

The background of the page features a large, light gray watermark of the Ugnou logo. The logo consists of a stylized 'U' on the left, which contains a circular emblem with a dollar sign inside. To the right of the 'U' is the word 'ignou' in a lowercase, sans-serif font, and below it, the words 'THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY' are written in a smaller, uppercase, sans-serif font.

BLOCK 3
APPLICATION OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY-I



UNIT 6 APPLICATION OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY TO ENVIRONMENT AND DIVERSITY*

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6.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you will be able to:

- examine the applications of social psychology to environment.
- discuss the applications of social psychology to diversity.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This case is also known as the 'Dehradun Valley Litigation'. In Mussoorie hill range of Himalayas, the activity of quarrying was being carried out. Limestone was extracted by blasting out the hills with dynamite. This practice has also resulted in cave-ins and slumping because the mines dug deep into the hillsides, which is an illegal practice. Due to lack of vegetation many landslides occurred, which killed villagers, and destroyed their homes, cattle and agricultural land.

* Dr. Tina D' Cunha, SEN Inclusion Learning Mentor and Key worker

Creuza Oliveira tells the story of more than nine million Brazilian domestic workers, mostly women, mostly black, for whom slavery is a way of life. Born in a family of poor rural workers with no schooling, Oliveira began life as a domestic worker in Bahia when she was a mere 10 years old. Unable to balance work and school, she had to pick work and dropped out of school numerous times. At work, Oliveira would be beaten and taunted whenever she broke something, often called lazy, monkey, even "nigger". The physical and psychological abuse was compounded by sexual abuse from the young men in the household where she worked. To top it all off, Oliveira was not paid. "I only started to receive a salary as a domestic worker when I was 21," she told a gathering at a UN conference in Geneva. "Until that age, my payment was in used clothes and food. I did not have a right to vacations or any basic workers rights."

Social Psychology today is concerned with its applications to human life and living. It lays great emphasis on the cognitive basis of social behavior and pays more attention to the practical application of the disciplines knowledge. Humans survive as a species depending on their capacity for social living. Most of human history involved people dependent on others for survival. Humans naturally adapted to this form of existence.

Individual's today make sense of the world around because of the shared understandings, norms, and behaviours that exist in primary social groups such as the family. They adjust to these even though they may have their own stereotypes and prejudice. A stereotype in social psychology is an overgeneralised belief about a particular category of people (Cardwell, 1999). Prejudice is an affective feeling towards a person based on their perceived social membership. It refers to preconceived, often unfavourable, evaluation of another person based on gender, beliefs, social class, disability, race/ethnicity etc. (Dovidio, 2010).

According to social psychologists, people formulate ideas of the world through two main approaches:

- **Social cognition approach:** Focusses on the functioning of the human mind which receives, processes, structures and stores information from the senses as mental representations (Perloff, 2008).
- **Discursive and narrative approach:** Focusses on how information in individual minds has already been constructed by other people. Thus, the information that individual's draw to make sense of the world arises from dialogues that have long cultural and social histories (Billig, 2008).

Social psychologists agree that the construction of representations (or understandings) of the world is central to the production of everyday knowledge. In an individual's social context, psychologists believe that even when an individual is physically isolated from others, they and the society they form remain a psychological presence for the person. Hence, an

important feature of social psychology is explaining human behavior as a result of the interaction of mental states and immediate, social situations.

In the present Unit, we will discuss the reciprocal relationship between human beings and the built as well as natural environment they live in. In this relationship there are varied socio-psychological markers like gender, age, race, sexual orientation etc. that contribute towards human diversity. These factors along with the physical, social and cultural environment aid in building social identities. Such diversity encourages positive group relations and an appreciation and value to others in the community. In a nutshell, this Unit focusses on the applications of social psychology to the environment and diversity.

6.2 SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENT

In this section we will attempt to understand the interplay between people and the environment by discussing how the physical environment affects human behavior (climate, nature, pollution etc.), how human behavior affects the environment (Conserving energy, recycling, reduced biodiversity etc.) and the tragedy of the Commons.

The interdisciplinary nature of environmental psychology enables us to understand the relationship between behavior and the environment. The Journal of Environmental Psychology explains the field as “the scientific study of the transactions and interrelationships between people and their physical surroundings (including built and natural environments, the use and abuse of nature and natural resources, and sustainability-related behavior)”. The case of Dehradun Valley Litigation mentioned at the start of the Unit is a clear example of how human behaviours disturb our natural resources and in turn affect humans themselves.

6.2.1 Effect of physical environment on human behavior

We all exist in a physical world. Our perceptions of the environment around us relate to the extent to which we engage with it. Humans are known to have an innate awareness and sensitivity towards the environment. In our need for safety and security (according to Maslow’s Hierarchy of needs), we seek the environment around us for physical and psychological comfort.

The environment we live in affects us and our behavior. Three such effects are on the following:

- **Behavioural and emotional responses:** According to Evans, G. (2018), negative affect, interpersonal and intergroup conflict and psychological distress has been linked to global climate changes especially rise in temperatures. Natural disasters like floods, draughts cause high stress, change in routines, decreased quality of life and disturbed mood states among people.

- **Health:** Factors in the physical environment like air/ water/ noise pollution, proximity to toxic sites, access to unhealthy food etc. can lead to various health concerns like cardiovascular illness, respiratory issues, lifestyle diseases among other consequences. Besides these direct influences, factors like geographical location, crowding, poor availability of resources can contribute to vulnerabilities such as malnutrition, impairments etc.
- **Motivation:** Environmental factors are known to affect every human that share common living or work spaces. Such factors such as proper (or improper) lighting, noise, humidity, space have huge impacts on human performance and productivity. People who have experienced calamities or those that have a passive for the environment along with environmentalists are motivated towards preservation and this motivation influences their knowledge, attitudes, risk perception and overall behavioral responses.

6.2.2 Effect of Human Behavior on the Environment

Human beings affect the environment in numerous ways. These are manifested in positive as well as negative behaviours that have a significant effect on our natural habitat. The indispensable resources of air, water, soil once damaged can take years, decades or even centuries to replenish. Three of the major impacts that harm the environment are

- 1) **Pollution:** The trash and waste that the human population produces is inescapable. Pollution in any form (water/ air/ noise) has serious impacts the environment and eventually on humans too. Such pollutants damage animal life, aquatic life by destroying their natural habitats. In humans, their own irresponsible behaviours of causing the various forms of pollution has health consequences like allergies, asthma, heart conditions etc.
- 2) **Global warming:** Humans engage in large scale deforestation and one of the detrimental effects of such behaviours is increase in CO² emissions that increase the planets average temperature. With rising sea levels, melting glaciers and disturbed wildlife habitats, human activities such as burning fossil fuel, land abuse, clearing forest and green lands continue to contribute towards global warming.
- 3) **Climate change:** According to Solomon et al (2007) human activities such as those mentioned above, cause variations in the atmosphere through the release of CO² in the air and hence contribute to climate change. The largest contribution comes from the burning of fossil fuels and such activities cause major changes in natural processes such as solar changes and volcanic eruptions.

Today, with awareness and activism to save the environment, times may be changing. Some of the positive human behaviours to undo the damage done so far are as follows:

- 1) **Conserving energy:** Simple behaviours like using an outdoor clothes line to dry clothes or using smart meters that display data on energy used or not leaving taps running when brushing your teeth etc. help towards saving energy.
- 2) **Following the three R's:** The three R's belong to what is known as the waste hierarchy – Reduce, Reuse, Recycle. These actions are to be taken in order of priority to reduce the amount of waste generated and create a sustainable life. By simply reusing or remaking old products into new ones without exploiting resources from nature is one way in which humans make a positive contribution to the ecosystem. Such eco friendly behaviours will help sustain our natural resources in a long run. Responsible human behaviours of refusing to buy items you do not need, reusing items more than once and disposing off items no longer required at appropriate recycling centres are taking the focus in environmental campaigns today.
- 3) **Conserving and protecting natural resources:** A lot of farming communities globally are faced with decreased yields and low incomes because of high temperatures and erratic rainfall. Individuals are realising the impact of their behaviours on such communities and need to engage in more sustainable activities such as planting trees to prevent soil erosion, rainwater harvesting, grow vegetation in catchment areas, treating industrial waste, using bio fuels and reducing the use of plastic among other things.

6.2.3 Social Dilemmas

When we discuss about social psychology and environment, we mainly focus on the effect that the environment has on the individuals and also the effect that individuals have on the environment. Our physical environment including the weather, pollution, buildings, the natural setting etc.. can have an impact on our behaviour as well as our thinking and wellbeing. And our behaviour and attitude related to conservation, waste management, conservation related activities etc can have an impact on the environment.

The application of social psychology to environment calls for focus on social dilemmas. Social dilemmas can be described as situations in which individuals have to make certain choices. In social dilemma, the individuals could get greater rewards for noncooperation than for cooperation, regardless of actions by others. But if a large number of individuals do not cooperate then the rewards received by all are lower (Gilford, 2012).

There are three main forms of social dilemmas:

- **Public goods problems:** This denotes a dilemma whether to contribute to a certain activity of project that will benefit everyone when it is a voluntary contribution. The contribution can be in terms of finance, efforts or time. For example, cleaning the common area of your society, which

will benefit everyone in the society. The dilemma here can occur when you have to contribute your time, energy or money. Also if only contribute the project will not be as successful as when a large number of individuals contribute.

- **Social traps:** These are pleasures that are for a short period of time but in long term could lead to pain or loss. For example, using pesticides while growing vegetables could help in clearing the pests but in long run the pesticides can have an impact on the fields in which the vegetables were grown.
- **Resource dilemmas:** Resource dilemmas can be termed as common dilemmas that denote the situations in which the individuals have to make a choice between one's own interest and that of the community or environment (Gilford, 2012). Each individual when taking certain decisions like using private car in place of public transport can contribute to depletion of resources. The issue may not seem large at an individual level. But when we see large number of persons doing so, leading to traffic jams and pollution and also leading to consumption of fuel, we realise the issue is at a much larger scale.

In context of social psychology and the environment, an interesting concept called the tragedy of the commons was coined by scientist Garrett Hardin in 1968. He described what could happen in groups of people when individual's act in their own best self interest and ignore what is best for the whole group. In a fishing community, for example, the activity of fishing is a main source of income and hence every fisherman will aim to catch as much fish as he can while ignoring the fact that the rest of the group may also be engaging in such self interest behaviours. As this behavior continues, the common shared resource (fish) will get depleted eventually and it will affect the entire community and people globally as well due to non-availability of fish.

People all over the globe need to share the common natural resources and preserve them as much as possible rather than engage in behaviours resulting in their depletion. Mark van Vugt (2009) outlined some common solutions to reduce the uncertainty of the future resulting from the tragedy of the commons:

- 1) **Information:** According to Van Vugt, the more information a person has, the more secure they feel about making rational decisions that may impact the environment they live in. For example, people may conserve more water when they are made to understand how their behaviours can directly alleviate water shortage.
- 2) **Identity:** Humans have a deep desire to belong to a social group. As social creatures, there is a strong need for acceptance and feeling of belongingness. Being a part of an energy usage group in the neighbourhood – where usage is reflected as a smiley face or a frown

face based on individual electricity bills – can make people change their consumption behaviours.

- 3) **Institutions:** Policies made by authorities and institutions need to engage in fair distribution of resources. People will have low interest or motivation to participate in a group if the authorities or institutions running these groups are corrupt or playing favourites. Such institutions can encourage trust in people by listening to them and providing accurate unbiased information about resources.
- 4) **Incentives:** Providing incentives by rewarding positive environmental behaviours and highlighting harmful ones aims at motivating people to engage in ways that promote environmental preservation.

Intervention strategies designed to focus on pro-environmental behaviours need to focus on the above and need to be based on strategies that lead individuals to avoid taking actions based on their self interest and go with larger interest of the community. According to Steg and Vlek (Gilford, 2012), an intervention could involve the following steps:

- 1) Specific behaviour that will have a positive impact on the quality of the environment is to be selected. For example, you could target the waste disposal behaviour of individuals in your society.
- 1) The primary factors underlying the specific behaviour (selected in step 1) are to be identified and examined. Any behaviour is complex and has many determinants. The primary factors could be values, awareness related to the problem, attitude, social norms and so on.
- 2) Development of an intervention strategy to change the specific behaviour. Various strategies based on the earlier steps can be designed. Strategies can be as follows:
 - **Antecedent strategies:** These strategies focus on the factors that lead to the problem. For example, awareness based strategies.
 - **Consequence strategies:** These strategies focus on the outcome of the problem. For example, reinforcement for certain pro-environmental behaviours.
- 3) Evaluating the effect of the intervention strategy. Any intervention is to be evaluated as was discussed by us in the previous unit. And based on the evaluation the intervention can be further improved or modified.

6.2.4 Social Design

In the context of social psychology and environment, the term environment denotes the situation in which we function and exist. It not only has to do with the natural resources but also with our work set up or a class room set up that could enhance the work productivity or learning process respectively. Our behaviour can be influenced by factors like lighting, noise distractions,

temperature and so on. Thus, as students of social psychology, we also need to focus on this aspect of social behaviour. And in this context we can discuss about the term social design. Social design mainly focus on how settings can be designed in a way that help meet the desires and requirements of individuals. Social design is different from technical design, that is, the engineering related details of a building. As described by Guilford (2012, page 312), the approach of social design is “small scale, human oriented, low cost, inclusive, democratic, tending to appropriate technology, and concerned with meaning and context, the occupant or paying client, and a local focus”. The main goals of social design (Guilford, 2012, page 322) include

- **Meeting or matching the needs of the occupants:** Buildings need to be socially designed in such a way that they match the needs and activities of the occupants. In this context, it is important to focus on Press that denotes the characteristics of environmental features that play a role in shaping of the behaviour. Press can be categorised as alpha press and beta press. Alpha press denotes the reality that can be examined with the help of an inquiry that is objective and beta press denotes individuals interpretation about the reality. Congruence that is based on alpha matching denotes how the setting objectively meets the needs of the occupants and habitability, that is based on beta matching denotes the environmental quality from the point of view of the occupants. As much as possible the social design must attempt to facilitate alpha and beta matching.
- **Ensuring the satisfaction of the users of the building:** The satisfaction of the occupants can be reflected in habitability. And social design practitioners need to focus on this aspects as well while designing the building.
- **Bringing about change in behaviour:** An adequate social design can lead to better work productivity, learning experience and will facilitate overall positive behaviours.
- **Facilitation of social support:** Buildings can be designed in such a way that they encourage social interaction. Furniture can also be arranged in a sociopetal way that encourage social interaction, rather than sociofugal way, arrangements that discourage social interaction.
- **Enhancing control:** Individuals should be able to control their immediate environment and should now have feelings of loss of control. An example of low control setting is a crowded area.
- **Using imageability:** The building should be understandable to individuals who use the buildings.

As such social designs can be applied to not only closed places but also outdoor areas and the above goals are applicable for outdoor area as well.

In this context, we can also discuss about Defensible Space Theory. The theory was proposed by Jane Jacobs and Oscar Newman (Guilford, 2021).

The theory states that crime occurrence and feelings of security can be influenced by certain physical design features. Thus, the spaces can be designed in a such a way that the feelings of security of the people is increased and likelihood of crime occurrence is reduced. There are six main elements on the basis of which the crime vulnerability of a space (Guilford, 2021) can be assessed:

- The possible visibility or lines of sight of the public areas.
- Presence of the residents who take benefit of the lines of sights.
- Social involvement of the individuals in maintenance.
- Good access and escape routes for victims but poor access and escape routes for the criminals.
- Surrounding needs to be attractive to promote caring behaviour on behalf of the individuals towards the space that creates the impression that individuals are vigilant.
- Whether there are structural safeguards or not.

Based on the above checklist, areas that could be prone to crime occurrence can be identified.

Thus, social psychology can be adequately applied to environment to enhance it and make it safe.

Check Your Progress I

1) What is resource dilemma?

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6.3 SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY AND DIVERSITY

If we look around we certainly understand that we exist in a ‘diverse’ social world. People around us belong to various nationalities, ethnic identities, cultural backgrounds, socio-economic status, religious beliefs etc. We still continue to live alongside this diversity as individuals with a strong sense of belonging to our particular community or group.

Human beings have varied social differences based on their gender, height, physical and mental capabilities and such attributes reflect how we perceive others. Some common types of diversity are:

- **Religion:** People belong to various religious backgrounds and faith around us.
- **Age:** In any given place people of different ages and more importantly, generations co-exist together.
- **Sex/ Gender:** Gender has numerous aspects to it which makes it diverse. Agender, gender conformity, gender dysphoria, sexual orientation are just a few ways of looking at the concept.
- **Disability:** The diversity in the experiences of people having disabilities (both physical and psychological) requires the world around to adjust and help adapt by making it an inclusive environment.

