

Advance Course in Social Psychology

Lecture 37 : Group Behaviour- Part IV

Hello friends, welcome back. I will continue my discussion based on previous discussion where I have talked about the structural properties of group. I discussed about roles, status and norms. In this discussion, I am going to talk about the another property that is cohesiveness. This is a very complex property which has its own extremes and how it can hamper or inhibit or encourage group members and groups functioning. So, let us define that what is cohesiveness.

It is the strength of an individual's members desire to be to remain as part of the group. Every member has a strong desire to be associated with the group depending on certain factors. For example, any member would try to continue his membership with any group for a longer period of time because entering into that group or awaiting the membership of the group was a very difficult task or the group is highly successful. So, based on certain factors people have the desire to be associated or remain as part of the group for a longer period of time and to remain as part of the group they tend to show lot of commitment to the roles they perform and commitment to the group.

So, the strength of a group members desire to remain as part of the group is termed as cohesion or cohesiveness where a highly cohesive group are the ones where members are attracted to each other. They have platform to satisfy the interest, develop more skills, group is highly successful and becoming the part of the group is difficult. So, based on the severity of the situation when people become part of the group then they become highly cohesiveness or attracted towards that group. Therefore, it high cohesiveness is because of groups goals and help work towards meeting them. In essence cohesiveness refers to the we feeling it is not that I am part of the group because I have some interest.

I am part of the group because this group is highly successful and I am ready to contribute to that group. So, people would tend to maintain healthy interpersonal relationship with each other. So, that the membership becomes intact. So, cohesiveness refers to and feeling which is known as aspiate decops which is a sense of belongingness to a particular group a high degree of feeling. So, several important factors influence the extent to which group members tend to stick together.

The first is the severity of initiation into the group. That means, the group is highly successful and becoming the member of the group is a difficult task, but anybody who becomes a member of the group they tend to overcome that difficulty and then when they become the member of the group they tend to stick to that group in a long run. This is why members become more cohesive towards that particular group. So, research has shown that the greater the difficulty people overcome to become a member of a group the more cohesive the group will be because they understand that what difficulty they have faced to enter any particular group. It can be of

any high profile or extremely successful educational institutions with high academic records and the entrance is very difficult.

Once any student enters they try to become highly committed and devote maximum time to attain good grades. So, that their association becomes stronger with that educational institution. Another reason is that group cohesion also tends to be strengthened under conditions of high external threat or competition. When the groups face common enemy then members come together to face that challenge or enemy they prepare their own ways to face those challenges and enemy attacks and tend to strategize things in a very cordial manner. They tend to coordinate the efforts in a way that they can confront that enemy attacks.

So, under such conditions petty disagreements are subsided and people tend to focus on the common goal to protect oneself and each other from external threats and danger. The other factors are for example, cohesiveness generally tends to be greater the more time group members spend together. Obviously, when members are interacting with each other there is more sharing of emotions and feelings. That sharing of emotions makes the group members come close to each other and that creates a reason that why people are so close and cohesive and do not want to leave that group. Similarly, if the group limited interactions would never foster any kind of cohesion among members because there is distance among each other.

They would they cannot help with, but interfere with opportunities to develop bonds between group members. The other is that cohesiveness tends to be greater in smaller groups obviously, because people can approach frequently with the other group members and if the group size is big or larger then definitely it becomes for one particular member to interact with other members of the group because of the larger size of the group. So, that makes a group less cohesive whereas, smaller groups are found to be more cohesive. Finally, nothing succeeds like success. If the success history if the group has a success history then definitely members tend to be associated with those groups because there are better opportunities to develop their more skills based on their interest and at the same time people employees tend to be loyal to successful companies.

This is very definite that if the group is highly successful members tend to associate with themselves and that association can only be maintained when people or members are highly loyal to those group members. Thus the discussion has implied that cohesiveness is a positive thing no doubt whatever we have discussed it appears that cohesiveness is a positive aspect of any group property, but people at the same time people are known to enjoy belonging to high cohesiveness that is, but obvious there is high level of satisfaction to be associated or become member of a highly cohesive group. Members of closely knit work groups participate more fully in their groups activities and readily accept their group goals and are absent from their jobs less often than members of less cohesive groups. They are there are more opportunities, there are more interactions, there is more sharing or sense of belongingness that adds more to the reason that why groups are highly cohesive and at the same time cohesive groups tends to

work together quite well and sometimes exceptionally productive and have low levels of voluntary turnover. The more people are less interactive the more their intentions to leave the organization, the more people are interacting with each other, more the group is successful then more is the cohesion of the group members.

