



Group Behavior: A Conceptual Analysis

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Abstract

People join a group for reasons such as avoiding the feeling of loneliness and social exclusion, being accepted by others, gaining status, and achieving success with the group, based on the need of sense of belonging mentioned in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. When individuals join groups, they both influence the group with their personal characteristics and are also affected by the structure, behavioral norms and situational conditions of the group. Many features such as the structure and characteristics of the group, individual characteristics of group members, norms of the group, roles, duties and status of the individuals have an impact on group behavior. It is important for the group members and the group leader to work in coordination in order for the group to achieve its goals and ensure its sustainability. In this study, the conceptual framework of individual and situational factors related to group behavior, characteristics of group structure, group development and group outcomes is presented with a holistic approach. The study is considered to be important in terms of providing researchers with a conceptual analysis on group behavior.

Keywords: Group behavior, group dynamics, group norms, group leader.

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Introduction

People naturally want to be included in a group based on the need of sense of belonging. Group behavior is a process that improves under the influence of individual and situational variables. Individual characteristics of group members, group structure (norms, roles, status, group cohesiveness) and group development activities, group type, group size and group tasks have an impact on group behavior and outcomes. Groups can bring about attitude change in individuals, increase their tendency to take risks by acting in a group, and give them status related to the roles they have in the group. In addition, individuals may be more successful when they work as a group member than when they work individually in situations where social shirking behavior does not occur. Therefore, groups are influenced by the individual characteristics (personality traits, skills and abilities, success, etc.) of organizational members as well as the behaviors of individuals. All group members have various duties and responsibilities in achieving the group's goals. When evaluated in terms of the roles of group members, it can be said that the group leader has an important role in ensuring organizational success. Within the framework of group norms, the leader should direct the group members towards the determined goal, make efforts to increase their performance and ensure the effectiveness of the group. This study aims to present a conceptual analysis of the individual and situational factors that influence group behavior, group structure, group development and group outcomes.

Group

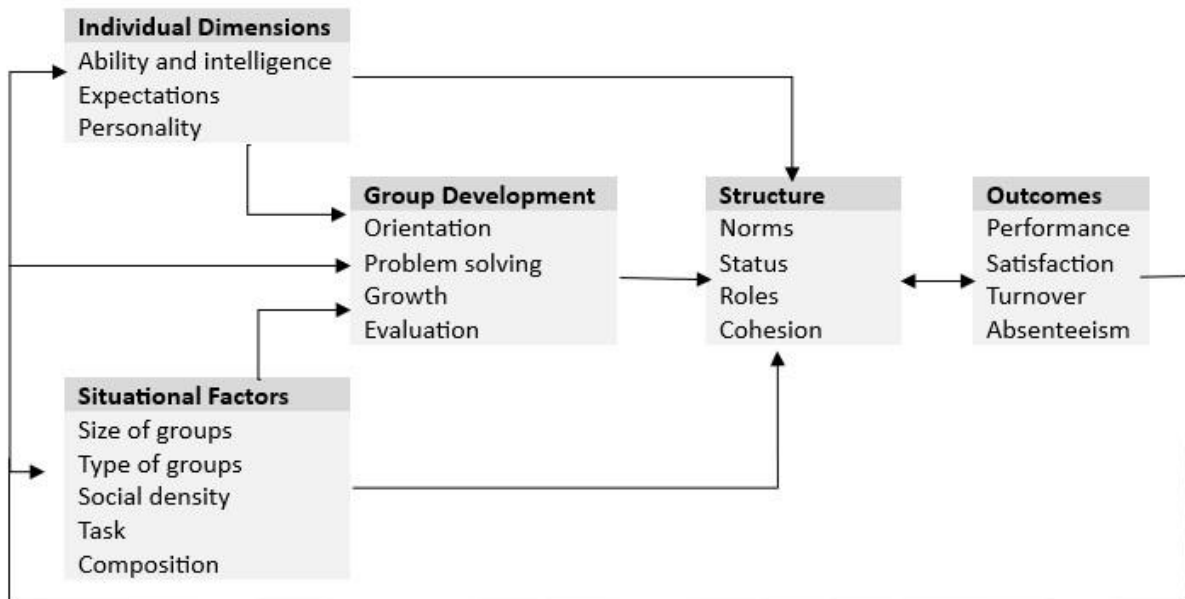
A group is two or more people interacting to achieve a common goal. A group is a community of individuals who share a common norm system, have different roles and interact with each other to achieve common goals (Balci, 2016: 85). Groups consist of two or more people interacting with each other, coming together to accomplish a specific goal (Robbins, Decenzo & Coulter, 2013: 250; Robbins & Judge, 2017: 276). People who are physically altogether, even if they look like a group from the outside, cannot be attributed as a group if they do not interact and communicate with each other (Özkalp & Kirel, 2016: 200). A group is a structure in which two or more individuals interact with each other and individuals are aware of their positive interdependence in achieving the set goals. Therefore, individuals know that they are members of the group and behave accordingly (Hogg & Vaughan, 2014: 288; Johnson & Johnson, 1987: 8). To summarize, in order to speak of a group, group members should perceive themselves as part of the group in line with common goals and rules, and individuals should interact and depend on each other (Can, Azizoğlu & Aydın, 2015: 165).

