information, synthesise the information and send the information back to other members. In contrast, in decentralised communication network, the numbers of channels at each position is roughly equal. Therefore, no single channel will become more “central” than another (Forsyth, 2006, 2014; Shaw, 1964).

**SELF-CHECK 5.3**

Describe the three features of intermember relations.

(a) Status relations;

(b) Attraction relations; and

(c) Communication relations.

**SUMMARY**

- The common structures of the group are the norms, roles and intermember relations.

- The norms refer to the emergent, consensual standards that regulate members’ behaviours or how members should behave in a group.

- The types of norms are the prescriptive norm, proscriptive norm, descriptive norm and injunctive norm.

- The development of norm in groups happens through a self-generating process.

- The transition of norms in the group is through the process of internalisation of norms among members where the entire group tends to adopt the same standard.
• Roles refer to coherent set of behaviours expected of people in specific positions within a group with the purpose to specify the expected behaviour of individuals who are in particular positions within the group.

• The types of roles are task roles, relationship roles and individual roles.

• Some issues related to role conflicts are role ambiguity, role conflict, person-role conflict and the relationship between role conflict and group performance.

• The structure of intermember relations includes status relations, attraction relations and communication relations.

| KEY TERMS |
|-----------------|------------------|
| Attraction network | Norms transitions |
| Centralised communication network | Pecking order |
| Decentralised communication network | Person-role conflict |
| Descriptive norm | Prescriptive norm |
| Homophily | Proscriptive norm |
| Individual roles | Relationship roles |
| Injunctive norm | Role ambiguity |
| Intermember relations | Role conflict |
| Inter-role conflict | Sociometric differentiation |
| Intra-role conflict | Status differentiation |
| Norms development | Task roles |


INTRODUCTION

Do you know what influence is? How do you think other people influence your opinions, judgements or actions? How does your influence affect their opinions, judgement or actions? What are the common strategies for them to influence you? How do you normally influence them? These questions reflect the dynamics of the influencing process. No social group is free from this influencing process. This is because as groups are formed, they have to achieve certain objectives or fulfil certain tasks. Therefore, the role of influence is important to direct groups’ members to achieve the group goals and focus on their functions.

The purpose of Topic 6 is to discuss the nature and extent of influence in terms of conformity, nonconformity and sources of social influence. It is hoped that by reading this topic, you would broadened your knowledge and understanding of social influence in a group.
CONFORMITY

As the group grows, there is a tendency for the members to influence each other. This process is known as social influence which refers to “interpersonal processes that change the thoughts, feelings or behaviours of another person” (Forsyth, 2006). This social influence can take the form of majority influence and minority influence. During the social process, the group’s members may conform or not conform to social influence (Forsyth, 2014). In this subtopic we will discuss the concept of majority influence and minority influence.

6.1.1 Conformity: Majority Influence

During the social influence process, members may be involved in conformity. The conformity is known as “a change in opinion, judgment or action to match the opinions, judgments or actions of other members or the group’s normative standards” (Forsyth, 2006). This means that despite their background and individual differences, the group’s members conform to the group’s norms. This is achieved by matching their opinions, judgments or actions to the opinions, judgments or actions which are favoured by their group (Forsyth, 2014).

What is the most common social pressure in a group? The most common social pressure which affects group members is in the form of majority influence. The majority influence is known as the “social pressure exerted by the larger portion of a group on individual members and smaller factions within the group” (Forsyth, 2006).
The question is how does majority influence work in groups? To understand this, we can examine the Asch experiment on conformity in groups. This experimental study seems to be easy as participants were only required to match the length of line on the left card with three option lines on their right (as indicated in Figure 6.2). However, there was only one true participant as other participants were Asch confederates (one true participant in each series of experimental studies).

The role of the confederates in this experiment is to deliberately make as many mistakes and to see how the true participant complies with the confederates’ responses. This is because the purpose of this experiment is to see how the majority can affect the true participant’s judgment in matching the line. At the end, the true participant tended to give responses which were in agreement with that of the research confederates (Forsyth, 2006).
This experiment shows that although the true participant might think that when the first confederate made a mistake about the match of the line, it is just a little thing. However, when the third, fourth and a fifth confederates agreed with one another collectively by selecting the wrong answer, the true participants tend to conform and change their answers to match the majority. Although Asch expected that true participants will resist the pressure to conform to majority and to point out the incorrect responses of the majority, however, the true participants did not do so. The fact is the participants conformed to the incorrect view of the majority (Forsyth, 2006; 2014).

It is important to understand the role of numbers in conformity. This understanding could be based on Bibb Latané’s social impact theory. The social impact theory is “an analysis of social influence developed by Bibb Latané that proposes the impact of any source of information depends upon the strength, the immediacy, and the number of people (sources) present” (Forsyth, 2006). As indicated in Figure 6.3, the conformity increased with two or three sources (persons) and adding more sources did not necessarily increase conformity in the group. Besides that, the strength and the immediacy of these sources are also important as they will generate more intense psychological reactions among members (Forsyth, 2006).
Figure 6.3: The conformity increased with two or three sources

**Source:** Forsyth (2006)

### 6.1.2 Conversion: Minority Influence

The second social influence which can trigger conformity is minority influence. Minority influence is known as a “social pressure exerted by a lone individual or smaller faction of a group on members of the majority faction” (Forsyth, 2006). This means that there is the possibility of any minority such as influential members or a small faction to influence or put pressure on a larger majority in a group to accept the minority’s beliefs and behaviours (Forsyth, 2006; Gardikiotis, 2011).

Minority influence occurs when members or factions try to bring change by questioning the established norms of the group by proposing alternative which opposes the existing group’s norms (Gardikiotis, 2011). Although majority influence leads to conformity, minority influence leads to conversion. This means minority influences tend to convert the majority to accept and adapt the thought or actions of the minority group (Sampson, 1991).

In terms of bringing change, minority influence is important in challenging the majority view in order to bring new ideas or positive change in the group. This is because minority influence is vital in promoting a personal shift in private opinion and behaviours among group members.
There are at least four qualities of a strong minority influence. These are:

(a) **Consistent Minorities**
The consistent minorities are influential when the majority interprets their consistency positively. Consistent minorities can be influential compared to rigid or uncompromising minorities, for instance, when consistent minorities show their reasonability when offering small concessions to the majority groups. Consistent minorities are influential when they are perceived as committed, competent and group centered “team players” which positively contribute to the groups (Forsyth, 2006; 2014).

(b) **Minorities with “Credit”**
A research by Bray, Johnson and Chilstrom (1982) compared the influence of two minority groups in the discussion of three issues. One minority built up idiosyncrasy credits by agreeing on the first two issues that the group discussed, but then disagreeing on the third. The second minority built up consistency by disagreeing with the group on all three issues. Findings showed that both minorities are influential, but the minority who build up idiosyncrasy credits was more influential (Forsyth, 2006).

This means that in order to be influential, minority groups must develop careful conformity during the early stage of group formation, and they can disagree when they have already established sufficient balance of idiosyncrasy credit (Forsyth, 2006; 2014).

Here is the definition of idiosyncrasy credit. The term was used in Edwin Hollander’s explanation for the leniency groups sometimes display toward high status members who violate group norms, the hypothetical interpersonal credit or bonus that is earned each time the individual makes a contribution to the group but erased each time the individual influenced others, make errors, or deviates from the group’s norms (Forsyth, 2006).

(c) **Larger (and Growing) Minorities**
Members tend to join expanding minority groups when minorities offer logic arguments supporting their positions and the majority are already swayed by those convincing or credible arguments (Forsyth, 2006).

(d) **Minorities Influence Indirectly**
The influence of minority is indirect. As members struggle to validate their judgments, the indirect influence of minority tends to lead to conversion to the minority position. If we compare this with majority influence (which is direct and blatant), the influence of minority is less blatant and there is the potential to lead to true convergence among members rather than mere compliance (Forsyth, 2006; 2014).
ACTIVITY 6.1

1. Borrow a textbook related to social influence from a library or an acquaintance and read up on Asch experiment on conformity;
2. Read the book to get detailed information on the group’s influence and conformity.

Were you able to differentiate the concept of majority influence and minority influence? Discuss with your coursemates.

SELF-CHECK 6.1

1. Briefly explain the following concepts:
   (a) Conformity, and
   (b) Conversion.
2. Briefly explain the types of social influence.
   (a) The majority influence, and
   (b) The minority influence.
3. Describe the four qualities of a strong minority influence.

ACTIVITY 6.2

What does it mean to be nonconformist in a group? Interview one of your close friends to get to know why he does not conform to group influence or pressure. Can you identify individual characteristics or personality traits associated with his nonconformity? Document your answer. Do not forget to share your findings with your coursemates.
Despite conformity there is a tendency of the group members not to conform to the majority or minority influence. This is known as nonconformity or independence (Forsyth, 2006; 2014). In fact, it is difficult to merely discuss nonconformity without addressing conformity at the same time. This is because both nonconformity and conformity are interrelated and lie in a continuum (which might be different in terms of the degree of conformity- nonconformity).

According to Forsyth (2006) there are at least two different processes involved when people change their stated position. These are compliance and conversion:

(a) **Compliance**
According to Forsyth (2006) compliance (also known as acquiescence) refers to “change that occurs when the target of social influence publicly accepts the influencer’s position but privately maintains their original beliefs”. This means that members might privately disagree with their group norms or position, however in their group they publicly accept the group’s opinion and at the same time match their opinion with the group’s opinion (Forsyth, 2006; 2014).

(b) **Conversion**
Conversion (also known as private acceptance) refers to “changes that occur when group members personally accept the influencer’s position; also, the movement of all members of a group to a single, mutually shared position, as when individuals who initially offer diverse opinions on a subject eventually come to share the same position” (Forsyth, 2006). This means that the members personally show the true acceptance of group’s position or opinions.

What is group members’ nonconformity? In the context of group interactions, nonconformity refers to the refusal to comply with group’s standards for normal attitudes, behaviours and beliefs among group members. In terms of nonconformity, members tend to involve at least two different processes related to nonconformity (Forsyth, 2006; 2014). These are independence and counter-conformity:

(a) **Independence**
According to Forsyth (2006) independence refers to “expressing opinions, making judgments, or acting in ways that are consistent with one’s personal beliefs but inconsistent with the opinions, judgments or actions of other group members or the group’s norms” (Forsyth, 2006). This means that to show their nonconformity to the group or to the majority, nonconforming
members tend to express the behaviours, beliefs and judgments which are consistent with their personal values and standards (Forsyth, 2006).

(b) **Counter-conformity**

Counter-conformity (or anticonformity) refers to “deliberately expressing opinions, making judgments or acting in ways that are different from those of the other group members or the group’s norms in order to challenge the group and its standards rather than express one’s personal preference” (Forsyth, 2006). In the context of counter-conformity, members tend to express ideas or take actions which are against the recommendations of the group majority (Forsyth, 2006). For further reference please refer to Figure 6.4.

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**Figure 6.4**: The illustration of compliance, conversion, independence and counter-conformity in groups

*Source: Forsyth (2006)*
What is the difference between compliance, conversion, independence, counterconformity and congruence? When people react to group pressures, conformity can be labelled as compliance, and nonconformity can be thought of as counterconformity. In the opposite situation, when the response is prompted by one’s personal standards, conformity becomes private acceptance or conversion, and nonconformity entails independence. Technically, people who agree with the group from the outset are not conformists, because they do not shift their opinion in the direction advocated by the group; they already hold that position. They display congruence with their groups (Forsyth, 2006)

### 6.2.1 Factors Affecting Conformity and Nonconformity

The question is what factors affect conformity and nonconformity among group members? To answer this, Forsyth (2006) identified various (a) individual and cultural related factors and (b) group and situational factors which potentially affect conformity and nonconformity. It is important to acknowledge that the roles of these factors lying in a continuum whether lower or higher potentially explain members’ conformity and nonconformity. Table 6.1 shows the association between personality characteristics with conformity and nonconformity, while Table 6.2 indicates group and situational characteristics that may increase and decrease conformity (or nonconformity). Both Table 6.1 and 6.1 are adapted from Forsyth (2006).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Reaction to Influence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Age</td>
<td>Conformity increases with age.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Authoritarianism</td>
<td>Authoritarians (tend to conform) as they respect and obey authorities and social conventions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Birth order</td>
<td>First born children tend to conform more than later-born children, who tend to be more rebellious and creative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Dependency</td>
<td>People who are high in dependency display heightened compliance, conformity and suggestibility as well as sensitivity to interpersonal cues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Gender identity</td>
<td>Masculine individuals and androgynous individuals conform less on gender-natural tasks than feminine individuals.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6. Individualism – collectivism</strong></td>
<td>People from collective cultures (for example, Asians) value conformity as a means of achieving harmony with others, whereas those from individualistic cultures (for example, European Americans) value uniqueness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7. Individuation</strong></td>
<td>People with a high desire to publicly differentiate themselves from others (high individuators) are more willing to express dissenting opinions and contribute more to group discussion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>8. Intelligence</strong></td>
<td>Less intelligent people and individuals who are uncertain of their abilities conform more.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9. Need for closure</strong></td>
<td>Conformity pressures are stronger in groups with a preponderance of members with a high need for closure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>10. Need for uniqueness</strong></td>
<td>Individuals with a high need for uniqueness (NFU) are more likely to make usual choices and prefer unconventional to the conventional.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>11. Self-blame</strong></td>
<td>Adolescents who tend to blame themselves (high self-blame) for negative outcomes conform more than individuals with low self-blame.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>12. Self-esteem</strong></td>
<td>Individuals with low self-esteem conform more than individuals with moderate and high self-esteem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>13. Self-monitoring</strong></td>
<td>High self-monitors, because of their higher self-presentational tendencies, conform more when striving to make a positive impression.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>14. Stability</strong></td>
<td>Stability, conscientiousness and agreeability are associated with higher conformity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>15. Yea-saying</strong></td>
<td>Yea-sayers, particularly when working under a cognitive load, say “yes” faster and more frequently than individuals who thoughtfully consider their position.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Adapted from Forsyth (2006)*
Table 6.2: A Sampling of Group and Situational Characteristics that Reliably Increase and Decrease Conformity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Conformity increases if…</th>
<th>Conformity decreases if…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Accountability</td>
<td>Individuals are striving for acceptance by others whose preferences are known</td>
<td>Individuals are accountable for their actions and are striving for accuracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Accuracy</td>
<td>Majority’s position is reasonable or accurate</td>
<td>Majority position is unreasonable or mistaken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Ambiguity</td>
<td>Issues are simple and unambiguous</td>
<td>Issues are complex and difficult to evaluate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Anonymity</td>
<td>Responses are made publicly in face-to-face groups</td>
<td>Responses are anonymous and members cannot see each other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Attraction</td>
<td>Members are attracted to the groups or its members</td>
<td>Members dislike each other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Awareness</td>
<td>Individuals are aware they disagree with the majority</td>
<td>Individuals do not realise their position is unusual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Cohesion</td>
<td>Group is close-knit and cohesive</td>
<td>Group lacks cohesion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Commitment to position</td>
<td>Individuals are publicly committed to their position from the outset</td>
<td>Uncommitted individuals are confronted by the group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Commitment to group membership</td>
<td>Individuals are committed to remaining in the group</td>
<td>Group or membership are temporary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Priming</td>
<td>Unnoticed cues in the setting prime conformity</td>
<td>Situational cues prime independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Size</td>
<td>Majority is large</td>
<td>Majority is small</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Task</td>
<td>Task is important but difficult</td>
<td>Task is important and easy, or task is trivial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Unanimity</td>
<td>Majority is unanimous</td>
<td>Several members disagree with the majority</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Forsyth (2006)
6.2.2 Influence as Social Impact

To further understand the role of social influence in groups, it is important to understand the role of influence as social impact to group members. This understanding can be based on the dynamic social impact theory. The dynamic social impact theory is “Bibb Latané’s extension of his social impact theory which assumes that influence is a function of the strength, the immediacy and the number of the sources present, but that this influence results in consolidation, clustering, correlation and continuing diversity in groups that are spatially distributed and interacting repeatedly over time” (Forsyth, 2006).

