

# **GROUP DYNAMICS**

## **Definition:**

**Group dynamics involve the study and analysis of how people interact and communicate with each other in face-to face small groups. The study of group dynamics provides a vehicle to analyse group communications with the intent of rendering the groups more effective.**

**(Davies & Newstrom 1985; La Monica,1985)**

**The development of groups is an inevitable part of human activity and, therefore, groups are a fact of life in all organistions. Because staff nurses work in close proximity and frequently depend upon each other to accomplish their jobs, the character or climate or group interaction is extremely important.**

**Two primary types of groups:**

**□ INFORMAL GROUPS**

**□ FORMAL GROUPS**

**Informal groups: evolve naturally as a result of people's interaction within an organisation. They are informal in the sense that they are not part of any organisational design. Ex a group of people who regularly eat together.**

**Formal groups: are work units developed by the organisation either temporarily or permanently to accomplish organisational tasks. Formal groups such as departmental groups, task groups or teams, task forces, committees, and informal organisational groups are going to be discussed. Ex are family, social, special interest, and therapy groups.**

# DEFINITIONS OF GROUPS

**A group is a collection of individuals who share a common set of norms, who generally have differentiated roles among themselves, and who interact with one another to jointly pursue common goals. (Steers 1984)**

**❖ COMMAND GROUPS:**

**has a leader over the group**

**❖ TASK GROUPS:**

**a group that works together with or without an assigned leader**

**❖ COMMITTEES:**

**Ex a committee responsible for health and safety.**

**( In the health dept. we have different ex Nursing Education Committee, Patient Care Evaluation Committee etc**

# **COMMAND GROUPS**

## **Command Groups:**

**are organised to achieve organisational goals. The supervisor has line authority over the group members.**

## **A Task Group:**

**is several persons who work together with or without an assigned leader to perform certain tasks. A task group can also be a command group but usually there are several task groups in a department or there are task groups (teams) that include members from several departments, such as patient care group that includes a nurse, a physician, a dietician, and a social worker. These are brought together with necessary skills to carry out the tasks and a system exists for directing, coordinating and controlling the group's activities. The structure, composition and size of the group will depend largely on the nature of the task.**

## **COMMITTEES OR TASK FORCES**

**are formed to deal with specific issues involving several departments. These could include a committee that is responsible for safety or a task force assigned to develop better procedures. There are many committees used in health care institutions, including nursing education committees, disaster committees, and patient care evaluation committees.**

**The leader's influence on group processes and the ability of the group to work together often determines whether the group is effective in accomplishing organisational and personal goals, regardless of the formality of the leader's role.**

# **GROUPS PROCESSES**

## **AFFECTED BY 3 THINGS:**

**❖ TASK**

**❖ NORMS**

**❖ SIZE**

**According to handy (1981), for best participation and for the highest all-round involvement, the optimum size is between five and seven. But to achieve the requisite breadth of knowledge the group may have to be considerably larger, this makes greater demands on the skills of the leader in getting participation. Thus the bigger the group the greater the diversity of talent, skills and knowledge.**

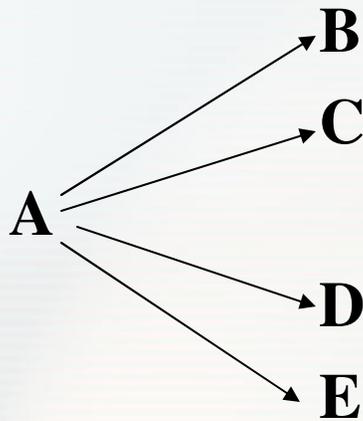
# MAIN PROCESSES

- 1. INTERACTION/COMMUNICATION**
- 2. TASK AND MAINTENANCE FUNCTIONS**
- 3. GROUP IDEALOGY**
- 4. GROUP COHESIVENESS**
- 5. GROUP NORMS**
- 6. GROUP ROLES**
- 7. GROUP CLIMATE**
- 8. GROUP DEVELOPMENT**
  - **FORMING**
  - **STORMING**
  - **NORMING**
  - **PERFORMING**
  - **ADJOURNING/REFORMING**

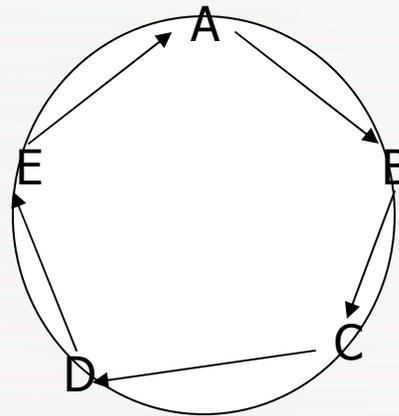
# 1. INTERACTION AND COMMUNICATION

Three basic channels of communication within groups identified by Leavitt (1951):

