



SOCIAL GROUP AND PROCESS

Meaning of Social Groups:

Two or more persons in interaction constitute a social group. It has common aim.

- In its strict sense, group is a collection of people interacting together in an orderly way on the basis of shared expectations about each other's behaviour.
- As a result of this interaction, the members of a group, feel a common sense of belonging.

MEANING

- Sociological conception of group has come to mean as indicated by Mckee,
" a plurality of people as actors involved in a pattern of social interaction, conscious of sharing common understanding and of accepting some rights and obligations that accrue only to members.

GROUP

- According to Green,
“A group is an aggregate of individuals which persist in time, which has one or more interests and activities in common and which is organised.”

- According to Maclver and Page

“Any collection of human beings who are brought into social relationship with one another”. Social relationships involve some degree of reciprocity and mutual awareness among the members of the group

SOCIAL GROUP

- social group consists of such members as have reciprocal relations.
- The members are bound by a sense of unity.
- Their interest is common, behaviour is similar.
- They are bound by the common consciousness of interaction.
- Viewed in this way, a family, a village, a nation, a political party or a trade union is a social group.

Characteristics of Social Groups:

- Following are the important characteristics of social group:

1. Mutual Awareness:

- The members of a social group must be mutually related to one another. A mere aggregate of individuals cannot constitute a social group unless reciprocal awareness exist among them. Mutual attachment, is therefore, regarded as its important and distinctive feature. It forms an essential feature of a group.

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- 2. One or more Common Interests:
 - Groups are mostly formed for the fulfillment of certain interests. The individuals who form a group should possess one or more than one common interests and ideals. It is for the realization of common interests that they meet together. Groups always originates, starts and proceed with a common interests.
- 3. Sense of Unity:
 - Each social group requires sense of unity and a feeling of sympathy for the development of a feeling or sense of belongingness. The members of a social group develop common loyalty or feeling of sympathy among themselves in all matters because of this sense of unity.

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- 4. We-feeling:
 - A sense of we-feeling refers to the tendency on the part of the members to identify themselves with the group.
 - They treat the members of their own group as friends and the members belonging to other groups as outsiders.
 - They cooperate with those who belong to their groups and all of them protect their interests unitedly.
 - We-feeling generates sympathy, loyalty and fosters cooperation among members.
- 5. Similarity of Behaviour:
 - For the fulfillment of common interest, the members of a group behave in a similar way.
 - Social group represents collective behaviour. The-modes of behaviour of the members on a group are more or less similar.

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- 6. Group Norms:
- Each and every group has its own ideals and norms and the members are supposed to follow these. He who deviates from the existing group-norms is severely punished. These norms may be in the form of customs, folk ways, mores, traditions, laws etc. They may be written or unwritten. The group exercises some control over its members through the prevailing rules or norms.

Classification of Groups:

- Different sociologists have classified groups in different ways. Social groups are not only innumerable but also diverse.
- It is not possible to study all the groups. A systematic study of groups needs a classification.
- Various thinkers have chosen many criteria or bases for the classification of social groups such as size, kind of contact, nature of interests, degree of organisation and degree of permanence etc. Some of these bases have received more attention than others.

Classification

Dwight Sanderson has classified groups into three types on the bases of structure such as,

- involuntary,
- voluntary and
- delegate groups.
- An involuntary group is that to which man has no choice, which is based on kinship such as the family, tribe or clan.
- A voluntary group is one which a man joins of his volition or wishes. At any time he is free to withdraw his membership from this group.
- A delegate group is one to which a man joins as a representative of a number of people either elected or nominated by them. Parliament or Assembly is a delegate group.

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P.A. Sorokin, an American sociologist, has divided groups into two major types

1. the vertical
- 2.the horizontal.

- The vertical group includes persons of different strata or statuses.
- But the horizontal group includes persons of the same status.
- Eg:A nation, for instance, is a vertical group, while a class represents horizontal grouping.

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F.H. Giddings classifies groups into,

- genetic and
- congregate.
- The genetic group is the family in which a man is born involuntarily.
- The congregate group is the voluntary group to which he joins voluntarily.

George Hasen has classified groups into four types on the basis of their relations to other groups. They are,

- unsocial,
- pseudo-social,
- antisocial and
- pro-social groups.
- An unsocial group is one which largely lives to itself and for itself and does not participate in the larger society of which it is a part.
- It does not mix-up with other groups and remains aloof from them.

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- but it never goes against the interests of the larger group.
- A pseudo-social group participates in the larger group of which it is a part but mainly for its own gain and not for the greater good.
- An antisocial group is one, which acts against the interest of the larger group of which it is a part.
- A pro-social group is the reverse of the antisocial group. It works for the larger interest of the society of which it is a part.

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C.H. Cooley classified groups on the basis of kind of contact into primary and secondary groups.

- In primary group, there is face-to-face, close and intimate relationship among the members such as in the family.
- But in a secondary group the relationship among the members are indirect, impersonal and superficial such as the political party, a city and trade union etc.

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W.G. Sumner made a division of groups into in-group and out-group.

- The groups with which the individual identifies himself are his in-groups such as his family, tribe, college, occupation etc.
- All other groups to which he does not belong are his out-groups.

Other types

Besides these above, the groups can be classified further into following categories:

- (i) Disjunctive and overlapping groups.
- (ii) Territorial and non-territorial groups.
- (iii) Homogenous and Heterogeneous groups.
- (iv) Permanent and Transitory groups.
- (v) Contractual and non-contractual groups.
- (vi) Open groups and closed groups.
- Thus, sociologists have classified groups into numerous categories according to their own way of looking at them.

Important questions

- Define social group?
- Discuss the types of social group in detail