



CHAPTER 12

Group Processes in Work Organizations

***PSY 482 - Selective Topics in
Industrial/Organizational
Psychology***



Defining Work Groups

- To which groups are you belong to? Why?
- Do you feel you are a group as the class here or you are a group of different groups (2 people perhaps); or are you a bunch of individuals?
- With which groups in Turkey (or your home country) are you identified with?



Defining Work Groups

- Why groups are important for work organizations?
 1. Can pool talent, energy, and knowledge to perform complex tasks
 2. Help provide professional identities
 3. Satisfy need for interaction and interpersonal relationships in the work
 4. Help establish rules for proper behavior



Defining Work Groups

- A **group** is two or more individuals engaged in social interaction to achieve some goal.
- **Roles** are patterns of behavior that are adapted based on expectations about the functions of a position in a group.
- **Role expectations** are beliefs concerning the responsibilities and requirements of a particular role.
- **Role differentiation** is the process by which group members learn to perform various roles.



Defining Work Groups

- Early researchers (Benne and Sheats, 1948) identified three categories of work roles in groups.
 - **Group task roles** are related to getting the job done (e.g., leader, evaluator).
 - **Group building and maintenance roles** deal with maintaining personal relationships among members (e.g., encourager, compromiser).
 - **Self-centered roles** involve satisfying personal rather than group goals (e.g., recognition seeker, aggressor).

TABLE 11.1

The Various Roles Individuals Play in Work Groups

Group Task Roles

- Initiator–contributor*: Recommends new ideas about, or novel solutions to, a problem
- Information seeker*: Emphasizes getting facts and other information from others
- Opinion seeker*: Solicits inputs concerning the attitudes or feelings about ideas under consideration
- Information giver*: Contributes relevant information to help in decision making
- Opinion giver*: Provides own opinions and feelings
- Elaborator*: Clarifies and expands on the points made by others
- Coordinator*: Integrates information from the group
- Orienter*: Guides the discussion and keeps it on the topic when the group digresses
- Evaluator–critic*: Uses some set of standards to evaluate the group's accomplishments
- Energizer*: Stimulates the group to take action
- Procedural technician*: Handles routine tasks such as providing materials or supplies
- Recorder*: Keeps track of the group's activities and takes minutes

Group Building and Maintenance Roles

Encourager: Encourages others' contributions

Harmonizer: Tries to resolve conflicts between group members

Compromiser: Tries to provide conflicting members with a mutually agreeable solution

Gatekeeper: Regulates the flow of communication so that all members can have a say

Standard setter: Sets standards or deadlines for group actions

Group observer: Makes objective observations about the tone of the group interaction

Follower: Accepts the ideas of others and goes along with group majority

Self-centered Roles

Aggressor: Tries to promote own status within group by attacking others

Blocker: Tries to block all group actions and refuses to go along with group

Recognition seeker: Tries to play up own achievements to get group's attention

Self-confessor: Uses group discussion to deal with personal issues

Playboy: Engages in humor and irrelevant acts to draw attention away from the tasks

Dominator: Attempts to monopolize the group

Help seeker: Attempts to gain sympathy by expressing insecurity or inadequacy

Special interest pleader: Argues incessantly to further own desires

Source: Benne K. D., & Sheats, P. (1948). Functional roles of group members. *Journal of Social Issues*, 4, 41–49.



Defining Work Groups

- **Role ambiguity** involves a sense of uncertainty over the requirements of a particular role.
- **Role conflict** results when the expectations associated with one role interfere with the expectations concerning another role.



Defining Work Groups

- **Norms** are rules that groups adopt governing appropriate and inappropriate behavior for members.
 - Norms have several purposes, they:
 - Facilitate group production.
 - Increase prediction of group member behavior.
 - Provide a sense of identity to the group.



Defining Work Groups

- **Organizational socialization** is the process by which new employees learn group roles and norms and develop specific work skills and abilities.
- Modeling, being reinforced.
 - Organizational socialization occurs in stages.
 - *Anticipatory socialization*: new employees develop expectations concerning the job and assess they “fit” in the organization.
 - *Accommodation*: new employees learn about work group roles and norms.
 - *Role management*: newcomers transition to regular members.



