

Group Decision-Making

Members of a group are often required to make decisions together. Three concepts related to group decision-making are groupthink, group polarization, and minority influence.

1-Groupthink

Groupthink is the tendency for a close-knit group to emphasize consensus at the expense of critical thinking and rational decision-making. In a groupthink situation, group members squash dissent, exert pressure to conform, suppress information from outside the group, and focus selectively on information that agrees with the group's point of view.

Groupthink is more likely to occur when groups have certain characteristics:

- High cohesiveness. Group cohesiveness is the strength of the liking and commitment group members have toward each other and to the group.
- Isolation from outside influences
- A strong leader
- The intent to reach a major decision

2-Group Polarization

The dominant point of view in a group often tends to be strengthened to a more extreme position after a group discussion, a phenomenon called group polarization. When a group starts out with a dominant view that is relatively risky, the group is likely to come to a consensus that is even riskier. This phenomenon is called risky shift.

3-Minority Influence

A committed minority viewpoint can change the majority opinion in a group. Group members are more likely to be influenced by a minority opinion when the minority holds the opinion firmly.

Deindividuation

When people are in a large group that makes them feel aroused and anonymous, they may experience Deindividuation. When people become deindividuated, they lose their inhibitions and their sense of responsibility and are not self-conscious about their behavior. Deindividuation is a major reason for the violence that sometimes happens in mobs.

Bystander Intervention

The subject of **bystander intervention** became of interest after a cocktail waitress was brutally murdered on a New York street. People heard her scream, but no one came to her aid. Research was conducted to determine factors that might lead to bystander intervention or to bystander apathy, as occurred in the New York case. Working on this topic, Bibb Latané and John Darley, concluded that people are more likely to receive help when they are alone rather than in a group and that the larger the group, the smaller the responsibility to intervene that bystanders feel. The cognitive model developed to explain bystander intervention (or a lack of it) includes the following concepts.

- **audience inhibition**, a reluctance to act in front of others
- **pluralistic ignorance**, an individual's interpretation that lack of action by others means that there is no emergency
- **diffusion of responsibility**, allowing others to share and thus assume responsibility in the intervention process