In other words, they are at least four tendencies of the groups when experiencing social influence. These are consolidation, clustering, correlation and continuing diversity (Forsyth, 2006; Nowak, Szamrej, & Latané, 1990):

(a) **Consolidation** – as time goes by, the size of group majority tends to increase and the size of group minority tends to reduce.

(b) **Clustering** – as members tend to be influenced by close members, the clusters of members with same opinions or positions will emerge. Clustering occurs when members communicate frequently with close members and less frequent with distant group members.

(c) **Correlation** – as time goes by, members discuss more issues which are not discussed previously. This will help them to correlate their opinions on various issues. There is a tendency of members of minority to agree with each other, but still disagree with the majority’s position on unrelated matters.

(d) **Continuing diversity** – as the result of clustering, minority members are often shielded from the influence attempts of majority, and their beliefs are kept alive in the group. While group diversity may drop if the majority is very large compared to minority, the group diversity continues when minority resists majority’s influence attempts through group communication (Forsyth, 2006; Nowak, Szamrej, & Latané, 1990).
In our daily life, we might be affected by social influence from our group members. However, the sources of social influence in the group can vary. Do you know what the possible sources of social influence are? This subtopic will discuss the sources of social influence which commonly exist in groups and our daily lives.

6.3 SOURCES OF SOCIAL INFLUENCE

In our daily life, we might be affected by social influence from our group members. However, the sources of social influence in the group can vary. Do you know what the possible sources of social influence are? This subtopic will discuss the sources of social influence which commonly exist in groups and our daily lives.

6.3.1 Social Influence

There are at least four sources of influence. These are the implicit influence, informational influence, normative influence, and interpersonal influence. Let us look at the elaboration on these sources of influence:

(a) Implicit Influence

Implicit influence is the first type of social influence. Implicit influence is produced by cognitive, emotional, and behavioural processes that members neither consciously control nor frequently notice when they are interacting in the group. The most common example is members tend to imitate each other (in terms of thought, emotion or feeling, and action or behaviour), without realising they are following the thinking, emotion and behaviour of
other members in the group (Forsyth, 2006). This is clear that members’ mindlessness can cause them to conform automatically to other members’ influence (Langer, Blank, & Chanowitz, 1978).

(b) **Informational Influence**

The second source of social influence is informational influence. According to Forsyth (2006) informational influence refers to the “interpersonal process that promotes change by challenging the correctness of group members’ beliefs or the appropriateness of their behaviour directly (for example, through communication and persuasion) or indirectly (for example, through social comparison process)” (p. 227). In this type of influence, information from other members (who are going to influence) play an important role in influencing change to other members.

This is because the level of knowledge on certain issues of members who are going to be influenced is very limited. The informational influence occurs when members utilise the responses of other members as reference points and informational resources. For instance, if every group member tends to choose Plan A over Plan B, members who have no opinion or knowledge on the issue will use information from the group to guide their decision or choice (Forsyth, 2006).

According to the social comparison theory, members are active information processors; they normally evaluate the accuracy of their beliefs and judge their personal attribute qualities by comparing themselves to other members (Darley, 2001). Groups purposely gather information about their members’ opinions as they are anxious to know the stand or positions of other members before they disclose their own views or choices (Forsyth, 2006; 2014).

However, there is a tendency for members to be involved in the **false consensus effect** as other members’ opinions are often biased. The false consensus effect refers to “the perceivers’ tendency to assume that their personal qualities and characteristics are common in the general population” (Forsyth, 2006, p. 230). Therefore, in understanding that the other members’ opinion is biased, members of the majority often underestimate the size of their own group, but minority members overestimate the degree to which others agree with them. This tendency leaves the members to think that there is more support for their position than there actually is (Krueger, 2000).
(c) **Normative Influence**

The third source of social influence is normative influence. Normative influence refers to “the personal and interpersonal process that cause individual to feel, think, and act in ways that are consistent with social norms, standards, and convention. Because individuals internalize their group’s norms they strive to act it in ways that are consistent with those norms” (Forsyth, 2006).

In group interaction, normative influence occurs when members modify their actions or behaviour to match the standard norms of the group. Therefore, members follow and stick to the group’s norms. This is important to indicate that they are responsible members; they accept the legitimacy of the group’s norms and acknowledge the importance to support the group’s norms (Forsyth, 2006).

In addition, disagreeing with other members on certain issues or decisions can cause cognitive dissonance among members. The cognitive dissonance is an unpleasant and neurologically detectable psychological state that individuals are motivated to reduce. Based on Cialdini’s focus theory of normative influence, it is noted that norms are a stronger or more effective and is a longer-lasting form of social influence than informational influence in changing members (Cialdini, & Goldstein, 2004; Cialdini, Kallagen, & Reno, 1991).

(d) **Interpersonal Influence**

Interpersonal influence is the fourth source of social influence. Interpersonal influence can be defined as the “social influence that results from other group members selectively encouraging conformity and discouraging or even punishing nonconformity” (Forsyth, 2006). In group interaction, interpersonal influence normally happens when the members use verbal and nonverbal influence strategies or pressures to promote change to other members.

There are always some consequences for members’ nonconformity. For instance, members who violate the norms of the group (even to a small degree), are often reminded or advised of their duty or responsibility and also advised to change their ways in order to fit the group’s norm (Forsyth, 2006; 2014).

Findings as indicated by Schachter’s analysis of group rejection shows that members who are nonconformists are generally less liked by other members in the group. Any forms of disagreement from the group approaches will reduce likeability of members who are nonconformists.
However, the communication with disliked nonconformist members can eventually diminish only when cohesive groups are working on relevant tasks or to achieve the fulfilment of certain group’s task that requires collective contribution (Forsyth, 2006; 2014).

**SELF-CHECK 6.3**

Describe the following concepts:

(a) Implicit influence;
(b) Informational influence;
(c) Normative influence; and
(d) Interpersonal influence.

**SUMMARY**

- Social influence consists of the interpersonal processes that change the thoughts, feelings or behaviours of another member in a group.

- Common types of group conformity is based on majority influence and minority influence.

- Context of majority influence reflects the social pressure exerted by the larger portion of a group on individual members and smaller factions within the group.

- Context of minority influence reflects the social pressure exerted by a single individual or smaller faction of a group on members of the majority faction.

- Group nonconformity means the tendency of members not to comply or conform to group pressure.

- Individual and cultural-related factors and group and situational factors potentially affect conformity and nonconformity.

- Social impact refers to four tendencies of groups, that is, consolidating, clustering, correlationning or continuing diversity when experiencing social influence.
There are four sources of social influence in the group namely the implicit influence, informational influence, normative influence and interpersonal influence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KEY TERMS</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clustering</td>
<td>Independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compliance</td>
<td>Informational influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conformity</td>
<td>Interpersonal influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistent minorities</td>
<td>Larger minorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consolidation</td>
<td>Majority influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuing diversity</td>
<td>Minorities influence indirectly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversion</td>
<td>Minorities with “credit”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correlation</td>
<td>Minority influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counter-conformity</td>
<td>Nonconformity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implicit influence</td>
<td>Normative influence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

REFERENCES


I am not afraid of an army of lions lead by a sheep;  
I am afraid of an army of sheep lead by a lion.  
(Alexander the Great)

A group is a platform where social power among members can be observed. The constructive purpose of this social power is to influence and regulate group members. Social power is important to direct members to achieve the goals of the group. To be successful, a group also requires a good leader. The roles of a leader are to manage, regulate and motivate members in group. The leadership styles adopted by a leader have the potential to affect the group relationship and the performance of a group. Therefore, the nature of the social power and leadership styles are important in promoting the group members’ relationships and the achievements of their tasks.
The purpose of Topic 7 is to discuss social power, the sources of social power, and reaction to the use of social power. Besides that, it also highlights leadership, the leadership styles and orientation of the task focused and relationship focused leadership. It is hoped that by reading Topic 7, you would have broadened your knowledge regarding issues related to social power in a group and types of leadership which might be applicable in leading the groups.

7.1 DEFINITION, SOURCES AND REACTION TO THE USE OF POWER

In group interaction, we are normally influenced by social power. Do you know what social power is? Generally social power refers to any form of authority which enables an individual or a sect of group members to control, to regulate or to influence group members to achieve group goals or to enhance group performance. In addition, social power also refers to “the capacity to influence others, even when these others try to resist influence” (Forsyth, 2006). This section will discuss the sources of social power and the reaction to the use of social power.

7.1.1 Sources of Social Power

Do you know how members or leaders may use social power to influence or to control other group members? To understand this, we have to examine the sources of social power. Do you know what the sources of social power are? The sources of social power as proposed by French and Raven (1959) can be based on reward power, coercive power, legitimate power, referent power, expert power and informational power (Forsyth, 2006, 2014). Table 1 summarises the definitions of the respective sources of social power.
Table 7.1: Summary of French and Raven’s Sources of Social Power as Highlighted by Forsyth (2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reward power</td>
<td>The capability of controlling the distribution of rewards given or offered to the target (group members).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coercive power</td>
<td>The capacity to threaten and punish those who do not comply with requests or demands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legitimate power</td>
<td>Authority that is derived from the power holder’s legitimate right to require and demand obedience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referent power</td>
<td>Influence based on the target’s identification with, attraction to or respect for power holder.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expert power</td>
<td>Influence based on the target’s belief that power holder possesses superior skills and abilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informational power</td>
<td>Influence based on the potential use of informational resources, including rational argument, persuasion or factual data.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Forsyth (2006)

It is important for us to understand the process of social power in a group. To understand this, we have to familiarise ourselves with power tactics and compliance tactics that leaders or power holders may use in group interaction. Firstly, power tactics can be understood as strategies of how leaders or power holders may demonstrate power over group members in order to influence or control group members. The power tactic can take in form of soft or hard tactics, rational or nonrational tactics, and unilateral or bilateral tactics (Forsyth, 2006, 2014). Table 7.2 highlights the examples and explanations of power tactics.
Table 7.2: Examples and Explanations of Power Tactics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Power Tactic</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Soft or hard tactics</td>
<td>• <strong>Soft tactics</strong> – for example, using collaboration, socialising, ingratiating in influencing group members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• <strong>Hard tactics</strong> – for example, bullying, threatening and economic rewards in influencing group members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rational or nonrational tactics</td>
<td>• <strong>Rational tactics</strong> – for example, using reasoning, logic, persuasion in influencing group members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• <strong>Nonrational tactics</strong> – for example, using evasion, ingratiating in influencing group members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unilateral or bilateral tactics</td>
<td>• <strong>Unilateral tactics</strong> – for example, using fait accompli, demands, disengagement in influencing group members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• <strong>Bilateral tactics</strong> – for example, using discussion, negotiation in influencing group members.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Secondly, compliance tactics refer to tactics which are used by leaders or power holders to promote compliance among group members. Some of the compliance tactics are Foot-in-the-Door technique, Door-in-the-Face technique, behavioural commitment and brainwashing (Forsyth, 2006, 2014). Table 7.3 highlights the summary of compliance tactics.

Table 7.3: Compliance Tactics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compliance Tactic</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foot-in-the-Door Technique</td>
<td>Using a small request followed by a much larger one.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“A method to influence in which the influencer first makes a very small request that the target will probably agree to; once the target agrees to the minor requests, he is more likely to agree with the influencers on more important requests” (Forsyth, 2006).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Door-in-the-Face Technique</td>
<td>Using a large request followed by a much smaller one.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioural commitment</td>
<td>Asking for commitment before revealing costs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brainwashing</td>
<td>Combining a series of compliance tactics with physical threats to the members.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Forsyth (2006)


7.1.2 Reaction to the Use of Social Power

Do you know how members or people react to social power? Generally there are at least three common ways members may react to social power. These are resistance to the influence, conversion and involvement in destructive obedience (Forsyth, 2006, 2014). The ways members react to power reflect the impact of power on group members.

(a) **Resistance to Influence**
   One of the possible ways members react toward social power is resistance to influence. Members’ resistance reflect that the authorities have not succeeded and members do not obey the authorities or powerholder. To a certain extent, members tend to influence the powerholder (Forsyth, 2006, 2014). Members’ resistance can take three possible forms. These are the revolutionary coalitions, reactance and conflict and rebellion authority.

The following are the explanations:

(i) **Revolutionary Coalitions**
   It is a movement where members develop coalition and form a subgroup especially when members share identity with members of low-power in the groups. The purpose of the coalition is to change or disrupt the structure of authority in a group (Dijke & Poppe, 2004; Forsyth, 2006, 2014).

(ii) **Reactance**
   Reactance occurs when members resist power holders who are lacking reference power, using coercive influence methods and asking members to carry out unpleasant tasks. Consequently members will strive for their sense of freedom by installing their autonomy in groups (Forsyth, 2006; Yukl, Kim, & Falbe, 1996).

(iii) **Conflict and Rebellion Authority (the Ripple Effect)**
   As members do not comply with power holders, the occurrence of conflict between members and power holder and members also tend to involve rebellion in groups (Forsyth, 2006, 2014).

(b) **Conversion**
   Conversion is another possible way members react toward social power in groups. The three-stage model of conversion as proposed by Kelman (1958, 1961) helps us to explain the process of conversion when members comply with leader or power holder influence. The three stages of conversion are...
the compliance, identification, and internalisation stages. Table 4 explains Kelman’s three-stage model of conversion.

**Table 7.4: Kelman’s Three-stage Model of Conversion**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compliance</td>
<td>Group members comply with the powerholder’s demand, but they do not personally agree with them. If the power holder does not monitor the members, they will likely not obey.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification</td>
<td>Group members’ compliance with the actual or anticipated demands of the powerholder is motivated by a desire to imitate and please the authority. The members mimic the powerholder’s actions, values, characteristics and so on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internalisation</td>
<td>Group members follow the orders and advice of the powerholder because those demands are congruent with their own personal beliefs, goals and values. They will perform the required actions even if not monitored by the powerholder.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Forsyth (2006)

(c) **Destructive Obedience**

Destructive obedience is another possible way members react toward social power in groups. The term was first introduced by Stanley Milgram in 1963 in his prominent experiment on obedience (Thomas, 2000). Destructive obedience is a form of compliance where members comply with the request or direction from legitimate authority without questioning. The members’ destructive obedience potentially causes harm or brings negative outcomes. The effect of destructive obedience is harmful to members and others as members do not question the command or instruction from legitimate authorities.