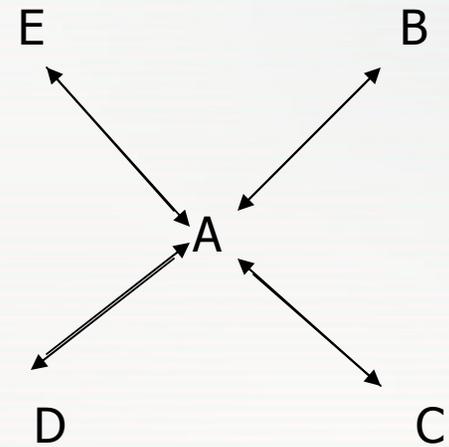
- WHEEL
- CIRCLE
- ALL-CHANNEL



wheel



Circle



All channel

## **The characteristics of these different groups are:**

- ❖ WHEEL GROUPS – where the task is straightforward, work faster, need fewer messages to solve problems and make fewer errors than circle groups, but they are inflexible if the task changes.**
- ❖ CIRCLE GROUPS – are faster in solving complex problems than wheel groups.**
- ❖ ALL CHANNEL GROUPS – are the most flexible and function well in complex, open-ended situations.**

**The level of satisfaction for individuals is lowest in the circle group, fairly high in the all-channel group and mixed in the wheel group, where the leader is more satisfied than the outlying members.**

## **2. TASK AND MAINTENANCE FUNCTIONS**

**The following functions need to be carried out in groups:**

- ❖ TASK – initiating, information seeking, diagnosing, opinion seeking, evaluating, decision making.**
- ❖ MAINTENANCE – encouraging, compromising, peacekeeping, clarifying, summarising, standard setting.**

**It is the job of the group leader or leaders to ensure that these functions operate effectively. Leaderless groups can work, but only in special circumstances. A leader is almost essential – whether official or self-appointed. The style adopted by a leader affects the way the group operates. If the leader is respected, this will increase group cohesiveness and its ability to get things done. An appropriately authoritarian style creates tension and resentment. An over-permissive style means that respect for the leader diminishes and the group does not function so effectively.**

### **3. GROUP IDEOLOGY**

**In the course of interacting and carrying out its task and maintenance functions, the group develops an ideology, which affects the attitudes and actions of its members and the degree of satisfaction, which they feel.**

## **4. GROUP COHESIVENESS**

**Lipitt and Seashore (1980) saw group cohesion as the *'attractiveness of the group to its members'* (p4). Cohesion involves the willingness of members to accept group decisions and whether group activities are grounded on commitment to a common goal or on likes and dislikes of persons for each other. Cohesiveness is the degree to which members are attracted to the group. Ideally, a group should work together while members maintain their individuality (Lipitt & Seashore, 1980).**

**Cohesiveness is also related to homogeneity of interests, values, attitudes, and background factors. Several propositions on group interaction and cohesiveness are shown in the following list:**

# **GROUP COHESIVENESS**

- 1. The greater the opportunity or requirements for interactions, the greater the likelihood of interaction occurring (Homans, 1950; 1961).**
- 2. The more frequent the interaction among people, the greater the likelihood of their developing positive feelings for one another (Homans, 1950; 1961).**
- 3. The greater the positive feelings among people, the more frequently they interact (Homans, 1950; 1961).**
- 4. The more frequent the interactions required by the job, the more likely that social relationships and behaviour will develop along with task relationships and behaviour (Homans, 1950; 1961).**
- 5. The more attractive the group, the more cohesive it is (Festinger, Schacter & Black, 1950).**

# **GROUP COHESIVENESS**

- 6. The more cohesive the group, the more influence it has on its members. The less certain and clear a group's norms and standards are, the less control it has over its members (Festinger, Schacter & Black 1950; Homans 1961).**
- 7. The greater the similarity in member attitudes and values brought to the group, the greater the likelihood of cohesion (Homans 1961).**
- 8. Group cohesion is increased by success in achieving the group's goals (Sherif & Sherif, 1953).**
- 9. The more easily and frequently member differences are settled in a way satisfactory to all members, the greater is group cohesion (Deutsch, 1968)**
- 10. The more cohesive the group, the more similar is the output of individual members, (Homans, 1950).**
- 11. A cohesive group by definition has a high overall level of satisfaction (Blake & Mouton, 1961).**

