

SUBJECT: SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE WITH GROUPS

SUB CODE: GSW13

CLASS: I MSW

UNIT-2

GROUP PROCESS AND DYNAMICS

GROUP PROCESS

Group process is the understanding of how groups of people come together, connect, interact, and disconnect. It can also refer to how groups perform activities or tasks together. In a workshop setting, an ideal facilitator would be professionally trained in understanding the dynamics of groups as well as a group process in order to be inclusive and effective.

In a group context, there are some people who will emerge as natural leaders, others who will be supporters, and also those who will be problem-finders/solvers. One of the dark sides of the group process is the tendency for groups to create a scapegoat within the group. A scapegoat is someone that the group decides is different from them and doesn't belong to the group.

Through thoughtful and skilful group settings, attuned group facilitators will be able to help groups to grow, be honest about their darker impulses, correct the tendency to scapegoat, and extend to a more-than-human capacity for inclusion, forgiveness, and healing.

Group process refers to how an organization's members work together to get things done. Typically, organizations spend a great deal of time and energy setting and striving to reach goals but give little consideration to what is happening between and to the group's greatest resource – its members. While working hard to achieve results, it is critical that members' needs be addressed. Membership in an organization is as much an opportunity to develop self-confidence, refine skills and make friends as it is to support a cause, fundraise or educate the campus community. All of these can be done simultaneously, but most likely will not just happen on their own.

Acceptance or rejection: A group worker must know every individual group member's relationship with other group members or how much power each one has over the other i.e. whether he is accepted by others or isolated. If a member is isolated, the group worker must know the meaning and causes of isolation. It may be because the individual's behaviour has offended the other members due to variations in Socio-cultural background or personality differences. Sometimes the situation is worse than the isolation i.e. the individual is rejected by the group and exposed to open hostility. Thus the questions of isolation or rejection need to be addressed by the group worker by handling interpersonal and intrapersonal issues in the group.

Sub groups: There is no group where all members come together to perform every task. Formation of sub groups are very natural and they emerge spontaneously. The group worker has

to observe whether these sub groups threaten the unity of the group or are friendly formations. He has to act accordingly. It should be known that emotional acceptance of the inevitability and legitimacy of sub groups is a pre requisite for good and skillful group work. A worker who works against the sub groups, loses the whole group (Konopka, 1963).

Group bond: It refers to 'group cohesiveness' or 'sense of belonging'. It is the force bringing group members closer. Group bond may be emotional or task-related. 'Emotional bond' derives from the connection that members feel to other group members and 'task-related bond' refers to the degree to which group members share group goals and work together to meet these goals. The effectiveness of a group can be understood through group bond. The main factors that influence group bond are: members' similarity, group size, entry difficulty, group success, and external competition and threats. Thus, group bond is a powerful aspect of group dynamics.

Group conflict: There exists no group without any conflict. Maturity of a group can be understood by observing how a group resolves conflict. Normally conflict can be solved or mitigated through withdrawal of one part of the group (giving up or running away or starting another group), subjugation (powerful part forces others to follow their wish), majority rule (major people decide action), minority consent (minority agrees with any option), compromise (each party agrees to the limit set by them), and integration (conflicting opinions are discussed and reworked for solution) [Konopka, 1963]. Integration is the most mature way of conflict resolution (Friedlander, 1976). The worker, while performing the helping role in a group, should have knowledge on 'group conflict' for better handling of the clash or arguments and decision-making.

Important of relationship

Relationships are as crucial as a social worker, because you're becoming involved with families and young people at a really vulnerable time for them. You want to support people to have the best outcomes during this tough time in their lives. It's not always about the relationship being amazing, because sometimes you might have to make decisions that people don't agree with. However, being open and honest from the beginning can really help when these difficult conversations need to be had. An important part of building a relationship with a family is asking what you could do that they would find helpful or unhelpful. This demonstrates that you have an active role in that relationship and it is not only them who may need to make changes.

What I enjoy most about teaching on the Frontline programme is seeing participants develop over the two years. At the beginning of their first year, most are feeling anxious about starting their placement and working with families. However, in a short space of time, their knowledge and confidence grow. Often, one of the key strengths of Frontline participants, particularly in the first few months, is their ability to build strong relationships with families. They learn this through the theories and approaches we teach them at the summer institute and throughout the programme. Their consultant social worker and practice tutor continue to support them in developing that skill over the two years.

We run 'good practice forums' in the North West where we ask participants to present work they've done with families. Every time I go to one of these, I'm amazed at the participants' hard work and creativity. It's really inspiring to see how they have used skills from previous roles or from their training to build strong, purposeful relationships with families. One participant recently demonstrated how she had used slime and glitter as a way of helping a child, who spoke very little, express how he was feeling.

My role has shown me that different people have such different ideas. People who don't have experience of social work and those who have enjoyed long careers in other fields are able to come into the profession and do a brilliant job, because they can make those connections with families. Through these relationships, participants are able to bring about change for the most vulnerable, and that's the most important thing.

Leadership

The entire functioning of the group process governs and is directed by the leader. The development of leadership significantly affects the development of the group. The group effectiveness is measured by the two factors: the emotional notion and the other one task orientation. There are leaders who are very task-oriented and some are happy to keep the team together. The emergence of social group leader depends on the ground of prior relationship, socio-economic background, affiliation, and achievement orientation.

COMMUNICATION IN GROUP

Group communication is the act of sending and receiving messages to multiple members of a group. In a business environment, groups often use this type of communication to exchange ideas, determine goals and motivate other members. The size of groups can vary, but they typically comprise at least three members and up to 20 members. Group communication can be beneficial for groups of all sizes, from smaller focus groups to entire departments. When groups communicate effectively, they can share necessary information as they work to accomplish mutual goals.