Can you recall Milgram’s experiment on obedience with the research participants? The research participants’ obedience in administering the electric shock without questioning in that experiment is one example of destructive obedience and this indicated the possible negative outcome of destructive obedience. Another example is the co-pilot’s obedience to the pilot’s instruction or command. Although the co-pilot knows that the command is incorrect and inappropriate for a flying procedure or in an emergency situation as the command can possibly cause an air crash, the co-pilot still has to follow the pilot’s command and this will consequently lead to a fatal air crash.
LEADERSHIP: DEFINITION AND LEADERSHIP STYLES

Do you know why the qualities of leadership are important? The qualities of leadership are important because they potentially affect the performance and productivity of a group or organisation. In addition, a good leadership style contributes to a conducive and positive working environment, promoting and enhancing motivation as well as psychological well-being of group members.
Besides that, good leadership also potentially facilitates good relationships and cooperation among group members. It is important for leaders to address members’ relationship issues as they will be working together in achieving the groups’ goals for a long period of time. This subtopic discusses the definition of leadership and leadership styles.

### 7.2.1 Definitions of Leadership

Do you know what leadership is? Leadership refers to leaders’ actions in leading a group or any organisation. Leadership also refers to the qualities of a leader in a group. A leader may offer different leadership styles compared to other leaders. What is leadership style? Generally, a leadership style can be considered as the characteristic behaviour of a leader. The characteristics of leaders are various and can be facilitative in motivating, guiding and managing the group members and the group performance. To a certain extent, leadership styles can motivate members to perform better and to be creative and innovative (Forsyth, 2006, 2014).

According to Forsyth (2006, 2014), leadership is not static characteristics of groups or individuals but a complex interpersonal process where members interact to influence and motivate each other in order to attain the group’s goals. The processes of leaderships are reciprocal, transactional, transformational, cooperative, adaptive and goal-seeking.

### 7.2.2 Leadership Styles

Leadership styles are important in inspiring group members and bringing change in a group or organisation. It is important to note that leadership styles vary and are not limited to leadership styles addressed or discussed in this topic. In fact, there are various theories of leadership styles or types. Some of the prominent leadership styles or types were proposed by Lewin, Lippitt, and White (1939). These are authoritarian, democratic or laissez-fair leadership styles. Table 7.5 summarises three types of Lewin’s leadership styles.
Table 7.5: Lewin’s Three Leadership Styles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership Style</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Authoritarian    | Authoritarian leaders:  
|                  | - Do not accept input from the members in making decisions;  
|                  | - Do not discuss the long-term goal in groups;  
|                  | - Emphasise leader’s authority;  
|                  | - Dictate which members will work on specific projects; and  
|                  | - Arbitrarily pair the members with their work partners. |
| Democratic       | Democratic leaders:  
|                  | - Encourage activities to be discussed by the entire group;  
|                  | - Allow members to make their own decisions related to projects or partners; and  
|                  | - Encourage the development of egalitarian (democratic) atmosphere. |
| Laissez-fair     | Laissez-fair leaders:  
|                  | - Rarely intervene in the group activities;  
|                  | - Function primarily as a source of technical information; and  
|                  | - Groups make all their own decisions without any supervision. |

Source: Lewin, Lippitt, & White (1939) and White & Lippitt (1968)

As research on leadership in organisation psychology further developed, various forms of leadership styles have emerged. Some of the additional leadership styles and models are Transformational Leadership and Transactional Leadership Style. Table 7.6 highlights the Transformational Leadership and Transactional Leadership Style.
Table 7.6: The Transformational Leadership and Transactional Leadership Style

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership Style</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transformational Leadership</td>
<td>(a) A charismatic, inspiring method of leading others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) Heightening followers’ motivation, confidence and satisfaction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(c) Uniting members in the pursuit of shared, challenging goals, and changing their beliefs, values and needs (Forsyth, 2006, 2014).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(d) Some researchers describe this style of leadership as a charismatic leadership style.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The transformational leadership comprises four components. These are idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration. The explanation is as follows:

(a) **Idealised Influence** – leaders stress on the importance of trust, purpose, commitment and the ethical consequences of decisions and the leader serves as an ideal role model for members.

(b) **Inspirational Motivation** – leaders articulate visions for the future, are optimistic and have the ability to inspire, motivate and encourage members and provide meaning for what needs to be done.

(c) **Intellectual Stimulation** – leaders question old assumptions, traditions and beliefs, stimulating members with new perspectives and strategies of doing things, encouraging the expression of ideas and reasons.

(d) **Individualised Consideration** – leaders deal with members individually, acknowledging their needs, ability and aspirations, listen to members, further members’ development, and advise, teach and coach members (Bass, 1997; Forsyth, 2006).
### Transactional Leadership
- This is a managerial type of leadership.
- Leaders pay attention to the role of supervision, organisation, and group performance.
- Leaders promote compliance among group members by using rewards and punishments.
- Changing the future is not the priority.
- Leaders pay attention to members’ work in order to find faults and deviations.
- Effectively used in a specific project, crisis and emergency situations (Hackman, Johnson, Michael, & Craig, 2009).

(e) Some researchers call this style of leadership a bureaucratic leadership style.

### Source

### SELF-CHECK 7.2
1. Describe three types of leadership as proposed by Lewin et. al (1939).
2. Explain Transformational Leadership and Transactional Leadership Styles.

### ACTIVITY 7.3
Do online search on task-focused leadership and relationship-focused leadership. Identify the common features of task-focused leadership and relationship-focused leadership. Discuss each with suitable examples.
Leadership in any group or organisation has to address two important components accordingly. These are the task and relationship in the group or organisation. As there are drawbacks of leadership style which merely either focus on task or relationship, researchers in the field of organisational and industrial psychology promoted the new perspective in understanding of leadership by focusing both on the task-oriented leadership and relationship-oriented leadership.

This subtopic discusses early work on the task-focused and relationship-focused leadership styles, followed by the leadership grid theory, situational leadership style, and desirable and undesirable qualities in a leader across culture.

### 7.3.1 Task-focused versus Relationship-focused Leadership

The important shift in understanding leadership style with the intention to focus on more humanistic approach in leadership style was advocated by Ohio State University. During their early work, the Ohio State researchers worked on various qualities or characteristics of leadership. Then, the researchers ran factor analysis on the characteristics. The analysis produced two common, important orientations of leadership namely task-oriented leadership and relationship-oriented leadership. The researchers built these two dimensions of leaderships into their Leader Behaviour Description Questionnaire (LBDQ; Forsyth, 2006, 2014).

Task-oriented leadership is a leadership style where leaders focus on the task performance and achievement of the goals in a group or organisation. In other words, task-oriented leadership focuses on the group’s goals and the group’s work (Forsyth, 2006, 2014; Yulk, 2002). In contrast, relationship-oriented leadership is a supportive type of leadership which focuses on the members’ relationship in the group or organisation.

This means that the main concern for relationship-oriented leadership is the interpersonal relationship within the group or organisation (Forsyth, 2006, 2014; Yulk, 2002). Research across countries repeatedly indicate that there is consistency of this two dimensional model of leadership behaviours. The labels of the two dimensional behaviours are various – such as work-facilitative versus supportive, production centred versus employee centred, and administratively
skilled versus relations skilled (Forsyth, 2006, 2014). Table 7.7 summarises the definitions of the task- and relationship-focused leadership, related terms and the samples of the behaviours.

Table 7.7: Task and Relationship Leadership: Definitions, Related Terms and Samples of the Behaviours

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Sample Behaviours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Task leadership:</td>
<td>Task-oriented, goal-oriented, work facilitative, production centred, administratively skilled and goal achievement.</td>
<td>Assigns task to members, makes attitudes clear to the group, is critical of poor work, sees to it that the group is working to capacity, coordinates activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action that promotes task completion; regulating behaviour, monitoring communication, and reducing goal ambiguity.</td>
<td>Assigns task to members, makes attitudes clear to the group, is critical of poor work, sees to it that the group is working to capacity, coordinates activity.</td>
<td>Assigns task to members, makes attitudes clear to the group, is critical of poor work, sees to it that the group is working to capacity, coordinates activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship leadership:</td>
<td>Relationship-oriented, socioemotional, supportive, employee centered, relations skilled, group maintenance.</td>
<td>Listens to group members, is easy to understand, is friendly and approachable, treats group members as equals, is willing to make changes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action that maintain and enhance positive interpersonal relations in the group; friendliness, mutual trust, openness, recognizing performance.</td>
<td>Listens to group members, is easy to understand, is friendly and approachable, treats group members as equals, is willing to make changes.</td>
<td>Listens to group members, is easy to understand, is friendly and approachable, treats group members as equals, is willing to make changes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Forsyth (2006)

Although the findings have identified two important dimensions or types of leadership, there is a need for the leader to offer a leadership style which is capable of offering “a balance” between task-oriented and relationship-oriented leadership. This “balanced” leadership orientation is not only important to the task and group performance but at the same time to stress on the importance of maintaining a good relationship and working atmosphere in a group or organisation. This is also important in promoting better understanding of a good leadership style which potentially promotes the group’s productivity.

Therefore, researchers argued that effective leaders should be capable of balancing the task-oriented and relationship-oriented leadership when leading a group or organisation or in their leadership styles (Forsyth, 2006, 2014; Hersey & Blanchard, 1977). Blake and Mouton’s “leadership grid” theory and situational leadership theory are some of the leadership theories which proposed the possible combination of task-oriented and relationship-oriented leadership.
7.3.2 Blake and Mouton’s “Leadership Grid” Theory

The “leadership grid” theory was introduced by Blake and Mouton in 1985. They hypothesised that in order to understand what style of leadership is appropriate to a group, we need the leaders’ answers to these two questions. Firstly, how important is the production of results by the group? Secondly, how important are the feelings of group members? While some leaders may focus their leadership goals on either the task or the relationship, other leaders may feel that both goals (task and relationship) are important (Blake & McCanse, 1991; Forsyth, 2006, 2014).

![Figure 7.1: Blake and Mouton’s “leadership grid”](source)

Blake and Mouton summarised the differences in their leadership grid as presented in Figure 7.1. As indicated in Figure 7.1, both dimensions, that is, concern for people and concern for results range from low concern to high concern which is presented with 9-point scales. Although the leadership grid can produce 81 possible combinations on the grid, Blake and Mouton stressed on the five orientations – these are located at four corner positions (that is, grid [1,1], [1,9], [9,1], and [9,9]) and the one in the centre [that is, grid [5,5]] (Forsyth, 2006, 2014).
The explanations of the five orientations are as follows:

(a) **For 1,1 leaders** – they are not interested in members’ feelings and the production results (hardly a leader).

(b) **For 1,9 leaders** – they focus more on members’ feelings and have low concern for production.

(c) **For 5,5 leaders** – they try to balance concern both for members and productivity. Sometimes leaders tend to sacrifice both when the members’ feelings and group’s results are in conflict.

(d) **For 9,1 leaders** – they are taskmasters who focus on productivity at any cost and low concern for people.

(e) **For 9,9 leaders** – they put high concern both for members’ feelings and productivity and achieving group goals through teamwork (Blake & Mouton, 1982).

### 7.3.3 Situational Leadership Theory

The situational leadership theory as proposed by Hersey and Blanchard (1982) is another example of a leadership theory which proposed the possible combination of task and relationship orientation. The Hersey-Blanchard Situational Leadership Model rests on two fundamental concepts. These are the leadership style and the individual or group’s maturity level (or developmental level).

Maturity is related to members’ competency where they are skilled and knowledgeable on the tasks and willing to carry out the assigned tasks. The leadership styles are characterised in terms of the task behaviour and relationship behaviour that a leader provides to their followers based on the individual or group’s maturity level. This means that it is important for the leadership style to be matched with the level of individual or group’s maturity.

Hersey and Blanchard (1982) categorised all leadership styles into four behaviour types. They named the four behaviour types as:

(a) **S1 (Directing)**;

(b) **S2 (Coaching)**;

(c) **S3 (Supporting)**; and

(d) **S4 (Delegating)**.
It is important to know that, the situational leadership theory noted that effective leadership has to be flexible and leaders must adapt themselves and their leadership style according to maturity level of the group. Therefore, there is no one style of leadership that is considered optimal for all leaders to use all the time. Table 7.8 summarises the explanation of the respective leadership styles:

**Table 7.8: Hersey and Blanchard (1982) Four Leadership Styles based on Group’s Maturity Level**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Style and Maturity</th>
<th>Explanation on Leadership and Maturity Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **S1: Directing** | • This stage is characterised by one-way communication.  
• At this stage, the leader defines the roles of the individual or group.  
• The leader provides the what, how, why, when and where to do the task.  
• The leader is not supportive.  
• **Leadership Style**: High directive and low supportive behaviour of leadership.  
• **Maturity level (M1: Low)** – that is, members are unable to do task, lack the specific skills required for the job and unwilling to take responsibility for a job or task. |
| **S2: Coaching** | • At this stage, the leader is still providing the direction.  
• At the same time leader is now using two-way communication.  
• The leader also provides the socioemotional support to groups’ members.  
• This will allow the members or group being influenced to be more participative into the process.  
• **Leadership Style**: High directive and high supportive behaviour of leadership.  
• **Maturity level (M2: Moderate)** – that is, members are unable take on responsibility but willing to work at the task. They can be considered as novices but are enthusiastic to do the task or job. |
S3: Supporting

- At this stage, leaders and members share decision making on how the task is accomplished.
- A leader also provides fewer task behaviours while maintaining high relationship behaviour with groups’ members.
- **Leadership Style:** Low directive and high supportive behaviour of leadership.
- **Maturity level (M3: Moderate)** – that is, members are capable of doing the task but unwilling to take on responsibility as they are not confident.

S4: Delegating

- At this stage, the leader is still involved in decision making.
- However, the process and responsibility of the group or project has been passed to the individual or group.
- The leader is still involved in monitoring the progress of the group or project.
- **Leadership Style:** Low directive and low supportive behaviour of leadership.
- **Maturity level (M4: High)** – that is, members are very capable of doing the task and are willing to take responsibility for the task.

7.3.4 Desirable and Undesirable Qualities in a Leader across Culture

Research has been carried out to examine the nature of desirable and undesirable qualities in a leader across culture. The researchers of Global Leadership and Organisational Behavior Effectiveness (GLOBE) Programme had been carried out with 15022 managers across 62 different countries to describe desirable and undesirable qualities in a leader.

The findings indicated that the universality of desirable and undesirable qualities in a leader across culture is consistent. While the most commonly reported desirable qualities of leaders were charismatic and transformational; the most commonly reported undesirable qualities were lack of integrity, self-centredness, and asocial tendencies (Den Hartog, House, Hanges, Ruiz-Quintanilla, Dorfman, & Associates, 1999; Forsyth, 2006, 2014). These findings can serve as a guideline for leaders to adapt their general quality of leadership in managing their group.
or organisation. Table 7.9 highlights the cross-cultural, universal qualities that are considered desirable and undesirable in a leader.

**Table 7.9: Cross-cultural, Universal Qualities that are Considered Desirable and Undesirable Qualities in a Leader**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>General Dimension</th>
<th>Specific Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Desirable qualities</td>
<td>Visionary, inspirational, integrity, group-focused, diplomatic, administratively competent, decisive, performance-oriented</td>
<td>Has foresight, plans ahead, dynamic, positive, encouraging, confidence, builder, motivational, trustworthy, just, honest, informed, communicative, coordinator, team builder, win-win problem solver, effective bargainers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undesirable qualities</td>
<td>Self-centred, malevolent, ruthless, egocentric, face saver.</td>
<td>Asocial, loner, irritable, non-cooperative, non-explicit.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Den Hartog et al. (1999) and Forsyth (2006)

**SELF-CHECK 7.3**

1. Discuss the task-focused leadership and relationship-focused leadership.

2. Discuss leadership style as proposed by the situational leadership theory.

3. Identify the desirable and undesirable qualities in a leader across culture.
Social power refers to “the capacity to influence others, even when these others try to resist influence.”