Besides these, there exist some intangible characteristics like education, personality, life experiences etc. that contribute towards human diversity. The presence of diversity often leads to experiences of bias and discrimination. These biases lead to the way perceptions are formed of each other. In examining the concept of diversity in the social context, let us focus our learning on intergroup relations in the community.

6.3.1 Cultural Diversity

One of the main concepts that can be focused here is cultural diversity. Culture can be described as a way of life. The term was first used by Taylor in 1871. Taylor defined culture as “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, laws, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (Berry, Poortinga, Breugelmans, Chasiotis, and Sam, 2002). Matsumoto and Juang (2004, page 10) defined culture as “ a dynamic system of rules, explicit and implicit, established by groups in order to ensure their survival, involving attitudes, values, beliefs, norms, and behaviours, shared by a group but harboured differently by each specific unit within the group, communicated across generations, relatively stable with the potential to change across time”. As is clear from the above definitions, culture have many dimensions and it can have a significant influence on the individual behaviour. Culture is socially transmitted through enculturation and socialisation. Thus, most of the behaviours can be perceived in a context and culture is a prominent context. As individuals belonging to various cultures come together due to various reasons like migration for work and education, due to globalisation and so on, the result is cultural diversity.

There are various dimensions of culture as stated by Hofstede, that lead to individual differences in the values and preferences that are learned. These are discussed as follows:

- **Individualism and collectivism:** An idiocentric individual, that is, an individual with individualism orientation will follow his/ her own goals without taking in to consideration the views of his/ her family members. On the other hand, an allocentric individual. that is an individual with collectivistic orientation will behave in manner that is seen as beneficial for the group and for that he/ she may even give on his/ her personal goals. United States of America and Canada can be seen as examples of individualistic societies. Whereas, India can be seen as an example of collectivistic society (Kwantes et al. 2012).
- **Power distance:** This is yet another dimension of culture and can be explained as the extent of acceptance of inequality (that is based on status in society, power, physical characteristics and so on) by the individuals in society. Thus, there can be cultures that have high power density (for example, Malaysia and Philippines) and cultures that have low power density (Germany and New Zealand).
- **Masculinity and femininity:** This dimension mainly focuses on work related goals. Cultures that have high masculinity focus in encouragement of recognition at work place, competitions and advancement at workplace. Whereas, cultures that have high femininity focus on relationships and provide significance to harmony. Examples of masculinity culture are Japan and Italy. examples of femininity culture are Sweden and the Netherlands (Kwantes et al. 2012). Gender differences may exist in values endorsed in masculinity cultures. Whereas such a gender difference is not found amongst femininity cultures.
- **Uncertainty avoidance:** This mainly has to do with coping process when uncertainties are faced. High levels of uncertainties can lead to generation of stress and anxiety amongst the individuals. And this is relevant in this context because every society will teach its individuals ways of coping with uncertainties. Societies with low uncertainty avoidance believe that uncertainties cannot be avoided. Example of such a society is Singapore. Societies with high uncertainty experience threat when faced with uncertainty. Example of such a society is Germany.
- **Long or short term orientation:** In cultures with long term orientation, the future rewards are valued and thus patience, harmony and persistence are given more importance. For example, Taiwan and South Korea. Whereas, in cultures with short term orientation, the focus is on immediate rewards and quick gratification. For example, Canada.

Thus, culture can contribute to the diversity amongst the individuals to a greater extent.

6.3.2 Intergroup Relations

As a part of the various social groups in any community, humans differ in their perceptions, attitudes, expressions and behaviours. They reflect strong

similarities between themselves and members of their own group and highlight the differences between their own group and other groups. When viewed from a cultural perspective, this behaviour showcases the concept of 'Ethnocentrism' which is a tendency to use your own culture as the standard to judge and evaluate other cultures. In groups, however, this is viewed as 'in-group favouritism' wherein people have a tendency to evaluate themselves and their groups more positively than others.

Intergroup relations refers to how people belonging to various social groups perceive and interact with those belonging to other groups. Most often these interactions involve hostility, prejudice and intolerance. A challenge to humanity is to reduce these negative occurrences among diverse groups and promote harmony. Prejudice can be described as a negative attitude that is based on membership of a group and discrimination can be described as the behaviour that is directed towards other individuals on the basis of membership of certain category. And these can have a negative impact on the intergroup relationships.

Two of the prominent approaches on reducing prejudice and discrimination are:

- 1) **Intergroup contact approach:** According to social psychologist Gordon Allport (1954), 'contact hypothesis' could help facilitate prejudice reduction. The hypothesis suggests that intergroup contact among diverse groups under appropriate conditions can help reduce prejudice. The four key conditions suggested for contact situations were
 - **Equal status:** Members in the contact situation should have an equal hierarchical relationship.
 - **Intergroup cooperation:** Members should work together in a non-competitive environment.
 - **Common goals:** Members must rely on each other to achieve their shared desired goals.
 - **Support by social and institutional authorities:** There should be authorities in the social domain that support the positive contact.

Pettigrew (1998) explained how these conditions facilitate prejudice reduction. He listed four processes of change.

- Learning about the 'out group' or reappraising how one thinks about one's own 'in-group'.
- Changing behaviour to open oneself to potential positive contact experiences.
- Generating affective ties and friendships and reducing negative emotions.
- In group reappraisal.

2) **Social identity approach:** The social identity theory by social psychologist Tajfel (1978) highlights that people's self concepts are based on their membership in social groups. These social identities affect people attitudes and behaviours in their in-group and out-group interactions. Some of the strategies of this approach include:

- a) **De-categorisation:** Involves teaching people from different social groups to focus on a person's unique individual characteristics rather than the group they belong to. Also known as individuation, this process helps to divert the attention from group differences to individual characteristics – for example, instead of talking about others belong to different religions as 'they', 'them', instead bringing the focus to 'me', 'you'.
- b) **Re-categorisation:** Individuals with different group identities are made aware of the fact that the groups to which they belong are part of a bigger group – for example, a person belonging to any state in India would be made aware that they are Indians.
- c) **Crossed categorisation:** Individuals from opposing groups are made aware of the fact that they simultaneously belong to a third separate group and the membership in the third group is emphasised – for example, John is an Indian national while David is a British national. But they both are catholic, male in gender and having similar political and social outlooks.

Diversity can pose various challenges like prejudice could develop amongst the individuals and there can also be discrimination. Besides, there can also be development of stereotypes, that is, beliefs that individuals hold regarding the characteristics, attributes and behaviours of certain group members (Kwantes et al. 2012). Diversity could also lead to conflict amongst the individuals, that mainly stems from lack of compatibility in interests of the individuals.

Despite of the challenges posed by diversity, there are many positives to it too. Experiencing diversity prepares people to adjust anywhere across the globe with others of different backgrounds and lifestyles. Diversity encourages learning provoking deeper thought and creativity. It also provides fulfilling experiences in one's social life. The presence of diversity promotes healthy attitudes and enhances self awareness. Following are some of the advantages if diversity:

- **It can enhance group processes:** In this context we can discuss about functional diversity, that is, in a group, different individuals will bring different talents, skills and strengths. Different individuals will bring different point of view, opinion and information to the group that can enhance the group effectiveness. Though it is also important to ensure that there is respect and acceptance amongst the group members and any difference in opinion or conflict is managed effectively.

- **It will lead to innovation and creativity:** As the group members are able to share diverse opinions and perspectives, innovation and creativity will be enhanced.
- **Effective problem solving:** Diversity leads to effective problem solving as the problem is viewed from different perspectives and diverse solutions are generated.

Check Your Progress II

- 1) List the dimensions of culture.

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6.4 LET US SUM UP

We all exist in a physical world. Our perceptions of the environment around us relate to the extent to which we engage with it. Humans are known to have an innate awareness and sensitivity towards the environment. Human beings affect the environment in numerous ways. Three of the major impacts that harm the environment are pollution, global warming and climate change. Today, with awareness some of the positive human include conserving energy, following the three R's— Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and conserving and protecting natural resources. We also focused on the social designs and how they can have an impact on the individual behaviours.

Another aspect discussed in the unit is social psychology and human diversity. People around us belong to various nationalities, ethnic identities, cultural backgrounds, socio-economic status, religious beliefs etc. We still continue to live alongside this diversity as individuals with a strong sense of belonging to our particular community or group. Cultural diversity with a focus on various dimensions of culture was also discussed. One attribute of diversity is intergroup relations. Two of the prominent approaches on reducing prejudice and discrimination among groups are the contact approach by social psychologist Gordon Allport (1954) and the Social identity approach Tajfel (1978).

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6.6 KEY WORDS

Culture: Taylor defined culture as “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, laws, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (Berry, Poortinga, Breugelmans, Chasiotis, and Sam, 2002).

Social design: Social design mainly focus on how settings can be designed in a way that help meet the desires and requirements of individuals.

Social dilemmas: Social dilemmas can be described as situations in which individuals have to make certain choices.

Tragedy of the Commons: According to scientist Garrett Hardin (1968) is what could happen in groups of people when individual's act in their own best self interest and ignore what is best for the whole group.

6.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

1) What is resource dilemma?

Resource dilemmas can be termed as common dilemmas that denote the situations in which the individuals have to make a choice between one's own interest and that of the community or environment

Check Your Progress II

- 1) List the dimensions of culture.
 - Individualism and collectivism
 - Power distance
 - Masculinity and femininity
 - Uncertainty avoidance
 - Long or short term orientation

6.8 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) Examine how human behaviours affect the environment.
- 2) Elucidate social designs.
- 3) Describe cultural diversity with a focus on dimensions of culture.
- 4) What is tragedy of commons?

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UNIT 7 APPLICATION OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY TO COMMUNITY AND LEGAL SYSTEM*

Structure

- 7.0 Objectives
- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 Concept of Community
- 7.3 Application of Social Psychology to Community.
- 7.4 Applications of Social Psychology to the Legal System
 - 7.4.1 Social Psychology and Crime
 - 7.4.2 Social Psychology and Law
- 7.5 Let us Sum up
- 7.6 References
- 7.7 Key Words
- 7.8 Answers to check your progress
- 7.9 Unit End Questions

7.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you will be able to:

- describe the concept of community;
- describe the application of social psychology to community; and
- explain how social psychology can be applied to the legal system.

7.1 INTRODUCTION

“In India . . . we must aim at equality. That does not mean and cannot mean that everybody is physically or intellectually or spiritually equal or can be made so. But it does mean equal opportunities for all, and no political, economic or social barrier. . . . It means a faith in humanity and a belief that there is no race or group that cannot advance and make good in its own way, given the chance to do so. It means a realisation of the fact that the backwardness or degradation of any group is not due to inherent failings in it, but principally to lack of opportunities and long suppression by other groups.”

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, The Discovery of India (1946)

* Dr. Tina D' Cunha, SEN Inclusion Learning Mentor and Key worker

We have had a good introduction to social psychology in the previous Units and hence now we shall directly understand the main aspects of this Unit, that is, application of principles of social psychology to community and legal systems.

The Unit will mainly focus on the concept of community and how social psychology can be applied to community. Community life is all about shared practices, common values and belief system. For instance, Goa – has the ‘Goan’ community- as it is often referred to. Being geographically on the coast and four centuries of Portuguese rule has led people of the state to have their own way of life and sustenance. The Portuguese influence is evident in names, food, architecture, music and all this is beautifully blended with Hindu festivals, the Konkani language, the farming, fishing and tourist industry and an undeniable Indian culture. Thus, we will not only understand the concept of community but will also look at the application of social psychology to community.

Further, the Unit will also explain the application of social psychology in legal system will be highlighted. The legal systems hold its prominence in social living. Since criminal behavior involves the violations of socially defined norms, psychologists view these behaviours to be accountable to both, the person as well as the situation it occurred in.

7.2 CONCEPT OF COMMUNITY

The community we live in or are a part of has a great influence on people's day-to-day lives and are central to humankind. They contribute to the development and sustenance of in-group knowledge and identity and also provide strong tools for empowerment. Under this section we will explore the applications of social psychology to community life starting by understanding the concept of a community.

According to the Oxford dictionary, the English-language word "community" derives from the Old French word *comuneté* (currently "Communauté"). Archaeological studies of social communities use the term "community" in two ways. The first is an informal definition of community as a place where people used to live (example a village, city or town). The second meaning resembles the usage of the term in other social sciences: a community is a group of people living near one another who interact socially.

Community can be explained as a group of people who are functionally related and reside in a certain geographical locality at certain point of time. The people also display cohesiveness and a common culture. These people are a part of a social structure and display awareness regarding their identity as a group that is unique and separate identity.

Community can be differentiated from society as society can be explained as a system of relationships amongst individuals and community can be

described as a group of people who reside in certain locality and display cohesiveness to one another. Thus, there are a group of individuals in both society and in community but the society denotes a system related to social relationship. Whereas, community can be related with certain locality. Further, society as such may not have cohesiveness of we-feeling that is often displayed by a community. Community is a concrete concept and society is an abstract concept. Though, community is narrower when compared to society. Community thus can be a village or state or national community, where as society is larger in size. Any society has differences as well as similarities. However, community is mainly on the basis of similarity amongst the individuals.

There are three broad categories of community:

- 1) **Rural Communities:** Today it is difficult to explain the term 'rural'. One characteristic of these communities is that they have a lower population density compared to the urban areas. Rural communities are often understood to be quiet, isolated and untouched by the urban developments of the world. These areas tend to have higher rates of poverty, unemployed or underemployment. They also place emphasis on family and blood lineages, kinship relationships, family and cultural preservation.

An interesting element in a social contact emphasised when understanding rural communities is 'understanding resilience'. Rather than examining what is not working out in rural areas, this approach examines what is present in these communities and its own strengths that could help deal with any challenges. Margalit (2004) suggests that such resilience is based on an inter-connection between the individual, family and the socio-cultural adaptation.

- 1) **Urban Communities:** Urban communities tend to be more complex and diverse in terms of their social status and needs. They have higher level of demographic complexity and hence the bonds that connect members of these communities could be weaker. The people in these communities could also come from many different places and often do not know one another or the heritage of place they live in. Unlike in rural areas, urban people may have to travel long distances for work and their lives are more controlled by their working hours. Overall, the social condition of people is more developed and generally more educated.
- 2) **Suburban Communities:** These are usually lower density areas that separate residential and commercial areas from one another. They may be part of a city or urban area. Suburban communities often have more job opportunities than rural areas though may not be as many as in urban areas. They often also benefit from better access to healthcare, spaces for physical activity or recreation.

The discipline of psychology holds the view that we as individuals are social beings and we exist in a community culture and we need each of our community lives in order to realise our distinct sense of self, attachment and individuality. Community life integrates individuals into a society. It connects personal histories and experiences to shared cultural values and practices. Social representations such as community symbols, histories, rituals and aspirations of people shape community life and these become a strong sense of social behavior and knowledge for people. Communities play an important role in influencing the behaviour of individuals who are its members. Communities provide social norms that direct and regulate the behaviours of the individual

Social psychologists also highlight that a community helps us in our need for 'belongingness'. It is important to note that a community cannot develop in isolation or influences from other communities. Hence, they construct their roots and identity based on the social life and experiences of people living in it. Though, there are numerous problems and issues world wide and they occur at various levels like economic issues, health issues, climate change, population, wealth distribution etc. Conflicts are bound to develop in groups and among individuals. They are present in every community group as well. There are differences in thought, opinions and experiences. These need to be minimised and resolved in a fair and open manner.

Further, in all societies we notice that some groups are socially excluded and may face discrimination. *Social exclusion* describes a process by which certain groups are systematically disadvantaged because they are discriminated against on the basis of their ethnicity, race, religion, sexual orientation, caste, descent, gender, age, disability, HIV status, migrant status or where they live and so on. Discrimination occurs in public institutions, such as the legal system or education and health services, as well as social institutions like in the household. A HIV positive lady gave this testimony "*I got HIV from my husband. After a year of our marriage, my husband died from AIDS. When it was discovered that I had become infected with HIV, my in-laws stopped having anything to do with me and disowned me. So I had to move back to my parents' house. After this tragedy I went looking for a job. Before my marriage I used to teach in a school, so I thought when I needed a job I could apply to the same school again. But the school authorities found out about my HIV status and refused to accept my application. Not only that, I was also humiliated and looked down upon. Later, I got in touch with a foundation which helped me get HIV treatment. Through them I found my present job.*" Social exclusion can also be subtle and unintentional like in the cases of disability where the common spaces like educational institutes, market places, government offices are not designed to be disabled friendly. One of the direct consequences, among other factors, of social exclusion is poverty in various communities. Socially excluded people are often denied opportunities causing low income and are left economically behind. Living with low income can increase parental stress and affect family bonding.

Poverty could indicate poor living and housing conditions, overcrowded neighbourhoods and unsuitable environments and influences like crime. It has negative influences on children's health, development and overall wellbeing.

