

## THE POWER OF GROUPTHINK IN DECISION MAKING PROCESSES

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Decision-making is a crucial aspect of human interaction, influencing various sectors such as politics, business, healthcare, and social dynamics. While collective decision-making is often seen as a way to harness diverse perspectives and expertise, it can sometimes lead to groupthink—a psychological phenomenon where the desire for harmony or conformity results in irrational or dysfunctional decision-making. Decision-making is a critical skill that influences every aspect of life, from personal choices to business strategies and global policies. It determines success, efficiency, and adaptability in different situations. Good decision-making ensures that individuals and organizations navigate challenges effectively, achieve goals, and avoid unnecessary risks. Below are key reasons why decision-making is important. Every problem requires a decision to reach a solution. Without decision-making, issues can escalate, leading to delays, confusion, or missed opportunities. Good decision-making streamlines processes and ensures that time and resources are used effectively. Groupthink is a psychological phenomenon where a group of people prioritizes harmony and consensus over critical thinking and individual opinions. This can lead to poor decision-making, as members suppress dissenting viewpoints, ignore potential risks, and make irrational choices to maintain group unity. Groupthink occurs when a group prioritizes consensus over critical evaluation, leading to poor decisions, overlooked risks, and missed opportunities. While it can contribute to efficiency and cohesion, it can also foster overconfidence, suppress dissent, and lead to catastrophic outcomes. Essentially, groupthink is the tendency of cohesive groups to reach consensus on issues without offering, seeking, or considering alternative viewpoints.

**Keywords:** Groupthink, decision-Making, consensus, conformity, critical thinking, leadership, teamwork, pressure, conform, censorship, mind guards.

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The concept of groupthink was initially presented by social psychologist Irving Janis in 1972. He characterized it as a cognitive process when a group's quest for consensus supersedes its inclination to evaluate options critically. This occurs when group members stifle dissenting viewpoints, neglect to assess risks impartially, and base choices on consensus rather than logical evaluation. Although groupthink is frequently regarded as detrimental, it is essential to comprehend its function in decision-making. It emphasizes the impact of group dynamics on decision-making, collaboration, and organizational culture. Groupthink illustrates how social pressure and the pursuit of consensus can result in suboptimal or illogical judgments. Identifying groupthink enables leaders to discern when a team is evading critical evaluation or overlooking possible hazards. The 2008 Financial Crisis partially resulted from groupthink among financial organizations, wherein experts disregarded warnings regarding hazardous lending practices. Janis posits that groupthink is defined by several cognitive biases and social dynamics. • The Illusion of Invulnerability refers to the phenomenon when group members perceive themselves as infallible, resulting in excessive confidence and propensity for risk-taking. Collective Rationalization is a predominant cognitive bias when a group disregards warnings and negative feedback, hence reinforcing its judgments. Stereotyping of outsiders is a subsequent beneficial prejudice that perceives those who contest the group's ideals as stupid, weak, or uninformed. • Pressure to Conform indicates that members experience compulsion to adhere to the group's agreement, deterring dissent. • Self-censorship is a significant phenomenon wherein individuals with reservations opt not to articulate their concerns to evade conflict or ostracism. • The illusion of unanimity is a cognitive bias that interprets silence as consensus, thereby reinforcing the belief that all parties endorse the decision. Mind guards provide information regarding certain individuals who function as gatekeepers, protecting the group from dissident viewpoints or conflicting facts. Numerous choices inside organizations are rendered by groups, teams, or committees (Gunnarsson, 2010). Does this imply that collective decisions are superior to those made by an individual? We will commence by