There are many types of group communication channels, and it's important to choose a method that works for most members to ensure everyone receives and understands the shared messages. Members of the group may have different styles of communicating, so more than one type of communication may be necessary to reach the group's mutual goals. For example, a group leader may choose to hold a weekly meeting to discuss the team's progress while also using emails to communicate on a more regular basis.

Verbal Communication

Verbal communication is perhaps the most obvious and understood mode of communication, and it is certainly a powerful tool in your communication toolbox. Put simply, verbal communication is the sharing of information between two individuals using words.

Spoken versus Written Communication

While we typically focus on speech while talking about verbal communication, it's important to remember that writing is also a form of verbal communication. After all, writing uses words too!

Imagine for a moment that you're a college student who is struggling with material in a class. Rather than simply giving up, you decide that you're going to ask your instructor for the guidance you need to make it through the end of the semester. Now, you have a few choices for using verbal communication to do this. You might choose to call your instructor, if they've provided contact information, or talk to them in person after class or during office hours. You may take a different approach and send them an email. You can probably identify your own list of pros and cons for each of these approaches. But really, what's the difference between writing and talking in these situations? Let's look at four of the major differences between the two:

1. **Formal versus Informal:** We generally use spoken communication informally while we use written communication formally.
2. **Synchronous versus Asynchronous:** Synchronous communication is communication that takes place in real time, such as a conversation with a friend. In contrast, asynchronous communication is communication that is not immediate and occurs over longer periods of time, such as letters, email, or even text messages.
3. **Recorded versus Unrecorded:** Written communication is generally archived and recorded for later retrieval while spoken communication is generally not recorded.

Benefits of Spoken Communication

Spoken communication can be a conversation, a meeting, or even a speech. Spoken communication is powerful in that it allows for input from every part of the social communication model. You encode your thoughts into the spoken word and look to your audience to decode and take the message in. You can ask for feedback directly to confirm understanding of your message.

In a world where we do most of our talking by email and text, spoken communication is a breath of fresh air. Leverage the power of spoken communication to create relationships—you can establish a rapport and a sense of trust with your audience when you speak with them. Spoken communication allows you to bond on a more emotional level with your listeners.

Spoken communication also makes it easier to ensure understanding by addressing objections and clearing up misunderstandings: you can adjust your message as you communicate it, based

on the feedback you're getting from your audience. Spoken communication allows you to walk away from a conversation with a higher degree of certainty that your message was received.

Nonverbal Communication

We've already employed a little bit of nonverbal communication with the active listening skills we've previously discussed: nodding, facial expressions, leaning toward the speaker to show interest—all of those are forms of nonverbal communication. Body language can reinforce your spoken message or it can contradict it entirely.

There's a myth that says that when you speak, only 35 percent of your communication is verbal and 65 percent of it is nonverbal. That's not entirely true because so much depends on the context and situation. It is, however, absolutely true that nonverbal communication can make or break your message.

Here are some types of nonverbal communication and the effects they can have on the success of your communication:

- **Facial expressions:** Your teenage cousin we referred to at the beginning of this section might have told you he was happy, but his apathetic facial expression may have communicated different information. Facial expressions—happy, sad, angry—help you convey your message. Be aware of your facial expression when you talk and particularly when you listen, which is when it's easy to forget.
- **Gestures:** When you speak, a gesture can make your message stronger. Pointing out something you want your listener to look at more closely is an example of nonverbal communication that makes your message understood. Motioning warmly toward a coworker who deserves special recognition, making a fist to show frustration or anger, such gestures help further engage your audience when you speak.
- **Proximity:** How close you are to your audience when you speak sends a nonverbal message. If your size is imposing and you leave a very small distance between you and your listener, it's likely your nonverbal communication will be a bit threatening. On the other hand, giving someone too much space is an awkward nonverbal communication that might confuse your listener.
- **Touch:** Shaking an audience member's hand, putting your hand on his shoulder: these are nonverbal cues that can affect the success of your message. Touch communicates affection, but it also communicates power. You can think about what kind of messages a job applicant may send through a weak handshake versus a firm one after having a job interview.
- **Eye contact:** Making and maintaining eye contact with an audience when you're verbally communicating or listening communicates to the other party that you're interested and engaged in the conversation. Good eye contact often conveys the trait of honesty to the other party.
- **Appearance:** Your clothing, hair, and jewelry are also a part of nonverbal communication. If you put a dachshund pin on your lapel each morning (because you have a pet dachshund), that says something about you as a person. Similarly, the quality and

condition of your clothing, how it fits, if it's appropriate for the season—all of these things speak nonverbally about you as a communicator.

Nonverbal communication reveals a lot about you as a communicator and how you relate to other people. It pays to be aware of the elements of your nonverbal communication so you can maximize the impact of your message.

Group Dynamics

Groups are important for organisational life. Managers spend substantial time in managing groups and teams so that groups contribute to organisational and group goals. How effectively a manager plans, organises, staffs, leads and controls depends upon how effectively he manages the groups. A group means “two or more people who interact with one another, are psychologically aware of one another, perceive themselves to be members of the group, and work towards a common goal.”

Group dynamics studies the nature, formation and reasons for forming the groups. It studies how groups affect the behaviour and attitude of members and the organisation. It is a process by which people interact with each other. If groups are effectively managed, they contribute a lot to organisational goals.

Basic Assumptions of Group Dynamics

According to Cartwright and Zander (1968), the basic assumptions are:

- i) the groups are inevitable (even the hermits / Sanyasis and the Hippies),
- ii) that groups mobilise powerful forces that produce effects of utmost importance to individuals,
- iii) that groups can produce constructive as well as destructive consequences and
- iv) that it is the correct understanding of group dynamics based on empirical studies that help in enhancing the constructive aspects of group life and group achievements.