Thus, there could be numerous issues in communities, that may need interventions based on the principles of social psychology.

Check Your Progress I

- 1) List the three categories of community.

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7.3 APPLICATION OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY TO COMMUNITY

In the context of application of social psychology to community, we can discuss about the term community psychology that also encompasses effective application of principles of social psychology to community.

Community psychology can be described as focusing on how individual relates with communities and society. It also focuses on improvement of quality of life for individuals as well as in communities and society as a whole and this is done with the help of research and action. According to Lafreniere et. al. (2012, page 275), the main values of community psychology include “family wellbeing, sense of community, respect for diversity, social justice, participation of citizens, collaboration and community strengths and empirical grounding”.

Some of the relevant values and approaches in community psychology (Lafreniere et. al., 2012, page 276 and 277) are discussed as follows:

- **Sense of community:** This is denoted by the feelings of belongingness and membership that the individuals in the community have towards the community. The main characteristics of the sense of community are interdependence and attachment towards other members of the community.
- **Ecological perspective:** The focus here is on fit between the individual and his/ her environment. The outcomes of a lack of such a fit is also highlighted. Further, any issue or problem is to be analysed at various levels as individuals are influenced simultaneously by multiple systems

like microsystem (family and peers), organisations (school, college, workplace), macrosystem (cultural group or political structures of the State of Country).

- **Promotion of wellbeing and prevention of problems:** Wellbeing here can be explained in terms of both physical and mental wellbeing. The focus of the community psychology is on enhancing wellbeing and also on prevention of problems that can negatively impact wellbeing of the individuals.
- **Respect for diversity:** In earlier unit, we focused on diversity. The community psychology also strives towards inculcating respect for diversity amongst the individuals.
- **Social justice:** Social justice denotes fair and equal distribution of resources and opportunities in the community. The rights of the underprivileged members are also upheld.
- **Collaboration and community strength:** Attempts are made to develop a relationship that is collaborative and in which the expertise and the experiences of the community members are utilised while the research is designed and programmes are planned.
- **Participation and empowerment of the citizens:** This involves encouraging the active participation of the members of the community in dealing with the social issues and problems in the community and in bringing about betterment of the community. The goal is also to make individuals in the community take control of their lives and become empowered.
- **Social action and bringing about social change:** Community psychology aims at bringing about positive social change and direct social actions in order to resolve social issues and problems.
- **Empirical grounding:** In this the focus is on research and empirical methods that can be used to study social issues and problems and develop suitable interventions in order to alleviate them.

In order to encourage positive influence of the community on the individuals and to enhance their sense of community, the social psychologists can focus on the four main elements that are described as follows:

- **Membership:** This denotes that any community will have boundaries that are social and geographical and an individuals can be seen as belonging to certain community or other. Sense of membership can lead to feelings of safety and belonging ness amongst the individuals, which in turn will lead to desire to work for the benefit of one's own community.
- **Influence:** This mainly focuses on the power. That is the influence that the community has on the individual and vice versa. Individuals who feel that

they have a presence or value in their community will have a strong sense of belongingness with that community.

- **Interdependence:** The members in the community are interdependent and play a role in fulfilling each others needs. There is also sharing of resources, goods and values.
- **Shared emotional connection:** A community that is cohesive in nature will have a stronger shared emotional bond with the community and with the members in the community. This can be promoted with the help of shared experiences, rituals and celebrations.

Cultivating a sense of community can lead to wellbeing of individuals as the community will provide the much needed direction and social support. Interventions based on the four elements of sense of community can be developed in order to enhance the sense of community amongst the individuals.

With regard to application of principles of social psychology to community, the focus can be on understanding deindividuation, that is mainly a loss of sense that is experienced when the person is in a crowded place or is burdened with overstimulation. This is often seen in urban cities, where despite of all the amenities and facilities, the individuals may not be fit to the environment and may experience stress and various other issues (Lafreniere et. al, 2012). Psychological experiences of living in an urban set up are not only due to various aspects like pollution, crowding etc.) but they could also be as a result of stimulus overload. Stimulus overload can be explained as a condition that is denoted by an overloaded nervous system that makes it difficult to respond simultaneously to varied stimuli in the environment. This can lead to adaptation in form of psychological retreating where response is not provided to all the stimuli that demand attention. According to Milgram (as cited by Lafreniere et. al, 2012), the following ways in which the psychological retreat takes place:

- Rushing through social situations and less time is devoted to dealing with obstacles.
- Prioritisation takes place and thus, tasks that are low priority get less attention or will be avoided.
- Structures are created in such a way that personal element has no place. Automation in terms of ATM machines and so on reduces social interaction to a greater extent.
- Barriers are created in order to avoid social interaction in day to day life.
- Specialised agencies are created to deal with certain issues and problems. Thus, any problem is directed to that agency and the individuals do not have to feel responsible.

In the context we can also discuss about diffusion of responsibility, that can take place when none of the individuals feel responsible and each one feels that some one else will help. This also leads to bystanders effect that we study in social psychology. The term bystander effect refers to the tendency for people to be inactive in high danger situations due to the presence of other bystanders (Latané& Nida, 1981). Thus, people tend to help more when alone than in a group. A young woman called Kitty Genovese was murdered in New York, while several of her neighbors looked on. No one intervened until it was too late. Latanéand Darley (1970) identified three different psychological processes that might prevent a bystander from helping a person in distress: (i) diffusion of responsibility; (ii) evaluation apprehension (fear of being publicly judged); and (iii) pluralistic ignorance (the tendency to rely on the overt reactions of others when defining an ambiguous situation).

Thus, when a social psychologist works in a community setup, especially in an urban community, the points discussed above need to be taken in to considered in order to enhance the person- environment fit and avoid deindividuation and diffusion of responsibility that could negatively affect the overall development and wellbeing of the community.

The main focus of community psychology (that could of interest to social psychologists as well) is on how the community or society have an influence on an individuals wellbeing. The focus is mainly on the disadvantages and aversive conditions in the social environment of an individual that can have an impact on his/ her mental health and wellbeing. And if community play a role in an individuals wellbeing, then various interventions at community level can have a positive impact and can play a role in enhancing the wellbeing of the individuals in the society.

Community-based mental health services are emphasised in the World Health Organisation's Mental Health Action Plan, the World Bank's Disease Control Priorities, and the Action Plan of the World Psychiatric Association. There is increasing evidence for effectiveness of mental health interventions delivered by non-specialists in community platforms in low- and middle-income countries (Kohrt et. al., 2018). The availability and integration of mental health services into communities can promote accessibility, acceptability, affordability, and scalability of services, as well as promote adherence to treatment and increase the likelihood of positive clinical outcomes. Moreover, community services can play a crucial role in promoting mental health awareness, reducing stigma and discrimination, supporting recovery and social inclusion, and preventing mental disorders. In a study by Nimgaonkar et. al. (2015) in Tamil Nadu used low cost task shifting by providing community education and identifying and referring individuals with psychiatric problems as effective strategies for treating mental disorders in tribal communities. Through the program, the health workers established a network within the village, which in turn helped the patients to interact with them freely. Consenting patients volunteered at the educational sessions to

discuss their experience about the effectiveness of their treatment. Community awareness programs altered knowledge and attitudes toward mental illness in the community.

Thus, community based interventions can play an important role in promoting mental health and wellbeing amongst individuals in the community.

Social psychologists also need to focus on diversity and respect and acceptance of diversity among the members in the community. This was discussed by us in details in the previous unit. Interventions can be designed by social psychologists in order to promote respect and acceptance of diversity and reduce stigmatization, prejudice and discrimination.

Community psychology also focuses on research and action in order to bring about social change. This is in accordance with the definition of applied social psychology, where empirical research is carried out in order to understand a social issue or problem and then based on the results intervention strategies are designed, developed and implemented. Community psychologists aim to create a positive social change within a social structure at two levels, firstorder changes, that involves encouraging changes in individuals inorder to prevent or fix a community problem. And second order changes that involves changing the social systems that contribute to problems inorder to ensure that individuals fit well into their environments. And interventions can be developed accordingly in order to bring about first order or second order change. Action research that we discussed n unit 2 of this course can be used in order to study social issues and problems and develop suitable intervention strategies.

Check Your Progress II

- 1) What is sense of community?

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7.4 APPLICATION OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY TO THE LEGAL SYSTEMS

Legal systems are a part of political, social and economic development of any given country. Major social changes are always reflected in the laws of the land. The relationship between social psychology and law may not be common in our understanding but it helps when we look at it as a 'coded set of rules that regulate human behavior and interactions'. The regulation of behaviours through set laws helps in conflict resolution and guiding accepted behaviours. There is a very deep connection between human mind and behaviours and the functioning of the legal system. In the following case study of false confessions, we can attempt to see how being 'caught' in a criminal offence can work on the human mind and have its consequences.

At 16, Huwe Burton confessed to killing his mother. He was still in shock from discovering her body when New York City police began to interrogate him. After hours of being threatened and cajoled, he told the police what they wanted to hear. He soon recanted, knowing he was innocent and hoping the justice system would clear him. Burton was convicted of second-degree murder in 1991 and received a sentence of 15 years to life. After 20 years in prison, he was released on parole, but he never could shake the stigma of the conviction. Attorneys from several organisations worked for more than a decade to clear him. They produced facts that contradicted the confession and showed evidence of prosecutorial misconduct. But for the Bronx District Attorney's Office, Burton's confession outweighed all other evidence; after all, who would admit to a crime they did not commit? Burton's attorneys brought in Saul Kassin, a psychologist, to help with the interrogation.

Kassin explained that false confessions are not rare. Drawing on more than 30 years of research, Kassin told the legal team how standard interrogation techniques combine psychological pressures and escape hatches that can easily cause an innocent person to confess. He explained how young people are particularly vulnerable to confessing, especially when stressed, tired, or traumatised, as Burton was.

The above case study highlights the role of psychology in legal system. The focus of the present unit though will be specifically on how the principles and concepts of social psychology can be applied to legal system.

7.4.1 Social Psychology and Crime

The foremost issue under legal system that needs to be focus on is crime and criminal behaviour. Crime can be termed as a social issues and can be linked to various other social issues and problems like poverty, discrimination socio-economic status and so on. Thus, it is important to view crime from social psychology lens in order to understand it and suggest suitable intervention strategies to deal with it.

In this section we will discuss the role of social psychology in the legal system. The socio-legal approach says that law is directly linked to the analysis of a social situation involving a legal angle and should be put into perspective of how the law plays a role in the maintenance or change of the situation.

When we try to understand crime or criminal behaviour, we need to focus on the factors that lead to criminal behaviour. And in the context of social psychology, it is important to focus on the environment or social situation of the offender rather than only his/ her personal characteristics.

Deindividuation: Once such factor (in the context criminal behaviour) could be deindividuation (that was also mentioned earlier in the previous subsection). Deindividuation can not only have a negative impact on the community as was discussed earlier but can also promote criminal behaviour and thus needs to be dealt with adequately. Deindividuation refers to the fact that when people are placed into groups or surrounded by a crowd, many people seem to lose their sense of identity or individuality, resulting in the loss of self-control or moral restraints. Deindividuation is commonly used to explain various situations of violence, including genocide, violent riots or crowds, gangs or antisocial group behavior. Philip Zimbardo, a well-known psychologist, believes deindividuation usually follows as a result of a complex set of events:

- a) The presence of many others encourages a feeling of anonymity.
- b) The individual feels that he/she has lost their sense of identity and becomes part of “the group”.
- c) The group identity gives comfort in the fact that he/she can no longer be singled out or held responsible for their behavior.

This then generates a loss of self-awareness, reduced concern of his or her behavior being evaluated by others, and an increasingly narrowed focus of attention.

Criminal behaviours like stealing are more likely when individual are in a group. Deindividuation can also be attributed to collective aggression as there is a loss is sense of identity when on wis ina group and there may be loss of self control that could lead to individuals displaying behaviours that may not be as per the societal norms.

Social facilitation: Yet another concept that we can discuss in the context of social psychology and crime or criminal behaviour is social facilitation. Social facilitation refers to the finding that people sometimes show an increased level of effort as a result of the real, imagined, or implied presence of others. In a study by Thornberry et. al. (1993) the boys of the Rochester Youth Development Study who were gang members were found to be much more delinquent than non-gang members. Results for transient gang

members, those who were gang members for only one year and presumably less committed to the gang, were most consistent with the social facilitation model. Involvement in delinquency was particularly high when the boy was an active gang member, but these boys were not consistently more delinquent than non-gang members when they were not active in the gang. For those who remained gang members for at least two years and were presumably more committed to the gang, that is, the stable gang members, these boys exhibited the highest rates of general delinquency, yet delinquent involvement was greatest during their years of active gang membership.

Antisocial patterns of attitudes: The study of attitudes, including antisocial attitudes, and their relation to behavior is an important endeavour in social psychology. Attitudes are generally thought of as evaluative judgments that a person makes about an issue, an object, an event, or a person. Thus, a person's attitudes toward crime may be relevant to his or her tendency to commit a crime. Andrews and Bonta (2002) identified five elements that comprise an antisocial pattern of attitudes (including values and beliefs):

- High tolerance for deviance in general,
- Rejection of the validity of legal authority and institutions,
- Use of cognitive distortions (for example rationalisation, denial) to make one's antisocial behavior acceptable.
- Interpretation of a wide range of environmental stimuli as a reason for anger, and
- A style of thinking that is generally antisocial.

The frustration- aggression hypothesis: We can also discuss about the frustration- aggression hypothesis in the context of criminal behaviour. This hypothesis is a social psychology model that states that anger, hostility and violence are more likely an outcome of an individual being prevented from achieving his/her goals (frustration). This theory is based on the psychodynamic theory of catharsis, (catharsis — the process of releasing, and relieving strong or repressed emotion). The following stages are proposed;

- 1) An attempt to achieve a goal is blocked,
- 2) Frustration is experienced,
- 3) Aggressive drive is created,
- 4) Aggressive behaviour displayed (e.g. violent fantasy, verbal / physical outburst.

This is cathartic because the aggression created by the frustration is satisfied, thereby reducing the drive and making further aggression less likely.

The principles of social psychology can thus be used to understand criminal behaviour and the above points can be kept in mind when programmes are developed to prevent criminal behaviour and workshops and programmes can

also be organised at community levels in order to understand the factors leading to community behaviours so that the same can be avoided.

7.4.2 Social Psychology and Law

Discussing about legal psychology, it can be explained as the application of psychology and its principles to legal system. According to Tapp (1973 as cited in Fisher, 1982), there are three main areas of application to psychology in legal systems that have been mainly focused on, they are legal socialisation in communities, the process of judiciary in the court of law and the criminal justice process. Though in the present section our focus will be on how one of the branches of psychology, that is, social psychology finds its application in legal system. Almost all aspects of legal rules and procedures relate to human behavior. Many assumptions made by the law about human behavior have been challenged by research in psychology, more specifically social psychology. In the related field of cognitive psychology, important contributions from research in memory regarding eyewitness testimony and eyewitness identification have led to greater scrutiny and occasionally expert testimony at trials (Ceci and Friedman, 2000).

Social psychology can thus find its application in legal system to understand the behaviour of the jury, lawyers, eyewitnesses, defendants as well as the accused. Further, it can also find its application to the arrest, interrogation and prosecution process.

Police investigation: Social psychology can play a role in understanding the investigation that is carried out by police. Investigation mainly involves a careful and systematic collection of information. And this involves interacting with the victim, eyewitness and even suspects. It is important that this process is free from any bias and error and is carried out as per the required procedure as stated by the law.

A lot will also depend on the interview that is carried out during the interrogation as the interviewer can have an impact on the interviewee (who could be the victim, eyewitness or the suspect). Interactional synchrony could take place, where the body movements are coordinated by the people when they are interacting with each other. This can have a detrimental effect on the investigation process. For example, if the interviewer, is a police officer, is restless during the interview, as a result of interactional synchrony, the interviewee could also get restless and this could be perceived as suspicious behaviour by the police officer. Any stress created during the investigation may make the suspect wrongly confess to crime. Thus, these issues need to be considered while the investigation is being carried out.

Further, self fulfilling prophecies can also play a role here. Self fulfilling prophecies occurs when expectations that a person has from another person, affects his/ her own behaviour and that of the other person in such a way that the person's beliefs will be confirmed. Thus, if the investigating officer has a preconceived notion that the person he/ she is interviewing has committed the

crime, the interviewee will behave in accordance with the self fulfilling prophesy, thus leading to error in the investigating process. Investigative interviews thus can be carried out keeping these aspects in mind and by employing effective cognitive interview techniques. For example, focus on rapport building, asking open ended questions, questions that are non leading, and strategic silence could be used (Day and Marion, 2012). The investigative officer needs even more careful while investigating children and questions asked again need to be non suggestive or non leading and neutral in nature.

