Group and and individual behavior

Introduction:

Group & an individual behavior has remained one of the favorite topics of psychologists, sociologists & researchers from quite long time. The characteristics of groups are the composites of some characteristics of individuals forming a group and some unique to the group as a whole like soldiers can act with more bravery when in group than alone (Spinks & Wells, 1995). Why we are influenced by being part of a group is because we interact with each other & shares common goal & values by perceiving our self to be a member of group (Handy, 1985).

The focus of this assignment would be on what the major types of groups are & how they influence the behavior of an individual? How groups are formed & what are their implications on an individual? What are the factors which are psychologically rewarding & potentially demanding for an individual on gaining membership of a group?

Individual & Group Behavior:

Behavior of an individual and group are not separate terms but are interrelated with each other like warp and weft of fabric. And it is not necessary that if a person is doing something as an individual is similar to when he is working in a group. In early nineties, psychologist's focus of study was on individual behavior in an organization. But it was after 1930's that psychologists suggested that in order to analyze behavior of an organization, working on group behavior is as essential as working on an individual. This was practically proved by Hawthorne studies carried out on group of employees and concluded that groups influence the member's perceptions, beliefs, attitudes and behavior (Fincham and Rhodes, 1992).

Every individual has some limitations in his thinking, skill and ability. If we have to do some work in which we do not require much thinking, an individual decision can be enough to complete a task. But if we have to fulfill some task which requires brainstorming, where one decision can affect the whole organization and where goal achievement is based on group dependence, we need groups to perform their part. Generally speaking effectiveness of an individual or groups depends both on the task and on the number of personal and situational factors (Mitchell and Larson, 1987).

Types of Groups:

Groups play an important role in shaping the behavior of an individual. Depending on the needs of an organization and an individual, groups can be divided into two basic types:

1). Formal groups.

These are the groups formed by an organization to carry on its work activities (Moorhead and Griffin, 1998). They can be differentiated on the basis of their membership, task, and nature of technology or position within organization (Mullins, 2007).

According to Moorhead and Griffin (1998), formal groups can be further sub divided into command (functional) groups and task groups. The nature of command group is permanent and is characterized by functional reporting relationship. Command groups are part of organizational chart. Whereas task groups are temporary in nature and their existence is limited to performance of some specific task.

The organization in which I was working had command groups in departments like production, maintenance, electrical, compressor, commercial and quality assurance. In production department, we have G. M production, who exercises his authority on his sub ordinates like Managers, Deputy Managers and Assistant Managers of warping, sizing, weaving and quality departments. If sometimes we have to complete some specific task related to some issue. A task group was formed by G. M production where managers from different departments discuss that issue and after completing the task, they spread to carry on their regular work activities. This activity had a positive impact on our behavior. We considered our self to be recognized and our analytical skills had greatly been improved.

Table Classification scheme for types of groups (Moorhead and Griffin, 1998).

	Relatively Permanent	Relatively Temporary
Formal	Command groups	Task groups
Informal	Friendship groups	Interest groups

2). Informal Groups

Informal groups are formed by individuals in order to satisfy their personal needs like friendship, support or recreational desires (Hunsaker and Cook, 1986). In an Informal groups, members assign their leader, who usually reflects the attitudes and values of the members, helps to resolve any conflict and leads the group and interact with management or other

individuals outside the group (Mullins, 2007). These groups can be seen in every organization. There is no hard and fast rule for their formation. Since these groups are developed on personal interest, so there is no restriction of designation, age or sex in these groups.

Moorhead and Griffin (1998) suggests that there are two types of Informal groups. First one is a friendship group, which is permanent in its nature. They are formed due to close relationship between members and pleasure they get on staying together. Second one is an interest group, which is temporary in nature and is developed around a common interest or activity.

A part from fulfilling personal needs, sometimes these informal groups can also become cause of rumors in an organization, which greatly affects the performance of an organization (Mullins, 2007). When Managing Director of an organization in which I was working had fired two senior managers in the same month. This caused severe job insecurity among other managers. So, whenever we use to sit after duty hours, we gossip on let's see who will be the next victim. Sometimes, some of our colleagues also spread rumors about expected manager to be fired next month. Although, in the end there was no such problem, but our morale and sense of job security was greatly affected by these rumors.

Group Formation:
Groups are formed for achieving various purposes. Mitchell and Larson (1987) states that individual joins group whether formal or informal, because sometimes it is essential for them to join group in order to achieve an organizational goal and sometimes to satisfy their personal needs. But, the

reasons why individuals are motivated towards forming a group can be best characterized as follows:

1). Affiliation.

Individuals are attracted toward groups because they have a need to develop social interaction and to connect with others. Festinger, Schachter, and Back (1950) made a study on effect of proximity on the formation of group of students. They concluded that those students who were living in apartments closer to each other were better affiliated with each other than those who were at greater distance.

When I joined Kohinoor Textile Mills as management trainee, the people with whom I affiliated the most were those who were in my department or in departments nearer to me. I felt myself to be recognized by joining it.

2). Source of information.

The desire to learn and know things around influences the behavior of an individual in a positive way. Groups can be an effective source of information for an individual knowing oneself and environment. In Maslow hierarchy of needs theory, he suggested that need for knowing is an essential prerequisite for the satisfaction of individual's other needs (Brooks, 2009).

This year I joined University of Salford as a post graduate student. The first thing being an international student I thought was to get some information regarding culture and tradition of Salford. I had come to know that there is some student mentor program run by " interlink" working in University of Salford. It gives information to new students by assigning them a local mentor. It was a great chance for me to fulfill my desire of getting some

information about Salford. So, I was given a local mentor, who was no doubt a source of information for me.

3). Source of reward.