The sources of social power are reward power, coercive power, legitimate power, referent power, expert power and informational power.

Power tactics refer to strategies of how leaders or power holders may demonstrate power over group members in order to influence or control group members.

Examples of power tactics are soft or hard tactics, rational or nonrational tactics, and unilateral or bilateral tactics.

Compliance tactics refer to tactics which are used by leaders or power holders to promote compliance among group’s members.

Examples of compliance tactics are Foot-in-the-Door technique, Door-in-the-Face technique, behavioural commitment and brainwashing.

Some possible ways people react to social power are through resistance to the influence, conversion and destructive obedience.

Members’ resistance to social power can take on three possible forms: revolutionary coalitions; reactance; and conflict and rebellion authority.

Three stages of conversion as proposed by Kelman (1958, 1961) are compliance, identification and internalisation stages.

Destructive obedience refers to a form of compliance where members comply to the request or direction from legitimate authority without questioning.

Definition of leader styles can be referred to as the characteristics of a leader.

Lewin’s three leadership styles are authoritarian, democratic or laissez-fair leadership styles.

Transformational Leadership refers to a charismatic, inspiring method of leading others where leaders heighten followers’ motivation, confidence and satisfaction.
There are four components of Transformational Leadership: idealised influence; inspirational motivation; intellectual stimulation; and individualised consideration.

Transactional Leadership Style refers to a managerial type of leadership where leaders tend to pay attention to the role of supervision, organisation, and group performance.

While task-oriented leadership focuses on the group’s goals and the group’s work, the relationship-oriented leadership is a supportive type of leadership which focuses on the members’ relationships in the group or organisation.

Researchers argue that effective leaders should be capable of balancing the task-oriented and relationship-oriented leadership styles when leading a group or organisation.

Blake and Mouton’s “leadership grid” theory and situational leadership theory are some of the leadership theories which proposed the possible combination of task-oriented and relationship-oriented leadership.

The leadership grid theory was introduced by Blake and Mouton in 1985.

The leadership grid can produce 81 possible combinations on the grid. Blake and Mouton stressed on the five orientations – those located at four corner positions (that is, grid [1,1], [1,9], [9,1], and [9,9]) and the one in the centre (that is, grid [5,5]).

Situational leadership theory was proposed by Hersey and Blanchard (1982).

Hersey and Blanchard (1982) categorised all leadership styles into four behaviour types: S1 (Directing); S2 (Coaching); S3 (Supporting); and S4 (Delegating).

Situational leadership theory noted that effective leadership has to be flexible and leaders must adapt themselves and their leadership styles according to the maturity level of the group.

Research on 15022 managers across 62 different countries has been carried out by Global Leadership and Organisational Behaviour Effectiveness (GLOBE) Programme to examine the nature of desirable and undesirable qualities in a leader across culture.
• The findings indicate that the universality of desirable and undesirable qualities in a leader across culture is consistent. While the most commonly reported desirable qualities of leaders were charismatic and transformational; the most commonly reported undesirable qualities were lack of integrity, self-centredness, and asocial tendencies.

• These findings can serve as a guideline for leaders to adapt their general quality of leadership in managing their group or organisation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KEY TERMS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authoritarian leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioural commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brainwashing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coercive power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compliance tactics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destructive obedience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Door-in-the-face technique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expert power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foot-in-the-door technique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informational power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laissez-fair leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership grid theory</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REFERENCES


INTRODUCTION

Individuals sometimes work hard when they think, ‘This task is important for me, BUT they are likely to work even harder when they think, ‘This task is important to us’.

(Forsyth, 2006)

As groups are formed to perform certain tasks, the groups’ performances can serve as important objectives for the groups’ establishment. It is understood that some members may perform better when they are working individually, while others may work productively when they are working collectively with other members. Therefore, it is important to understand the productivity in groups, how group and individual performances can affect productivity and how creativity can improve group performance.
The purpose of Topic 8 is to discuss group productivity which includes group and individual performance and creativity in groups. It is hoped that by reading Topic 8, you would have broadened your knowledge regarding group productivity, group and individual performances and creativity in groups.

### 8.1 PROCESS AND PRODUCTIVITY

Do you know why people participate in groups? One of the common reasons why people get involved in groups is to get the task done. This is because a group could be formed by members with various talents and experiences. These various talents and experiences are important for the productivity of the group. Besides talent and experience, a group also comprises individuals from different background. The individual and background differences potentially affect the group’s productivity (Forsyth, 2006, 2014). Therefore, it is important to understand the group process and productivity.

The most classical work on group process and productivity was proposed by Ivan Steiner (1972). To explain this, Steiner introduced the concept of **process loss** which refers to the reduction in performance effectiveness or efficiency in group productivity. The process loss can be attributed to various factors such as actions, operations or dynamics in the group which hinder the group and its members from reaching its full potential, including reduced effort, faulty group processes, coordination problems and ineffective leadership.

The process loss helps to predict the productivity of a group. In the other words, process loss helps to understand how well or poorly the group will perform (Forsyth, 2006, 2014). In addition, Steiner (1972) further helped to understand groups’ productivity by introducing Steiner’s Law of Productivity. According to Steiner’s Law of Productivity:

\[
\text{The Actual productivity (AP) is equal to Potential Productivity (PP) Less Process Loss (PL) or:}
\]

\[
\text{AP} = \text{PP} - \text{PL}
\]

(Steiner, 1972)

It is important to know when to work in groups. Generally people work in groups when the task is difficult, complex and important (Forsyth, 2006, 2014). The following subtopic will discuss the most common processes related to group productivity. These are social facilitation and social loafing.
8.1.1 Social Facilitation

The most common question in understanding productivity is “is performance or productivity better when members work in groups as compared to when members work individually?” In fact, performance may increase when another person is present. This is termed as social facilitation. Social facilitation refers to an “improvement in task performance that occurs when people work in the presence of other people” (Forsyth, 2006).

Research on motivational analysis of social facilitation by Zajonc (1965) helps to understand how the presence of members may enhance the performance of other members on a given task (refer to Figure 8.1). Zajonc’s motivational analysis noted that the presence of others may have two possibilities, which is, produce dominant responses which will enhance performance or produce nondominant responses which will decrease performance.

If the task requires dominant responses, members will work rapidly and this will lead to social facilitation where the presence of others enhances performance. In contrast, if the task requires nondominant responses, the presence of others will decrease performance as the presence of others is considered as social interference (Forsyth, 2006, 2014).

![Figure 8.1: Zajonc’s motivational analysis of social facilitation (1965)](source: Forsyth (2006))

The question is why does social facilitation occur in a group process? To understand this, Forsyth (2006) suggested that there are at least three factors that help to explain the occurrence of social facilitation in groups. These are drive processes, motivational processes and cognitive processes.
(a) **Drive Processes**
Zajonc (1980) noted that the presence of others in a group potentially stimulates a generalised drive state which is characterised by increased readiness and arousal among members. This generalised drive then promotes social facilitation or productivity to occur in groups. This is what Zajonc referred to as the behaviour or *compresence* which describes the state of how members respond or behave in the presence of others. In other words, the *compresence* will elevate drive levels and these drives will trigger social facilitation in groups especially when the task is easy (Forsyth, 2006, 2014; Zajonc, 1980).

(b) **Motivational Processes**
When members work alone, they are the only people who will judge their productivity. However, in the presence of others, members offer their judgment and the standard in evaluating productivity. This leads to evaluative pressures among members. The evaluative pressures tend to motivate them to work harder in order to achieve the standardised productivity in groups (Forsyth, 2006, 2014).

This can be further explained by evaluation apprehension theory and self-presentation theory. According to evaluation apprehension theory, the presence of others may make the members believe that other members are evaluating them and this apprehension will facilitate their performance on simple tasks and well-learned tasks in groups (Cottrell, 1972).

In addition, according to self-presentation theory, members actively control other members’ impressions of themselves. This impression is achieved by striving to provide good impressions or social behaviours on themselves when they are working in the presence of other group members. This helps them to establish and maintain a desired social image in groups (Forsyth, 2006, 2014). To avoid embarrassment, members will enhance their efforts when self-presentation pressures are strong. This will potentially increase productivity in groups (Bond, Atoum, & VanLeeuwen, 1996).

(c) **Cognitive Processes**
Cognitive process is another factor which helps us to understand social facilitation. Generally cognitive theories proposed that the presence of other group members may change members’ capacity to adequately process information. This is because they have to divide their attention to their tasks and to the other members (Forsyth, 2006, 2014). This means that the presence of members increases the self-awareness of other members.
This leads the members to give inadequate attention to the tasks as they put more attention on themselves (Mullen & Baumeister, 1987) and this consequently affects their performance. This conflicting attention is further explained by distraction-conflict theory. Distraction-conflict theory offers an analysis of performance in groups. This theory assumes that “when others are present, attention is divided between the other people and the task; this attentional conflict increases motivation and so it facilitates performance on simple, well-learned tasks” (Forsyth, 2006).

8.1.2 Social Loafing

The second common process related to productivity in group is social loafing. Social loafing refers to “the reduction of individual effort exerted when people work in groups compared to when they work alone” (Forsyth, 2006). This has the potential to lead to productivity losses in groups. This is explained by The Ringelmann Effect. According to the Ringelmann Effect, group members will be less productive when they are working with others where they tend to become less efficient. At a gradual decreasing rate, their less efficiency increases when the group size become larger (Ingham, Levinger, Graves, & Peckham, 1974; Kravitz & Martin, 1986).

The most important contribution of the Ringelmann Effect is it helps to understand the sources of process loss, that is, why members tend to be less productive when they are working together on simple tasks. The first source is coordination loss which is attributed to the lacking of simultaneity of group’s member efforts when they are working together.

The coordination loss affects the group’s productivity as groups are not working at their full potential. The second source of process loss is members work less hard when they are working in groups. The reduction of efforts among members will contribute to loss of productivity in groups as members tend to be carried along with other non-productive members (Forsyth, 2006; Kravitz & Martin, 1986).
ACTIVITY 8.1

Borrow a textbook related to group performance and productivity from a library or an acquaintance and read the book to get detailed information on social facilitation and social loafing.

What is the effect of social facilitation and social loafing on group performance? Discuss.

SELF-CHECK 8.1

1. Briefly explain the following:
   (a) Social facilitation; and
   (b) Social loafing.

2. Discuss factors which lead to social facilitation in groups.

3. Describe how Ringelmann Effect explains the sources of process loss.

ACTIVITY 8.2

Do you know how individuals perform in groups? To answer this question, conduct an interview with a working individual. Explore the nature of their individual performance and group performance at the workplace. Do you detect any examples of social facilitation and social loafing which may affect individual and group performance? Document the findings from your interview. Share your findings with your coursemates.
8.2 INDIVIDUAL VERSUS GROUP PERFORMANCE

Do you know how individual and group performance can affect productivity? Also, how can we ensure the productivity of groups? To answer these questions, it is important to address the individual and group performance in a group. Generally, group members can either become more productive or less productive when they work with others. In fact, both the individual performance and group performance are interrelated and have the potential to affect the productivity of the group. This subtopic discusses individual and group performances.

8.2.1 Individual Performance

According to Forsyth (2006), there are at least five strategies to improve individual performance (or social loafing). These are increase identifiability, minimise free-riding, setting goals, increase engagement by building interdependence and increase identification with the group.

(a) Increase Identifiability
Social loafing in groups is likely to occur when members are anonymous, and the contributions of group members are unidentifiable where the presence of others reduces evaluation apprehension (Harkins & Szymanski, 1987, 1988). Research indicates that when members’ output or contributions are identifiable, the social loafing was virtually eliminated (Sanna, 1992). Social loafing also can be reduced if the productivity of individual members is measured and reviewed (Williams, Harkins, & Latané, 1981).

(b) Minimise Free-riding (by Making the Group as Small as Possible)
The second strategy to minimise social loafing is minimising free-riding. According to Forsyth (2006), free-riding refers to “contributing less to a collective task when one believes that other group members will compensate for this lack of effort”. There are two approaches to minimising free-riding. Firstly, by promoting awareness to group members that they are an important part of the group and their individual contribution is significant for the group’s success. This has the potential to make them work harder and minimise free-riding in groups (Kerr & Bruun, 1983). Secondly, by making the size of group members as small as possible (that is, between six and eight members in a group). As the group is smaller, each member will play an important role to determine the outcomes of the group and this will minimise free-riding (Forsyth, 2006; Kameda, Stasson, Davis, Parks, & Zimmerman, 1992).
(c) **Setting Goals**  
It is important to set clear goals in the groups especially when members lose their objectives. This is because as members lose their objectives, they tend to be less productive and more involved in social loafing (Forsyth, 2006, 2014). The presence of clear goal setting in groups potentially stimulates the production process, increasing members’ efforts, better planning and increased commitment among group members (Weldon, Jehn, Pradhan, 1991). It is important to make sure that the groups’ goals are attainable (Locke & Latham, 2002). These goal-related measures potentially minimises social loafing in groups.

(d) **Increase Engagement by Building Interdependence**  
It is important to increase engagement in order to minimise social loafing in groups. This is because social loafing is less likely when members are actively and personally involved in the groups’ tasks. Social loafing is minimised when members perceive that poor group performance will affect them personally and when their successful performance is rewarded based on the group (as long as group size is small) rather than the individually based (Bricker, Harkins, & Ostrom, 1986; Wageman, 1999).

It is also important to promote social composition in groups as it potentially reduces social loafing. According to Forsyth (2006), social composition refers to “the tendency for group members to expand greater effort on important collective tasks to offset the anticipated insufficiencies in the efforts and abilities of their co-members”.

(e) **Increase Identification with the Group**  
Another strategy to reduce social loafing is to increase identification with the group. According to social identity theory, in order to minimise social loafing, it is important for members to match their groups’ tasks and its members’ self-definition. This is because if members derived sense of identity from group membership, the social loafing will be replaced with social labouring. Social labouring occurs when members put in extra effort for their groups and this potentially reduces social loafing (Haslam, 2001). This is because social loafing is reduced when members put more effort for the groups as they think that the task is not only important to them but also to their groups (Forsyth, 2006, 2014).
8.2.2 Group Performance: Building Effective Groups

Group performance depends on the group composition (Forsyth, 2006, 2014). According to Forsyth (2006), group composition refers to “the individuals who compose the group and their unique and common qualities (for example, knowledge, skills and abilities) that combine to create the group as a whole” (p.305). It is common to find groups which comprise members of various talents and skills. The members in the groups are relatively interdependent members. In fact, members offer various personal experiences, skills, abilities and motivations to the group as whole (Forsyth, 2006, 2014; Moreland, Levine, & Wingert, 1996).

In addition, group performance also depends on the knowledge, skills and abilities (or known as KSAs) of its members. The KSAs is an “acronym for knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics that are needed to complete a job or task successfully” (Forsyth, 2006). Table 8.1 indicates some of the KSAs of members which are important for group performance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skilled members</th>
<th>Ability to play or work together</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High intelligence</td>
<td>Communication skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High motivation</td>
<td>Leadership ability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High energy</td>
<td>Talent for managing conflict</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, the diversity of members in terms of skills and abilities are also important for the groups’ performances (Forsyth, 2006, 2014). The diversity in KSAs will promote heterogeneity of the groups. Research indicates that heterogeneity can lead the group to be productive. This is because other members will motivate the low-performing members by setting high standards. Besides that, the skilled members can be a source of assistance for low-performing members in a group. This will help low-performing members increase their performance (Forsyth, 2006; Goldman & Goldman, 1981).

