

# Social psychology concept of groupthink flashcard



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Groupthink may be described as consensus in groups. The theory of groupthink was developed in 1972 by a psychologist by the name Irving Janis and it was based on decision making.

It was based on the idea that groupthink is a type of thinking that places more importance on group cohesiveness and solidarity. This theory of groupthink has fundamental core assumptions underlying it and it is bound to take place when a number of particular preconditions are adhered to such as cohesiveness, isolation from contrary opinions among others (Janis, 1982). The negative outcomes that may be as a result of group thinking are many. There may result a negative outcome if the group places limitations to only few alternatives that may be available, not restudying the various solutions made and initially favored by a majority member groups, a group failing to reexamine the alternatives originally disfavored, not seeking expert opinions, discrimination on gathering and attainment of information by the group and finally the group being too confident about its own ideas that it does not want to seek any further opinions or contingency plans. Groups could be claimed to be successful since majority of its members have varied opinions and ideas accompanied by common collective knowledge hence they are focused on working together. Moreover groups have greater value to both individuals and businesses since they are able to learn and acquire new skills, acquired feedback from the other members as well as identifying their weaknesses and strengths (Janis, 1982).

Groups in business organizations are faced with the task of accomplishing tasks that prove difficult for individuals to perform. Group think on the other hand could lead to making bad judgments. This paper will focus on the

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importance of the concept of group think in the context of a social center. The concept of group think plays an important role in social center services by addressing any psychological factors that could lead into successful decision making processes. Good decision making and problem tackling is bound to take place as a result of a desired cohesiveness in groupthink, but this can only take place under the existence and leadership of a persuasive group leader, when there is high cohesion in the group and also when there is intense pressure to make an informed decision from outside (Kowert, 2002). Group think that consists of goal-oriented people could also be helpful in delivering good communication among the various social centers hence creating harmony since they possess specific skills, specific performance goals, have a mutual accountability that they share as well as having a common working approach.

Group thinking could also be useful in the social centers as regards solving complex problems, uncertain conditions or even other important situations that need to be worked on. The idea of group thinking is also important because group members tend to be focused hence help in the planning of these organizations along with other issues that require critical decision making processes and communication between various departments. Groupthink also plays a vital role in a social center since they are able to accomplish tasks that individuals are unable to handle. This therefore is also a major positive factor that contributes towards the effective performance of these organizations. However, group think can on the other hand affect a groups work so severely that could even end up making other people to lose their lives. It is therefore important to recognize conditions regarding group

think since even though a highly cohesive group is concerned with the maintenance of unanimity, they mostly fail in the evaluation of all their options and other alternatives.

This therefore calls for effective groups that need to have mutual trust between participants, clear goals external training and support as well as accountability that needs to be shared by everyone. This means there are a lot of symptoms that show that groupthink could be taking place in a decision-making process. Those groups that are dominated by group think often tend to form unethical decisions as compared with those decisions that would have been made by using rational decision- making processes.

Illusion of invulnerability often exists in many groups as they think that they are incapable of being on the wrong side when it comes to decision-making. In addition, these groups are also close-minded when it concerns a particular situation that could be accruing.

As a result, they will not take into consideration any information that does not conform to the opinions of the group. On the extreme, a highly cohesive group could be more concerned in the maintenance of its positive group spirit instead of making realistic decisions. Groupthink also possesses various symptoms which are illusion of invulnerability, collective rationalization, unquestioned morality, excessive negative stereotyping, strong conformity pressure self-censorship of dissenting ideas, illusion of unanimity, self-appointed mind guards among others (Janis, 1982). Illusion of invulnerability involves the ignorance of obvious signals, taking extreme risks and being over optimistic collective rationalization on the other hand means that the groupthink discredits as well as ignores various warning signals which mostly

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run contrary to the group thinking. Unquestioned morality means believing that whatever positions the group has taken is moral and ethical whereas the rest are inherently evil.

The viewing of the opposing side as being bad or not of importance for any serious consideration refers to excessive negative stereotyping. In addition, strong conformity pressure refers to the discouragement of any dissenting opinions that are expressed under the risk of being expelled for disloyalty whereas the withholding of dissenting ideas to oneself accompanied by other counterarguments refers to self-censorship of dissenting ideas (Kowert, 2002). Illusion of unanimity applies to the sharing of false beliefs about judgments made and that every body in the group agrees to it. Lastly, self-appointed mind guards are also a groupthink, symptom. This means that groups are protected from any negative and threatening information that could affect their performance. In addition, by groups becoming strongly loyal amongst them, they could result into ignoring useful information from various sources that could prove as a challenge to the groups' decision making processes.