Eyewitness testimony: The application of social psychology can also be discussed in the context of how eyewitness's testimony, mainly the ability to identify the perpetrator. There could be errors in this as well as this identification will depend on various circumstances. For instance, the eyewitness could make error when under stress while witnessing the event. Fewer errors are made when the full face of the perpetrator is visible rather than when the perpetrator is in disguise or the face is not clearly visible. In this regard cross-race effect may also occur, where the individuals are able to recognise a face of individuals belonging to their own race rather than that of an individual belonging to another race. The conditions under which the eyewitness has to identify the witness may also play a role. In this regard, the foils (individuals who are innocent), who stand in the lineup along with the suspects need to be selected carefully. The line up could also be sequential line up (one at a time) rather than simultaneous line up (all lined up together). Thus, errors can be reduced in investigation and the perpetrator identification process using the principles and concepts in social psychology.

Further, we discussed some of the important skills related to cognitive interviewing, communication skills and so on. Workshops on these can be organised for the police personnel in order to help them enhance their investigative skills.

A tool that could be of help during interrogation is the polygraph test or lie detector that is based on principles of psychology. Lie detection is a major theme in 'psychology and law', which in turn is one of the main areas of applied psychology. To facilitate lie detection, psychologists and practitioners have developed numerous lie detection tools. Such tools span the entire possible range from observing behavior, analysing speech, and measuring peripheral physiological responses to recording brain activity.

Negotiations by lawyers: In legal system, there are often negotiations that take place between two or more parties. In the legal context the key aims of negotiation are to

- Arrive at a compromise in settling a dispute in a way which is most beneficial to the client.
- Achieve the best possible outcome for the client without needing to resort to litigation.

- Obtain enough information from the other party to reach a potential solution.

A lawyer must always act ethically in negotiations. However, there is much room for debate as to where and how lines should be drawn. For example, a lawyer should never lie but is not obliged to volunteer information which may adversely affect his or her case. Negotiators may suffer from a bias blind spot, which refers to the tendency for people to view others as biased, while being unable to perceive their own biases, even when alerted to the potential for bias in their decisions. Rapport is another interpersonal influence in negotiation, and it is an important determinant of the extent to which negotiators develop the trust necessary to reach mutually beneficial agreements (Nadler, 2004).

Jury: A jury is a sworn body of people (the jurors) convened to render an impartial verdict (a finding of fact on a question) officially submitted to them by a court, or to set a penalty or judgment. The role of the jury is described as that of a finder of fact, while the judge is seen as having the sole responsibility of interpreting the appropriate law and instructing the jury accordingly. The jury determines the truth or falsity of factual allegations and renders a verdict on whether a criminal defendant is guilty, or a civil defendant is civilly liable. It is important that the Juror needs to be impartial they need to reach a decision based on the admissible trial evidence alone (Day and Marion, 2012). According to Vidmar and Schuller (2001, as cited in Day and Marion, 2012, page 263), a juror could have following prejudices that can lead to bias:

- **Interest prejudice:** The juror has interest or stake in the trial outcome.
- **Specific prejudice:** The juror has certain attitudes and beliefs that may interfere with his/ her impartial judgement of the case.
- **Generic prejudice:** The juror may have a general attitude related to race or gender and so on that can interfere with his/ her evaluation of the evidence.
- **Normative prejudice:** A strong community sentiment about a case could interfere with the ability of the judge to make an impartial decision about the case.

Prison climate: Besides the above the principles of social psychology can also be applied to understanding and improving prison climate or setup. The prison has many goals. It can be a form of punishment or means of removing the individual from the society for safety of others, it can be incapacitation of the offender, rehabilitation and also denunciation to imply that the behaviour as displayed by the offender will not be tolerated. Prison includes a social environment as various offenders as well as the guards interact with each other on day to day basis. The social climate of a correctional system like

prison has three main dimension according to Moos (1987, as cited in Day and Marion, 2012, page 266):

- **Relationship oriented:** Includes support, involvement and expression.
- **Personal development:** Includes autonomy, practical orientation and personal problems orientation.
- **System maintenance and change:** Includes order and organisations, programme clarity and staff control).

Prisons need to play an important role in rehabilitation of the offender and thus the environment needs to be created in such a way that it facilitates positive behaviour change.

Thus, when we discuss about application of social psychology to legal system, numerous issues are covered including the crime related instigation, to the eyewitness testimony, to jury prejudices and prison settings.

Principles and concepts in social psychology can be used not only to understand various aspects of legal system and also to develop suitable interventions.

Check Your Progress III

1) What is deindividuation?

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7.5 LET US SUM UP

To sum up, in the present unit, we discussed about the concept of community. Community can be explained as a group of people who are functionally related and reside in a certain geographical locality at certain point of time. The people also display cohesiveness and a common culture. These people are a part of a social structure and display awareness regarding their identity as a group that is unique and separate identity. The three broad categories of community, namely, rural, urban and sub-urban communities were also discussed. The unit also focused on the application of social psychology to community. In this section, some of the relevant values and approaches in community psychology were also covered. With regard to application of social psychology to legal system, the subsection focused on social psychology and crime and social psychology and law. Under social psychology crime, deindividuation, social facilitation, antisocial patterns of

attitude and the frustration- aggression hypothesis. Under social psychology and law, we discussed about police investigation, eyewitness testimony, negotiation by lawyers, jury and prison climate.

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7.7 KEY WORDS

Community: Community can be explained as a group of people who are functionally related and reside in a certain geographical locality at certain point of time. The people also display cohesiveness and a common culture. These people are a part of a social structure and display awareness regarding their identity as a group that is unique and separate identity.

Community psychology: Community psychology can be described as focusing on how individual relates with communities and society. It also focuses on improvement of quality of life for individuals as well as in communities and society as a whole and this is done with the help of research and action.

Deindividuation: Deindividuation refers to the fact that when people are placed into groups or surrounded by a crowd, many people seem to lose their sense of identity or individuality, resulting in the loss of self-control or moral restraints.

Frustration- aggression hypothesis: This hypothesis is a social psychology model that states that anger, hostility and violence are more likely an outcome of an individual being prevented from achieving his/her goals (frustration).

Social facilitation: Social facilitation refers to the finding that people sometimes show an increased level of effort as a result of the real, imagined, or implied presence of others.

7.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

- 1) List the three categories of community?

The three categories of community are rural, urban and suburban.

Check Your Progress II

- 1) What is sense of community?

This is denoted by the feelings of belongingness and membership that the individuals in the community have towards the community. The main characteristics of the sense of community are interdependence and attachment towards other members of the community.

Check Your Progress III

- 1) What is deindividuation?

Deindividuation refers to the fact that when people are placed into groups or surrounded by a crowd, many people seem to lose their sense of identity or individuality, resulting in the loss of self-control or moral restraints.

7.9 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) What is a community? describe the different types of communities.
- 2) Describe the application of social psychology to community.
- 3) Explain social psychology and crime.
- 4) Describe social psychology and law.

UNIT 8 APPLICATION OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY TO POLITICAL BEHAVIOUR*

Structure

- 8.0 Objectives
- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.3 Social Perception and Political Behaviour.
 - 8.3.1 Attribution
 - 8.3.2 Schemas and Heuristics
- 8.4 Voting behaviour
 - 8.4.1 Social Influence
 - 8.4.2 Interpersonal Attraction
- 8.5 Media Influence on Political Behaviour
- 8.6 Let Us Sum up
- 8.7 References
- 8.8 Key Words
- 8.9 Answers to Check Your Progress
- 8.10 Unit End Questions

8.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- explain social perception and political behaviour;
- discuss voting behaviour; and
- explain the media influence on political behaviour.

8.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous units, we discussed the application of social psychology to various areas. In the present unit, we will try to look at application of social psychology to political behaviour. When we talk about political behaviour, the term encompasses human behaviour in terms of power and politics. Thus, the behaviour that we will focus on would be the political attitudes, opinions, beliefs and values. Before we go on to understanding the application of social psychology to political behaviour, let us define political behaviour.

Political behaviour mainly denotes the political attitudes, opinions, values and beliefs. Thus, an individual's political opinions, views, ideology and participation in politics can be studied under political behaviour. In psychology the political behaviour is studied under Political psychology. Political psychology can be explained as a branch of psychology that focuses on analysing the relationship that exists between the political processes and psychological fundamentals. Searst et. al. (2003, page 3) defined political psychology as "the application of what is known about human psychology to the study of politics". Thus, the principles of psychology are applied to understand the political processes. Though, the focus of the present sub section is on application of social psychology to political behaviour. Why individuals vote the way they do? What political ideologies they hold and how they perceive politics? are some of the questions that a social psychologists may look to answer in the context of political behaviour. And while doing so the focus is not only on the factors within the individual, like personality but also social factors, for example, group identity.

In the present unit, we will focus on social perception and political behaviour, voting behaviour and media influence on political behaviour.

8.3 SOCIAL PERCEPTION AND POLITICAL BEHAVIOUR

Political behaviour is rooted in social perception. Social perception refers to how people perceive, think about, and remember information about others. And this can play an important role in the way the political leaders are perceived by the general public. There are a number of perceptual biases as well, like, selective perception and halo effect that can have an effect on the way the political leaders are perceived. Individuals often receive a large number of information which they may not be able to process and as a result, attention is paid only to some information and thus the perception is based on certain features that are unique and these features may not represent the individual and his/ her behaviour. Halo effect denotes generalisations that are carried out about a person based on certain limited information.

Let us discuss some of the significant concepts in social psychology that could play a role in political behaviour. Though we will not discuss

Social perception can be defined as the process in which the information with regard to how individuals perceive themselves and others, is selected and interpreted. Thus, it mainly deals with how we see or view others. And this perception of others is subjective in nature and thus there could be a number of perceptual biases that may occur when we perceive others. In an organisational set up, thus it is important to focus on how the employees perceive each other and also become aware about the perceptual biases.

Perceptual biases: Perceptual biases can be explained as systematic errors that are made when individuals perceive other. Perceptual biases can impact

the way politicians or political parties are perceived and it could also influence voting behaviour of the individuals. Two main perceptual biases can be discussed in this context. They are as follows:

- **Selective perception:** This denotes that individuals are exposed to a large amount of information and thus not all the information is focused on but attention is paid only to certain information thus leading to selective perception. The perception is based on the distinctive features and behaviours that as such may not represent the individual behaviour. Thus, a political candidate will be perceived based on certain distinctive characteristics without paying attention to the overall of behaviour of the candidate.
- **Halo effect:** Based on a limited information, generalisations are made about an individual. Thus, again a political candidate is perceived as an effective or ineffective candidate based on limited information.

Social perception can be used in political behaviour to determine how the politicians are perceived and how certain perceptual biases could occur when certain politicians are perceived.

8.3.1 Attribution

Attribution is also a significant concept under social perception. It can be explained as the inferences drawn about the causes of behaviours displayed by other individuals, one's own behaviour and events (Shetgovekar, 2018). It can also be described as efforts made by an individual to ascertain the reason or causes of one's own behaviours and that of others (Baron and Byrne, 1995). While making attributions, individuals can also make attribution biases. These are discussed as follows:

- **Fundamental attribution error:** The behaviours displayed by others are attributed to their internal factors.
- **Actor observer bias:** The behaviour of others is attributed to internal factor but one's own behaviour is attributed to external factors.
- **Self serving bias:** This can be explained as where success is attributed to dispositional characteristics of the individual and failure is attributed to the situational factors.

Errors based on attribution could also occur when we discuss about how the politicians are perceived.

8.3.2 Schemas and Heuristics

In the context of social perception, we can also discuss about heuristics and schemas.

Schemas can be defined as "the expectations we have about certain situations or certain persons" (Shetgovekar, 2018, page 71). Schemas can be explained

as mental representations and they are a set of cognitions about certain concept. And these cognitions are organised and structured. Schemas aid in the organisation of knowledge and information and also plays a role in guiding information processing.

Schemas help us in interpretation of new information regarding social situations, roles, objects and phenomenon. The information that we obtain from others and from our social situations can be quickly processed with the help of schemas. They can also help in enhancing our memory as the information received is remembered, interpreted and inferences are drawn on the basis of information. Further, gaps that are created due to missing information can also be filled based on the information that is consistent with schema. Thus, schemas can play an important role in how we perceive situations, events, people and so on. They operate in an automatic manner and are unintentional and thus could lead to biases and errors. For instance, when assumptions about certain political candidate are based on faulty schemas, the interpretation and inferences that we make would also be faulty and incorrect. Further, stereotypes that are based on schemas can also have a detrimental effects.

Social psychologists can make use of schemas in order to understand how political related information is organised by the individuals. Schemas can also help in understanding political belief system from psychological and social perspectives.

In the context of political behaviour, we can also discuss about political schemas. And in this context we need to highlight that certain aspects related to political knowledge could be low or high on emotions. Thus, certain political knowledge could evoke strong emotional and cognitive reactions. Further, the focus also needs to be on the variation amongst the individuals with regard to the availability and use of schemas (Conover and Feldman, 1984).

Heuristics can be explained as cognitive shortcuts as stated by Tversky and Kahneman (1974, pg 1124) “People rely on a limited number of heuristic principles which reduce the complex tasks of assessing probabilities and predicting values to simpler judgemental operations. In general, these heuristics are quite useful, but sometimes they lead to severe and systematic errors”.

Some of the commonly used heuristics are as follows:

- **Representativeness heuristics:** In this the information received from the environment and the information received through schemas are matched. These can be explained as mental shortcuts where there is a categorisation of instances on the basis of how similar they are to atypical members in certain categories (Barret, 2017). Thus, a political candidate belonging to certain political party would be perceived in certain manner based on how the information about him/ her matches the schema.

- **The availability heuristics:** Availability heuristic is described by Barrett (2017, pg 92) as “mental shortcuts in which people judge the frequency or likelihood of an event based on how easily relevant examples come to mind”. Here the inferences are made based on the information that is easily available. For example, inferences about certain political candidate or a political party may be drawn based on the information as reflected in the media.
- **Simulation heuristics:** The simulation heuristic can be explained as “a tendency of an individual to think the events or situations that can be easily stimulated mentally or imagined, are more likely to occur” (Shetgovekar, 2018, page 77).
- **Anchoring heuristics:** When we try to understand certain vague or unclear information, we use anchors. These anchors can be explained as reference points. It is most commonly used in marketing to influence consumer behaviour.

Schemas and heuristics can play a significant role in our social perception and they can have an influence on the political decisions of the individuals.

Check Your Progress I

- 1) What is social perception?

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8.4 VOTING BEHAVIOUR

Social perception and the concepts that we discussed under social perception, like attribution, schemas and heuristics can play a role in determining the voting behaviour of the individuals. In social psychology we also discuss about social influence and interpersonal attraction. Electoral voting behaviours involve understanding of the social and political frameworks of a given area, informed choices by voters along with an ability to make inferences and predictions for community welfare.

8.4.1 Social Influence

Social influence can also play a role in determining voting behaviour. It can be explained as persuasive effect that the people have on each other. Social influence can be defined as a change that occurs in the behaviour, attitude, opinions and judgements of individuals that is as a result of being exposed to

the views and opinions of other individuals. For example, friends can have an impact on our opinion and views. Media as well can have an impact on our judgement.

Three important terms in this context are conformity, compliance and obedience.

- 1) **Conformity:** Conformity can be explained as pressure to behave in the ways that others do. It can be explained as pressure to behave the way as others do. An experiment in this regard was carried out by Asch (that you must have discussed in BPCC107), in which it was found that some of the participants gave incorrect answers so that they could go along with the answers that were given by majority of the people. Conformity can have an impact on the voting behaviour and overall political behaviour of the individuals as individuals may vote or have certain attitude or opinion about a political candidate not because either truly believe but because they want to conform with the view point of the majority. In the context of conformity, we can discuss about normative social norms and informational social norms. Normative social influence occurs when the conformity is as an outcome of desire to be liked and accepted by group members. Whereas, informational social influence is a tendency in which an individual will measure his/ her behaviour with that of others and will accept the facts that he/ she obtained from others as reality.

In this context, we also need to discuss about anti-conformist that denotes individuals who do not give in to the pressure from others and maintain their opinion, views and behaviours. Individuals may not conform as they wish to retain control over their lives and not be controlled by others. They also want to maintain their uniqueness in comparison with others (referred to as individuation).

- 2) **Compliance:** Compliance can be explained as making changes in one's behaviour as a result or suggestion or requests from other individuals. Some of the prominent techniques in this context are as follows:
 - **Ingratiation:** In this technique individuals indulge in enhancing their attractiveness in order to make other comply with their demands, opinions etc.
 - **Foot in the door technique:** In this compliance is initially obtained from smaller requests and then a larger request is put-forth.
 - **Door in the face technique:** In this technique, the individual will make a larger request first and then if this request is denied a smaller request is then put forth.