8.2.3 Steiner’s Taxonomy of Tasks

The nature of the task such as the combination process of the tasks in a group is another factor which will determine group performance (Forsyth, 2006, 2014). The combination process of the tasks is known as task demand. According to Forsyth (2006) task demand refers to “the effect that a problem or task’s features, including its divisibility and difficulty, have on the procedures the group can use to complete the task”. As proposed by Steiner (1972), the task demands vary
depending on three aspects. These are the divisibility of the task, the types of output desired (quantity versus quality) and the combination rules required by members to complete the task (refer to Table 8.2).

The following are some of the important concepts in the understanding of task demands as proposed by Steiner (1972):

(a) **The divisibility of the task** – some tasks can be broken down into subtasks and assigned to different members (known as divisible tasks), while other tasks cannot be divided (known as unitary tasks);

(b) **Quantity versus quality of the task** – some tasks require high rate of production where quantity is what counts (known as maximising task), and other tasks require performance of quality closely matching any predetermined criterion (known as optimising task); and

(c) **Combination rules of the task** – the contributions of each member can be combined in different ways. The five combinational categories of tasks are additive, compensatory, disjunctive, conjunctive and discretionary (Forsyth, 2006, 2014). The examples of the respective tasks can be found in Table 8.2, while the definition of the respective tasks can be found in Table 8.3.

Table 8.2: A Summary of Steiner’s Taxonomy of Tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Task Type</th>
<th>Qualities</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Divisibility: Can the task be broken down into subtasks? | Divisible | Subcomponents can be identified and assigned to specific members | • Playing a football game.  
• Building a house.  
• Preparing a six-course meal. |
| | Unitary | The task does not have subcomponents. | • Pulling on a rope.  
• Reading a book.  
• Solving a math problem. |
| Quantity versus quality: Is the quantity produced more important than the quality of performance? | Maximising | Quantity: The more produced, the better the performance. | • Generating many ideas.  
• Lifting a great weight.  
• Scoring for most goals. |
### Optimising

**Quality:**
- A correct or optimal solution is needed.

- Developing the best answer.
- Solving a math problem.

### Interdependence: How are individual inputs combined to yield a group product?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Additive</th>
<th>Individual inputs are added together.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Pulling a rope.
- Shovelling snow.

### Compensatory

**Decision is made by averaging together individual decisions.**

- Averaging rating of job applicants.

### Disjunctive

**Group selects one solution or product from a pool of members’ solutions or products.**

- Picking one person’s answer to a math problem to be the group’s answer.
- Letting one art project represent the entire school.

### Conjunctive

**All group members must contribute to the product for it to be completed.**

- Climbing a mountain.
- Eating a meal as a group.

### Discretionary

**Group decides how individual inputs relate to group product.**

- Deciding to shovel snow together.
- Choosing to vote on the best answer to a problem.

*Source: Forsyth (2006)*
Table 8.3: The Definitions of the Respective Tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Task</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Divisible</td>
<td>A task that can be broken down into subcomponents which can then be assigned to individuals or subgroups within the group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unitary</td>
<td>A task that cannot be performed piecemeal because it does not break down into any subcomponents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximising</td>
<td>A task or project that calls for a high rate of production.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optimising</td>
<td>A task or project that has a best solution and outcome, thus the equality of the group’s performance can be judged by comparing the product to a quality-defining standard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additive</td>
<td>A task or project that a group can complete by cumulatively combining individual members’ inputs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compensatory</td>
<td>A task or project that a group can complete by literally averaging together (mathematically combining) individuals members’ solutions or recommendations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disjunctive</td>
<td>A task or project that is completed when a single solution, decision, or recommendations is adopted by the group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conjunctive</td>
<td>A task that can be completed successfully only if all group members contribute.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discretionary</td>
<td>A relatively unstructured task that can be completed by using a variety of social-combination procedures, thus leaving the methods used in its completion to the discretion of the group or group leader.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Forsyth (2006)

As you noted, we already know the types and examples of the respective tasks. The next step is, it is important to know how the tasks can affect the group performance or the productivity of a group. Table 8.4 summarises the potential effect of tasks on group’s performance as proposed by Steiner’s Taxonomy.
Table 8.4: Steiner’s Taxonomy of Tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Task</th>
<th>Productivity Effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Additive</td>
<td>Better than the best: The group exceeds the performance of even the best individual members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compensatory</td>
<td>Better than the most: The group exceeds the performance of a substantial number of individual members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disjunctive</td>
<td>Better than average: On most tasks and equal to the best if the groups accept the most capable member’s input as the group solution: groups rarely perform better than the best member (synergy, or assembly bonus effect).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conjunctive:</td>
<td>Equal to worst: The group equals the performance of its least capable member.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unitary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conjunctive:</td>
<td>Better than the worst: Performance will be superior if subtasks are matched to members’ capabilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divisible</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discretionary</td>
<td>Variable: Performance depends on the combination rules adopted by the group.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Forsyth (2006)

SELF-CHECK 8.2

1. Describe the strategies to improve individual performance.
2. Discuss the effects of group composition on group performance.
3. What is Steiner’s Taxonomy of Tasks?
TOPIC 8    PERFORMANCE

CREATIVITY IN GROUPS

The other aspect which is important for group performance is group creativity. It is important for groups to look for creative solutions for their tasks and problems. This can be achieved by brainstorming. This subtopic will discuss rules for brainstorming, problems with brainstorming and alternatives for brainstorming.

8.3.1 Brainstorming

Do you know what is brainstorming? According to Forsyth (2006), brainstorming refers to “a method for enhancing creativity in groups that calls for heightened expressiveness, inhibited evaluations, quantity rather than quality, and deliberate attempts to build on earlier ideas”. Generally brainstorming is very facilitative in helping group to decide on solutions for their problems.

According to Forsyth (2006), there are at least four rules to be observed when doing brainstorming:

(a) **Be expressive** – members are expected to express ideas from their mind freely in the group during brainstorming. The expression of the ideas (whether the ideas are strange or wild) should not be constrained.

(b) **Postpone evaluation** – as all ideas are valuable, it is important not to evaluate the ideas immediately during the idea generation process.

(c) **Seek quantity** – members are advised that the more ideas, the better as this will increase the chances of finding the excellent solutions for the problems.

(d) **Piggyback ideas** – as brainstorming is conducted in group, members are advised to expand or modify other members’ ideas whenever possible.

ACTIVITY 8.3

Do an online search on group creativity. Identify the common role of brainstorming in enhancing group creativity. What are the rules to be observed when conducting brainstorming in groups? Specify and discuss, with suitable examples.
However, there are barriers in brainstorming in groups. The following are explanation of barriers in brainstorming:

(a) **Social loafing** – brainstorming may produce few ideas as some members may engage in social loafing. This means that some members may not work hard to generate ideas.

(b) **Production blocking** – as groups suffer process loss and cognitive loss, they may experience production blocking during brainstorming. Production blocking refers to “a loss of productivity that occurs when group and procedural factors obstruct the group’s progress toward its goals, particularly when individuals in a brainstorming session are delayed in stating their ideas until they can gain the floor and when group members are distracted by others’ ideas and so generate fewer of their own” (Forsyth, 2006).

(c) **Social matching** – occurs when members tend to be involved in evaluation apprehension where members worry that their ideas may be viewed negatively by authorities. This will create social anxiety among members and the social anxiety potentially leads members to be unproductive brainstormers. This is because they experience nervousness and anxiety during the brainstorming process.

(d) **Illusion of productivity** – the members can be unproductive as they may overestimate their productivity which is known as illusion of productivity. Illusion of productivity refers to “the tendency for members to believe that their groups are performing effectively” (Forsyth, 2006). This is because members have no standard to determine their performance; therefore they tend to guess how well they perform and often the guess is unrealistically positive (Forsyth, 2006, 2014).

Therefore, it is important to look for solutions and possible alternatives for brainstorming. The following are possible solutions to help members to be creative as proposed by Forsyth (2006):

(a) The use of training with feedback to facilitate members to follow brainstorming rules;

(b) Giving opportunity for members to record their ideas during and after the session individually;
(c) To adapt pause and silence periodically to facilitate members to think in silence to improve results;

(d) Giving members enough time to complete the given task during brainstorming;

(e) Remind members to stay focused on tasks, to talk in pairs or dominate the session; and

(f) A skilled discussion leader is required to coordinate members’ effort during brainstorming (Forsyth, 2006).

Besides that, it is also important to look for alternatives to brainstorming. According to Forsyth (2006), there are at least four strategies as alternatives for conventional brainstorming. These are brainwriting, synectics, nominal-group technique (NGT) and electronic brainstorming (EBS). Table 8.5 highlights the explanation or the respective alternatives for brainstorming.

Table 8.5: The Explanation for Respective Alternatives for Brainstorming

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Brainwriting</td>
<td>Brainwriting refers to “brainstorming sessions that involve generating new ideas in writing rather than orally, usually by asking members to add their own ideas to circulating list” (Forsyth, 2006).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Synectics</td>
<td>Synectics refers to “a technique for improving problem solving in groups that uses creativity-building exercises to enhance members’ involvement and inventiveness” (Forsyth, 2006).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Nominal-group technique (NGT)</td>
<td>Nominal-group technique refers to “a group performance method wherein a face-to-face group session is prefaced by a nominal-group phase during which individuals work alone to generate ideas” (Forsyth, 2006).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Electronic brainstorming (EBS)</td>
<td>Electronic brainstorming refers to “generating ideas and solving problems using computer-based communication methods such as online discussions and real-time e-mail rather than face-to-face sessions” (Forsyth, 2006).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Forsyth (2006)
The most common processes related to group productivity are social facilitation and social loafing.

Social facilitation in groups is when improvement in task performance tends to occur when people work in the presence of other people.

Three factors which help to explain the occurrence of social facilitation in groups are drive processes, motivational processes and cognitive processes.

Social loafing refers to situations where individuals may reduce their effort when they work in groups compared to when they work alone.

The Ringelmann Effect explains the sources of process loss, that is, reasons why members tend to be less productive when they are working together on simple tasks.

Five strategies to improve individual performance are increasing identifiability, minimising free-riding, setting goals, increasing engagement by building interdependence and increasing identification with the group.

Group composition (that is, the composition of members with various talents and skills) affects group performance.

Steiner’s taxonomy of tasks and the concepts of task demands include the divisibility of the task, quantity versus quality of the task and combination rules of the task.
• There are nine types of tasks in group performance. These are divisible task, unitary task, maximising task, optimising task, additive task, compensatory task, disjunctive task, conjunctive task and discretionary task.

• Brainstorming refers to a method for enhancing creativity in groups as it facilitates the group to decide on solutions for their problems.

• Four rules of brainstorming are: be expressive, postpone evaluation, seek quantity and the use of piggyback ideas.

• The barriers to brainstorming in groups are social loafing, production blocking, social matching and illusion of productivity.

• Possible solutions to overcome brainstorming help members to be creative.

• There are four strategies as alternatives for conventional brainstorming. These are brainwriting, synectics, nominal-group technique (NGT) and electronic brainstorming (EBS).

### KEY TERMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Additive task</th>
<th>Illusion of productivity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brainstorming</td>
<td>Law of Productivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brainwriting</td>
<td>Motivational processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive processes</td>
<td>Nominal-group technique (NGT)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compensatory task</td>
<td>Piggyback ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conjunctive task</td>
<td>Production blocking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discretionary task</td>
<td>Ringelmann Effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disjunctive task</td>
<td>Social facilitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divisible task</td>
<td>Social loafing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drive processes</td>
<td>Steiner’s taxonomy of tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electronic brainstorming (EBS)</td>
<td>Synectics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free-riding</td>
<td>Unitary task</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REFERENCES


By the end of this topic, you should be able to:

1. Discuss individual and group decision making;
2. Identify the model of decision making;
3. Describe the tendency for groups to be imperfect decision makers;
4. Discuss symptoms and causes of groupthink; and
5. Discuss some strategies to prevent groupthink.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

INTRODUCTION

None of us alone is as smart as all of us together.

(D. G. Myers, 2002)

In our daily life (such as in the community or workplace), we utilise groups as platforms for decision making and solving problems. This is because groups normally offer better decisions compared to individuals. However, it is acknowledged that groups are not free from mistakes as members may lose rationality in the pursuing of groups’ consensus and unity. The fact is groups can be imperfect decision makers as groups’ decision making potentially leads to groupthink. Groupthink can bring negative or unexpected consequences to the groups and groups’ members (Forsyth, 2006, 2014).

The purpose of Topic 9 is to discuss and share the definitions of decision making, models of decision making, the symptoms and causes of groupthink and the strategies to prevent groupthink. It is hoped that by reading Topic 9, you would have broadened your knowledge regarding group decision making.
DEFINITION OF DECISION MAKING

In our daily life we tend to be involved in decision-making processes. In the process, we are required to come up with simple or complex decision making either individually or in groups. This subtopic will highlight the discussion on the definition of decision making and individual and group decision making.

9.1.1 What Does Decision Making Mean?

Do you know what decision making is? Generally decision making is a process of choosing the appropriate solutions for a problem which requires us to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of the respective alternatives. In the context of group decision making, it is a process which requires members to analyse the problems, suggesting the possible solutions or actions, weighing the pros and cons of each alternative, and choosing the best solution for the problems. In the group decision-making process, the consensus or agreement from the groups is important. However, groups are not free from pressure and groupthink.

9.1.2 Individual and Group Decision Making

Did you know that we tend to be involved in decision making in various settings in our daily life? Although some of us may prefer to make decisions individually, we may also prefer to make decisions in groups most of the time. The decision making in groups may involve the interdependent members to make collective decisions on certain matters or issues which are commonly related to the groups’ interests (Forsyth, 2006, 2014). For instance, family members may decide on their vacation destination and expenditure, a group of political leaders may decide on certain public policy, a group of physicians may decide on medical procedures for their clients, or a group of investors may decide on the risk related to their investment.

The question is, why do we make decisions in groups? Stasser and Dietz-Uhler (2001) noted that there are at least four reasons why making decisions in groups is better than individually. These are:

(a) A group is better at **choosing** compared to individuals;
(b) A group is better at **judging** compared to individuals;
(c) A group is better at **estimating** compared to individuals; and
(d) A group is better at **problem solving** compared to individuals.
In addition, one possible explanation why a group is better at decision making compared to individuals is offered by Ruscher and Duval (1998). According to Ruscher and Duval (1998) groups provide more accurate perceptions compared to individuals. This could be attributed to various knowledge, experiences, expertise and skills among members. This will make it possible for groups to provide various information and perspective on the issues before the appropriate decision is considered by the groups.

As already mentioned, it is common for us to consult others in decision making. For instance, political leaders, investors, physicians, management leaders or other form of groups or associations consult other members before making decisions (Forsyth, 2006, 2014). This is because people rely on groups as they believe that the daily problems can be overwhelming if they choose to handle the problems individually. In fact, some may believe that working alone is not as smart as working in groups (Myers, 2002). For that reason, they turn to groups in handling daily problems especially in term of decision making.