People have a basic need to "belong" and this leads them to become close to each other and join groups (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). In addition, physical closeness can also be counted among the reasons for joining a group (Hogg & Vaughan, 2014: 318). Individuals tend to get along well with people with whom they are often in the same physical space (Tyler & Sears, 1977). Individuals may also want to join a group to avoid social exclusion (Hogg & Vaughan, 2014: 320). Social exclusion is the deprivation of individuals from all kinds of social interaction with group members and isolation from the group (Solak & Teközel, 2019). Finally, eliminating the insecurity of loneliness by joining a group, gaining status by joining a group that is respected by others, and meeting social needs are among the reasons for joining a group (Can et al., 2015: 165-166). The desire to associate with other people and belong to a group is an innate drive. Groups also have a social facilitation effect. Social facilitation is the tendency of individuals to be better at easy tasks and less successful at complex tasks in the presence of others and in the evaluation of individual performance (Aronson, Wilson & Akert, 2012: 497, 510). In addition to social facilitation behavior, individuals also exhibit social shirking behavior. Social shirking is the decrease in the effort of each person as the number of members in the group increases. While doing a task, individuals make less effort with the idea that other group members will do it anyway (Hogg & Vaughan, 2014: 298). Therefore, individuals may join a group in order to achieve success more easily through the group as well as individual achievements.

The mutual interactions within the group constitute group dynamics. Since a group is a living structure, there are continuous interactions among individuals. Group dynamics are the effects of changes in any part of the group on the individuals in the group and on the structure of the group.

Group dynamics refers to cause-effect relationships within the group, the formation and functioning of groups (Güney, 2015: 154-155). Group dynamics are the interactions and forces among group members in social situations (Luthans, 2011: 339). Group behavior is the behavior of an individual under the influence of the group (Güney, 2004: 101). Group behavior is the behavior that emerges when similarities are observed in the behavior of individuals as a result of the norms, standards, rules and sanctions of the group as well as the interactions between individuals (Balci, 2016: 85). Group behavior is a process that evolves under the influence of individual and situational variables. In this context, the structure of the group and group development activities have an impact on group behaviors and outputs (Figure 1).

Figure 1
A Framework for Group Behavior



Source: Szilagyi & Wallace, 1990.

