Review Questions

1. Compare and contrast formal and informal groups, and ingroups and outgroups.

Answer

Formal and Informal Groups
These groups differ in the degree to which the functions of the group are stated explicitly and formally. The functions of a formal group are explicitly stated as in the case of an office organisation. The roles to be performed by group members are stated in an explicit manner. The formal and informal groups differ on the basis of structure. The formation of formal groups is based on some specific rules or laws and members have definite roles. There are a set of norms which help in establishing order. A university is an example of a formal group. On the other hand, the formation of informal groups is not based on rules or laws and there is close relationship among members.

Ingroup and Outgroup
Just as individuals compare themselves with others in terms of similarities and differences with respect to what they have and what others have, individuals also compare the group they belong to with groups of which they are not a member. The term 'ingroup' refers to one's own group, and 'outgroup' refers to another group. For ingroup members, we use the word 'we' while for outgroup members, the word 'they' is used. By using the words they and we, one is categorising people as
similar or different. It has been found that persons in the ingroup are generally supposed to be similar, are viewed favourably, and have desirable traits. Members of the outgroup are viewed differently and are often perceived negatively in comparison to the ingroup members. Perceptions of ingroup and outgroup affect our social lives.

2. Are you a member of a certain group? Discuss what motivated you to join that group.

Answer

Yes, I am a member of a certain group.These are the factors which motivated me to join that group:
(i) Security : When we are alone, we feel insecure. Groups reduce this insecurity. Being with people gives a sense of comfort, and protection. As a result, people feel stronger, and are less vulnerable to threats.
(ii) Status : When we are members of a group that is perceived to be important by others, we feel recognised and experience a sense of power. Suppose your school wins in an inter-institutional debate competition, you feel proud and think that you are better than others.

(iii) Self-esteem : Groups provide feelings of self-worth and establish a positive social identity. Being a member of prestigious groups enhances one's self-concept.

(iv) Satisfaction of one's psychological and social needs : Groups satisfy one's social and psychological needs such as sense of belongingness, giving and receiving attention, love, and power through a group.

(v) Goal achievement : Groups help in achieving such goals which cannot be attained individually. There is power in the majority.

(vi) Provide knowledge and information : Group membership provides knowledge and information and thus broadens our view. As individuals, we may not have all the required information. Groups supplement this information and knowledge.

3. How does Tuckman's stage model help you to understand the formation of groups?

Answer

Groups usually go through different stages of formation, conflict, stabilisation, performance, and dismissal. Tuckman's stage model suggested that groups pass through five developmental sequences which are forming, storming, norming, performing and adjourning.

(i) Forming stage: When group members first meet, there is a great deal of uncertainty about the group, the goal, and how it is to be achieved. People try to know each other and assess whether they will fit in. There is excitement as well as apprehensions.

(ii) Storming stage: It is a stage of intragroup conflict which is referred to as storming. In this stage, there is conflict among members about how the target of the group is to be achieved, who is to control the group and its resources, and who is to perform what task. When this stage is complete, some sort of hierarchy of leadership in the group develops and a clear vision as to how to achieve the group goal.

(iii) Norming stage: This storming stage is followed by norming. Group members by this time develop norms related to group behaviour. This leads to development of a positive group identity.

(iv) performing stage: It is the fourth stage. By this time, the structure of the group has evolved and is accepted by group members. The group moves towards achieving the group goal. For some groups, this may be the last stage of group development.

(v) Adjourning stage: For some groups, for example, in the case of an organising committee for a school function, there may be last stage and group comes to an end. In this stage, once the function
is over, the group may be disbanded.

4. How do groups influence our behaviour?

Answer

Groups and individuals exert influence on us which may force us to change our behaviours in a particular direction. Group influence our behaviour by the method of 'social influence' which means getting influenced by the imagined presence of other people. Throughout the

day we may encounter a
number of situations where others have tried to influence our and make us think in ways they want.Social influence is a part of our life. In some situations, social influence on us is very strong as a result of which we tend to do things which we otherwise would have not done. On other occasions, we are able to defy influence of others and may even influence them to adopt our own viewpoint.