Basic Group Processes

- **Conformity** is the process of adhering to group norms.
 - Conformity is often very strong and helps maintain order and uniformity in group behavior.
 - What is the dark side of the picture?
 - Extreme and repeated norm violation results in ostracism from the group.
 - Members who have more power (e.g., the group leader) or who usually conform to norms are more likely to be successful in nonconforming behavior.
 - Leader group prototypicality and buffering effect of it



Basic Group Processes

- **Cohesiveness** is the degree of attraction among group members (social glue).
 - Cohesiveness increases member satisfaction, but only increases productivity when it is work-related.
 - Cohesiveness **increases when group members have equal status** → one reason of job enrichment efforts
 - Cohesiveness **increases with increased stability of group membership.**
 - **Greater similarity of group members increases cohesiveness. The dark side?**
 - The **we-they feeling** is cohesiveness created by the existence of a threat to the group.
 - Can you link this to the political events occurring nowadays?



Basic Group Processes

- **Group efficacy** is a group's shared belief that they can attain organizational outcomes.
 - Individual member self-efficacy contributes to group efficacy, which in turn increases cohesiveness and productivity (Pescosolido, 2003).
 - **Group efficacy is a better predictor of group performance than the sum of individual members' self-efficacy.**
 - Group efficacy **enhances job satisfaction and organizational commitment.**
 - Leaders can have an important effect on group efficacy (Walumbwa et al., 2004).



Basic Group Processes

- **Cooperation** is very likely in work groups because it is difficult to accomplish work goals alone.
 - Cooperation is often based on the **reciprocity rule**, the tendency for persons to pay back those to whom they are indebted for assistance.
 - Cooperation increases with **task interdependence**, the degree to which an individual's task performance depends on the efforts/skills of others.
 - **Social loafing** occurs when individuals working in groups exert less effort than when they work alone.
 - **Think about equity theory now**



Basic Group Processes

- **Competition** is the process whereby group members are pitted against one another to achieve individual goals.
 - Wage systems in the U.S. and internationally are often competitive in nature (e.g., bonuses, promotions available).
 - While competition may increase motivation to perform, the introduction of competition when goals are already set may lead to a decrease in performance (Campbell & Furrer, 1995).



Basic Group Processes

- **Competition vs. cooperation:**
- **How would you apply these two processes to yourselves as students to be graduated very soon?**



Basic Group Processes

- **Conflict** is behavior by a person or group intended to inhibit the attainment of goals by another person or group.
 - Like cooperation and competition, conflict occurs naturally within groups.
 - The key element in defining conflict is that conflicting parties have incompatible goals.
 - While conflict can have negative consequences, **it can be constructive and lead to positive outcomes for work groups and organizations** (Wall and Callister, 1995).



Basic Group Processes

- Conflict can occur at four levels within work organizations.
 - **Intraindividual conflict** occurs when an individual is faced with two sets of incompatible goals.
 - Role as a wife and as the manager
 - **Interindividual conflict** occurs when two people are striving to attain their own goals, blocking the other's achievement.
 - **Intragroup conflict** occurs when a person or faction within a group attempts to achieve a goal that interferes with group goals.
 - **Intergroup conflict** occurs between two groups trying to attain their respective goals.



Basic Group Processes

- **Interorganizational conflict** is conflict between organizations with incompatible goals (**seems to be the best one**).
 - Interorganizational conflict can lead to positive outcomes, including provision of better goods and services in competing for customers/clients.
 - Interorganizational conflict can lead to negative outcomes, including sabotage or failure to provide necessary services to clients.



Basic Group Processes

- Sources of conflict in organizations include:
 - Scarcity of important resources.
 - Individual and group interdependence.
 - The “we-they” feeling (e.g., unions vs. managers).
 - Interpersonal conflicts.
 - **Dangerous if between two powerful figures**
 - Younger workers are more conflict-prone than older workers (Robbins, 1974).
 - Personality factors may lead some individuals to be more conflict-prone.



