Unit 8
Groups and Group Dynamics

Needs for belonging to a group

Security

When people feel threatened, they often join groups with the aim of obtaining greater security.

Status

People often become members of a group to obtain the status associated with membership of the group.

Self-image

Belonging to a group makes people feel important, which in turn helps them to improve their self-image.

Affiliation needs

Affiliation needs (need for social contact with other people) are often the main motivation for people joining groups, i.e. John will become a member of the safety committee because it will offer him/her the opportunity to meet more people.
Needs to belong to a group continue...

Power

People often gain control and power over other people by becoming members of groups. Groups usually have more power than individuals, for example, management would rather listen to the complaints of a group of employees than to an individual employee.

Collective objectives

Certain objectives are achieved better or only in groups because people cannot perform the necessary tasks on their own.
Groups and Group Dynamics

Group development stages

**Forming:** The stage where group members come together and are dependent (looking for support and guidance) and tentative (testing to discover what behaviour is acceptable in the group).

**Storming:** The stage where group members acknowledge and discuss their differences. Often things begin to bog down a little after the storming stage. The issue of inclusion and exclusion may not have been entirely resolved.

**Norming:** Also known as the integration phase. If the group weathers the storming phase and successfully handles conflict and hostility, a sense of renewed hope may emerge. Members begin to tolerate each other’s differences and accept the group.

**Performing:** This is the stage where the group is well organised and internally controlled. With the group structure and identity formed the members ‘get on with the job’.

**Adjourning:** This takes place when the group disbands. Termination behaviour includes checking out goal achievement, coping with ending, disbandment and departure and making plans for the future.
Classification of groups

Reference groups

A reference group is the group with which a person is identified and is particularly important in the formation of a person’s beliefs, values and attitudes. A person may either be an actual member of his/her reference group or just aspire to be a member of the group.

Social groups

Social groups provide mainly recreational opportunities for their members, as well as the opportunity to make new friends, for example, a sports club or a bridge club.

Task groups

A task group is usually a temporary group that aims to achieve a specific objective. This group usually forms part of a larger organisation and members of the group usually also have other tasks within the larger group.

Formal groups

Formal groups are created as part of a formal organisation with the aim of doing the work of the association. The different departments within the organisation each form such a formal group.
Classification of groups

Informal groups

An informal group develops as a result of employees’ needs for social contact and is not structured formally. Such groups often develop within the work group as smaller groups or cliques or may even develop independently of the work, such as when people develop a specific friendship group at home.

Classification of informal groups

- A horizontal informal group or clique consists of employees who are all from the same division and the same level of management.

- A vertical clique consists of employees from the same division but different levels of management.

- A mixed clique comprises employees from different divisions and different management levels.
Nature and Characteristics of Small Groups

The main group characteristics of small groups are as follow:

Interaction between members of the group

Interaction can be either verbal (ordinary spoken language) or non-verbal (the use of gestures or body language), but if there is no interaction, it is not a group.

Stable structure (relationship pattern)

There must be a stable structure (relationship pattern). If the group members get to know each other, mutual expectations (norms or rules) develop that give stability to their interaction. If there is a continual change in members of the group, such a relationship pattern cannot develop and it is not actually a group.

Common objective

The group must have a common objective. A group often develops as a result of a common objective and it is usually the objective that keeps the group together.

Group members must perceive themselves as a group

- People in a group must think of themselves in terms of a group. They must know who is a member of the group and who is not, in order to function successfully as a group, i.e. the people who happen to stand together waiting to enter the gate of their organisation are not members of a group. However, if they are all part of a protest action, they do form a group.
Nature and Characteristics of Small Groups

Group Structures and Characteristics

Group structures and group characteristics have an important influence on the group members in that they influence the behaviour of group members and the performance of the group. The following group characteristics and group structures are particularly important in this regard (Cartwright & Zander, in Kruger et al, (1996).

Communication patterns

- Communication can be regarded as an obvious aspect of interaction. However, in any group specific patterns of communication form and certain members may be more central than others, i.e. during the tea break most employees will address B, the most popular person in the group, when they have something to tell.

Decision-making patterns

- In any group there are also certain patterns according to which decisions are made.
Nature and Characteristics of Small Groups

Division of power
The power of individual members of the group to influence decisions may differ and specific power patterns will also develop in a group.

Role differentiation
As a result of the task orientation of the group, one can expect that different members of the group will specialise in different functions, which in turn leads to role differentiation.

Leadership
Because the decision-making process is so important, the role of the leader is the first role that is usually developed.

Group cohesion
One of the characteristics of the small group is that the members must be aware of themselves as a group. The extent to which the members are attracted to the group is known as group cohesion.
Nature and Characteristics of Small Groups

Conforming to group norms
The normative regulation (behavioural rules that are regarded as desirable) within the group leads to group unity. The extent to which the members within the group conform to group norms (obey the rules) can also vary.

Dealing with conflict
As a result of clashing individual needs and personalities within the group, the handling of conflict within the group and between groups is one of the most important functions of the group, and specific structures are developed for this purpose.

Motivation and productivity
In the work situation, it is particularly important that the group and group objectives influence the individual motivation and productivity of the different members.