- **That's Not All (TNA) technique:** Using this technique, a deal is sugar coated in order to make it seem attractive thus leading an individual to conform.

These techniques are effectively used in marketing and sales. Political candidates and political parties as well could engage this strategy in order to improve their image and garner votes from the public.

3) Obedience: In this the individual will engage in giving commands and directions so as to change the behaviour and actions of other individuals. Often such individuals have some status or position in society that is considered as important. Obedience can take varied forms from obedience to God, to certain persons, social norms, laws and so on. The experiment carried out by Milgram can be mentioned here which showed that obedience can have an influence on individuals' behaviour. Whether a person will obey or not will depend on factors like his/ her personality, locus of control, social norms and upbringing of the individual. A tendency to be submissive to an authoritarian figure is termed as authoritarian submission (Shetgovekar, 2018). There are individuals as well who do not obey and they do so because they feel responsible for their actions and they feel that submissive behaviour beyond an optimal level is unnecessary and could be harmful. Individuals could also be made aware about how obeying to certain directions that are harmful or have ill-effects need to be avoided and that such directions and authority needs to be challenged.

Social influence plays a major role in our lives. Social psychologists can use the principles of social influence to develop intervention strategies and awareness programmes that help people understand how their behaviours are influenced.

8.4.2 Interpersonal Attraction

Interpersonal attraction can be explained in terms of attitude towards other individuals. Thus, when an individual A likes individual B, then the attitude would be positive and if individual A dislikes individual B, then the attitude towards that individual would be negative. There are various determinants of attraction including physical determinants that is based on the physical characteristics of the person, warmth displayed by the other person and competence displayed by the other person. Thus, when explaining voter behaviour the determinants of attraction can be studied. Further, similarity and proximity can also play a role in determining voting behaviour.

The main principles of interpersonal attraction that we can focus on are association and reinforcement. To explain association, when individuals have positive attitude towards those individuals with whom positive experiences can be associated. And reinforcement denotes that individuals who evaluate us positively or reward us are seen as attractive. Both the principles can be applied to not only understand political behaviour, specifically voting

behaviour which to a great extent can be determined on the basis of attraction.

Repeated exposure could also determine voting behaviour besides attraction. This principle is also used in advertising. When individuals are exposed to a certain political candidate through billboards, hoardings, pamphlets, appliances on television, videos on social media and so on, the face of that political candidate will become familiar and individuals would develop a positive attitude and linking towards that individual.

Emotions also play high in this context and politicians who are associated with positive emotions are preferred or liked and politicians who are associated with negative emotions are not preferred or disliked. Keeping this in mind, you will notice that a lot of political campaigning will involve affective manipulations where attempts are made to associate the opposing candidates with negative emotions and to evoke positive emotions, smiling and happy pictures are placed on the hoardings, billboards and pamphlets (Baron and Byrne, 1994)

Voting behaviour will also depend on the perceived leadership qualities of the politician. A leader would be expected to display certain characteristics like motivation, intelligence, self confidence, necessary skills and expertise, honesty, knowledge and creativity (Baron and Byrne, 1994) and on the basis of these voters perceptions of the political candidate as a leader would be determined. The non verbal behaviour of the candidate can also play an important role in this context.

Political psychologists can thus make use of the principles as discussed in this section in order to understand the voting behaviour. Suitable interventions can be developed to create awareness about political systems as well.

Check Your Progress II

- 1) What are the main principles of interpersonal attraction.

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8.5 MEDIA INFLUENCE ON POLITICAL BEHAVIOUR

In social psychology we mainly focus on what influences our behaviour in social set up. And one of the answers is media. Media can have both positive and negative impacts on human behaviour and thought process. Thus, media

can also influence our political behaviour. In this context, we can explain media setting, that can be described as an idea that media can lead to shaping of thoughts and issues that are perceived as important by the individuals (Ewoldsen and Roskos, 2012). Thus, if a certain murder case is extensively covered by the media, the general public will perceive that case as important. Thus, the media influences what we think is important than what we think. There are three kinds of agenda that can be discussed here:

- **Public agenda:** This mainly focuses on the issues that are perceived as important by the general public.
- **Policy agenda:** This mainly focused on the issues that are perceived as relevant by the policy makers or government personnel.
- **Media agenda:** This includes issues that are covered extensively by the media.

Studies in this regard have indicated that often the public agenda is determined by the media agenda and the policy agenda is determined by the public agenda (Ewoldsen and Roskos, 2012). This can be attributed to the very fact that certain issues are widely covered by the media and that leads to the public thinking that the issue is important and the issue becomes salient. This then can have an effect on how judgements are made by the public as availability heuristics plays a role here. Thus, the issue is easily recalled and reported and is termed as significant. And if a certain issue is covered by various media or covered by the media for a considerable period of time, then it is all the more perceived as significant. Though, we have to remember that it is not always that the media agenda determines public agenda and there could be issues seen as relevant by the general public that may not be covered in media agenda.

In the context, we can also discuss about political priming that is especially relevant when we discuss political behaviour. Political priming denotes that information used by people to make judgements regarding politicians is determined by the issues covered by the media. Thus, again we need to stress that media does not influence the thinking process but will include how the information is utilised when such judgements are made. To take an example, if the media focuses on the way a certain issue was managed by a politician, the judgement of the people will depend on how the same was portrayed by the media whether positively or negatively. Similar if the media focused on how the political candidate played an important role in international negotiations, the judgement of the people will be accordingly determined.

It is often felt that media focuses more on negative aspects when it comes to politics and this can have an impact on the trust that the people put in the politicians or the government. Though studies have indicated that exposure to media did lead to increase in the understanding of the people with regard to political system. These studies did have some limitation as mainly surveys were used (Ewoldsen and Roskos, 2012).

Much also depends on framing that how the story is presented. It mainly denotes the angle of the story. This is especially important as depending on the focus of the story, certain elements of the study would be emphasised and others will be deemphasised. Framing can also determine the trust that the people will have in a political candidate or the government. Here a reporter could use issue frame, that is, the focus will be on relevant issue, its background and various details. For example during campaigning, certain issue like lack or suitable health facilities in certain constituency can be highlighted by the reporter. There can also be strategy frame that focuses on the motivations that determine the varied positions taken by the politician. For example, the strategy focus could emphasise on why a certain policy was launched or backed by a politician.

Thus, media plays a role in determining political behaviour of the people, though we cannot deny the contribution of other factors as well.

Check Your Progress III

- 1) Explain the three kinds of agenda.

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8.6 LET US SUM UP

To summarise, in the present unit the focus was on application of social psychology on political behaviour. In this context we discussed about social perception, voting behaviour and media influence on political behaviour. Social perception refers to how people perceive, think about, and remember information about others. In the context of social perception, we discussed about attribution, schemas and heuristics. Voting behaviour was discussed keeping in mind social influence and interpersonal attraction. Lastly, the influence of media on political behaviour was discussed that focus don how media can have an influence on the political behaviour of the individuals.

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8.8 KEY WORDS

Attribution: Attribution can be explained as the inferences drawn about the causes of behaviours displayed by other individuals, one's own behaviour and events.

Heuristics: As stated by Tversky and Kahneman (1974, pg 1124) "People rely on a limited number of heuristic principles which reduce the complex tasks of assessing probabilities and predicting values to simpler judgemental operations. In general, these heuristics are quite useful, but sometimes they lead to severe and systematic errors".

Interpersonal attraction: Interpersonal attraction can be explained in terms of attitude towards other individuals.

Perceptual bias: Perceptual biases can be explained as systematic errors that are made when individuals perceive other.

Political behaviour: Searst et al. (2003, page 3) defined political psychology as "the application of what is known about human psychology to the study of politics".

Schemas: Schemas can be defined as "the expectations we have about certain situations or certain persons" (Shetgovekar, 2018, page 71).

Social influence: Social influence can be defined as a change that occurs in the behaviour, attitude, opinions and judgements of individuals that is as a result of being exposed to the views and opinions of other individuals.

Social Perception: Social perception refers to how people perceive, think about, and remember information about others.

8.9 ANSWER TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

- 1) What is social perception?

Social perception refers to how people perceive, think about, and remember information about others.

Check Your Progress II

- 1) What are the main principles of interpersonal attraction.

The main principles of interpersonal attraction that we can focus on, they are association and reinforcement.

Check Your Progress III

- 1) Explain the three kinds of agenda.

There are three kinds of agenda that can be discussed here:

- **Public agenda:** This mainly focuses on the issues that are perceived as important by the general public.
- **Policy agenda:** This mainly focused on the issues that are perceived as relevant by the policy makers or government personnel.
- **Media agenda:** This includes issues that are covered extensively by the media.

8.10 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) Explain social perception in the context of political behaviour.
- 2) Describe voting behaviour.
- 3) Discuss the role of social influence in voting behaviour.
- 4) Describe the influence of media on political behaviour.

UNIT 9 APPLICATION OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY TO CONSUMER BEHAVIOR*

Structure

- 9.0 Objectives
- 9.1 Introduction
- 9.2 Concept of Consumer Behaviour
- 9.3 Consumer Behaviour Models
- 9.4 Factors Influencing Consumer Behaviour
- 9.5 Application of Social Psychology to Consumer Behaviour
- 9.6 Let us Sum up
- 9.7 References
- 9.8 Key Words
- 9.9 Answers to Check Your Progress
- 9.10 Unit end Questions

9.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- elucidate the concept of consumer behaviour;
- explain the consumer behaviour models;
- describe the factors influencing consumer behaviour; and
- discuss the application of social psychology to consumer behaviour.

9.1 INTRODUCTION

Raj was eagerly waiting for the new model of iPhone. As soon as it was launched in India, he waited for hours in line outside the shop to purchase the phone.

Sheena was looking forward to her shopping during the festival period when heavy discounts are offered by the departmental stores.

Karim came across an online sale on electronic items that was supposed to start at midnight. Despite of having an interview the next day he sat up whole night shopping to take advantage of the sale.

*Dr. Kshipra Vora, Faculty, Abbé Faria, Post Graduate Department of Psychology, St. Xavier's College, Goa.

The above examples highlight the consumer behaviour of individuals. Which though is an essential part of our life, can also have a negative impact on our finances, mental health and day to day life.

In the previous units, we discussed the application of social psychology to various areas. In the present unit, we will try to look at consumer behaviour from the lenses of social psychology. When we talk about consumer behaviour denotes behaviour of individuals as consumers. How and why they select and buy certain products. their attitude towards certain products and so on.

In this unit, you will study the concept and relevance of consumer behaviour, the factors influencing it and its scope and applications. You will also understand the consumer's decision-making process and how it impacts the consumer as well as the organisations. Hoping you have an interesting read and can put a few principles in action as well!

9.2 CONCEPT OF CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

Every individual will always have needs, wants and demands and this will hence make him a consumer at almost all times. Now, who is a consumer? A consumer is an individual who uses, *actually* uses the product or service that he has purchased. For example, you are a consumer for the mobile phone you bought or the food you ate or the clothes you are wearing, or the visit to the career counsellor to help you decide your next step. It is essential that as a consumer, you *consume* or *utilise* the product or service you purchased. If you have only engaged in a commercial transaction of buying the product or service from the seller then you become a customer, only using it makes you a consumer.

A consumer can fall in any of the below mentioned categories and it is critical to understand this because it can help organisations to market and effectively deliver their good and services. These categories of consumer classification are as follows:

- **Seasonal consumer:** Purchasing on a seasonal basis, for example, umbrellas, sweaters.
- **Personal consumer:** Purchasing for their need or their family, for example, grocery, car.
- **Organizational consumer:** Purchasing in bulk with recurring order by corporates, organisations.
- **Impulse buyer:** Purchasing instinctively, without planning, because you like it, usually done on a whim, for example, chocolates, shoes.
- **Need-based consumer:** Purchasing for a specific need, for example, light bulb to see at night, cough syrup.
- **Discount-driven consumer:** Purchasing during sale and discount time

Our needs, wants and demands as consumers vary from occasion to occasion. For organisations to be able to reach out to us and deliver, they need to first understand consumer needs; individual and as a social, cultural, economic group, factors influencing it, approaches and models that affect purchasing by consumers. This needs to be done so organisations can effectively plan and execute their marketing strategies in order to meet the consumers' requirements. Organisations who are able to consistently deliver will build loyalty and a good reputation within consumers. This kind of analysis occurs in the study of consumer behaviour and has wide applications in areas of marketing and branding, green consumerism, hospitality, tourism, education, etc.

Now, having understood the concept and relevance of consumer, let us understand the concept of consumer behaviour. Consumer behaviour is the study of how customers (individuals, groups, organisations) select, buy, and utilise ideas, goods and services to meet their needs, wants and demands. It also implies the actions of the consumers in the marketplace and the reasons for the same. Solomon et. al. (2006), defined consumer behaviour as, "the study of the process involved when individuals or groups select, purchase, use or dispose of products, services, idea or experiences to satisfy needs and desires". Kotler et. al. (2006) note that by studying consumer behaviour, one can get clues for developing other marketing activities such as improving or introducing products or services, setting product pricing, developing marketing channels and creating communication content. The definition implies that understanding consumer behaviour can have potentially positive influences for businesses and organisations. Not only can they understand the needs of their consumers, but they can also design their products to match those of their consumers. Product pricing, labelling and packaging can also be tackled accordingly. In today's times, where environmental sustainability is a major issue, green consumerism can also get an impetus with consumers focusing on green product purchase. Understanding the market scenario to pitch a new product or expand the current range would be made possible due to the understanding of consumer behaviour. It should be noted that consumer behaviour is a dynamic discipline that undergoes changes over a period of time. Critically, as an individual's demographics change, his product preferences are also likely to change. These changes are useful for businesses too, as they study the changing trends. Besides, such a structural and demographic analysis helps them in market prediction and forecasting. Hence, organizational policies, pricing policies, decision regarding channels of distribution, sales, promotion, and discount schemes are also made possible due to understanding of consumer behaviour.

Consumer behaviour analysis is essential in every industry, be it tourism, hospitality, cosmetics, fashion and apparel industry, jewellery designing. Sports, education, health, banking, insurance schemes also benefit a great deal from consumer behaviour. In fact, incorporating consumer feedback (positive as well as negative) is a great way to enthuse consumer

participation, thereby improving brand image and consumer loyalty. Thus, the relevance of consumer behaviour is far-reaching.

In the present context we can also discuss various types of consumers that also determines the consumer behaviour displayed by these consumers.

Types of Consumers: consumer types based on those possessing greater resources (income, education, health, confidence and eagerness to buy) include:

- *Actualizers:* Successful, sophisticated, active and take charge people. Their purchases tend to reflect their cultivated tastes for relatively upscale, niche-oriented products.
- *Fulfilleds:* Mature, satisfied, comfortable and reflective consumers. They favour durability, functionality and value in products.
- *Achievers:* Successful, career and work oriented individuals. They are favour established and prefer products that demonstrate success to their peers.
- *Experiencers:* Young, vital, enthusiastic, impulsive and rebellious buyers. Such individuals are willing to spend comparatively higher proportions of their income on clothing, fast-food, music, movies and the like.

When individuals have fewer resources, they can be clubbed into the following:

- *Believers:* Conservative, conventional and traditional. They favour familiar products and established brands.
- *Strivers:* Uncertain, insecure, approval-seeking and resource-constrained consumers. They favour stylish products that mimic the purchases of those with greater material wealth.
- *Makers:* Practical, self-sufficient, traditional and family oriented in nature. These consumers favour only products with a practical or functional purpose such as tools, utility and fishing equipment.
- *Strugglers:* Elderly, resigned, passive, concerned and resource-constrained. These are cautious consumers and are loyal to favourite brands.

Consumer behaviour is thus, understood as “the actions and decision processes of people who purchase goods and services for personal consumption” (Engel et al). This process is systematic and can be explained by a number of models as seen previously. As is also seen consumer buying behaviour and purchase decisions can be influenced by a number of factors, cultural, social, psychological, personal, economic, etc. It is seen that consumer behaviour varies individual to individual and situation and situation. The scope of the field refers to everything that is studied as a part

of its subject discipline. While the most crucial aspect is the actual buying behaviour and patterns relating to the same, consumer behaviour also relates to purchase intentions and the attitudes, marketing strategies, and perceived control that individuals have over their actions. The scope of consumer behaviour also extends to the roles played by consumers and the way these roles influence their product and brand choices and purchase decisions.

Consumer behaviour is a systematic process, following a series of steps to be followed in a sequential manner and is influenced by a number of different factors. It is dynamic and complex in nature as it is not predictable and is subject to change over time. Individual differences are also noted in patterns of consumer behaviour, more over consumption patterns for different patterns is also different for the same individual. These patterns in purchase behaviour differ as per region and reflect consumer status and possess predictive ability that is vital for marketers in their strategic formulation. Inputs from consumer behaviour are utilized in all organizations and businesses, be it, tourism, education, health, manufacturing, garment and apparel, etc.