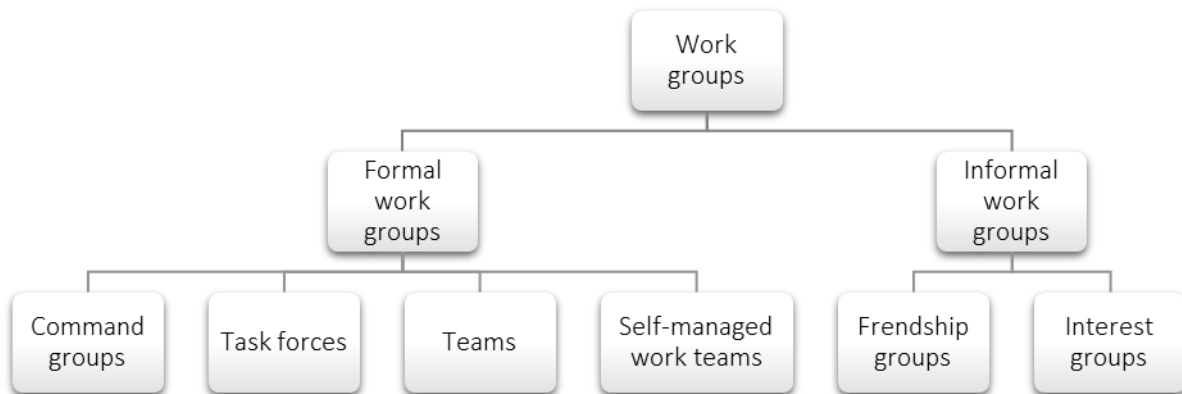
1. Individual Factors in Group Behavior

One of the main characteristics of a group is that it creates a sense of synergy (team spirit, peer solidarity, morale, motivation) among members. Through this unity, individuals support each other by forming close bonds and become self-sufficient (Hogg & Vaughan, 2014: 301). Group members bring with them characteristics that can affect group behavior. An individual's typical behavioral patterns, how he or she reacts to others, skills and abilities influence the reactions of other group members to that individual, the subsequent interaction and the ultimate performance as a group (Szilagyi & Wallace, 1990: 261).

2. Situational Factors in Group Behavior

Group behavior is influenced by various factors such as group structure, size and tasks. There are many types of groups in organizations and groups play an important role in determining organizational effectiveness. Groups are divided into formal and informal groups (Figure 2). Managers establish formal groups in order to achieve organizational goals. In formal groups, goals are determined key to the needs of the organization. Informal groups, on the other hand, arise naturally in organizations. This is because individuals believe that working together in a group will help them achieve their goals or meet their needs (George and Jones, 2012: 305).

Figure 2
Types of Work Groups



Source: George & Jones, 2012.

Based on the figure, it is possible to say that groups are considered as formal and informal groups; formal groups consist of command groups, task groups, teams and self-managed teams. Informal groups consist of friendship groups and interest groups. Formal groups are the groups determined by the organizational management in which jobs are allocated in order to fulfill the tasks. The behaviors that individuals must fulfill in formal groups are aimed at achieving the goals of the organization (Robbins & Judge, 2017: 276). Informal groups are naturally occurring structures in organizations. Individuals in the organization form informal groups in order to meet their interests, needs or goals that the formal organization cannot meet (Balci, 2016: 85). These groups emerge spontaneously in organizations and tend to form around common interests and friendships (Robbins et al., 2013: 250).

Formal groups planned and formed by the organization can also be allocated by the organization. In organizations, the pattern of relations among formal groups are aimed to be determined by creating an organizational chart and the tasks to be assigned to these groups are determined (Aydin, 2014: 18). In organizations, members who report to a specific manager constitute the *command and control group* (Can et al., 2015: 166). This group consists of individuals who report directly to a specific manager and report directly to the manager (Robbins & Judge, 2017: 276). *Task groups* consist of members brought together to complete a specific task (Can et al., 2015: 166-167). In task groups, there are not only hierarchical command and control structures but also cross-command structures (Robbins & Judge, 2017: 276). A *team* is a formal working group consisting of individuals working in a coordinated manner to achieve the group's goals. A team consists of individuals who interact at a high level and work together intensively to achieve a common group goal. *Self-managed teams* are formal work groups consisting of individuals who are jointly responsible for achieving the team's goals and directing individuals (George & Jones, 2012: 306; Hellriegel, Slocum & Woodman, 1995: 273).