# GROUP COHESIVENESS

**Cohesive groups are more likely to develop:**

- **where there are shared values and beliefs,**
- **Where individuals have similar goals and tasks**
- **Where individuals have to interact together to achieve these tasks**
- **Where group members work in the same unit and on the same shift,**
- **Where group members have specific needs that can be satisfied by the group.**

**Group cohesiveness is also influenced by the *formal reward system*.**

**The characteristics of group members also influence whether a group becomes cohesive.**

**Similarities in educational experiences, social class, sex, age, and ethnicity that lead to similar attitudes strengthen group cohesiveness.**

# **GROUP COHESIVENESS**

**Groups can affect absenteeism and turnover.**

**Groups with high level of cohesiveness exhibit lower turnover and absenteeism than groups with low levels of cohesiveness.**

**Cohesiveness influences member satisfaction and intra group and inter group conflict.**

**The impact of group cohesion can, however, result in negative as well as positive results. (Janis' 1972) study of decision –making processes of US foreign policy-groups established that cohesive group of individuals, sharing a common fate, exerts a strong pressure towards conformity. He coined the term 'group think' to describe the exaggeration irrational tendencies that appears to occur in groups and argued that a group setting can magnify weakness of judgment. Team working is a good thing, but so is flexibility and independent judgment.**

# **We have these types of groups:**

**□ GROUP NORMS**

**□ GROUP ROLES**

**□ GROUP CLIMATE**

# **GROUP NORMS**

## **NORMS :**

- Are informal rules of behaviour shared and enforced by group members**
- Emerge whenever humans interact**
- Should be adhered to for continuing membership in the group**
- For a nursing team include taking care of no more than 9 patients on a medical ward and 2 for and intensive care on a given day.**

**An important norm that groups often establish is how hard a group member should work.**

# **GROUP ROLES**

## **ROLES**

- **Are specific to positions in a the group ( not like norms which apply to all the group members)**
- **Are a set of expected behaviours that fit together into a unified whole and relate to an undividual's position within a group**
- **Specific roles include:**
  - **Task leader**
  - **The maintenance or social emotional leader**
  - **The friendly helper**
  - **The new comer.**

# **GROUP CLIMATE**

## **CLIMATE**

- Refers to the tone and atmosphere that is created in the group**
- Refers to members if they are competitive, tense, polite, friendly, flat , energetic, enthusiastic etc**

**In a positive group climate is important because enthusiasm and energy are catching and tend to snowball in growth.**

**Unfortunately even in a negative climate there is also catching and growth (La Monica 1985)**

# **GROUP DEVELOPMENT**

**Tuckman (1965) has identified four stages of group development**

**FORMING**

**STORMING**

**NORMING**

**PERFORMING**

- 1. FORMING, when there is anxiety, dependence on the leader and testing to find out the nature of the situation and the task, and what behaviour is acceptable.**
- 2. STORMING, where there is conflict, emotional resistance to the demands of the task, resistance to control and even rebellion against the leader**
- 3. NORMING, when the group cohesion is developed, norms emerge, views are exchanged openly, mutual support and cooperation increase and the group acquires a sense of its identity.**
- 4. PERFORMING, when interpersonal problems are resolved, roles are flexible and functional, there are constructive attempts to complete tasks and energy is affective work.**

**However there is also the fifth stage;**

**ADJOURNING – when the group has achieved its purpose.**

**OR REFORMING - when some major changes takes place in the membership or environment of the group causing the group to recycle through the previous four stages (Tuckman & Jensen, 1977).**

# **GROUP DECISION-MAKING**

**Individual decision-making is the traditional status quo approach.**

**Today the trend is different – WHY?**

- **The need for staff participation in decision-making**
- **The need for group approaches to problem solving**

**Advantages of using groups for decision-making**

- **Groups possess greater knowledge and information than any of their members individually**
- **Groups can deal with more complex problems than individuals can**
- **Where an individual might continue using a particular approach, a group is more likely to try several approaches.**

# **GROUP DECISION-MAKING**

- **Rather than suffering from tunnel vision as some individuals do, groups have a greater variety of training and experiences and approach problems from more points of view.**
- **Involving numerous personnel may yield more complete, accurate, and less biased information than that obtained from only one person**
- **Groups deal with problems more effectively crossing group boundaries**
- **Participation in problem solving has additional advantages over individual decision making**
- **It increases acceptance and understanding of the decision and leads to enhanced co-operation in effective implementation**

# **CONCLUSION**

**A group will be effective when:**

- **The members are attracted to it**
- **Members trust each other**
- **Norms and goals of the group are congruent with organizational goals**
- **Group size, structure, and heterogeneity match the task to be accomplished**
- **Group members are motivated to communicate openly and cooperate**
- **The group is rewarded for goal attainment**