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examining the advantages of collective decision-making (Robbins & Judge, 2011). Collectives produce more comprehensive information and knowledge. They provide enhanced diversity of perspectives. Group decisions result in heightened acceptance of the outcome. Despite the acknowledged advantages, group judgments possess inherent flaws. A notable dysfunction in decision-making that has garnered significant scholarly attention is the phenomena known as groupthink (Brownstein, 2003; Chapman, 2006; Choi & Kim, 1999; Eaton, 2001; Esser, 1998). Irving Janis introduced the term groupthink, which occurs when internal group pressures result in diminished cognitive efficiency, distorted perceptions of reality, and weakened moral judgments (Janis, 1982). It often arises in tightly-knit groups where the members' aspiration for unanimity supersedes the objective assessment of issues and solutions. The decision-making process is influenced by both advantageous and detrimental impacts. One good effect is that decisions can be taken swiftly when there is minimal dispute and debate. Most individuals contemplate the matter and may readily identify solutions to each hard inquiry. Furthermore, teaching cohesiveness can provide significant positive consequences, as it fosters a sense of togetherness and shared purpose, hence enhancing morale and cooperation. Moreover, confidence—when a group reaches a consensus, individuals may experience increased assurance in the decision—is crucial for the decision-making process. Undoubtedly, there are adverse effects as well. The absence of critical thinking encompasses those who may refrain from challenging ideas to preserve peace, resulting in suboptimal actions. Repression of Dissent - Individuals with divergent viewpoints may experience coercion to conform. Overconfidence may result in the disregard of prospective hazards, leading to perilous or irrational decisions. Groupthink can engender a perilous illusion of confidence, when members collectively disregard potential risks and overrate the validity of their actions. This behavior results in perilous or irrational decisions as individuals repress uncertainties to preserve group unity. Practical Illustrations of Groupthink in Decision-Making The COVID-19 pandemic necessitated swift decision-making by governments, healthcare authorities, and scientists globally. Numerous decisions were taken collaboratively, with specialists convening to evaluate risks, devise policy, and execute remedies. Nonetheless, although collective decision-making resulted in scientific advancements and efficient answers in certain instances, groupthink also contributed to procrastination, the suppression of alternative opinions, and the occurrence of expensive errors. This section examines the pivotal individuals, organizations, and scientific teams that influenced the pandemic response—both favorably and unfavorably—through decision-making and groupthink. The WHO was pivotal in coordinating worldwide pandemic response. Researchers at the WHO endeavored to identify the virus, establish health guidelines, and coordinate vaccination initiatives. Nonetheless, initial decisions—such as postponing the announcement of a pandemic—were condemned due to political influence and collective conformity. Dr. Anthony Fauci (United States) Dr. Fauci, as the Chief Medical Advisor to the U.S. President, epitomized science-driven policymaking. He championed masks, social isolation, and vaccinations despite political resistance. Although Fauci was esteemed, his proposals were occasionally disregarded or superseded owing to political consensus. Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the WHO, spearheaded global communication initiatives about COVID-19. Criticized for the tardiness of travel restrictions and ambiguous communication in early 2020. His judgments demonstrated an equilibrium between scientific advisories and political influences, underscoring the impact of groupthink on the WHO's initial response. Dr. Katalin Karikó and Dr. Drew Weissman, developers of mRNA vaccines Their research on mRNA technology resulted in the creation of the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines. The collaboration among scientists, pharmaceutical corporations, and governments led to the swiftest vaccine development in history. Effective collective decision-making facilitated swift innovation; yet, worldwide vaccine distribution was hindered by groupthink and disparities. Government Officials: Collective Conformity and Proficient Leadership Jacinda Ardern, Prime Minister of New Zealand Heeded health authorities and instituted stringent lockdowns promptly. Promoted transparent communication with the public to prevent groupthink. New Zealand's empirical methodology resulted in a reduced incidence of cases and fatalities relative to other countries. Donald Trump, then President of the United States, minimized the virus, disregarded expert advisories, and disseminated falsehoods. Numerous individuals within his administration participated in groupthink, disregarding scientific evidence and advocating for unverified treatments such as hydroxychloroquine. His judgments led to elevated infection rates and vaccine skepticism in the United States, highlighting the importance of scientific collaboration and successful decision-making narratives. Operation Warp Speed (United States) A public-private collaboration that expedited vaccine research. Facilitated collaboration among scientists, pharmaceutical corporations, and governmental entities to expedite vaccination authorization. Effective decision-making and collaboration resulted in the development of numerous vaccinations within a year. Groupthink significantly impacts the decision-making process. Although it can improve efficiency, cohesion, and confidence in collective decisions, it frequently results in adverse consequences by stifling dissent, neglecting dangers, and promoting overconfidence. Historical instances, ranging from military defeats to industrial catastrophes, exemplify the perils of unrestrained groupthink. Organizations and leaders must

actively mitigate groupthink to enhance decision-making by promoting open communication, supporting independent thought, soliciting outsider viewpoints, and employing organized decision-making frameworks. By doing so, they can achieve equilibrium between cohesion and critical evaluation, resulting in more reasonable, well-informed decisions. The essence of effective decision-making is in integrating multiple viewpoints while retaining the capacity to interrogate assumptions and scrutinize dominant views.

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