At the end of the process of bringing individuals together in a formal organization, the emergence of informal organizations is inevitable. The relationships that arise spontaneously between the individuals that make up the formal group constitute informal groups (Aydin, 2014: 19). *Interest groups*, one of the informal groups, are communities formed when individuals come together due to a subject of interest. Communities formed by individuals coming together to improve working conditions can be given as an example (Robbins & Judge, 2017: 277). *Friendship groups* are groups formed by individuals who want to share with each other outside the organization (Can et al., 2015: 167). Social associations that usually take place outside the organization, close age groups, similar ethnic origins, those who are interested in the same music group and those with the same political

views can form these groups (Robbins & Judge, 2017: 277). Individuals join natural organizations in order to establish relationships with others, to belong to a group and to feel a sense of identification, to get help in realizing the behaviors desired by the organization and to cooperate with other individuals (Aydın, 2014: 20-22). Informal groups provide many advantages to individuals. The first of these is the integration and reinforcement of social values through informal groups. These values turn into norms that shape individuals over time. In addition, in informal groups, information transmission is faster than in formal groups and individuals in these groups can get information and take action in a short time. Finally, informal groups guide the behavior of group members and facilitate their work (Özkalp & Kirel, 2016: 206-207).

The size of the group and the tasks of the group play an important role in group behavior. The number of individuals forming the group affects the integration of the group. Since there will be many informal relations in groups with a large population, the integration of the group becomes difficult. Because conflicts arise in groups with many informal relationships (Güney, 2007: 664). Social interactions are more frequent in small groups than in large groups. In large groups, the large number of group members leads to the emergence of subgroups. Subgroups can affect the organization positively or negatively (Özkalp & Kirel, 2016: 216). Groups of 12 or more people are more successful in providing various inputs. Because it is easier for all group members to interact with each other (Berelson & Steiner, 1964). On the other hand, small groups with 5 to 7 members tend to act more efficiently (Robbins et al., 2013: 255). In addition to the size of the group, the tasks of the group also have an impact on group behavior. Groups can be formed to fulfill production, discussion and problem solving tasks (Hackman & Jones, 1965; cited in Szilagyi & Wallace, 1990: 264). The greater the difficulty of the task, the more important it becomes for group members to interact effectively to achieve a high level of performance (Szilagyi & Wallace, 1990: 264).

3. Structure of the Group

The relationships between the individuals who make up the group and the characteristics that ensure the functioning of the group constitute the structure of the group (Can, et al., 2015: 175). These features can be considered as group norms, roles, status and cohesiveness (Szilagyi & Wallace, 1990: 258). Group structure has an impact on group behavior and individual behavior.

Norms

Groups help to establish social norms, in other words, explicit or implicit rules about behaviors accepted in the group (Aronson, Wilson, & Akert, 2012: 498). Individuals within the group tend to think and behave in a similar way. Continuous communication between group members leads to the formation of common value judgments and group norms shared by the group (Aydın, 2014: 23). Norms are behaviors that are commonly shared by individuals in the organization and that must be performed within the group (Robbins & Judge, 2017: 285). Norms are common beliefs about how group members should behave. These beliefs are descriptive as well as prescriptive. Norms create a frame of reference for individuals' behaviors (Hogg & Vaughan, 2014: 308-310). In other words, norms guide group members to achieve organizational goals (Hellriegel, Slocum & Woodman, 1995: 285). Each group creates its own norms (Robbins et al., 2013: 253). Norms serve four purposes within the group. These are: (1) facilitating the continuity and survival of the group, (2) setting the limits of behaviors, (3) helping group members avoid embarrassing situations, (3) expressing the core values of the group and helping to know the characteristics that distinguish the group from others (Özkalp & Kirel, 2016: 218).