Applications of consumer behaviour relate to fields as:

- **Analysing market opportunity:** Identifying unfilled needs and wants of consumers. It requires analysing marketplace trends and operating conditions and pitching products accordingly.
- **Selecting target market:** A careful review of market opportunities aids in locating market segments with distinct product demands. Identifying these groups and observing patterns in purchase decisions enables marketer to better product designing and hence selling.
- **Marketing mix:** Many a times when products don't move off the shelf, a detailed research on consumer behaviour might provide the necessary insights. Product, price, distribution and promotion areas can be analysed and relevant changes could be introduced in the marketing strategies to increase sales.
- **Use in social and non-profits marketing:** Non-profit businesses can also be greatly benefitted by consumer behaviour analysis in formulating and executing awareness campaigns on varied issues from health, abuse to empowerment and environment conservation.
- **Useful in government decision making:** Consumer behaviour learning can be applied to evaluate government decision making and assist in policy framing as well. Another commercial application would be to protect consumer interest and regulate business practices.
- **Consumer education:** Educating consumers on their own purchase behaviours may give them an insight to reprioritise their spending and either save the spare income or reallocate it to other product purchases. For

example impulse buyers may be given the insight to save enormous amounts and spend on insurance instead.

- **Organizational policy framing and decision making:** Inputs from consumer behaviour have been very useful for businesses to formulate their product feature and pricing policies. Decisions about sales promotion, marketing pitch, channels of distribution and the value delivery process are enabled with inputs from consumer behaviour. Trends and forecast also help organisations in exploiting marketing opportunities and meeting the challenges.

The branch of psychology that mainly focuses on consumer behaviour is consumer psychology. Consumer psychology can be defined as “a branch of psychology that studies the behaviour of individuals in terms of reasons and influences on the bases of which they buy or do buy products” (Shetgovekar, 2018, page 293).

Check Your Progress I

- 1) What is consumer behaviour?

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9.3 CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR MODELS

In order to understand the concept of consumer behaviour, various theoretical approaches and models have been formulated. These models provide structure to the construct of ‘consumer behaviour’ and help us study it. It also outlines the assumptions made and the processes involved in buying behaviour and purchase decisions. As a model, they provide a framework to analyse consumer behaviour, factors influencing it and their outcomes. A good model can also play an important role in predicting the extent and impact of consumer behaviour. Basically, the model should be able to fulfil the four goals of psychology: understand, describe, control and predict.

A few of the important consumer behaviour models are enlisted as follows:

Economic model: This model states that consumers follow the principle of maximum utility, which is based on the law of diminishing marginal utility. They compare on price points, value for money and the income they have and accordingly make a purchase decision. Basically, they want to maximise their gains within the minimum amount. For this, they take into account, *price effect*, that is, more products will be purchased if price is less, *substitution*

effect, denoting whether there is a substitute product with lesser price, then the utility of the original product will be reduced, and *income effect*, that is, if consumers earn higher incomes, and have that is, more money at their disposal to spend, then the quantity of products bought will be high.

Though, this model seems practical and utilitarian, it has shortcomings, as it does not take into account the psychological factors influencing consumer's buying behaviour. Aspects like need, priority, interest etc. are not considered.

Psychodynamic model: This model follows the tenets as postulated by Sigmund Freud. It suggests that the needs, wants, desires, fears, apprehension buried in the unconscious, influence our demands and therefore indirectly influences the choices we make regarding product purchase. For example I may buy a sari, which reminds me of my grandmother. The model, thus, proposes that our instincts drive or rather push or pull us during product purchase decisions. It also states that our unconscious feelings largely infiltrate into our conscious to influence our present day choices. The theory also suggests that our personalities react to the marketing stimuli and the stimuli that may have triggered a positive reaction to any past / unconscious significant event gets selected to influence the consumer's buying behaviour and purchase decisions.

Though the model seems logical that our needs influence our buying behaviour, it should be understood that paramount importance to unconscious processes is scientifically unfounded. Man is not a mere puppet of the unconscious, and a multitude of factors influence his purchase decisions.

Behaviourist model: This model suggests that we make product choices based on our conditioned experiences with them. Through classical/operant conditioning processes, we may buy certain products/ or from specific brands alone or might not choose to buy that product at all. For example, if you have had a very bad experience with a fridge of a particular brand, you are not likely to buy any other gadget from the same brand; if you have had food poisoning on eating spinach, you may never buy it all your life. Similarly, if you are an environmental activist, then you might buy only organic cosmetics or those that are not animal tested. Behaviour approach is dependent on the interaction of external factors, like product features, product availability; and consumer need and spending ability.

The behaviourist model explains patterns in consumer purchase, brand loyalty and can help organisations to statistically collate data as they are observation based and more scientific in their methodology. These however undermine the cognitive influences that can mediate consumer purchase decisions.

Cognitive model: This model states that consumers follow their purchase decisions after thinking about it. The model explains comprehensively the interplay of varied factors thereby integrating the multivariate nature of

individual consumers. Under this model, there are various sub-classifications, but are broadly divided into analytical and prescriptive models.

Analytical models (theory of buyer behaviour and consumer decision model) are more wide ranging in scope and tend to follow the information processing paradigm of problem recognition, information search, alternative evaluation, and choice and outcome evaluation.

Prescriptive models (theory of reasoned action and theory of planned behaviour) relate to the ways consumer behaviour is structured. They follow an algorithm format as prescribe causal connections between factors influencing consumer behavior.

The theories under analytical and prescriptive models are describes as follows.

- *The Theory of Buyer Behaviour:* This theory integrates social, psychological and marketing influences on consumer choices, within an information processing paradigm. It combines *input* (environment), *significant* (product and brand features) and *social* (pressure from family, peers, reference groups) factors as impacting consumers' attention, comprehension, attitude, intention and purchase behaviour.
- *The Consumer Decision Model:* This theory outlines the consumer buying process. First is need identification, followed by information search, evaluating alternatives, making the purchase decision, post purchase reflection and finally divestment. It looks at the contributing effect of factors such as; past product use memories, role of culture, social class, personality influences, family values and resource availability. The model also looks at motivation, knowledge, personality, attitudes, values and lifestyle influences on the consumer buying process.
- *Theory of Reasoned Action:* The theory proposes that consumer decision process is complex. One's beliefs about consequences of behaviour and evaluation of these consequences contribute to the attitude the individual possess towards the behaviour. In addition, beliefs about perceptions of others and the motivation to comply with those affect one's subjective norms about the behaviour. Collectively, attitude and subjective norms influence the behavioural intention of consumers; this in turn is influenced by other intervening variables to influence actual behaviour.
- *Theory of Planned Behaviour:* This theory extends the theory of reasoned action in explaining consumer buying behaviour and purchase decisions. Along with, attitude and subjective norms, the model includes a third dimension of perceived behavioural control, mediated by a consumer's control beliefs. An interaction between attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control affects intention. This intention is then mediated by actual behavioural control to impact the final behaviour.

Humanistic model: This model states that consumer decisions are based on the needs they possess. They tend to make purchase decisions that will take them ahead in reaching their personal goals. It explores the more introspective reasons for an individual's buying behaviour and purchase decisions, which are targeted toward personal growth and 'purpose in life' related. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs best explains consumer choices. The model is in a pyramid shape with basic needs at the bottom and higher order needs on top. Needs at the base include, physiological needs, safety and security needs, love and belongingness needs, while needs higher-up include esteem needs and on top self-actualisation needs, and as per Maslow, we can move to a higher order need only once we have fulfilled and secured the means to achieve the lower order need. Thus, you will see that these needs will affect consumer choices about the products and brands they choose and buy from. It is also one reason why you will also see a daily wage earner more concerned about buying his food than working on a hobby like painting or playing the guitar.

These models are perspectives that help us gain deeper insights into consumer behaviour. Choices, patterns and decisions made by consumers help organizations to explain, analyze and forecast market trends. It also provides insight into product packaging, redesigning, branding, and building loyalty.

Check Your Progress II

- 1) Explain analytical models.

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9.4 FACTORS INFLUENCING CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

As consumers there are various reasons we buy products and decide over our preferences and needs. These are outlined as follows:

- 1) **Cultural factors:** Cultural factors influence buying priorities and consumer choices. Culture can be understood as a set of norms, learned values, rituals and symbols of society that are transmitted through generations by means of language and symbols. How individuals from varied cultures, regions, strata of society will buy products and brands will largely depend on cultural aspects. This kind of analysis is essential to allow organisations to make an effective marketing pitch and

accordingly work out product positioning and segmenting. Social class is a critical deciding factor, and includes aspects like income, education, occupation. Sub-factors include

- *Culture*
- *Sub culture*
- *Social class*

2) **Social factors:** Social factors also largely impact a consumer's choice and product purchase. Influences from family, friends, peers and reference group are important deciding factors. The exposure that one receives during the initial stages gets imprinted and thereby holds potential in influencing consumer choice. Reference groups include opinions of influential persons, leaders, celebrities and anyone who can influence the other because of his special status, skill, knowledge and other characteristics. Buying decisions are also defined by the roles and statuses people hold. Sub-factors include

- *Group influence / peer pressure*
- *Reference groups*
- *Family*
- *Role and status*

3) **Personal factors:** Personal factors are more individualised in comparison to culture and social factors. These include demographic information that influences our product and brand choices. An individual's age, gender, marital status etc. define what product you may buy and what you may not. It is understood that buying behaviour as per personal factors is more transient and subject to change as individual cross demographic levels. For example as an infant, the individual required diapers, but not more as he grows older. Consumption patterns are largely affected by personal factors. The lifestyle one possesses, along with the place of work and designation also define consumer behaviour. For example a wild-life photographer will not invest in business suits but in expensive camera equipment. Most critically, an individual's buying capacity and income disposal also define product and brand choices. Personality types, preferences and interests also guide purchase intention and buying behaviour. Sub-factors include

- *Age*
- *Gender*
- *Occupation*
- *Economic situation / purchasing power*
- *Lifestyle and preferences*
- *Personality*

4) **Psychological factors:** Psychological factors are the more transient factors influencing consumer choice and decision making. Personal needs, wants, motives, priorities indirectly impact buying behaviour. Personal perceptions about self, events around us, products available, companies manufacturing them, etc., tend to influence our purchase intentions and decisions. Along with these, our reaction to marketing campaigns in terms of attention, retention, selective attention, distortion and retention are also effective in influencing our buying behaviour. Marketing campaigns that resonate with customer values and belief systems have higher chances of being successful. Sub-factors include

- *Motivation*
- *Perception*
- *Beliefs and attitudes*

1) **Other factors:** Other factors like economic and environmental also tend to play a moderating role in the area of consumer behaviour. The buying behaviour is largely dependent of marketing campaigns of production houses. The economic situation, income available to spend and critically the presence of the brand and its product range in the market are critical. For example during emergencies and crisis times consumers are more inclined to buy goods necessary for survival and comforts than luxury. However you will also understand that personality or other mentioned factors may interact with each other to impact consumer behaviour. While some may hoard in panic and greed, some may sacrifice personal comforts and luxuries to help those in need. Another factor that can override every other factor is mainly the purchasing power of the consumer. If he has money, then he buys it, if he doesn't have money, he doesn't buy. Sub-factors include

- *Economic and situational, geographical factors*
- *Political and legal forces*
- *Technological advancement*
- *Organisation's marketing availability*
- *Product availability, features and pricing*
- *Ethical considerations*

It is to be understood that no one factor can influence consumer behaviour directly or in isolation. Largely consumer choices and decisions are based on the interaction of any or all of the above factors and can be explained by understanding the models. It is also to be also understood that some product areas are transient, like food choices, fashion trends, and some are enduring, well-thought out like buying a house.

Check Your Progress III

- 1) List the factors influencing consumer behaviour.

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9.5 APPLICATION OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY TO CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

Consumer psychology is applying the principles of psychology to understand, describe, control and predict consumer behavior. These help organisations understand the demands of the consumers and accordingly modify their offerings in their products and services. Consumer behaviour is largely influenced by the tenets of social psychology. Social psychology explains human interaction in a social spaces. It studies the dynamics between individual and group processes. Understanding this relationship will aid the understanding of consumer behavior. These inputs are used by marketing and sales departments to enhance organizational profits by increasing market share by getting more consumers to utilise the goods and services.

Let us discuss some of the relevant concepts in social psychology that can play a role in consumer behaviour.

- **Reciprocity:** Reciprocity is when there is a mutual understanding between the two parties. One gives and other receives, later the receiver gives and giver receives. This mutuality is the basis of continued interaction between the two parties. Organisations thrive on the principle of mutuality. Apart from monetary transactions, a social reciprocity is also seen. Organisations expect consumer loyalty, but before expecting this, they provide their consumers with special discounts, free manuals, after sale contests and even free consultations and handwritten notes. It is in the face of reciprocity that organisations are constantly engaging with their consumers and reaping loyalty benefits or consumer wrath. Credit cards will often offer discounts in certain products and this can also be termed as an example of reciprocity.
- **Compliance:** We discussed about compliance under unit 8 in the context of voting behaviour. Compliance as a concept of social psychology also finds its application in the context of consumer behaviour. To help you recall, compliance is an important aspect of social influence and can be described as tendency to modify or change one's behaviour based on suggestions and requests made by other. Various techniques of compliance

can also be discussed here. Most prominently the foot in the door technique. Foot in the door technique can be termed as a form of social bargaining. Here, you convince an individual to commit himself/ herself to a smaller favour, and once he follows through you escalate into a bigger favour that the individual is likely to oblige because he has already done so earlier. It's almost as if the individual is not opening the door, then you thrust your foot in and work your way to get the door opened. Many a time consumers are invited for launch promos, some freebie contests on social media, free demos, and then it is assumed that since they have committed so much already, they might as well buy the product. Many services and apps also have free versions, free trials, and as the consumers get attached to the product, they place a bigger demand, payment, which by then the consumers feels obliged to consent.

Other techniques of compliance like ingratiation and That's Not All (TNA) technique are also used by organisations to promote their products. Products are often packaged in an attractive manner so that the individuals feel like buying them. Organisations in fact pay a lot of attention to the packaging part of the product. Also the deals that are offered are made to look attractive. Thus, along with the hotel room, you are offered free breakfast and pick up from airport/ railway station/bus station. These techniques are thus used in order to encourage the consumers from conforming and buying the product.

Door in the face technique is effectively used by consumers in order to bargain on the product price. For example, if you go to buy certain product and the price is high (say Rs. 1000), you quote your own price (say Rs. 300) which is much smaller and will bargain till you reach the price (say Rs. 500) that you would like to buy the product for.

- **Social cognition:** Social cognition helps in understanding social situations from cognitive point of view. Moscovitz, (2005, page 3) defines social cognition as “the study of mental processes involved in perceiving, attending to, remembering, thinking about, and making sense of the people in our social world”. Under social cognition as well we can discuss about schemas, heuristics and attributions, Schemas are mental representations and many a time the way we look at the products and decide to buy them will depend on schemas. Schemas help in organisation of knowledge and information and any new information is interpreted and processed based on the present information and experience. Organisations need to focus on these schemas especially when they want the customers to buy a new product. Heuristics are mental shortcuts and advertisements often are based on these aspects. These are simple rules of thumb on the basis of which decisions are made. And types of heuristics including the representativeness heuristics, availability heuristics, anchoring heuristic and simulation heuristics can play a role in

determining our decisions regarding which products we buy and which we don't.

