

## Nature of Groups

A group may be defined as an organized system of two or more individuals, who are interacting and interdependent, who have common motives, have a set of role relationships among its members, and have norms that regulate the behaviour of its members. Groups have the following salient characteristics:

- ① A social unit consisting of two or more individuals who perceive themselves as belonging to the group. This characteristic of the group helps in distinguishing one group from the other group and gives the group its unique identity.
- ② A collection of individuals who have common motives and goals. Groups function either working towards a given goal, or away from certain threats facing the group.

③ A collection of individuals who are interdependent, i.e. what one is doing may have consequences for others.

④ Individuals who are trying to satisfy a need through their joint association also influence each other.

⑤ A gathering of individuals whose interactions are structured by a set of roles and norms. This means that the group members perform the same functions every time the group meets and the group members adhere to group norms. Norms tell us how we ought to behave in the group and specify the behaviours expected from group members.

Groups can be differentiated from other collections of people. For example, a crowd is also

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a collection of people who may be present at a place/situation by chance. Suppose you are going on the road and an accident takes place. Soon a large number of people tend to collect. This is an example of a crowd. There is neither any structure nor feeling of belongingness in a crowd. Behaviour of people in crowds is irrational and there is no interdependence among members.

Teams are special kinds of groups. Members of teams often have complementary skills and are committed to a common goal or purpose. Members are mutually accountable for their activities. In teams, there is a positive synergy attained through the coordinated efforts of the members. An audience is also a collection of people who have assembled for a special

purpose, may be to watch a  
cricket match or a movie.  
Audiences are generally passive  
but sometimes they go into a  
frenzy and become mobs. In a  
mob, there is a definite sense  
of purpose. Mob behaviour is  
characterised by homogeneity of  
thought and behaviour as well  
as impulsivity.