But this is one thing that has been posed that cohesiveness is a positive aspect or positive group property, but it has also a negative side. What if the cohesion or level of cohesiveness goes high in a way that it also hampers the functioning of the organization? Imagine any situation when group goals are completely contradicted by the organizational goals then how group members who are extremely cohesive will react to that differentiation they perceive between their goals and the organizational goals. Under such circumstances a highly cohesive group can also position themselves to inflict to a great deal to the organization and can work against the organizational goals. That means, they put lot of pressure on the organizational goals or hierarchy to impose their willingness that what they want rather than confronting or accepting the organizational goals. So, this is a negative impact of high cohesion among members.

So, within this in mind it is important to recognize that cohesiveness is a double edged sword and its effects can be both helpful and at the same time it can be harmful. Now these are the advantages and disadvantages of a highly cohesive group, but ultimately it becomes an organization's responsibility to maintain an equilibrium that even high cohesion is there then how that high cohesion can be used or regulated for more productive activities. To understand this concept more as I mentioned that high cohesion has to be regulated by organizational authorities. Raster performed a pitchfork study where he has talked about levels of cohesiveness high and low levels of cohesiveness based on induction. Now here induction is considered as a leadership in organization and it was identified that what if high and low cohesiveness is paired with positive or negative leadership as an induction then what can be the level of productivity.

So, it was found in his study that high cohesiveness with positive leadership will have record breaking levels of productivity which sounds so promising and positive that when leaders are leading a highly cohesive group with high goals and a proper direction and there is complete agreement between group goals and organizational goals based on positive leadership then leadership is going then productivity levels will definitely go high at the same time it can be negative that even group goals can go against the organizational goals because of high cohesion and support from the leader. But it was observed that high cohesion with positive leadership will have positive results or enhanced levels of productivity and to that extent that even the groups can become self managing teams that they set their own standards set their own rules set their own norms to achieve the organizational goals. Whereas low cohesiveness with positive and negative leadership if it is low cohesiveness positive leadership and low cohesiveness with negative leadership in both the cases it is difficult for any induction or leadership style to identify or increase the level of cohesiveness and they tend to remain at moderate level that is they are definitely below the level of productivity which is being

observed in high cohesiveness groups with positive leadership because even if the leadership is positive it is difficult to derive that level of cohesiveness among members based on the differences among members that exist this again will have negative impact on productivity. Similarly, low cohesiveness with negative leadership then definitely there will be no direction to the members and it leads to low levels of productivity and at the same time if cohesiveness is high with negative leadership then again the organization has to face the dire consequences because the even a leader can also mislead a highly cohesive groups may be there is more risk taking and members who are highly cohesive will not take any observation that what kind of decision making has been taken without any intervention of the leader. So, the ultimately it is about a balance or equilibrium that can be maintained while having high cohesiveness and leadership based on the requirement or the organizational goals or a parity between organizational and group goals.

So, this is how the pitchfork results from the Sashto study. So, the results indicated if we compile the results the results indicated that highly cohesive groups if given a positive leadership style will have highest possible productivity that is, but obvious and highly and also it was stated by Sashto in his study that a highly cohesive group is analogous to a time bomb in the hands of the management which can obtain record breaking productivity levels or severely restricting output depends on how it is laid. What if any leader through his positive leadership style can also mislead a highly cohesive group. These are the extremes of high levels of cohesiveness whereas, a low cohesive group with poor leadership leads to the lowest levels of productivity although low cohesive groups regardless of leadership fall between the two extremes of the cohesive group. The implications are that a group when well handled is most valuable productive tool however, when mishandled the consequences can be dire.

So, the intervention of leadership style plays a very critical role in handling high cohesive group or low cohesive group. Even cohesion is low and leadership is positive it becomes very difficult to enhance that levels of cohesiveness because members are not thinking on common lines they are differing from each other and how to encourage members to collaborate at one point. So, ultimately it is very difficult to maintain the equilibrium between high cohesiveness groups or low cohesiveness groups based on leadership style. Since I just now I mentioned that cohesiveness is a double edged sword then it has its own consequences as well that is the negative. The first is group think if I go to the previous study by Shaster and consider the first situation high cohesiveness with positive leadership style.

Now if a leader has also taken any decision or vice versa a highly cohesive group has also taken a very valid decision on an important issue. But at the same time since members are close to each other they tend to conform strongly conform to the decisions made by the leader or by one member in the group and they fail to understand or think critically the potential influences of outsiders or some negative elements within the group itself because of high cohesiveness. People have lot of hopes and the confidence level also goes high to that level that they fail to think critically that what can be the consequence of the particular decision on the organizational functioning or how any outsider can also impact that decision that has been

taken by the group or by the highly cohesive group. So, this tendency where members of a highly cohesive group fail to think critically about the potential consequences of that decision is known as group think. It is not thinking it is group think.

