

COMPETITION AND COOPERATION (Topic 1)

- Define competition and cooperation
- Understand competition as a process
- Familiarity with psychological studies of competition and cooperation
- Pros and cons of competition
- How to enhance cooperation

Competition & Cooperation

Competition- Social process when rewards are given for how performance compares with the performances of others during the same task

Cooperation- Social process, performance evaluated and rewarded in terms of the collective achievement of a group working together towards a goal

Competition as a Process

Martens (1975) Model- Competition as a process with four phases

1. **Objective Competitive Situation-** Performance compared with some standard of excellence in the presence of at least one other person aware of the comparison
2. **Subjective Competitive Situation-** How the person perceives, accepts, and appraises the objective competitive situation (influenced by personality factors and situational factors such as family)
 - Gill and Deeter (1988) found three types of competitive orientations:
 - Competitiveness – enjoyment of competition
 - Win orientation – focus on beating other competitors (interpersonal comparison).
 - Goal orientation – focus on improving own performance, not beating others.
 - Athletes score higher than non-athletes on all three subscales, but especially on the competitive orientation (Gill, 1993)
3. **Response-** Whether a person approaches or avoids an objective competitive situation (at the behavioural, physiological, and psychological levels)
4. **Consequences-** An evaluation (usually plus or minus) of one's response to the standards of the performance comparison. Feedback mechanism – success or failure influences future involvement in competitive sport.

Objective competitive situation (Martens) is slightly different to the definition of competition offered by Coakley. They both agree that competition is a social process (requires more than one person). Coakley's definition involves comparison with people doing same task or same event. Marten's definition involves evaluation that another person is aware of.

Psychological Studies of Competition and Cooperation

- Triplett's cyclists

Cyclists were faster alongside or in competition with another cyclist than when racing alone against the clock

- Deutsch's Puzzles

Competition groups were self-centred, directed efforts at beating others, had close communication, and exhibited group conflict and distrust. Cooperation group students communicated openly, shared information, developed friendships and solved more puzzles.

- The Robbers Cave Experiment

- Examined intergroup and intragroup relations in a natural environment.
- 24 Boys, 12 years of age, assigned to one of two groups on camp. No previous friendships within or between groups.
- 3-week competition/cooperation study conducted in phases.
- All boys were matched for the following:
 - IQ and grades (all average to above average)
 - Eyesight (no glasses)
 - Fitness (none overweight)
 - Ethnicity (all Anglo)
 - Behaviour (no 'trouble makers')
 - Accent (all similar)
 - Zero history (all from different schools)
 - Religion (all Protestant).

Phase 1

- 1 week – groups kept segregated. Each group was given goals that had common appeal.
- Researchers able to observe appearance of intragroup process e.g., hierarchies, leadership roles, norms, etc.
- Each group established an identity for itself – One called itself 'Rattlers', the other 'Eagles'.
- Towards end of phase, the groups became aware of each other. Discussions about the other group became more prevalent within groups.
- As each group became aware of the presence of the other group, they became reinforced in their own sense of being a group.
- Each group became immediately distrustful of the other. E.g., asking camp staff whether the other group were abusing camp facilities.
- The groups insistently asked the camp staff to arrange some sort of competition against the other.
- Improved performance on in-group exercises.

Phase 2

- The groups met for the first time in a mess hall i.e. Name calling and singing of derogatory songs by each group.
- Competitions arranged between groups. E.g., baseball game.

The competitive activities were arranged with a reward for the winners (trophy and pocket knives for each member of team). Nothing for losers

- Burning of flags and raiding of cabins occurred before competition.
- Losing team raided cabins after competition – removed medals and pocketknives.
- Derogation of out-group was expressed in word and deed.

Phase 3

- Brought groups together in non-competitive situations for 6-7 days.

- E.g., eating together, watching films, fireworks night.
- These strategies failed to reduce hostilities.

A series of crises were staged that required cooperation between groups.

- E.g., disruption to water supply, preparation of meals, pulls a broken truck.
- These crises were referred to as superordinate goals
- Intergroup hostility and group polarisation were reduced and intergroup contact, friendships, cooperation were increased.

- A major finding from the Robbers Cave Experiment was that:

- Superordinate goals can be effective in reducing intergroup hostilities.