The classical research on groups’ decision making by Shaw (1932) indicated that groups performed better compared to individuals. They found that groups offered more accurate solutions and detected errors in calculation and faulty inferences better compared to individuals. In addition, group decision making also depends on two factors. These are the situational factors and task-related factors (Forsyth, 2006, 2014):

(a) **For situational factors** – although groups may be resilient to time pressures, when time is limited, the group tends to perform poorly.

(b) **In terms of task-related factors** – groups tend to perform poorly when the tasks are very difficult, unfamiliar, complex or when the tasks are uninteresting to members of the group (Shaw, 1981).

**ACTIVITY 9.1**

Borrow a textbook related to the decision-making process from a library or an acquaintance and read the book to get detailed information on individual and group decision making.

Did you detect any advantages of group decision making compared to individual decision making? Discuss.
This subtopic will discuss the model of decision making. Do you know what the common stages of decision making are? Some of the basic stages of decision making process are orientation, discussion, decision and implementation.

### 9.2.1 Stages of Group Decision Making

As noted by Forsyth (2006), there are four basic stages in the decision making process. These are orientation, discussion, decision and implementation stages (as indicated in Figure 9.1).
(a) **Orientation**

The first stage is orientation. At this stage, members identify objectives and goals, develop strategies and plans and select tactics for the respective issues. It is a stage where the blueprint of sequences of their operation is to be executed. It is also the stage where group members identify the problems, then develop plans to reach the decision (Forsyth, 2006, 2014). Some of the key components of the orientation stage as proposed by Gouran and Hirokawa (1996) are as follows:

(i) Clarifying the group’s desire to identify the best solution possible;

(ii) Identifying the resources needed to make the decision;

(iii) Enumerating any obstacles that must be overcome or avoided;
(iv) Specifying the procedures to be followed in gathering information and making the decision; and

(v) Establishing ground rules for meeting.

As the orientation stage might be perceived as unimportant for some groups, consequently they tend to pass over this stage. However, there is an advantage for groups who get involved in the orientation stage. The orientation stage facilitates the development of mental representation of the problems among members as this mental representation is shared by members (Forsyth, 2006, 2014). What is mental representation? Mental representation is also known as shared mental models referring to “knowledge, expectations, conceptualisations, and other cognitive representations that members of a group have in common pertaining to the group’s members, tasks, procedures and resources” (Forsyth, 2006).

(b) Discussion
The second stage is discussion. At this stage, members gather and process information about the problem or situations in order to make decisions. Members will rigorously identify and weigh the problems by expressing opinions (and also agreements or disagreements), evaluations and analyses of the problems in a group discussion. Also at this stage, members will test their assumptions and request for additional information and clarification from each other. Normally the communication is at its peak during the discussion phase (Forsyth, 2006, 2014).

According to the collective information process model in group decision making, “groups use communication and discussion among members to gather and process the information needed to formulate decisions, choices, and judgments” during the decision making process (Forsyth, 2006). As proposed by the collective information process model, there are three information processes resulting from the discussion. These are improved memory for information, increase exchange of information and more thorough processing of information (Propp, 1999). The following are the further explanations:

(i) **Improved memory for information** – when having a group discussion, members will remind other members about information that they would not remember when working alone. This is known as cross-cueing which refers to “the enhancement of recall that occurs during group discussion when the statement made by group members serve as cues for the retrieval of information from memories of other group members” (Forsyth, 2006).
(ii) **Increase exchange of information** – groups will possess more information compared to individuals, and the information is actively exchanged during the discussion where members will pool their expertise to come out with possibly the best group decisions (Forsyth, 2006, 2014).

(iii) **More thorough processing information** – more thorough processing information occurs as members will ask questions and clarifications and other members will offer answers. The alternative options for the issues are discussed and the advantages and disadvantages of the options or tactics are taken into consideration (Forsyth, 2006, 2014).

(c) **Decision**

The third stage is the decision stage. The decision stage relies on implicit or explicit social decision schemes to combine individuals’ preferences in order for the group to reach a collective decision. The group may rely on the social decision scheme in making decisions. The social decision scheme refers to “a strategy or rule used in a group to select a single alternative from among various alternatives proposed and discussed during the group’s deliberations, including explicitly acknowledged decision rules (for example, the group accepts the alternative favoured by the majority) and implicit decision procedures (for example, the group accepts the alternative favoured by the most powerful members)” (Forsyth, 2006).

The types of social decision schemes are delegation, statisticised decisions (also known as statistical aggregation), voting (or plurality decisions), consensus (discussion to unanimity) and random choice/decisions.

(i) **Delegation decisions** – there are at least three forms of delegation decisions. Firstly, if the final decision is made by a person for the entire group and without input from other members, this is known as dictatorship scheme. Secondly, if the decision is made by a subgroup for the entire group, this is known as oligarchy scheme. Thirdly, the delegation decisions can also be made by asking an expert or formed subcommittee among members to study the issue and make decisions or conclusions (Forsyth, 2006, 2014).

(ii) **Statisticised decisions** – in this type of decision, all members are eligible to give individual decisions or recommendations either before or after group discussion. Then, these individual decisions will be averaged together to produce a nominal group decision for the entire group (Forsyth, 2006, 2014).
(iii) **Voting** – is also known as plurality decisions. Members will vote for their individual preferences publicly or privately by using a secret ballot. Then the alternative which is favoured by the majority members will be chosen for the entire group (Forsyth, 2006, 2014).

(iv) **Consensus (discussion to unanimity)** – the decision may take a series of straw polls in order to reach a unanimous agreement without voting. The purpose is to generate the general sentiment of the group on the respective issues (Forsyth, 2006, 2014).

(v) **Random choice/decisions** – if the group fails to reach a consensus or are confused by the problems, members leave the final decision to chance. For instance, members may decide by flipping a coin or other similar methods which produce the final decision by chance (Forsyth, 2006, 2014).

The question is, how fair is the decision made by the groups as perceived by their members? To understand this question, Brockner and Wiesenfeld (1996) highlighted some measures related to the implementation of the decisional procedures that are important to observe. This is because they potentially lead group members to believe that a fair decision has been made in their groups. The measures relate to how the implementation of the decisional procedures should be made:

(i) Consistently;
(ii) Without self-interest;
(iii) On the basis of accurate information,
(iv) With opportunities to correct the decision;
(v) With the interests of all concerned parties; and
(vi) Following moral and ethical standards.

(Brockner & Wiesenfeld, 1996)

(d) **Implementation**

After a decision has been made by the group, the next step is to implement the group decision. The two important tasks for the group at the implementation stage are firstly to implement the decision. For instance, if the group had decided to demand for a wage increment, they will meet the employer to discuss the matter or carry out a strike to put pressure on the wage increment.
Secondly, is to evaluate the quality of the decision they made. For instance, groups have to assess the impact of workers’ strikes or to question whether the strike is necessary (Forsyth, 2006, 2014). Therefore, at this stage it is important for the group to carry out decisions and assess the possible impacts or consequences from the decision they are implementing.

In addition, it is important to understand motivation among workers at the workplace especially in implementing decisions. The early and continuous participation among members or workers is important as it will affect their levels of satisfaction and commitment in carrying out the implemented decision. This is because members are more satisfied and likely committed to implementing the decision when they are actively involved in the decision-making process (Forsyth, 2006; Locke, Alavi, & Wagner, 1997).

For instance, the involvement of quality circle groups and self-directed teams in decision making and the implementation of the decision are likely to increase satisfaction and commitment among group members (Chansler, Swamidass, & Cammann, 2003; Forsyth, 2006).

### 9.2.2 Group as Imperfect Decision Makers

Do you think groups are always perfect decision makers? Forsyth (2006) argued that although a group decision is better compared to an individual decision, there is a tendency for groups to be imperfect decision makers. This means that to a certain extent, groups have the potential to outperform individuals. So, the question is when and why groups tend to make poor decisions? Some of the reasons for groups making poor decisions are group discussion pitfalls, the shared information biased, cognitive limitations and group polarisation.

(a) **Group Discussion Pitfalls**

Groups tend to make poor decisions when there is high level of misunderstanding among members and members lack communication skills to express themselves clearly. This has the potential to lead to unintentional misleading information, inaccuracy and confusion in the group communication (Forsyth, 2006, 2014). Besides that, members may also lack interpersonal skills which are important for group discussions. Research by Di Silvo, Nikkel and Monroe (1989) indicated that there are at least seven categories of problems associated with poor group decision making. As indicated in Table 9.1, these problems are communication skills, egocentric behaviour, nonparticipation, sidetracking, interruptions, negative leader behaviour as well as attitudes and emotions.
Table 9.1: Group Members’ Descriptions of Problems Experienced
When Trying to Make a Group Decision

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication skills</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Poor listening skills, ineffective voice, poor nonverbal communication, lack of effective visual aids, misunderstands or does not clearly identify topic, is repetitive, uses jargon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egocentric behaviour</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>Dominates conversation and group. Behaviours are loud, overbearing. One-upmanship, show of power, manipulation, intimidation, filibustering. Talks to hear self talk. Followers or brown-nosers; clowns and goof-offs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonparticipation</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>Not all participate, do not speak up, do not volunteer, are passive, lack discussion, silent start.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sidetracking</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>Leaves main topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interruptions</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>Members interrupt speaker; talk over others; socialise; allow phone calls, messages from customers or clients.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative leader behaviour</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>Unorganised and unfocused, not prepared, late, has no control, gets sidetracked, makes no decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes and emotion</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>Poor attitude, defensive or evasive, argumentative, personal accusations, no courtesy or respect, complain or gripe, lack of control of emotions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Forsyth (2006)

In addition, instead of using discussions to facilitate decision making, sometimes groups also may use discussion as a form of avoidance for making a decision (Forsyth, 2006, 2014). Janis and Mann (1977) noted as members can be reluctant decision makers, they tend to use various tactics to prevent groups to reach decisions during discussion. As indicated in Table 9.2, some of the tactics to prevent groups from reaching decisions are procrastination, bolstering, avoiding responsibility, ignoring alternatives, “satisfying” and trivialising the discussion.
Table 9.2: Tactics to Avoid Group to Reach Decision

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tactics</th>
<th>Explanations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Procrastination</td>
<td>“Rather than spending its time studying alternatives and arguing their relative merits, the group postpones the decision”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolstering</td>
<td>“The group quickly but arbitrarily formulates a decision without thinking things through completely, and then bolsters the preferred solution by exaggerating the favourable consequences and minimising the importance and likelihood of unfavourable consequences” (Forsyth, 2006).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoiding responsibility</td>
<td>“The group denies responsibility by delegating the decision to a subcommittee or by diffusing accountability throughout the entire assembly”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ignoring alternatives</td>
<td>“The group engages in the fine art of muddling by considering only a very narrow range of policy alternatives that differ to only a small degree from the existing policy”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfying</td>
<td>“Members accept as satisfactory any solution that meets only a minimal set of criteria, instead of working to find the best solution. Although superior solutions to the problem may exist, the ‘satisfier’ is content with any alternative that surpasses the minimal cut-off point”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trivialising the discussion</td>
<td>“The group avoids dealing with larger issues by focusing on minor issues”.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Forsyth (2006)

(b) The Shared Information Bias

The second situation which leads groups to make poor decisions is when shared information bias occurs in the discussion. The shared information bias refers to “the tendency for groups to spend more time discussing information that all members know (shared information) and less time examining information that only a few members know (unshared)” (Forsyth, 2006). In fact, to be effective in making decisions, all members should have access to unshared information. However, the shared information bias hinders the chance of the group to have access to unshared information.

Forsyth (2006) highlighted that there are at least two causes of shared information bias. Firstly, the shared information bias as a form of informational influence and normative influence. In terms of informational influence, the discussion help individuals to convince other members that they need to make a good decisions based on the information or evidence
provided by shared information biased. In terms of normative influence, the discussion is a platform for members to influence other’s opinion on certain issues. In other words, the shared information bias is a way to influence other members in group decision making (Forsyth, 2006).

The second cause of the shared information biased is the psychological and interpersonal needs of members in groups. For instance, if members already have a clear preference, they tend to argue in favour of their preference and against others’ preferences. If the shared information leads to one direction, then in the discussion members will argue on unfavourable alternatives negatively. Consequently, in the discussion, members will focus on information that is shared by other members, and not to focus on information which only they possess (Forsyth, 2006). Forsyth (2006) noted that the shared information bias can be avoided through the use of group decision support system. Group decision support system refers to “a set of integrated tools groups use to structure and facilitate their decision making, including computer programs that expedite data acquisitions, communication among group members, document sharing, and the systematic review of alternative actions and outcomes” (Forsyth, 2006).

(c) Cognitive Limitations
The third reason for groups making poor decisions is cognitive limitations. As groups are not free from cognitive limitations such as judgmental biases, these will affect their decision making. Kerr, MacCoun, and Kramer (1996) identified three categories of potential biases. These are:

(i) **Sins of commission** – errors in how information is used;

(ii) **Sins of omission** – errors caused by overlooking useful information; and

(iii) **Sins of imprecision** – errors caused by reliance on mental rules of thumb that oversimplify the decision.

To overcome these tendencies, it is important for groups to carefully use a more thorough decision-making procedure (Little-page & Karau, 1997). For instance, it is important for members and groups to be resistant to the confirmation bias. Confirmation bias refers to “the tendency to seek out information that confirms one’s inferences rather than disconfirm them” (Forsyth, 2006). The confirmation bias could be overcome, when groups include members who adopt divergent or different minority positions in deciding on certain issues during the decision making-process (Forsyth, 2006, 2014).
(d) **Group Polarisation**

Another possible reason for group to make poor decisions is group polarisation. Group polarisation refers to “the tendency to respond in a more extreme way when making a choice or expressing an opinion as part of a group, as opposed to when responding individually” (Forsyth, 2006). In other words, groups tend to make extreme decisions compared to individuals. Research indicates that the risk taking among people increased when they made their decision in groups (Forsyth, 2006, 2014). This is known as risky-shift phenomenon which refers to “the tendency for groups to make riskier decisions than individuals” (Forsyth, 2006).

One of the possible causes for group polarisation is the social influence process (such as social comparison, normative influence, and social decision schemes). This is because when members make group decisions, they tend to use other members’ preference points to examine their own positions and preferences. If there are differences between their view and view of the group, they may change their opinions in order to be in agreement with the groups’ views (Forsyth, 2006; Goethals & Zanna, 1979).

This is explained by persuasive-argument theory assumption of group polarisation. Persuasive-argument theory assumes that “group members change their opinions during group discussion, generally adopting the position favoured by the majority of the members, because the group can generate more arguments favouring that position” (Forsyth, 2006).

Although group polarisation can have positive effects (such as in promoting groups collective efficacy, support and optimism in group); group polarisation can also lead groups to misstep and come up with extreme decisions (Forsyth, 2006, 2014). As members become committed to their plan, to a certain extent, group polarisation leads members to refuse to revise their plan (Forsyth, 2006; Whyte, 1993).

**SELF-CHECK 9.2**

1. Describe the four stages of decision making.
2. What are the five schemes of social decisions?
3. Discuss some reasons why groups tend to be imperfect decision makers.
4. Identify the common problems experienced by group members when trying to make a group decision.
9.3 GROUPTHINK AND ITS PREVENTION

Do you know what groupthink is? Groupthink refers to the incapability of group members in making a rational decision which results from a distorted style of thinking (Forsyth, 2006). According to Janis (1982) it is “a mode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive ingroup, when the members’ striving for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action”.