There is absence of reality testing and moral judgment. People tend to go straight forward that thinking is so fast that they do not understand whether the judgment even the judgment or decision has been taken in while considering all the moral constraints or ethical constraints of the organization or not. To understand this tendency there are certain symptoms that exist in a highly cohesive group. The first is illusion of invulnerability. Creating excessive optimism that encourages members to take extreme risk and decisions.

Without understanding what can be the consequence of any decision they fail to consider anything and they have lot of confidence and optimism to take a particular risky decision. Belief in inherent morality. Members have strong belief in the rightness of the decisions and sometimes ignore the moral and ethical consequences of their decisions. As I mentioned that there is absence of reality testing and moral judgment. So, members have strong belief in the rightness of the decisions and sometimes ignore the moral and ethical consequences of their decisions.

Self-censorship. Because of high levels of conformity and to maintain the cohesiveness of the group members are under constant pressure that do not express arguments, doubts and developing and deviations against the group's decision or views. Even one member who has any doubt or any disagreement he or she would not speak up in order to maintain the cohesiveness of the group and that can also hamper the consequence of the group or organizational goals. The self-appointed mind guards. Members protect the group and the leader from information that is problematic or contradictory to the group cohesiveness. Members protect the group and the leader from information that is problematic or contradictory.

Just to maintain the cohesiveness of the group any member who has some important information in order to change the decision they would restrict themselves or inhibit themselves. So that cohesiveness should be maintained. Now based on these inhibitions high cohesiveness has been maintained no doubt, but at the same time it also has some dire consequences because that information was not shared and the decision will have a negative impact on the functioning of the organization. And the last is stereotype views of out group. Negative views make effective responses to conflict which seems unnecessary.

Sometimes the members tend to consider or have false interpretations about the out groups and considering those interpretations about the out groups they tend to take the decisions within their group and that actually hampers the functioning of the organization and that stereotyping attitude towards out group is actually unnecessary and have less effective

responses on their decision making. Now this kind of tendencies will definitely exist in any organization because they are natural tendencies, but are there any way out to cut down on these tendencies? We cannot eliminate these human tendencies from the organization at all, but those tendencies can be reduced. So, there are certain strategies that have been suggested by social psychologists and OB professionals that how tendency of group think can be avoided. The first is promote open enquiry. Group leaders should encourage members to be skeptical of all solutions to problems and to avoid reaching premature agreements.

Towards this end it sometimes helps to play the role of devil's advocate by intentionally finding fault with the proposed solution and challenging others to improve upon it. The members, the leader opens up the decision within the group and members are allowed to give a critical judgment or opinion on the decision that has been taken and more enquiry is being posed upon those decisions so that the correct decision can be taken in the last moment. Thus raising a non-threatening question to force both sides of an issue can be very helpful in improving the quality of decision. Both sides means the advantages and disadvantages or helpful impact or harmful impact of any decision on the organization.

The other is use subgroups. Two groups are taking a common decision on an issue. If two groups have agreed upon it then definitely there is a tendency of group thing, but if out of two groups one group is against the decision then it is a positive situation which actually opens more ways for more in-depth discussions to correct that decision. So, because the decisions made by any one group may be the result of group thing, but basing decisions on the recommendation of two groups is a useful check. If the two groups disagreed a discussion of the differences is likely to raise important issues. Definitely when groups are also questioning the decisions then there is some chances that there are chances that the decision can be altered.

However, if two groups agree one can be relatively confident that their conclusions are not both the result of group thing. So, this is how using subgroups means when decisions is being opened to the groups then how two or more than two groups react to those decisions can cut down or curtail the tendency of group thing. When group thing occurs group members feel very confident that they are doing the right thing such feelings of perfection discourage people from considering opposing information. However, if members have also the tendency to accept the flaws and mistakes that have they have performed in taking the decisions then definitely they can open up to more corrective actions and that can enhance the decision making process and curb the tendency of group thing. And the other is hold second chance meetings.

Before implementing a decision it is a good idea to hold a second chance meeting during which members are asked to express any doubt and propose any new ideas that they may have. Now the thing to observe in the discussion is that in all those these four strategies we are actually trying to identify the symptoms of illusion of invulnerability, belief in inherent morality, self-censorship, self-appointed mind guards and stereotype views of out group. The other two remedies of group thing which is based on the legalities. The first is devil's advocate

technique where it is a decision making technique where an individual is allowed to become a critic in the proposed decision. Among the group itself one member is considered as a critic and he or she makes comments or suggest any alteration that can be offered to any decision that helps in preventing the tendency of group thing and increases the chance of a high quality decision.