Roles

In every group, members have certain social roles to fulfil. These roles are common expectations about how individuals should behave within the group (Hare, 2003; cited in Aronson, Wilson & Akert, 2012: 500). With the division of work in groups, roles emerge that individuals must fulfill (George & Jones, 2012: 314). Role is the behavioral patterns that an individual must perform depending on his/her position in the organization (Robbins & Judge, 2017: 282). Roles are largely similar to norms. However, while norms apply to the group as a whole, roles apply to subgroup

members. Roles are behavioral patterns imposed on individuals that are designed on the differentiation of group members in order to ensure the effectiveness of the group (Hogg & Vaughan, 2014: 312). Individuals fulfil the roles expected from the group they belong to. An individual who encounters different role expectations experiences role conflict. Individuals frequently encounter role conflict in organizations (Robbins et al., 2013: 253). Role expectation is the expectation of other individuals about how an individual should behave in a certain environment. Role conflict is the situation where individuals face different role expectations from each other (Robbins & Judge, 2017: 285). Each group member has a specific role in the functioning of the group. However, the leader has a complementary role with his/her coordinating and motivating roles (Güney, 2007: 664).

Status

Some roles within the group are more valuable than others. These roles are respected more than others and thus provide a greater status to the person who undertakes that role (Hogg & Vaughan, 2014: 313). Status is a social ranking in a group that is determined by the position of individual characteristics within the group (Szilagyi & Wallace, 1990: 279). Status refers to the level of prestige, position or rank within a group (Robbins et al., 2013: 254). Status is the prestige and reputation of an individual. It expresses the importance of the position of the individual for the group (Aydın, 2014: 24). Status is an important source of motivation for individuals. Discrepancies between an individual's own status and other individuals' perceptions of this status cause behavioral consequences (Robbins & Judge, 2017: 290). It is important that individuals in the organization believe that the formal status system of the organization is appropriate. There should be equivalence between the status attributed by the organization to the individual and the rank/rank perceived by the individual. For example, when a manager in an organization receives lower wages than his/her employee, this may cause disharmony and disruptions in the organization (Robbins et al., 2013: 255). Therefore, it is possible to say that status has an important effect on the group structure and group behaviors.

Cohesiveness

Some groups seem to have a certain atmosphere of closeness or shared attitudes, behaviors and performance that is not found in other groups. This closeness, called group cohesiveness, refers to situations where the factors that are effective for group members to stay and join the group are more effective than the factors that are effective for members to leave the group (Szilagyi & Wallace, 1990: 282). Group cohesiveness is the degree to which group members influence each other and share the group's goals. As the individuals in the group are influenced by each other, the goals of the individuals become compatible with the goals of the group and this increases group cohesion (Robbins et al., 2013: 255). Group cohesiveness refers to the desire of individuals to stay in the group and their commitment to the group, and the commitment of group members occurs when the individual goals of the members are in harmony with the goals of the group (Hellriegel, Slocum & Woodman, 1995: 288). Many internal and external factors can increase group cohesiveness. Factors that increase group cohesiveness can be listed as (1) agreement on group goals, (2) frequency of interaction, (3) personal attractiveness, (4) intergroup competition, (5) positive evaluation. In a group with a high degree of commitment, individuals are happy to be together with others and adopt the group's goals. Individuals in these groups cooperate to achieve the goals. In groups with a low degree of commitment, individuals are not happy to be together, there are conflicts in the group and individuals do not want to help each other in achieving the goals (Can, et al., 2015: 178-179).

4. Development of the Group

Groups change over time. In organizations, the tasks and goals of the group change due to factors such as outputs, recruitment and promotion. As a result of changes in groups, group members gain experience while interacting with each other (George & Jones, 2012: 307). *Orientation*, the first stage in the group's development process, takes place when individuals come together for the first time. This stage is characterized by the beginning of communication patterns, the development of interdependencies between members, acquaintance with the structure and goals of the group, the expression of expectations, and members' acceptance of each other as members of the group. In the

second stage, *internal problem solving*, problems arising from the orientation stage are confronted and attempts are made to solve them. The potential for interpersonal conflict increases at this stage because individuals bring to the group different feelings about authority, power, dependencies and leadership structure. The *growth and productivity* phase is characterized by group activities that are almost entirely oriented towards achieving the group's goals. Group members become more cohesive, share ideas, provide feedback, explore actions related to the work to be done and share ideas (Szilagyi & Wallace, 1990: 270).