Groups can be a source of reward for its members. Reward is not only limited to money but friendship, feeling of belonging and status can also act as rewards for an individual. An exchange theory better explains the reward-cost outcomes of interaction for group formation. Rewards (fulfillment of social needs, bonus e. t. c) should be greater than cost (anxiety, fatigue e. t. c) in order to form a group (Homans, 1950 as cited in Luthans, 2002).

I still remember when I was working in a Kohinoor Textile Mill; we have observed that the mending time of weaver for knotting a broken end was greater than the standard. A competition was arranged between them and it was announced that person who will mend greater number of knots in a given time will be rewarded as being the best weaver. The results of this competition were astonishing as most of the weavers have mended greater number of knots in a given time in order to take lead on other members of group. It was that feeling of to be called " the best weaver", that they joined the group for competition.

4) Accomplish task.

There are some tasks which cannot be accomplished alone. Group cohesiveness is necessary to accomplish such tasks. In university, we have to make task groups when our teacher asks us to present a case. We make our group so as to fulfill that task. After accomplishment of task we use to dismantle unless some other case is provided. I have observed that my

critical thinking had been improved to greater extent by going through those tasks.

5) Compulsory Membership.

One of the disadvantages of formal groups is that it is necessary for a person to join it whether he likes or dislikes it. In this particular case, group is formed out of compliance (Mitchell and Larson, 1987). Whenever we will join any organization, we became member of a formal group. Where we use to give and receive commands. In such groups we require relatively high cohesiveness, standardized norms and approved member status.

When we join some institute like university, we were assigned a department as I am in M. Sc. Management, so it is compulsory for me to be member of management department instead of HRM or International Business.

Factors affecting Individual Behavior in Group:

These are the factors which effect behavior of an individual, while working as part of a group. They can have favorable as well as adverse effects on the personality of an individual.

Conflict :

Conflict in a group has an interesting perspective. It can be beneficial for group's effectiveness or it may result in loosing group membership. Conflict can rise from not properly defined roles, norms, task, leadership, communication channel, power and status. It can be inter or intra in nature. If conflict in group or groups is not managed properly it will lead to physical, psychological and behavioral problem of an individual (Luthans, 2002). Therefore, it is necessary to resolve conflict so as to make it beneficial for an

individual and group. There are some studies on group conflict which shows that it sometimes aids for making better decisions, improving performance and creativity in groups (Rispens, 2009).

Social Facilitation:

Social facilitation has a positive effect on the performance of an individual. Mitchell and Larson (1987) stated that groups can affect the behavior of an individual in a number of ways. An individual's performance is facilitated by its presence in a group. The best example of social facilitation is explained by Triplett research. He gathered data on the results of bicycle races. What he observed was that the winning time in head to head competition was faster than the winning time in which cyclist rode individually over a given course trying to beat the time. This is a fact that when we have people around, it increases an individual's performance as he has a thought of being evaluated.

Zajonc (1965) also suggested that " social presence improves performance of simple or well-learned tasks".

Social Loafing:

The size of a group also has a significant effect on the behavior of an individual. If size of a group increases, social loafing gets its way into a group. Bowditch and Buono (1994) explain this phenomenon as reduction in an effort of an individual when he was working in a group rather than as an individual. The most important thing to be noticed in here is that social loafing does not mean shyness or discomfort in working as a member of group. But it means low effort applied by an individual due to low motivation

or disinterest. The reason for this problem is simply because it is difficult to assess an individual in larger group than in smaller one.

According to McKenna (2000), there have been some assumptions that social loafing is likely to occur in an individualistic culture dominated by self-interest and the best example of it is U. S. A. Social loafing is considered to be less in collective societies like china, where individuals in such culture are motivated by group goals rather than self interest. It means Chinese can be considered as good performers in groups as compared to individuals.

Norms:

Norms are like a pillar for any group. They have a significant influence on the behavior of an individual. Kreitner, Kinicki and Buelens (1999) defines norm as guidance to behavior of group of people by sharing attitude, opinion, feeling or action and are not a written format of rules but are generally better understood by the members of group. Hackman (1976) suggest that norms have concern with behavior of group members instead of their feelings.

Mullins (2007) stated one of the Hawthorne experiments, which best exemplifies the influence of norms on the behavior of group members and was related to Bank Wiring observation room. He observed that group of 14 men had developed their own norms and decided to produce lower level of output than their capability.

Recently I joined S and A Bedding Ltd in Manchester. On first day, when I was actively filling cushion covers. One of the employees, who were working over there, advised me not to increase your level of production because if you will

do so, manager will increase level of output required. Ultimately, my performance was reduced as I had to follow that norm.

Group Polarization:

Group polarization has both positive and negative effects on individual behavior. Individual in a group can take risky decisions which he will never take alone (Stoner, 1961 cited in McKenna, 2000). An individual's decision can become more risky or cautious as a result of group discussion. Social identity theory explains perception of people to consider their group in terms of extremes and then shift their attitude towards these extreme norms of a group (Mackie, 1986). The best way to get positive outcome from it is to highlight all the possible risks before concluding anything. Mullins (2007) explains that one of the advantages of group polarization is that an individual can take risky decisions but its disadvantage is that no one is ready to accept the responsibility of that decision.

Conclusion:

Individuals have to form groups whether to fulfill needs, accomplish tasks or as a compulsory member. Group formation and the factors affecting individual behavior play an important role, generally in order to assess the organizational performance and particularly individual's performance and effectiveness. Joining some group whether formal & informal has several advantages & disadvantages. But advantages which a member gets on being a part of some group are greater than their disadvantages. There are some of the negative factors which cannot be eliminated completely like conflict, norms (negative), social loafing (in case of large group) or group polarization. The best way to deal with them is to study the behavior of group as well as

an individual and reduce the negative parameters affecting individual's performance.