In other words, in his study about groupthink, Janis identified this process of group thinking as being the main cause of many poor decision-making processes that occur in organizations and this group think mainly occur when those decision makers who are working together eventually develop a strong solidarity amongst themselves and this eventually clouds their vision hence suppressing views that conflict as well as developing negative feelings about proposals that are put forward whether consciously or unconsciously.

Therefore groupthink manifests itself into a phenomenon of staggering

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irrationality that could be a major draw-back to the thinking capacity of otherwise highly intelligent, conscientious and competent individuals more so if they start working as a group team. Groupthink has also got the effect of overestimating its morality and power on group members as well as creating pressures required for uniformity. Other impacts on the group members include the manifestation of the illusions of invulnerability and also the encouragement and determination to undertake greater risks and also ignoring the moral or ethical aspects of their actions and decisions.

Groupthink concerns the tendency of members of the group also who are decision makers to unite around a person or policy without understanding or questioning any basic assumptions. Group think have also resulted in the poor strategic planning in many organizations hence resulting into conflicts among individuals.

This is because, first the groupthink decision-makers primarily tending to think that they are the ones who are responsible for any success that an organization may experience and not those who might have implemented and managed these changes. Secondly these groups think that they make the best decisions since they groups think that they make the best decisions since they are emotionally linked together. Whereas in reality these groups of persons are self-serving and arrogant since they mostly filter out any facts or information that may not be part of their basic assumptions and they do not allow anyone who questions their basic assumptions into their team as this person is considered as not being a team player. Organizations can develop various ways in order to counter the group think effects. Leaders should be able to encourage other alternative comments by asking

individuals to complete their comments and encouraging everybody to participate in frank and open communication which is essential to effective decision-making. High levels of cohesiveness and solidarity that take place relatively over long periods of time accompanied by little or no turnover among the groups could end up treating a dysfunction in the group hence lowering the organizational performance.

Since group think over long periods of time often result in poor decision making, it is therefore essential to combat it. The occurrence of poor decisions is mostly due to the existence of conflicts among group members and hence they seek to resolve it and this order to create group harmony. There are various ways in which groupthink may be combated. Group members could combat groupthink by making each of the members to become a critical evaluator and hence they will be able to identify problems that exist in group situations and the leader of the group has to accept whatever criticisms that may be put across so that this could work. The leader of the group could also create different groups and assign them to work on the same problem and they should be led by different leaders. This will help in the generation of different opinions and ideas that is essential towards solving a particular problem that exists in an organization.

This will also help to reduce the pressure of making agreements since groups are mostly comfortable with working in similar groups than larger ones when it comes to sharing their disagreements (Kowert, 2002). Another way that can be used to combat groupthink is to thoroughly examine the effective alternatives as this is helpful in coming up with informed decisions. In addition, it is vital for each member of the group to share and discuss the

proposed group ideas with other trusted people that are not part of the organization. This will also be a boosting factor in the attainment of various opinions that could be helpful for the organization. The invitation of experts from outside to take part in the group meetings is important because the group members will be in a position to discuss important issues and at the same time question these experts and finally different persons should be incorporated for every meeting that takes place (Kowert, 2002). There are also several methods that could be helpful in the minimization of group cohesion.

Such methods include nominal group technique, Delphi technique and Ringi technique. The above mentioned techniques are essential since the group members contribute solutions to the existing problem as individuals rather than groups. In addition, these methods consume a lot of time hence increasing the time that is needed for the decision making process.

However, these methods if not used properly could result in the manipulation of group members by their group leaders (Kowert, 2002). The dissenter behaviours that could be useful in the accomplishment of goals for the group include: offering frequent dissenting opinions, reinforcement of dissenting comments made by other group members through offering comments, offering of rebutting comments in cases whereby mind guards rebuke dissidents, putting across the failures of the past and reminding members of these failures and also draw their attention to the possible risks that could occur in future, supplying counter information and lastly requesting that these decisions be made on a formal vote (Kowert, 2002). In addition, the other methods commonly referred to as "hardball" techniques that could be



used in solving more complex conflicts in an organization may apply various tactics.

Challenging the judgment, integrity or intentions of the group leader is one way and this exposes such leaders hence questioning their leadership. Group members could also withdraw publicly from the group or they could negotiate a situation and the public nature that accompanies such withdrawal often act like a shock to the organizational system. Lastly, it is essential that the group leaders define the extreme alternatives that exist in a group as this will help the group to move towards the dissenter position which a pre-condition for gaining dissenter's re-entry to the decision making process of the group (Kowert, 2002). To conclude, it is essential for an organization to have good decisions as this will help them to improve their performance hence an understanding and awareness of groupthink should be avoided. Groupthink plays important roles in social centers as it helps in effective communication, formulation of important decisions, generation of skills among others that could be useful in the decision making processes of the organization.