When groups experience groupthink, the groups tend to commit errors that could easily be avoided. The tendencies to commit errors are attributed to their striving for unanimity or agreement in the groups (Forsyth, 2006, 2014). This subtopic will discuss the symptoms and causes of groupthink, and the strategies to prevent groupthink.

9.3.1 Symptoms and Causes of Groupthink

According to Janis (1982) the symptoms of groupthink can be grouped into three categories. These are the overestimation of group, closed-mindedness and pressures toward uniformity (Forsyth, 2006, 2014; Janis, 1982). Table 9.3 summarises the three categories of symptoms of groupthink.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Explanations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overestimation of group</td>
<td>Groups tend to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Assume that everything is working perfectly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Develop failure planning and making wrong choices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Be involved in the illusion of invulnerability – that is, a form of illusory thinking where they feel or believe that they perform well although they do not.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Suffer illusion of morality – that is, they believe that their group has inherent morality and the morality reflects their decision although it does not.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closed-mindedness</td>
<td>Groups tend to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Be close-minded – that is, not open to new ideas and perspectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Bolster their initial decision through rationalisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Express stereotypes about the outgroup during discussions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Pressures toward uniformity

Groups tend to:
- To use interpersonal pressures to make consensus too easy and making disagreeing too difficult.
- To achieve pressures through self-censorship, illusion of unanimity, direct pressure on dissenters and self-appointed mindguards.
- Self-censorship – that is, members banning themselves from disagreeing with the groups’ decisions.
- Have illusion of unanimity – the situation when decisions are made and members seem to agree with the groups’ decision although they do not.
- Direct pressure on dissenters – putting direct pressures to dissenters through self-appointed vigilantes (known as self-appointed mindguards).
- Self-appointed mindguards – “a group member who shields the group from negative or controversial information by gatekeeping and suppressing dissent”.


Generally there are three possible causes of groupthink. These are cohesiveness, structural faults of the group or organisation, and provocative situational context. Table 9.4 highlights the causes of groupthink.

**Table 9.4: The Causes of Groupthink**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causes</th>
<th>Explanations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cohesiveness</td>
<td>- Groupthink occurs in a cohesive group when internal disagreements disappear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- This means members are refrained from expressing disagreement on the decision, avoiding argument with other members and striving to maintain friendship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural faults of the group or organisation</td>
<td>- Groups are organised in such a way to inhibit the flow of information and to promote carelessness in decision-making procedures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Insulation of groups from other groups poetically promotes inaccurate perspective on issues and its solutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Leadership style which promotes control and conformity pressure in group potentially causes groupthink.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Provocative situational context

- Provocative situational factors (for example, pressures, tension and anxiety triggered by decision-making process) can promote error related to groupthink.
- Any factors which lower the self-esteem of members can increase possibility of groupthink.


Figure 9.2 summaries the emergence of groupthink. In this model, the antecedent conditions of groupthink refers to the causes of the groupthink. These are the cohesiveness, structural faults of the group or organisation and provocative situational context. The observable consequences of groupthink reflect the symptoms of groupthink.

![Figure 9.2: The emergence of groupthink](image)

9.3.2 Strategies to Prevent Groupthink

According to Forsyth (2006), there are at least three strategies to prevent groupthink. These are:

(a) Limiting premature seeking of concurrence or agreement;
(b) Correcting misperceptions and biases; and
(c) Using effective decision-making techniques.
Table 9.5 highlights the strategies to prevent groupthink.

**Table 9.5: The Strategies to Prevent Groupthink**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Explanations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Limiting premature seeking of concurrence (agreement) | - Can start by changing close style of leadership to open style of leadership. This can welcome divergent opinions and disagreements to avoid looking for immature agreement in decision making.  
- Leaders not to discuss their position or view at the beginning of the group discussion.  
- Promote unbiased discussion in weighting the advantages and disadvantages of solution or the respective issues.  
- Promote and acknowledge healthy criticism among members.  
- Arrange other group meetings without the presence of group leaders.  
- Encourage specific members to play roles as dissenters in the discussion. |
| Correcting misperceptions and biases             | - Promote the use of vigilant information processing to avoid misperceptions, illusions and errors among members.  
- Members acknowledge their personal inadequacies and ignorance and are willing to consult experts (who are also unbiased outsiders) in certain areas of expertise (not members of the group). |
| Using effective decision-making techniques       | - It is important to use effective decision-making techniques. By using this technique, group members:  
  (a) Analyse various alternative actions thoroughly;  
  (b) Consider and reconsider the possible effects of possible actions;  
  (c) Consult relevant experts; and  
  (d) Develop detailed contingency plans. |

*Source: Forsyth (2006, 2014)*
TOPIC 9  DECISION MAKING

The decision-making process requires members to analyse the problems, suggesting possible solutions or actions, weighing the pros and cons of each alternative and choosing the best solution for the problems.

Four stages of the model of decision making are orientation, discussion, decision and implementation.

In the orientation stage, members identify objectives and goals, develop strategies and plans, and select tactics for the respective issues.

In the discussion stage, members gather and process information about the problem or situations in order to make decisions.

The decision stage relies on implicit or explicit social decision schemes to combine individuals’ preferences in order for the group to reach a collective decision.

The social decision schemes include delegation, statisticised decisions (also known as statistical aggregation), voting (or plurality decisions), consensus (discussion to unanimity), and random choice/decisions.

In the implementation stage, two important tasks for the group are to implement the decision and to evaluate the quality of the decision they made.

SELF-CHECK 9.3
1. Describe the symptoms and causes of groupthink.
2. Discuss strategies to prevent groupthink.

ACTIVITY 9.3
Do an online search on groupthink. Identify the common symptoms and causes of groupthink. Discuss the strategies to prevent groupthink. Specify and discuss each with suitable examples.

SUMMARY

- The decision-making process requires members to analyse the problems, suggesting possible solutions or actions, weighing the pros and cons of each alternative and choosing the best solution for the problems.

- Four stages of the model of decision making are orientation, discussion, decision and implementation.

- In the orientation stage, members identify objectives and goals, develop strategies and plans, and select tactics for the respective issues.

- In the discussion stage, members gather and process information about the problem or situations in order to make decisions.

- The decision stage relies on implicit or explicit social decision schemes to combine individuals’ preferences in order for the group to reach a collective decision.

- The social decision schemes include delegation, statisticised decisions (also known as statistical aggregation), voting (or plurality decisions), consensus (discussion to unanimity), and random choice/decisions.

- In the implementation stage, two important tasks for the group are to implement the decision and to evaluate the quality of the decision they made.
• The reasons why groups make poor decisions are group discussion pitfalls, shared information bias, cognitive limitations and group polarisation.

• Groupthink refers to the incapability of group members in making a rational decision which result from a distorted style of thinking.

• The symptoms of groupthink are the overestimation of group, closed-mindedness and pressures toward uniformity.

• Causes of groupthink are cohesiveness, structural faults of the group or organisation and provocative situational context.

• Three strategies to prevent groupthink are:
  – Limiting premature seeking of concurrence;
  – Correcting misperceptions and biases; and
  – Using effective decision-making techniques.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KEY TERMS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Satisfying”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoiding responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolstering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closed-mindedness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohesiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consensus decisions</td>
</tr>
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<td>Decision making</td>
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REFERENCES


Although people may join groups with the aim of achieving the group’s goals, sometimes they have difficulty getting along with other group members and may be involved in conflict. The presence of conflict in groups is a part of the group dynamics. The conflict can bring positive effects to group if it is perceived positively. For instance, conflict is perceived as a part of maturing the group and has the potential to enhance the productivity and functions of the group. In contrast, conflict can be intense when conflict is prolonged and each group member struggles for power and fails to reach the resolution. As conflict can be damaging to the group, it is important to manage the conflict constructively.

The purpose of Topic 10 is to discuss conflict, the causes of conflict and the ways to manage the conflict. It is hoped that by reading Topic 10, you would have broadened your knowledge regarding issues related to group conflict.
DEFINITION OF CONFLICT

Generally conflict is any form of disagreement among at least two group members or “two small factions” in a group. According to Forsyth (2006) conflict refers to “disagreement, discord and friction that occur when the actions or beliefs of one or more members of the group are unacceptable to and are resisted by one or more of the other group members”.

Conflict can be harmful as it may affect the psychological well-being of the group members, the function and effectiveness of the groups and hinder the achievement of the group’s goals. As the group members interact and work collectively in a group, the conflict that they experience may affect the way they treat, react and communicate with other members. They have the tendency to mistreat or react negatively, and communicate negatively with other group members. This form of social and physical treatment potentially affects the emotion and psychological well-being of the group members.

Besides that, conflict tends to be an obstacle for the members to work efficiently in a collective environment. This can affect the effectiveness of the group function as the group is working like a system. As conflict arises, the group might not be functioning effectively as expected. This conflict affects the group function as there are factions in the group and they fail to deliver the task that the group has to achieve.

At the end, the group will face negative consequences as they fail to achieve and fulfil their goals. Conflict can prevent member from working effectively and collaboratively. It is clear that the conflict can adversely affect the achievement of groups’ goals. Therefore, it is important to understand how conflict escalates, the factors associated to the conflict and how the conflict can be resolved.

10.1.1 Cycle of Conflict

Do you know how conflict may occur? Generally, there are at least six common features of the cycle of conflict or process of conflict escalation (as indicated in Figure 10.1). These are routine interaction, disagreement, conflict, conflict escalation, conflict de-escalation and conflict resolution (Forsyth, 2006, 2014).
Figure 10.1: Six common features of the cycle of conflict


(a) **Routine Interaction**
Normally, group members will be involved in routine interaction. In this interaction process, group members interact in developing rapport and defining their goals and the function of the group. The group members also interact in order to maintain the group relationship and goals. In fact, the interaction also may involve how the group can successfully fulfil the task in order to achieve the goal of the groups and to drive the group towards productivity. Throughout the interaction process, the members may be involved in disagreement (Forsyth, 2006, 2014).

(b) **Disagreement**
The next stage or feature in the cycle of conflict is disagreement. During the disagreement, the individual or small faction in the group negotiate the best ways to achieve group goals or to finish up the group tasks. This disagreement can be attributed to various factors not limited to the member’s differences in background, level of education, personal view, personal interest and motives and many more. These factors play roles in explaining the disagreement of group members on certain issues or actions.
and decisions. The intensity of the disagreement they tend to experience lie in the form of a continuum from the less tense to the most tense. The disagreement can take on the forms of actions, decisions, opinions, emotions, behaviours and values. They try to negotiate the actions, decisions, opinions and values in order to achieve the group consensus. If this disagreement is successfully resolved, conflict may not arise. However, if the disagreement fails to be resolved or does not go well, this may lead to conflict in the group (Forsyth, 2006, 2014).

(c) **Conflict**
Conflict is the next stage in the cycle of conflict. As the disagreement fails to be resolved, the group members are caught in the conflict. The conflict tends to strengthen when the group members fail or refuse to negotiate for the betterment of the group. The conflict also can be strengthened by the individual quality, personal interest, motive and value often intertwined in the conflict. Although initially the conflict may start with a small number, the number tends to increase as the conflict arises. Sometimes the conflict can be resolved after negotiation between group members. However, if the conflict is intense and cannot be resolved, this potentially leads to the escalation of conflict in a group (Forsyth, 2006, 2014).

(d) **Conflict Escalation**
Conflict escalation is the next feature of the cycle of conflict. The factors which promote conflict escalation are both parties insisting to resolve the conflict or fail to come to the point of agreement. The other factor is when the individual interest is higher and put as the priority compared to group interest. Besides that, the group members may lose respect towards other members. Therefore, they tend to upset other factions; this may result in hatred and anger. This hatred and anger may promote aggressive behaviour among members or factions who are in conflict (Forsyth, 2006, 2014).

(e) **Conflict De-escalation**
The next stage or feature in the cycle of conflict is conflict de-escalation. Usually, after a certain time, members will try to think about the future of the group and act rationally and not to be too overwhelming emotional or personal. By thinking and acting rationally and minimising the emotional and personal interest or motive, there is the potential to ensure the survival and function of the group. The group members should devote time to reduce the conflict and try to focus on finding the solution for the group’s conflict (Forsyth, 2006, 2014).
Conflict Resolution

Conflict resolution is the next stage or feature in the cycle of conflict. This stage means the group members already agree to solve the problem either by themselves or through the use of middle persons. At this conflict resolution stage, members think and act for their solution of the conflict.

The important role of each group member is to put group interest above personal interest, to act on solutions and be willing to promote the growth of the group. In fact, the collective efforts and commitment are the important requirement for the conflict to be resolved in the long term. Continuous collective efforts and commitment are important for the group to continue to function effectively and to survive in the long run (Forsyth, 2006, 2014).

ACTIVITY 10.1

Borrow a textbook related to group conflict from a library or an acquaintance and read the book to get detailed information on the cycle of conflict.

Did you detect any common process in group conflict? Discuss.

SELF-CHECK 10.1

1. Define conflict.
2. Briefly explain the cycle of conflict.

ACTIVITY 10.2

What are the potential sources of conflict in groups? To answer this question, conduct an interview with the leader of a small organisation. Explore the possible sources of conflict in group during the interview process. Do you detect any common sources of conflict in groups? In particular, try to generate a list of the sources of conflict in groups. Document the findings from your interview. Please do not forget to share your findings with your coursemates.
10.2 SOURCES OF CONFLICT IN GROUPS

Do you know the possible sources for conflict? Although sources which trigger conflict are various, according to Forsyth (2006, 2014), there are at least five sources of conflict. These are the competition to win, conflict over resources, conflict over power, conflict over choices and personal issues (of liking and disliking).

(a) Competition to Win

In many cases, the nature of the social situation in groups may promote competition among the group members. The nature of these competitions can be direct and indirect. The issue in this group competition is someone has to win and the other must lose. This means that the success of one member means other members must fail (Forsyth, 2006, 2014). Throughout the process of this social situation, conflict may occur and members keep competing with other members.

Although competition may be a good motivator for human behaviour where groups compete against each other, putting more effort and interest in their work and setting higher personal goals, competition to a certain extent may promote conflict between members (Tauer & Harackiewicz, 2004). The conflict may occur as members look after their own interest, and not the interest of the group as they compete. Sometimes members also have difficulty in taking pride in other group members’ accomplishments as in a competitive group, members normally benefit from others’ members errors (Franken & Prpich, 1996). This may lead to feelings of jealousy, hatred and anger.

(b) Conflict over Resources

The second factor is conflict over resources. As the group live and work together, they have to share resources. Sometimes the resources for the group are limited and the priority to use the resources needs to be considered. Therefore, the issue is who gets what resource? This is also related to fair distribution of resource and whether it is possible to share certain resources with other members.

In reality, individual members may be in social dilemmas as they may be motivated to achieve their own outcomes and minimise cost. Therefore, they tend to over-utilise the group resources and minimise their cost in order to achieve their own outcomes. Conflict arises when individual or personal motives outweigh the group motives, especially when the group resources is jeopardised for the achievement of the personal motives (Forsyth, 2006, 2014).
(c) **Conflict over Power**

In understanding the concept of conflict over power as the factor related to conflict, we have to understand the dynamics of group interaction and status differentiation among group members. As group members come from different status, and have different prestige and power, in group interaction, there is a tendency for group members to try to influence other members. To a certain extent, there is also a tendency for members to strive for positions of authority in the group. The issue is who is in charge of the group?