There are three important group influence processes, i.e. conformity, compliance and obedience.

(i) Conformity: It means behaving according to the group norm, i.e. the expectations of other group members. Persons who do not conform (called 'deviants' or 'non-conformists') get noticed more than those who do conform.

(ii) Compliance: In this, there are external conditions that force the individual to accept the influence of the significant other. Compliance also refers to behaving in a particular way in response to a request made by someone. It could take place even without a norm.

(iii) Obedience: A distinguishing feature of obedience is that such behaviour is a response to a person in authority. The presence of an authority figure immediately makes this behaviour different from conformity. For instance, you may stop talking loudly in the classroom when the teacher asks you
to keep quiet, but not when your classmate tells you to do the same thing.

5. How can you reduce social loafing in groups? Think of any two incidents of social loafing in school. How did you overcome it?

Answer

It has been found that individuals work less hard in a group than they do when performing alone. This
points to a phenomenon referred to as 'social loafing'. Social loafing is a reduction in individual effort when working on a collective task, i.e. one in which outputs are pooled with those of other group members. An example of such a task is the game of tug-of-war. It is not possible for
us to identify how much force each member of the team has been exerting. Such situations give opportunities to group members to relax and become a free rider.

This phenomenon has been demonstrated in many experiments by Latane and his associates who asked group of male students to clap or cheer as loudly as possible as they (experimenters) were interested in knowing how much noise people make in social settings. They varied the group size; individuals were either alone, or in groups of two, four and six. The results of the study showed that although the total amount of noise rose up, as size increased, the amount of noise produced by each participant dropped. In other words, each participant put in less
effort as the group size increased. Reasons for the occurrence of social loafing:

(i) Group members feel less responsible for the overall task being performed and therefore exert less effort.

(ii) Motivation of members decreases because they realise that their contributions will not be evaluated on individual basis.

(iii) The performance of the group is not to be compared with other groups.
(iv) There is an improper coordination (or no coordination) among members.
(v) Belonging to the same group is not important for members. It is only an aggregate of individuals.

Two incidents of social loafing in school:
(i) Some students work very less in group projects and works.
(ii) Sometimes during sports competition, some students practice very less and thus this affect the whole team.
It may be reduced by:
(i) Making the efforts of each person identifiable.
(ii) Increasing the pressure to work hard (making group members committed to successful task performance).
(iii) Increasing the apparent importance or value of a task.
(iv) Making people feel that their individual contribution is important.
(v) Strengthening group cohesiveness which increases the motivation for successful group outcome.

6. How often do you show conformity in your behaviour? What are the determinants of conformity?

Answer

Conformity in your behavior means behaving according to the group norm, i.e. the expectations of other group members. Conformity in behavior can be shown by the following examples. Some of your friends come to you with a letter of protest against a rule that has been recently announced, i.e. banning use of mobile phones in the school. Personally you believe that the rule is very sensible and should be enforced. But you also know that if you do not sign the letter. Thus, I have to behave according to the group norm. Determinants of conformity are size of the group, Size of the minority, nature of the task, public or private expression of behaviour and personality.
(i) Size of the group: Conformity is greater when the group is small than when the group is large. It
is easier for a deviant member (one who does not conform) to be noticed in a small group. However, in a large group, if there is strong agreement among most of the members, this makes the majority
stronger, and therefore, the norm is also stronger. In such a case, the minority member(s) would be more likely to conform because the group pressure would be stronger.
(ii) Size of the minority : Suppose the subject finds that after some rounds of judgment of the lines, there is another participant who starts agreeing with the subject's answer. When the dissenting
or deviating minority size increases, the likelihood of conformity decreases. In fact, it may increase the number of dissenters or non-conformists in the group.
(iii) Nature of the task: In Asch's experiment, the task required an answer that could be verified, and could be correct or incorrect. Suppose the task involves giving an opinion

about some topic. In
such a case, there is no correct or incorrect answer then conformity would be less likely in the second situation.
(iv) Public or private expression of behaviour: In the Asch technique, the group members are asked to give their answers publicly, i.e. all members know who has given which response. However, there can be other situations in which the behaviour of members is private. Less conformity is found under private expression than it is seen under public expression.
(v) Personality: The conditions described above show how the features of the situation are important in determining the degree of conformity shown. We also find that some individuals have a conforming personality. Such persons have a tendency to change their behaviour according to what others say or do in most situations.