5. Outcomes in Group Behavior

Groups have an impact on the behavior of individuals. The group has an impact on an individual's attitude, productivity, tendency to take risks and commitment to norms (Bumin 1990). The impact of the group on individuals is briefly explained below (Güney, 2015: 156-159):

The normative effect of the group on the individual: Group members fulfil their roles by complying with group norms. Individuals gain some status when they belong to a group. Because of these statuses, when they are alone, they exhibit different behaviors than they do in the organization. Individuals do not want to accept group norms when they are alone. The reason for this is that instead of adopting group rules, these rules are accepted through obedience.

The effect of the group on the individual's attitude change: The group can change individuals' attitudes in a positive way, or it can have a preventive effect on attitudes. For example, if attitude change is in favor of the group, the group can increase the attitude change of individuals. However, if individuals' attitudes are contrary to the rules of the group and harmful for the group, the group may act in a way that prevents attitude change.

The effect of the group on the productivity of the individual: With reference to research, individuals work more efficiently when they are members of a group. The group can affect an individual's productivity positively or negatively. The presence of some people in the group can increase the productivity of the individual, while the presence of other people can decrease the productivity of the individual. However, in general, the individual makes more effort not to fall behind the group members and his/her productivity increases.

The group's propensity to take risks: Individuals with a risk-taking tendency are more effective for the group because they can convince others in the group to take risks. In addition, the fact that the responsibility belongs to the whole group and not only to a single individual lead individuals not to hesitate to take risks. Because while individuals avoid taking risks alone, taking risks as a group does not seem to be too objectionable for individuals.

As a result of interaction in groups, various gains are achieved and the performance of group members increases. In other words, effective work groups increase their potential performance over time by achieving process gains, that is, by finding better ways of working together (George & Jones, 2012: 334). Leaders greatly influence almost all aspects of group behavior. A leader often plays a key role in the relationship between the team and external groups or top management (Hellriegel, Slocum & Woodman, 1995: 291). In addition to providing psychological foundations to ensure individuals' commitment to the group, the group leader should ensure fairness in the allocation of tasks and develop group norms to increase effectiveness and efficiency in organizational outputs (Sığırı, 2011: 162).

Conclusion

Individuals want to be included in a group based on the need of sense of belonging. This is sometimes to avoid social exclusion and sometimes because it is easier to succeed with the group. Individuals sometimes want to belong to a group because of physical proximity and sometimes because of factors such as shared common values and common characteristics. By joining a group, individuals avoid social exclusion, isolation and loneliness. Many features such as the structure and characteristics of the group, individual characteristics of group members, norms of the group, roles, duties and statuses of individuals have an impact on group behavior. Therefore, individuals are

affected both by the group and affect the group. In order for a group to be effective, it must have clearly stated norms that unite and integrate group members and are accepted by group members. It is important that all members of the group are aware of their roles and responsibilities. Groups in which boundaries are clearly drawn, rules are clearly stated, and the duties and responsibilities of individuals are clearly presented survive longer. Therefore, it is important for the group to have these characteristics in order for the groups to be sustainable and to obtain positive outcomes as a result of group processes. In order to achieve this, both the members of the organization and the leader should work in coordination. All members of the group have various roles and tasks, but the leader has an important role in sustaining the group, ensuring its continuity and ensuring the highest efficiency and effectiveness. The group leader should motivate the group members within the framework of the norms of the group, guide them in ensuring the effectiveness of the group and ensure the development of the group. All organizations have to adapt to environmental changes and develop. Therefore, it is important for the leader to come up with practices to improve the group.

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