It also help prevent companies from making expensive risky decisions and promote open inquiry and admit shortcomings. And the other is authentic dissent technique. It is a technique for improving the quality of group discussion in which one outside expert there is a thin line. In devil's advocate technique there is only a critic within the group itself whereas in authentic dissent technique an outside member is considered as the outside as an expert who actively disagrees with the group's decision and encourages original thinking and alternative views and attitude changes. So all in all the strategies and the remedies to group thing tends to curb the tendency among people about group thing and then they tend to focus on all the shortcomings which lies in any decision.

The other tendency is group shift. It is a phenomenon in which the initial position of an individual members of a group are exaggerated towards a more extreme position. For instance I as an individual member would not take any extreme risk or decision in favor of the organization. But if any decision that has been taken at group level and the results or the consequences are shared by every member of the group then immediately that risky decision can be made and implemented. This is termed as group thing. In a group people are likely to exhibit a slight preference towards risky decision as a risk is divided among the group members rather than borne by an individual.

This is a tendency of group shift that members of the group are exaggerated towards a more extreme position and when people are in groups they make decisions about risk differently from when they are alone. As soon as we are in a position to take any decision but at the same time we tend to share that decision or consequence of the decision with the other members rather we will not take because we are alone. This is known as group shift. Taking extreme decision but at the same time members also bear the consequence of a particular decision. So, group think is a mode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive group and when the members are striving from unanimity override their motivation to appraise alternative courses of action realistically.

So, there are varying explanations that attempt to provide a reason as to why group shift occurs. The first is group diffuses responsibility. When the group size increases people tend to shed off from the responsibility on to others. They will put their responsibilities on to others and they want to act freely in the group itself. So, there is a sense of irresponsibility rather being responsible for taking the decision.

So, the emotional bond that are created within the group serve to decrease anxiety within the group and the actual risk of the situation seems less. Now what happens that when the size of the group increases the senior members would try to transfer the responsibility on to others and they want to set themselves free. At the same time they also have emotional bonding with the other members of the group. They become less anxious and free with this idea that the others members would take the decision and they will share the responsibility or consequence of the decision. This is group diffusion of responsibility which evokes the tendency of group shift.

Brown also indicates that the social status in group is often associated with risk taking leading people to avoid a low risk position. That means people who have high status they would engage themselves in risk in engage in taking risky decisions rather they would avoid any low risk position. It is also suggested that high risk takers are more confident and hence may persuade others to take greater risk. If it is about diffusion of responsibility then it is another extreme which evolves or leads to a state of group shift that high risk raters are more confident and engage in persuading people to take more risky decisions. It is also suggested that as people pay attention to a possible action they become more familiar and comfortable with it and hence perceive less risk.

So, this entails that more a person as an individual member is engaging himself in the group activities the more the person becomes familiar and comfortable with the situation and engage in taking risky decision which leads to a tendency of group thing. And the other consequence is social loafing and social facilitation, group thing, group shift and social loafing and social facilitation. Now these are the tendencies which are based on the influence of others presence in an individual's performance and both are a part of group behavior. Performance of an individual based on the or during the performance of an individual and the presence of an individual will either facilitate or inhibit the performance of an individual and at the same time when members tend to exert less effort on an additive task. Additive task means when all the efforts are pulled in order to achieve a greater goal then people tend to shed off from their responsibility and they tend to diffuse their responsibility onto others.

So, in both the examples of situations these tendencies are known as social loafing and social facilitation. Social loafing is a tendency of group members to exert less individual effort on the additive task as the size of the group increases. Additive task means the coordinated effort every individual will put an effort on the common goal and that effort is being pulled in the end. But what when the group size increases and people tend to avoid exerting effort on the common goal this is social loafing. Whereas social facilitation is a tendency of the presence of others to enhance an individual performance and at the other time impair it.

It is a state of heightened emotional arousal. For instance any student who has to perform guitar on the stage if he has supporters in the hall he will be in a state of arousal where he can perform better because he is combining his knowledge with high performance. If in the same

situation he does not have supporters in the hall then again there will be some emotional arousal and the person will be unable to perform at a higher level. Now based on this emotional arousal if supporters are there and he has expertise in performing the guitar then it will facilitate the performance. And if even if supporters are there and the task is not well learned then also there will be a state of emotional arousal and there will be no social facilitation to perform the task effectively. So, in both the cases social facilitation is something which is related to an emotional arousal.

If emotional arousal is high along with support or facilitation and with appropriate knowledge or expert then the performance will be increased else it is impaired or inhibited. So, this all depends on the level of cohesiveness of the group. If the task is well learned and the group members are highly cohesive then the performance of an individual will definitely go high. This is the tendency of social loafing and facilitation. So, this is all about cohesiveness as the integral dynamics of any group which has its positive and negative consequences in terms of group shift, in terms of group thing, in terms of social loafing and facilitation. That is all for the discussion. Thank you. Thank you.