7. Why do people obey even when they know that their behaviour may be harming others? Explain.

Answer

People obey even when they know that their behaviour may be harming others because if we disobey, some punishment might follow. Sometimes, it is because we believe that persons in authority must be obeyed.
Several reasons for this are:
(i) People obey because they feel that they are not responsible for their own actions, they are simply carrying out orders from the authority.
(ii) Authority generally possesses symbols of status (e.g., uniform, title) which people find difficult to resist.
(iii) Authority gradually increases commands from lesser to greater levels and initial obedience binds the followers for commitment. Once you obey small orders, slowly there is an escalation of commitment for the person who is in authority and one starts obeying bigger orders.
(iv) Many times, events are moving at such a fast speed, for example in a riot situation, that one has no time to think, just obey orders from above.

8. What are the benefits of cooperation?

Answer

When groups work together to achieve shared goals, we call it cooperation. The rewards in cooperative situations are group rewards and not individual rewards.
Benefits of coopoeration:
(i) People work together and hence work load on each individual is less.
(ii) Each individual can attain the goal only if other members of the group also attain the goal.
(iii) In cooperative groups, there is more coordination and acceptance for each other's ideas.

(iv) members became more friendly and can excel easily in groups.
(v) Members are more active towards communication, interaction and discussions.

9. How is one's identity formed?

Answer

One's self-definition of who s/he is which may include both personal attributes, e.g. hard working, happy-go-lucky, or attributes which you share with others, e.g. girl or boy is known as social identity.
One's self identity is formed by oneself as a unique individual, and social identities derived from groups we perceive ourselves to be members of.
Although some aspects of our identity are determined by physical characteristics, one may acquire other aspects as a consequence of our interaction with others in society.
Sometimes we perceive ourselves as unique individuals and at other times we perceive ourselves as members of groups. Both are equally valid expressions of self. The extent to which we define ourselves either at personal or at social levels is flexible. From our own experience, we would realise that identification with social groups can have a great deal of importance for your self-concept. feel so because of our social identity as an Indian. Social identity is, thus, that aspect of our self-concept which is based
on our group membership. Social identity places us, i.e. tells us what and where we are in the larger social context, and thus helps us to locate ourselves in society.

10. What are some of the causes of intergroup conflict? Think of any international conflict. Reflect on the human price of this conflict.

Answer

Some of the major reasons for group conflicts are:
(i) Lack of communication and faulty communication by both parties. This kind of communication leads to suspicion, i.e. there is a lack of trust. Hence, conflict results.
(ii) Another reason for intergroup conflict is relative deprivation. It arises when members of a group compare themselves with members of another group, and perceive that they do not have what they desire to have, which the other group has. In other words, they feel that they are not doing well in comparison to other groups. This may lead to feelings of deprivation and discontentment, which may trigger off conflict.
(iii) Another cause of conflict is one party's belief that it is better than the other, and what it is saying should be done. When this does not happen, both parties start accusing each other. One may often witness a tendency to magnify even smaller differences, thereby conflict gets escalated because every member wants to respect the norms of her/his group.
(iv) A feeling that the other group does not respect the norms of my group, and actually violates those norms because of a malevolent intent.
(v) Desire for retaliation for some harm done in the past could be another reason for conflict.
(vi) Biased perceptions are at the root of most conflicts. As already mentioned earlier, feelings of 'they' and 'we' lead to biased perceptions.

(vii) Research has shown that when acting in groups, people are more competitive as well as more aggressive than when they are on their own. Groups compete over scarce resources, both material resources, e.g. territory, and money as well as social resources, e.g. respect and esteem.