Therefore, power struggle or "power games" is the common dynamics in a group. This is because those with authoritative power are in a position to give orders to others. The other members are expected to follow the instructions (Forsyth, 2006, 2014). When they are in power they potentially defend their power through manipulation, favouritism, control of information and the formation of coalitions. This situation can lead to tension, anger and conflict among members (Sell, Lovaglia, Mannix, Samuelson, 2004).

(d) **Conflict over Choices**

Most of the time, members are required to work on some tasks and to produce the outcomes for the group. Therefore, members have to make decisions on choices about work and also for the betterment of the group. The common issue is, who will decide about the choices? As the members need to discuss and analyse their problems and plans related to certain group work, they may come into disagreement about the choices or options they may have made.

Sometimes the disagreement can turn into personal disagreement and unpleasant conflict among members (Forsyth, 2006, 2014). As members are struggling to reach consensus on certain issues, the group tends to respond negatively to members who slow down the process of getting the consensus (Kruglanski & Webster, 1991).

(e) **Personal Issues**

Another factor which may be the source of conflict is personal issues. As there is diversity among group members, they tend to have the tendency to be different in terms of attitudes and personal qualities. These differences potentially lead to disaffection and conflict among members as they do not easily get along together. Blaming each other’s personal qualities (such as moodiness, compulsivity, incompetence, communication difficulties and sloppiness) are the common sources of conflict in groups (Forsyth, 2006, 2014; Kelly, 1979).
According to the balance theory by Heider, group members tend to respond negatively when they disagree with members they like or agree with those they dislike (Forsyth, 2006; Heider, 1958). In fact, a prominent researcher found that conflict is greatest when group members both disagree with and dislike each other. The harmonious group (or group with less conflict) occurs when members like each other and agree with each other on certain issues or choices (Forsyth, 2006; Taylor, 1970).

It is clear that tension or conflict is intense among members who dislike each other. The risk of conflict is high among heterogeneous groups compared to homogeneous groups. This is because the members’ similarities increase interpersonal attraction, with more affection and less conflict compared to members with dissimilarities (Forsyth, 2006, 2014; Rosenbaum, 1986).

1. Explain how competition to win can be a source of conflict.
2. Describe how conflict over power can be a source of conflict.
3. Discuss how personal issues can be a source of conflict.
4. What is balance theory?

Do an online search on conflict escalation and conflict management. Identify the common ways conflict escalates in a group. What are the strategies to manage conflict in group? Specify and discuss, with suitable examples.
10.3 CONFLICT ESCALATION AND MANAGEMENT IN GROUPS

Although members may hope the conflict can be resolved quickly, the psychological and interpersonal factors may impede them in reaching conflict resolution. To certain extent, the psychological and interpersonal factors have the potential to promote the conflict escalation. Generally, conflict is not static as it tends to escalate with time and needs to be managed. This subtopic discusses conflict escalation and strategies to manage conflict in groups.

10.3.1 Conflict Escalation in Groups

According to Forsyth (2006, 2014) there are at least six ways how the conflict can escalate. These are:

(a) **Uncertainty Escalates to Commitment**

Although initially, uncertainty or doubt may lead to conflict, the escalation of conflict occurs when members become committed to the stand and to pursue their stand or position firmly in the group. They tend to seek the information to support their stand or view and to persuade other members. They also tend to rationalise and be committed to the choice they already made.

This means that they have to stick to their choice and reject the information or view which is conflicting with their choice. Although they may realise that they are making a wrong choice, they stick to it and continue to argue against other members as they want to save their face. If other members argue too strongly, they become more defensive and more committed to defend their proposition (Forsyth, 2006, 2014).

(b) **Perception Escalates to Misperception**

Having the correct perception about disagreement on an issue in a group, is important. By having the correct perception about the disagreement, situation and people in the group, members will rationalise the reason for the disagreement. This will decrease the risk of the conflict escalating in the group. In contrast, conflict escalates when members have misperceptions about the disagreement, situations and people in the group (Forsyth, 2006, 2014).
For instance, when members associate the disagreement or the situation to other member’s incompetence, argumentativeness or other personal qualities, this potentially escalates the disagreement into true conflict (Ross & Ward, 1995). Therefore, it is important for members to have accurate perceptions and to verify their perceptions with other members. If members have accurate perceptions about the disagreement, situation and people, they will have a better understanding of each other and this will reduce group conflict.

(c) **Soft Tactics Escalate to Hard Tactics**
Members tend to influence other members in the group by various strategies such as the use of request, statement, demand, promise, reward, threaten, punish, bully, discuss, negotiate, manipulation, supplication and so on. The strength of these tactics in influencing other members varies. When conflict escalates, the tactics to influence other members will change from soft tactics to hard tactics.

Some of the hard tactics used by members when conflict escalates are threats, punishment and bullying. These tactics are contentious as they are direct, nonrational and unilateral. Members use soft tactics (such as request and statement) at the beginning of the conflict. However, they shift to hard tactics when conflict escalates. The tendency to use strong tactics is when members become more antagonistic and this will potentially intensify the conflict escalation (Forsyth, 2006, 2014).

(d) **Reciprocity Escalates to Retaliation**
The norm of *reciprocity* notes that members who harm other members also deserve the harm themselves. Although not every member will favour this norm, for those who favour this norm, there is the tendency for them to adopt it in dealings with group disagreements and conflicts. For instance, if a member criticises the characteristics, ideas or opinions of other members, the members who are victims of these critiques may feel justified that it is acceptable to counterattack other members in the future. If a group tends to adopt this norm, the threat by members will elicit a threat in return from other members, and an attack also will lead to a counterattack (Forsyth, 2006, 2014).

The issue is how accurate the members match the threat and punishment especially in retaliating or counterattacking their members. In fact, there is a tendency for members to overmatch threats and punishment especially at low levels of conflict. At higher levels of conflict, the members may tend to under-match their threats or punishment. The over-matching at low levels of conflict could be perceived as a strong warning, whereas the under-
matching at higher level of conflict can be perceived as a conciliatory message by members (Forsyth, 2006; Youngs, 1986).

(e) **Irritation Escalates to Anger**
In any conflict situation, only a few members can remain calm and work collectively. Most members will feel easily irritated when they are in conflict. For instance, when members are involved in a dispute, tempers easily rise and this will promote negative emotions and arguments during the initial conflict. This tends to lead to anger. When anger is dominant, members tend to be negative, becoming abusive verbally and/or aggressive physically and fail to work constructively in finding the resolution for the group or personal conflict. Members may tend to attack someone or something and possibly lose their emotional control when members are angry (Forsyth, 2006, 2014). Therefore, anger is very disruptive and contagious not only to the group environment but also to group members (Kelly, 2001).

(f) **Few Escalates to Many**
Generally, the initial conflict might start with a few members. As the conflict escalates, the conflict may involve many members or factions. This is because there is a tendency for a member who is in dispute to persuade other members to their side (in the dispute or conflict). The purpose of persuading other members is to form a coalition in the group which will support in their favour (Forsyth, 2006).

Although, the initial dispute may involve a small number of members, as the conflict intensifies, the “non-partisan” or neutral members tend to join with one faction. Therefore, coalitions promote conflict as they invite more members into the group fight. Coalitions can be harmful as members in the coalitions not only working for their own outcomes but also to ensure that they worsen the outcomes of non-coalition members (Forsyth, 2006, 2014; Mannix, 1993).

### 10.3.2 Conflict Management in Groups
In fact, it is not wise to let conflict in the group prolong. This is because it will affect the function and achievements of the group. Therefore, members should be responsible to look for the resolution in order to manage the conflict. Forsyth (2006, 2014) proposed six strategies to manage conflict in groups. These are through negotiation, understanding, cooperative tactics, forgiveness, composure and mediation. The main aim of the strategies is to manage the conflict and to instill a conducive and functioning environment in the group for members.
(a) **From Commitment to Negotiation**
As conflict escalates, the members tend to be firmly committed to their proposition against other members or friction in the group. To reflect their strong commitment, members advocate and fight for their stand or proposition. Therefore, it is important to intervene the commitment through negotiation.

According to Forsyth (2006) negotiation refers to “a reciprocal communication process whereby two or more parties to a dispute examine specific issues, explain their positions, and exchange offers and counteroffers to reach agreement or achieve mutually beneficial outcome” (p. 435). There are at least three approaches to negotiation. These are soft negotiation, hard negotiation and principled negotiation (Fisher & Ury, 1981).

(i) **Soft Negotiation**
Soft negotiation can be considered as a gentle form of negotiation. This type of negotiation tends to make offers for the best interest of their counterparts (not their own best interest), tends to comply with other faction demands, avoids confrontation and tries to maintain friendship.

(ii) **Hard Negotiation**
Hard negotiation tends to use tough and competitive approaches in the negotiation process. They tend to begin the negotiation by taking extreme positions on the issue. Only then do they unwillingly make small concessions. They use contentious strategies to influence other members or factions such as by saying “Take it or leave it” or “This is my final offer”, etc.

(iii) **Principled Negotiation**
Principled negotiation tends to adopt integrative solutions by avoiding commitment to specific positions. The principle negotiation focuses on the problem, not the intentions, motives and needs of the members or factions involved. The choice is based on objective criteria, not on power, pressure or self-interest (Fisher & Ury, 1981; Forsyth, 2006, 2014).
(b) **From Misperception to Understanding**

As most conflict is rooted in misperception, it is important to correct the misperception by providing a fair understanding about the situation, other members and their motives or intention accurately. For instance, sometimes members may misperceive the good motive or intention to be cooperative; occasionally this good motive for cooperation might be perceived as intention to compete with them. It is important for those who are in conflict to have an understanding when dealing with any misperception by finding resolutions for conflict.

The misperception can be managed by having a discussion on motives and goals. During the process, members are expected to actively communicate their motives and goals through group discussion. This is because the conflict may drop when members communicate their intention in specific terms and develop trust, cooperation and fairness (Harinck, 2004).

Besides that, members should enhance the level of empathy in order to have better understanding about other members. By enhancing their level of empathy they will be able to recognise others’ thoughts and emotions. Therefore, empathy potentially facilitates understanding about other members and this will increase cooperativeness and reduce conflict in groups (Forsyth, 2006, 2014).

(c) **From Hard Tactics to Cooperative Tactics**

![Figure 6.2: Four tactics in dealing with conflict](image)

*Source: Forsyth (2006, 2014)*
Members may cope with conflict by using different strategies. There are at least four tactics in dealing with conflict as illustrated in Figure 6.2. These are avoiding, yielding, fighting and cooperating (Forsyth, 2006, 2014). The following are the features of the specific tactics:

(i) **Avoiding** – inaction, withdrawal; lose-lose; “wait and see” attitude; denial, evasion; exit the group, minimise own losses; low concern both for self and or others.

(ii) **Yielding** – acceptance, smoothing, accommodating, giving in, yielding, losing; maximising others’ outcomes; low concern for self and high concern for others.

(iii) **Fighting** – competing, forcing, dominating, contending; win-lose; maximising own outcomes and minimising others’ outcomes; high concern for others.

(iv) **Cooperating** – sharing, collaborating, problem solving; win-win; synthesis, negotiation; maximising joint outcomes; high concern both for self and for others.

While fighting and avoiding are considered negative methods of dealing with conflict, cooperating and yielding are considered as positive methods of dealing with conflict. This is because both methods (that is, fighting and avoiding) fail to take others’ outcomes into consideration, tend to intensify conflict and are perceived as more disagreeable.

In contrast, cooperating and yielding acknowledge and try to accommodate others’ needs, mitigate conflict and are perceived as more agreeable (Forsyth, 2006, 2014). According to Thomas (1992), only cooperation provides the integrative solutions for group conflict. Other tactics such as avoidance, fighting and yields serve as a temporary solution as they do not deal with the sources directly and tend to be superficial in approach. In contrast, cooperation most of the time tends to provide immediate and long-term benefits in managing conflict for the group.

(d) **From Retaliation to Forgiveness**

Trust is very important for a group in order to function in a long period. However, trust is jeopardised when the group is involved in conflict. When members do not trust other members they tend to compete, retaliate and be defensive towards each other. Therefore, it is important to reduce competition and distrust in dealing with conflict. One important strategy for effective competition reverser is called Tit For Tat (TFT). According to
Forsyth (2006) the Tit For Tat strategy refers to “a bargaining strategy that begins with cooperation, but then imitates the other person’s choice so that cooperation is met with cooperation and competition with competition”.

In this approach, matching response is important. For instance, members match cooperation with cooperation and match competition for competition when dealing with conflict. This strategy works as this strategy is believed to be provocable and forgiving; provocable in the sense that members immediately retaliate against competing members and forgiving in the sense that members immediately reciprocate cooperation from other members cooperatively (Forsyth, 2006, 2014).

(e) From Anger to Composure
Negative emotions such as anger is known to promote conflict. Therefore, it is important to promote positive affective response, creative problem solving, cooperation and constructive bargaining strategies when managing conflict (Van Kleef, De Dreu, & Manstead, 2004). Members are advised to regain control of their emotions when they are angry. Apologies may also work in reducing anger among members. Anger also can be controlled by developing group norms that prohibit show of strong or negative emotions. Providing relevant information, background information of the problems and explanation of the possible causes of the problems also can reduce conflict (Forsyth, 2006, 2014).

(f) From Many to Few: Mediation (3rd Party)
As conflict grows when the numbers of members taking sides and getting involved in conflict increases, it is important to acknowledge the role of mediators or third-party to minimise the conflict. As highlighted by Forsyth (2006), the roles of mediators are:

(i) Creating platform for both parties to express themselves;
(ii) Improving communication between parties;
(iii) Framing the acceptance of concessions in a positive ways;
(iv) Offering acceptable proposals for alternative solutions for both parties; and
(v) Guiding both parties during the integrative problem-solving process.
Conflict refers to any form of disagreement among at least two group members or “two small factions” in a group.

Six features of the cycle of group conflict are:
- Routine interaction;
- Disagreement;
- Conflict;
- Conflict escalation;
- Conflict de-escalation; and
- Conflict resolution.

Five possible sources or root factors for conflict are:
- The competition to win;
- Conflict over resources;
- Conflict over power;
- Conflict over choices; and
- Personal issues (of liking and disliking).

The nature of the escalation of the group conflict are that uncertainty escalates to commitment, perception escalates to misperception, soft tactics escalate to hard tactics, reciprocity escalates to retaliation, irritation escalates to anger and few escalates to many.

SELF-CHECK 10.3

1. Describe how conflict escalates in groups.
2. Discuss strategies to manage conflict in groups.

SUMMARY

- Conflict refers to any form of disagreement among at least two group members or “two small factions” in a group.

- Six features of the cycle of group conflict are:
  - Routine interaction;
  - Disagreement;
  - Conflict;
  - Conflict escalation;
  - Conflict de-escalation; and
  - Conflict resolution.

- Five possible sources or root factors for conflict are:
  - The competition to win;
  - Conflict over resources;
  - Conflict over power;
  - Conflict over choices; and
  - Personal issues (of liking and disliking).

- The nature of the escalation of the group conflict are that uncertainty escalates to commitment, perception escalates to misperception, soft tactics escalate to hard tactics, reciprocity escalates to retaliation, irritation escalates to anger and few escalates to many.
Six strategies to manage group conflict are:
- Through negotiation;
- Understanding;
- Cooperative tactics;
- Forgiveness;
- Composure; and
- Mediation processes.

**KEY TERMS**

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**REFERENCES**


If you have any comment or feedback, you are welcome to:

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2. Fill in the Print Module online evaluation form available on myINSPIRE.

Thank you.

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