- **Impression formation and management:** Impression denotes how information about a particular person is organised. The three main dimensions of impression includes evaluative, potency and activity. Evaluative dimension denotes how individuals evaluate other persons, good or bad. Potency denotes the other persons potentiality, whether weak or strong and activity dimension denotes whether the person is active or passive. While the general use of product consumption is utilitarian, that is, need based, there are other functions that the consumer looks forward to satisfy. The identity function is one such. Consumers prefer luxurious brands to imply a certain impression on others. Indirectly by such 'conspicuous consumption', individual satisfy personal ambitions of displaying elegance, aristocracy and power. Organisations make use of this social psychology principle of the need for impression formation to position their brands and get maximum leverage. Consumer profiling is carried out and later innovation presents each strata with their preferred products. Delighting consumers and paying minute attention to their psychological needs and satisfying them, ensures brand loyalty.
- **Attitude:** This is yet another significant concept in social psychology when we discuss about consumer behaviour. Attitude formation can be viewed from varied perspectives that include biological perspective, experiences of the individual, contextual influences, self perception theory and so on. One of the significant perspectives under attitude formation is mere exposure effect. Mere exposure effect is the positive feelings and attitude one develops to something they are repeatedly exposed too. It is to be noted that the content has to be useful and tastefully designed to avoid overkill. Marketers use this principle to let consumers know about their offerings, discounts and ensure that the products and services are not wiped out from the consumers mind. Mass communication strategies are tactfully using the exposure effect to influence consumers into making purchases. Organisations may also work in order to bring about an attitude change in the direction of consumers liking and preferring the products offered by them. one way in which change can be brought in attitude is through persuasion. Persuasion involves using persuasive arguments to change beliefs, attitudes, intentions or behaviour of others. It is critical that there is no information overload; the subject of persuasion is of interest and value to the consumer. If information is dissonant with the consumer's preexisting beliefs it should be presented empirically, validating the claims to be effective in successful persuasion.
- **Environment effect:** In social psychology, we give a lot of importance to environment. environmental effect denotes that the external factors play a subliminal/ subtle role in influencing our decisions. Environmental cues can be potent to trigger past memory, experiences and attitudes towards a

certain topic. The environment also primes individuals to process information in a certain way. Mass communication techniques, advertisement apply this social psychology principle to target consumers and position their goods and services accordingly. This principle also implies that consumers are more inclined to make purchase decisions if they are in that environment. Office related decisions are best taken when the consumer is in office work mode and hence you will not see those advertisements in prime time which is relaxing family time. An important application of social psychology lies in the impact of 'spaces' on the favourableness quotient of the product and services. Physical warmth is known to elicit positive emotions and thereby a consumers' product valuation. Aesthetics that imply familiarity add to the positive evaluation. This principle can be found in use in setting store temperatures and interior designing.

Besides the above there is also peer influence on our consumer behaviour. And this can also be as a result of peer comparison. Peer comparison is based on the theory of social proof and it implies the role of positive influence of others doing positive behaviour. An individual is inclined to do better himself/herself, if he/she is compared to the positive actions done by his/her peers. In the corporate world, cooperation, patronage is solicited from stakeholders by telling them how their competitors/peers are supporting a cause. With this peer comparison, many organisations, even competing ones get together.

Further, surprise rewards are found to be more effective in motivating behavior in comparison to expected rewards. Surprise is contingent in enhancing mood experiences as well. Potential consumers are likely to be brand loyalists, when they are pleasantly surprised with discounts, deals, promotional offers etc. Such tactics are often used by organisations to encourage the customers, especially, the existing customers to buy their products.

Scarcity is yet another aspects that can be discussed in this context. Scarcity connects to the principle of supply and demand. The rare the good, the more value it hold for the consumer and thus a strong desire to purchase it. This is very commonly used by organisations to highlight the limitedness of the offer/ stock. Discount and sales exhibition apply the scarcity principle by successful attracting consumers and getting them to transform their purchase intentions into buying behaviour.

Theory of reasoned action and planned behaviour also find their application here. These theories attempt to link intention, social norms, purchase intentions and ultimately behaviour. An individual's intention to behave in a particular fashion is preceded by his personal belief patterns and the subjective norms that surround the same. When these converge, and individual is primed to act in a certain way. Consumer behaviour is associated with these theories. Buying pro-environmental products need

personal and social validation along with other factors such as awareness of product, its procurement feasibility and pricing.

Hierarchy of needs by Maslow is also often used by marketing and sales personnel, where products are shown as fulfilling more than one need. For example, certain beverages or food items are seen as catering to both, the physiological needs or hunger and thirst and need to belong as often these are consumed along with friends. Advertisements are designed keeping these in mind.

It is seen that influence of social psychology on consumer behaviour is at two levels, intrapersonal and interpersonal. The intrapersonal influences are associated with the process that function at the individual level and bring change while interpersonal factors are stemming out of the interaction of individuals in group situations and the powerful influence of group processes.

Aspects like social perception attraction, conformity and prejudice play an indirect role in influencing consumer buying intentions. Often regional trends will be noticed in buying behaviour owing to the same factors. Marketers also use celebrities to endorse products, thereby getting their followers and fans to conform and buy the products. In employing social psychology to persuade consumer behaviour, credibility of the source, its trustworthiness and expertise is more influential. For example, a dentist recommending a toothbrush is perceived more legitimate than a celebrity endorsing the same. The context of the message and audience/ target group preferences is as important as consumer demographics.

Heuristics are cognitive shortcuts an individual used to arrive at decision making. Product credibility is evaluated against availability, representativeness, conformity and probability estimates. Compliance is quick if obedience to leadership is sought. Decision making is largely influenced by group polarisation and propagating stereotypes. Advertisements use these principles in influencing targeted audiences.

Consumer behaviour is a delicate blend of influences from commerce, management, art and perception, media and critically social psychology. An integration of these principles implies effective marketing and reach of offerings to consumers.

Check Your Progress IV

1) What is social cognition?

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9.6 LETS US SUM UP

To sum up, in the present unit, we discussed about the concept of consumer behaviour. Consumer behaviour is the study of how customers (individuals, groups, organisations) select, buy, and utilise ideas, goods and services to meet their needs, wants and demands. It also implies the actions of the consumers in the marketplace and the reasons for the same. In this context we discussed about categories and types of consumers and application of consumer behaviour. Various consumer behaviour models including, economic model, psychodynamic model, behaviourist model, cognitive model and humanistic model were discussed. Various factors influencing consumer behaviour were also highlighted. Lastly the unit focused on various concepts in social psychology and their application to understanding consumer behaviour.

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9.8 KEY WORDS

Consumer: A Consumer Is An Individual Who Uses, Actually Uses The Product Or Service That He Has Purchased.

Consumer behaviour: Solomon et. al. (2006), defined consumer behaviour as, “the study of the process involved when individuals or groups select, purchase, use or dispose of products, services, idea or experiences to satisfy needs and desires”.

Reciprocity: Reciprocity is when there is a mutual understanding between the two parties. One gives and other receives, later the receiver gives and giver receives. This mutuality is the basis of continued interaction between the two parties.

Social cognition: Moscovitz, (2005, page 3) defines social cognition as “the study of mental processes involved in perceiving, attending to, remembering, thinking about, and making sense of the people in our social world”.

9.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

- 1) What is consumer behaviour?

Consumer behaviour is the study of how customers (individuals, groups, organisations) select, buy, and utilise ideas, goods and services to meet their needs, wants and demands. It also implies the actions of the consumers in the marketplace and the reasons for the same.

Check Your Progress II

- 1) Explain analytical models.

Analytical models (theory of buyer behaviour and consumer decision model) are more wide ranging in scope and tend to follow the

information processing paradigm of problem recognition, information search, alternative evaluation, and choice and outcome evaluation.

Check Your Progress III

- 1) List the factors influencing consumer behaviour.

The factors that influence consumer behaviour include:

- Cultural factors
- Social factors
- Cultural factors
- Personal factors
- Other factors

Check Your Progress IV

- 1) What is social cognition?

Moscowitz, (2005, page 3) defines social cognition as “the study of mental processes involved in perceiving, attending to, remembering, thinking about, and making sense of the people in our social world”.

9.10 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) Explain the concept of consumer behaviour.
- 2) Describe various consumer behaviour models.
- 3) Explain factors influencing consumer behaviour.
- 4) Discuss the application of social psychology to consumer behaviour.

UNIT 10 APPLICATION OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY TO WORK SETTINGS*

Structure

- 10.0 Objectives
- 10.1 Introduction
- 10.2 Social Perception in Work Settings
- 10.3 Application of Social Learning Theory in Work Settings
- 10.4 Work Motivation and Job Satisfaction
- 10.5 Group Dynamics
- 10.6 Conflict in Work Settings
- 10.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 10.8 Reference
- 10.9 Key Words
- 10.10 Answers to Check Your Progress
- 10.11 Unit End Questions

10.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to discuss and explain;

- explain social perception in work settings;
- discuss application of social learning theory in work settings;
- elucidate work motivation and job satisfaction;
- describe group dynamics; and
- explain conflict in work settings.

10.1 INTRODUCTION

What causes individuals to work? An individual is driven to work by his own needs and preferences, and preference may differ depending on surroundings. Social psychology defines and redefines concepts as identity, situations, engagement in terms of organizational structure to make it more effective and efficient. It focuses on three main areas, social thinking, social influence and social behavior. Social Psychology in work settings examines people's behavior and their impact on others with focus on power of the situation.

*Dr. Tapti Roy Yadav.

Powerful situation may lead to negative behaviours as bullying, cheating, stealing; aggression etc. etc. but structured organization would forbid such behavior without a strong reason (Goetz et.al., 1983). Abuse of power and position may still happen as exception

When we refer to a work setting, we necessarily mean an organisation. An organisation can be explained as a social unit that constitutes individuals who are involved in work related activities and have a common goal. The whole setup is intermittently weaved around goal setting, direction, supervision, persuasion, negotiation, job satisfaction and belongingness. In brief it can be safely assumed that workplace is collection of people, who act as leader and follower, depending on their position as designated, aiming for ultimate growth of self, others and organization. Thus, social psychology and its principles can be effectively applied to an organisation or a work setup.

The principles of social psychology can be applied in a work setting in order to understand the social cognition and perception of the employees and to understand the thinking patterns of the employees and also see how they perceive each other. Social psychology can also be helpful in understanding the interpersonal relationships amongst the employees. In organisations, employees are often expected to work in groups and teams and understanding interpersonal relationships will help in increasing team effectiveness and overall work productivity. Besides interpersonal relationships, it is also important to study group dynamics amongst the employees. Attitudes of employees in work setting are also relevant and need to be focused on. As employees work in a group set up, they can have an influence on each other, thus social influence can also be an important aspect while we study the application of social psychology to work setting.

Thus, there are various issues ranging from motivating employees to leadership and conflict management where the principles of social psychology can be adequately applied.

In various sections of this unit, we will discuss about some of the relevant applications of social psychology to work settings. Further, in unit 11, we will discuss about application of social psychology to sports, in which context we will discuss about team, leadership and effective communication. Though these topics will not be covered in the present unit, they find their relevance in the present context as well.

10.3 SOCIAL PERCEPTION IN WORK SETTINGS

Social perceptions deals with how others are perceived. In any work setup, there are individuals who are in constant interaction with each other. Thus, it becomes relevant that we discuss about a very important term in social psychology, that is social perception, in order to understand how the individuals perceive each other in the work set up. We discussed about social

perception under the unit 10 in the context of application of social psychology to political behaviour. Thus, in this section we will not focus on the sub-topic in detail but will look at its implications in the work set up.

In the context of social perception in unit 8, we also discussed about the perceptual biases and these biases can also be applied here. These perceptual biases could interfere with effective decision making in the context of work set up as wrong individuals could be selected during selection process or an employee may be wrongly denied of promotion. There are two main perceptual biases, namely selective perception and halo effect. In an organisational set up selective perception can be detrimental in the process related to selection and performance appraisal. Focusing on schemas and heuristics that were studied in social psychology also play a role here. Thus, the individuals or the human resource managers need to be aware about this bias and ensure that it is avoided while carrying out selection and performance appraisal. With regard to halo effect, an employee who is not punctual may be perceived as lazy, when in reality he/ she may be very hardworking. There could also be “similar to me effect” where the superior will positively perceive the employee of subordinate as he/ she sees him/ her as similar to himself/ herself.

Attribution also needs to be focused on when we discuss about social perception. Though the focus in this context would be on the Covariance model that was proposed by Kelly in 1973. According to this model, the individual behaviours can be as a result of internal or external factors (Coutts and Gruman, 2012). Internal factors denote factors that are under control of the individual and the external factors denote the factors that are not under the control of the individual. The model further states three types of information that is considered while making attributions.

- **Distinctiveness:** The extent to which the behaviour is unique or distinctive across situations. If the behaviour is not common, the distinctiveness is high and if the behaviour is common, the distinctiveness is low.
- **Consensus:** This denotes whether the behaviour is displayed by other individuals as well or not. Thus, if the behaviour is displayed by others as well, the consensus is high and if the behaviour is not displayed by others, then the consensus is low.
- **Consistency:** The third type of information is consistency and this denotes the behaviour pattern of the individual over a period of time. If the behaviour pattern is same over a period of time, the consistency is high and if the behaviour pattern is not same over a period of time, the consistency is low.

Behaviour of an individual is attributed to internal causes if he/ she displays high distinctiveness, high consensus and low consistency. But behaviour of an individual is attributed to external factors if he/ she displays low distinctiveness, low consensus and high consistency. To take an example, an

employee who is always late (low distinctiveness), whereas other employees reach on time (low consensus) and the behaviour of coming late is consistent over a period of time (high consistency). Such a behaviour will be attributed to internal factors of the employee rather than external factors.

The attribution errors that can be focused on are the fundamental attribution error and actor-observer bias. An example of fundamental error bias would be, that the reason why employee is not able to achieve a target is because he/ she is not hard working. The external factors in this context are not considered (internal factors are considered). And an example of actor-observer bias would be, an employee A will attribute employee B's inability to reach on time to office for lack of time management, his/ her internal factors. But with regard to his/ her own inability to reach on time to office is attributed to traffic jam that is an external factor.

Social perceptions lay the basis of opinions and judgements. In organizational framework many managerial activities are based on perception of employees. Process of recruitment, training performance and appraisal, in brief human resource department, rely heavily on social perception. These processes are so subtle that in many incidences neither the manager nor the employee realises that a precious moment of decision transpired between the two of them. It is essential that unseen boundaries between employees are demolished to protect individual perception free of biases and prejudices.

Social psychologists can play a role in this context in order to make the superiors, human resource managers and employees in general about social perceptions and its errors. Suitable awareness programmes and workshops in this direction can be organised.

Check Your Progress I

1) What is covariance model?

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10.4 SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY AND ITS APPLICATION TO WORK SETTING

Albert Bandura's theory of social learning theory (1980) focused on how an individual implies cognitive skills on processing their social experience. The theory argues that an individual learn both cognition and behavior by observing others' behavior. It claims learning is an internal change in behavior and is targeted towards a goal. Cognition plays important role making learned behavior self-regulated. It gets affected by expectation and occurrence, or non-occurrence of consequences. Social learning theory adequately explains gender role, learned aggression and role of reinforcement, and moral behavior in some complex situations. Social learning in organization takes places in three stages:

- **Close observation of environment and others:** Organisations work in a group and new members are assigned to different work groups. These work groups could make managerial team, quality circles, or operational team or a group of skilled workers. Such sets and sub set of groups have certain established norms to follow, in form of declared and documented policies by management. To be a successful team, it is expected that new member would by default observe and adapt the behavior of senior members, environment and culture of the organization.
- **Understanding and imitating behaviours:** It is a known fact that every employee joins the organization with past learning. Work culture offers immense opportunities to new member to apply their own rationale to analyse other's behavior, verify the result on various occasion. It has also been found that complex strategies and complicated behavior makes it difficult for the new member to imitate and learn. Before starting to imitate seniors, it should also be remembered by the new member that many strategies are drafted customised to the need of affair and may not be befitting other scenario. It is very important that an individual member finds the behavior of other member justified and beneficial to follow them as role model.
- **Reinforcement and changed behavior:** Social learning theory underlines the fact that observation does not assure change in behavior. In organizational context the change in behavior is more or less temporary and highly subjective to reinforcements. It is employees' anticipation of reward or punishment attached to certain learned behavior and their own perception of significance of that particular reward or punishment that determines the strength and permanency of learned behavior. Organizational environment is task and result oriented; hence any permanency in adopted behavior is subject to rewards or punishments, which ultimately would affect organizational goal and growth.

Social learning theory suggests that people learn to behave in a particular manner by modelling, observation and willingness to be a part of that social

context. Negative consequences of any act stops repetition of the same, whereas rewarding consequences strengthens the learned behavior. Social learning theories are predominantly applied in organizational setting to understand group behavior in cultural background, leadership styles, mentor-follower relationship, creativity, productivity, personal and organizational development etc. Modelling puts a lot of emphasis on active learning, which is the key element of social learning theory. It is widely accepted and implemented in field of organizational training. Learning and reproducing the behavior is preceded by active listening. Such learning procedures bring employees close to each other, and keep them engaged in their work. Anything that is tried to be imparted during training program and not practiced in reality would not sustain in behavior. Although social learning is economic and durable, it is yet flexible. An organization where employees are focused on learning by observing and sharing information will have more competitive employees, who are quick to react in case of emergency and changed environment. Informal learning via observation promises long lasting change in behavior than the learning that took place in formal training session. An organization where knowledge is actively shared, majorly guided interactions occur, delegated tasks are supervised, witness a competent environment with employees growing at every stage.

The principles of social learning theory can be adequately applied in an organisational set up in order to create a learning environment and ensure overall development of the employees and the organisation. The social psychologists can thus focus on developing interventions that promote a learning culture in the organisations. the focus can also be on identifying the role models in the organisational set up, who could set an example for the employees, especially the new joiners.

Check Your Progress II

1) What is social learning theory?