Basic Group Processes

- Outcomes of conflict in organizations can be *positive*:
 - **Conflict may energize group members, increasing work motivation. 😊**
 - **Conflict can stimulate creativity and innovation.**
 - **Conflict can improve the quality of decision-making.**
 - **Conflict can increase organizational communication.**



Basic Group Processes

- Outcomes of conflict in organizations can be *negative*:
 - **Conflict can reduce group cohesiveness.**
 - **Conflict can hamper effective communication**
 - **Conflict can lower group member satisfaction (not only for the individual who experiences conflict).**
 - **Conflict can cause group goals to become secondary to infighting.**



Basic Group Processes

- Conflict management strategies
 - **Dominating:** persisting in conflict until one party attains personal goals at the expense of the other's.
 - **Accommodation:** making a sacrifice to resolve conflict. (lose-win)
 - **Compromise:** both parties give up some part of their goals. (lose-lose)
 - **Collaboration:** parties cooperate to reach a solution that satisfies both. (win-win)
 - **Avoidance:** withdrawing from or avoiding the conflict situation.
 - **Superordinate goal:** a goal that two conflicting parties are willing to work to attain. (stimulating cooperation strategy)



Group Decision-Making Processes

- **Autocratic decision making** is a process by which group decisions are made by the leader alone, based on information the leader possesses.
 - **Advantage?**
 - **Consultative decision making**: the leader solicits information from group members but still holds the final say.
- **Democratic decision making** is a process by which decisions are made by group members based on majority-rule voting.
 - Pooled knowledge and experience of all members
 - More likely to be followed
 - Greater number of alternatives
 - Time consuming and **leftover minority issue**
- **Consensus** is decision making based on 100% member agreement (**mostly for very major decisions**)



TABLE 11.2

Advantages and Disadvantages of Group Decision Making

Advantages

Works from a broad knowledge base
Decision is accepted by members
Decision is highly critiqued
Aspects of the problem can be divided among group members

Disadvantages

Slow (can be a problem in crisis situations)
Creates intragroup conflict
Potential for groupthink and group polarization
Certain members, such as leaders, may dominate the decision-making process



Group Decision-making Processes

- **Groupthink** is a syndrome characterized by a **concurrency-seeking tendency** that overrides the ability of a cohesive group to make critical decisions. Especially when...
 - **Cohesiveness is relationship-based** rather than task-based
 - **Members are very similar** to each other
 - Janis → Kennedy's Bay of Pigs Invasion, Johnson's Vietnam War
- **Group polarization** is the tendency for groups to make decisions that are more extreme than those made by individuals.

TABLE 11.3*The Eight Symptoms of Groupthink*

1. *Illusion of invulnerability*—The highly cohesive decision-making group members see themselves as powerful and invincible. Their attraction to and faith in the group leads them to ignore the potential disastrous outcomes of their decision.
2. *Illusion of morality*—Members believe in the moral correctness of the group and its decision; related to the first symptom. Derived from the we–they feeling, members view themselves as the “good guys” and the opposition as bad or evil.
3. *Shared negative stereotypes*—Members have common beliefs that minimize the risks involved in a decision or belittle any opposing viewpoints.
4. *Collective rationalizations*—The members explain away any negative information that runs counter to the group decision.
5. *Self-censorship*—Members suppress their own doubts or criticisms concerning the decision.
6. *Illusion of unanimity*—Members mistakenly believe that the decision is a consensus. Because dissenting viewpoints are not being voiced, it is assumed that silence indicates support.
7. *Direct conformity pressure*—When an opposing view or a doubt is expressed, pressure is applied to get the dissenter to concur with the decision.
8. *Mindguards*—Some members play the role of protecting or insulating the group from any opposing opinions or negative information.



Teams and Teamwork

- A **team** is an interdependent group of workers with complementary skills working toward shared goals.
 - Teams are **most appropriate for complex tasks, complex decision-making, or creative tasks.**
 - Teams are **also appropriate when the situation is variable**, requiring the team to adapt to changing external conditions.
 - Self-managing work teams have complete responsibility for whole work tasks.

TABLE 11.4*Guidelines for Effective Functioning of Work Teams*

1. The task is one that is appropriate for a work team.
2. The team is recognized as such by its own members and others in the organization.
3. The team has clear authority over the task (e.g., team must not be "second-guessed" by management).
4. The structure of the team, including the task, the team members, and the team norms, need to promote teamwork.
5. The organization must support the team through policies and systems specifically designed to support the work teams' needs.
6. Expert coaching and feedback are provided to the teams when it is needed and when team members are ready to receive it.

Source: Hackman, J. R. (1998). Why teams don't work. In R. Scott Tindale et al. (Eds.). *Theory and research on small groups*. New York: Plenum Press.