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10.5 WORK MOTIVATION AND JOB SATISFACTION

Work motivation and job satisfaction are two important aspects in an industrial set up. These two components to a great extent determine the work performance of the employees. Any organisation, thus need to focus on the work motivation and job satisfaction of the employees.

Work motivation: Motivation can be explained as drive that directs us to behave or act in certain ways. Quick, Nelson and Khandelwal (2013, pg 172) defined motivation as “the process of arousing and sustaining goal directed behaviour”. When we talk about work motivation, it is mainly motivation related to work activities. Motivation can be broadly classified in to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation can be explained as a motivation in which the individual internally feels that he/ she needs to work in certain direction. For example, employees could be intrinsically motivated to achieve the target assigned to them. Extrinsic motivation denotes motivation that is as result of external factors. For example, an employee can be motivated to achieve his/ her target as result of pressure from his immediate superior.

There are various theories of motivation that can be considered in this regard:

- **Drive reduction model:** Also known as push theories, this model states that the behaviour of an individual is driven towards the goal as a result of a force that is within the individual. Drives can be categorised in to primary (that includes the basic needs of an individual like food, shelter and so on) and secondary needs (includes need that is based on past experience and learning).
- **Incentive theories:** Also known as pull theories, these theories denote that motivation is an outcome of desire to get reward and incentives. Thus, the focus here is on the external sources that lead to motivation.
- **Optimal arousal model:** The model states that when an individual is aroused, he/ she will be able to function in a better way. Though, if the arousal goes beyond the optimal level, then the performance of the individual will be affected. The model is based on the Yerkes-Dodson law that was proposed by Yerkes and Dodson in 1908.
- **Cognitive approaches to motivation:** Cognitive approaches to motivation emphasise on the role of one's cognition in individuals being motivated to achieve their goals. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are discussed under these approaches, that need to be focused on in order to adequately motivate an employee to achieve his/ her work goals.
- **Maslows hierarchy of needs:** This theory was stated by Maslow and proposes a hierarchy of needs. The lower order needs or basic needs are at the bottom of the pyramid (that we used to explain the model) and needs to be met before the higher order needs. The basic need include the physiological needs, safety needs and need for love and belongingness. The high order need includes, self respect and self actualisation. Only when the basic needs like physiological needs are met, the individual feels secure and safe and feels loved and belongingness, that he/ she will move on to the needs relate to self respect and self actualisation.

- **Alderfer's ERG theory:** ERG stands for Existence, Relatedness and Growth. The existence needs denote the physiological and safety needs. Relatedness mainly focuses on interpersonal relationships and growth is related to being competent and achieving one's full potential. The theory as you see is similar to that proposed by Maslow.
- **Herzberg's two factor theory:** the theory denotes that there are two main factors, namely hygiene and motivational factors. Whether an employee is satisfied or not will depend on these two factors. Some of the hygiene factors include pay and salary, work conditions, positive interpersonal relationship at work place and feeling of security. Motivational factors include, rewards and bonuses, growth and development, assignment of responsibility and recognition. In an organisation, it is important that an hygiene factors of the employees are met as otherwise the individual will be dissatisfied and in order to ensure that the employee is satisfied, the motivational factors need to be taken care of.
- **McClelland's Acquired needs Theory:** The theory was proposed by McClelland and explains three basic needs, namely need for achievement, need for affiliation and need for power. Need for achievement denotes achievement of one's goals, dealing with challenges, overcoming difficulties and so on. Need for affiliation includes need to be engaged in intimate and close relationships. And need for power includes having power, control and influence over others.
- **Process theory:** In the context of work motivation, we can also discuss about process theory of work motivation. Equity theory can be categorised under process theory that states that employees seek a condition of equity or fairness as they deal with other individuals and the organisation (Coutts and Gruman, 2012). Thus, an employee will compare his input in work activity and the outcome with that of input of work activity and outcome of other employees. If fairness is not perceived then the individual will experience dissonance and will display behaviours that are directed towards dealing with the dissonance.

When we discuss about application of social psychology to work motivation, it is important to focus on the theories of motion in order to understand how the employees can be motivated to work effectively towards achieving their goals. Intervention programmes can thus be based on these aspects that can be provided to the employees as well as the superiors.

Further, when we discuss about motivation in the context of work setting, we also need to focus on the ability of the person. If a person possess the necessary skills and ability to perform the job and is motivated as well, such a person will serve as an asset to the organisation. If a person lacks ability to perform but is highly motivated, certain intervention strategies can be developed in order to help the employee develop his work related skills. If the person possesses the skills and abilities as per the demand of the job but is

low on motivation, suitable interventions can be designed to enhance the work motivation of the person. There could also be persons with low on both motivation and ability, necessary steps can be taken by the human resource manager to take necessary measures in this regard. Though this needs to be taken care during the recruitment and selection process.

Job satisfaction: Coutts and Gruman (2012, page 225) defined job satisfaction as “a person’s attitude toward his or her overall job as well as toward various aspects of the job; it is a predisposition to respond to one’s work environment in a favourable or unfavourable manner”. Thus, in an organisation an employee may display high or low job satisfaction based on his/ her attitude towards his/ her job and its aspects. Any organisation therefore needs to focus on ensuring job satisfaction of its employees and to do so job satisfaction of the employees can also be measured. There are two main approaches to measuring job satisfaction:

- **The global approach:** This approach focuses on the overall job satisfaction and there is one general question asked to the employees about how satisfied they feel with their job keeping in mind the all the aspects. A Likert type (five point) scale can also be used to provide response to such a question. For example, the employees can respond in terms of highly satisfied, satisfied, undecided, not satisfied, highly not satisfied.
- **The facet approach:** This approach takes in to consideration various aspects and facets of the job. Thus, the attitude and feelings of the employees with reference to various facets of the job like nature of the task, supervision, benefits, opportunities and so on are focused on. A standardised scale is used to rate these facets and an overall all job satisfaction score is obtained.

There are various determinants of job satisfaction, that are discussed as follows:

- 1) **Characteristics of the job:** The very nature and content of the task can have an impact on job satisfaction. In this context five job characteristics have been stated by Hackman and Oldham in 1976 (Coutts and Gruman (2012). These job characteristics include:
 - **Variety of skills:** The extent to which the job permits an employee to carry out varied tasks that require skill variety.
 - **Identification with the task:** The extent to which the employee is able to view his/ her work from start to end.
 - **Significance of the task:** The extent to which one’s task or work activity is perceived as important.
 - **Autonomy:** The extent to which the employee has control over his/ her job.

- **Feedback related to the job:** The extent to which the work provides and employee with feedback about his/ her effectiveness.

Job characteristics are often measured using self report inventories and this can be one of the limitations as employees who are satisfied with their jobs may respond positively to the items related to job characteristics and vice versa. In which case the job satisfaction becomes a cause for the way job characteristics are perceived rather than the other way round.

Overall job satisfaction as such is experienced by an employee when the employee is satisfied with the work. And in this context, the work activity needs to be meaningful and interesting.

In this context, we can also discuss about growth need strength, that can be explained as the receptiveness of the employee towards the job challenges and the degree to which they would want their job to contribute to their growth and development. Job characteristics in relation to job satisfaction would be more relevant for employees having high growth need strength.

- 2) **Social and organisational factors:** There are various social and organisational factors that can lead to job satisfaction amongst the employees including, interpersonal relationships at the workplace, perception regarding the rewards as well as equitability of rewards and so on.

In this context, the process related to social influence would also play a role. The work related activities are interpreted by the employees based on the social environment and thus social environment plays a significant role in job satisfaction experienced by the employees. The job satisfaction experienced by the employees is also determined based on the perception of job satisfaction of other employees in the organisation. Besides varied social influences, the relationship between the coworkers and the employees and superiors is also relevant. The perception with regard to equitable rewards is also relevant in this context and if there is a perception that there are unfair means in which the employees in the organisations are rewarded, this can have a negative impact on the employees' job satisfaction. Opportunities for promotion in the organisation also determine job satisfaction amongst the employees.

- 1) **Personal characteristics:** Personal characteristics such as personality, self esteem, generalised self efficacy, locus of control, emotional stability and affectivity, whether positive or negative can also have an impact on the job satisfaction of the employees. Studies indicate a strong relationship with personal dispositions like generalized self esteem and job satisfaction and positive and negative affectivity and job satisfaction (Coutts and Gruman, 2012).

In this context we can also discuss about the person-job fit models that state that job satisfaction is an outcome of both environmental and personal characteristics.

Job satisfaction not only leads to effective performance on part of the employees but can also have an impact on the withdrawal behaviour like absenteeism or turnover on part of the employees. Thus, social psychologists need to focus on the factors that lead to high job satisfaction amongst the employees in an organisation and suitable interventions, training programmes and workshops can be accordingly organised for the employee at different levels. Intervention programmes can also be organised for the superiors and leaders in the organisation so that they take suitable measures to enhance job satisfaction amongst the employees.

Check Your Progress III

- 1) What is job satisfaction?

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10.6 GROUP DYNAMICS AT WORK PLACE

Group dynamics represent the interaction between group members and their reaction to the same depending on their perception. It is a universal truth that a worker in an industry is always a part of some group and groups will have their own dynamics. Individual employee acts very differently in isolation than his /her behavior in group. In structured group such as an industry, power dynamics also play an important role in deciding individual behavior. At work place numerous formal and informal groups are formed referring to organizational structure for example group of directors, group of managers, group of supervisors, group of workers; and then becomes sub groups as for example one group of a manager, supervisor and workers for one work station and another such group for another work station. For an organization to be able to perform as a whole it is very important that goals are approached and attained in unison as a group. In this we shall discuss important dimensions of group dynamics in brief and the same is discussed in detail in other units. Group dynamism decides the extent of participation, influence and abidance of each member in that social setting.

Let us discuss some of the relevant concepts in group dynamics.

Group formation: Tuckman's (1965) model of group formation, explains five stages namely forming, storming, norming performing and adjourning. In an organizational setup the process starts with recruitment. Right mix of people ensures better productivity and success. After being hired employees brainstorm their ideas to decide upon a common goal. Sometimes organization with rigid hierarchical structure miss out on some innovative ideas, as new member either remains reluctant or position, power and politics inhibit the process. Gradually norms are framed if it is a startup, in case of it being an established unit, new joiner starts to fall in place and abide by existing norms. Courtesy and acceptance are key factors to determine the kind of relationship members would share amongst them. Once structure for communication, policy formation and parameters for achievement are decided, everybody starts working towards goal attainment. Unlike other groups and subgroups in society, organizational groups does not necessarily breakup in stage of adjourning. The stage of adjourning would mean different pertaining specific situation, such as, after completion of one project (goal) the members either get transferred, promoted, retired, terminated or resigns.

Group think: It is a psychological phenomenon where group members try to reach an unanimous decision without disturbing harmony in the group. Janis (1972) observed how people put aside their individual beliefs to be accepted in the group irrespective of absence of any peer pressure and coined the term "group think". The phenomenon occurs when group identity overpowers individual identity. In organization it can be seen in form of collectivism and unionism. Most often "group think" happens under influence of three factors; extreme internal cohesiveness, external threat or poor leadership. One of the worst impacts of group think in organizational set up is lack of opposition. Say for example, the organization is in expansion mode and the management organizes many meetings and conferences to reach best conclusion. Although the democratic approach of management is expected to finalise on best options, the motive would not be served rightfully if it gets swayed by group think. In effect organisations suffers loss in rush of implementing plans. Critical thinking and individual criterion of evaluation is very important for procedural development.

Group polarisation: It is a phenomenon opposite to group think, where group members' opinion starts drifting to extremity as discussion prolongs. Stoner (1961) observed and documented "the risky shift" behavior of group members, where group decisions happened to be riskier than individual decisions. In an organizational setup it is mostly driven by influence of social comparison. An individual employee who adjusts with unfair practices moderately may decide to revolt and thus the organization stands the risk of getting divided in two extreme groups of management and worker, causing serious damages to the organization. Let us recall the example of organization that thought of expansion. The management calls for meetings and conferences similar way to maintain democracy. In an effort to understand things from a different angle some member in the meeting

opposes the idea, on financial ground. In a natural way few would agree to opposer, some would remain with proposer and remaining others may prefer to remain indifferent. It had been noticed in many such events that, as discussion prolongs, eventually people start agreeing to either party. In effect organisations get delayed in implementing plans. Severe damages can be avoided by recruiting heterogeneous group, because extreme polarization does not take place in groups where individual members have quite different opinions and views on everything.

Group decision making: The most beneficial outcome of group decision making in any organization is the fact that it is difficult to reverse once reached. Group decision making is an attempt to respect each member's presence and intellect. A big group would take forever to reach a decision unanimously. Nevertheless, when decision making process is broken down in sub-channels and allocated to smaller groups, it is economical and results are prompt. Hence whenever there is requirement to reach a decision as group, it should start with brainstorming at elementary stage and gradually end up with voting of significant few representatives. Group decision making is effective in manufacturing and service industry where innovation is inevitable. In such industries smaller items are made in pieces and patches, then assembled to get finish product. Whole set of employees work in smaller teams dealing with smaller items. Managerial decisions taken as a group also proves to be effective and encounters less resistance. Collective decision making ensures collaboration of diverse ideas. Implementing the process in right spirit encourages employees' participation, higher acceptability and shared responsibility.

Group cohesion: Group cohesion is an important factor of group dynamics that defines the degree of bonding among group members of organization. Cohesive groups always measures low on stress (Piper et.al, 1983) and high on productivity (Beal, et. al., 2003). High cohesive group also results in high group conformity. Such organisations where orders are infrequent and production hours vary with reference to order and dispatch schedule, adherence of group members to irregular works schedule and regular work norms is of utmost importance. Such groups' work in unison in overtime schedules and weekends. In case of emergency it takes less amount of time and energy of the supervisor to gather workers in short notice and deliver product. More important is the fact that group cohesiveness has to be maintained at moderate degree to yield better results. Similarity, attraction, emotion, coordination and belongingness are the factor that determines degree of cohesiveness in the group. A high performing team with high cohesiveness would ascertain clear priorities, clarity of roles, and moderate autonomy to group members.

Check Your Progress III

1) State the five stages of group formation.

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10.7 CONFLICT IN WORK SETTINGS

When individuals work together and interact with each other, there could be conflicts. Conflicts in an organisational set up can negatively impact the organisation. Thus, any conflict needs to be avoided or managed adequately. When we discuss about conflicts, we do not mean disagreement. For example, there could be disagreements between two or more team members or there can be diverse opinions expressed that could lead to debate and discussion. Such an interaction would be healthy. But if the disagreement leads to conflict that the team or the individuals engaging in conflict will not be able to function adequately.

Conflict can be explained in terms of perceptions of incompatibility related to interests. Conflicts can arise between individuals or groups and can be due to various reasons.

Causes of conflict at workplace can be categorised as follows:

- **Organisational causes:** Such conflicts find their origin in the organisational structure and process. Examples of such conflict are disparity in power, role ambiguity and so on.
- **Interpersonal factors:** These include lack of effective combination, biased attributions, negative attitude, inequality and so on.

As was discussed earlier, it is important to deal with any conflict that arises in the organisation. Conflict in the organisation can be between coworkers, superior and subordinate and so on. It could also be between management and trade unions. Various strategies can be used to manage these conflicts. Some of them have been discussed as follows:

- **Bargaining:** Bargaining includes making exchange offers and even counter offers. The conflicting parties bargain with each other and make exchange offers. And this is either done directly or through a third part representative. Much depends on the bargaining skills of the individuals in the conflicting parties or groups and also on the perceptions of the individuals involve din bargaining. Bargaining can be explained with the

help of two perspectives, distributive and integrative perspectives. The outcome of distributive perspective is win-loose, that is one part will win and the other will loose. Whereas, in integrative perspective, the outcome is win-win, where both the parties will win.

- **Superordinate goals:** Various studies in social psychology have highlighted the role of superordinate goals in conflict resolution. In a study by Sherrif in 1966 that was based on intervention, superordinate goals were seen as a strategy to reduce conflict between the conflicting parties. Superordinate goals can be explained as that are perceived as significant and found to be appealing by both the conflicting parties (Shetgovekar, 2018). Thus, in an organisational set up as well, such goals can be created that both the parties can work towards achieving and thus the conflict could be resolved.
- **Incompatibility response strategy:** This strategy could mainly be used to deal with any aggression that accompanies the conflict. In this the individuals displaying aggression are exposed to situations or conditions that elicit emotional responses that are not compatible with anger, for example, empathy, feelings related to amusement and so on (Baron and Byrne, 1995).

Thus, suitable interventions based on principles of social psychology can be developed in order to manage and resolve conflicts.

Check Your Progress V

- 1) What are superordinate goals?

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10.6 LET US SUM UP

An organization is a social unit comprises of employees who are involved in work related activities to reach a common goal. They are expected to work in groups and teams with high team effectiveness and productivity. Varied culture, religion, ethnicity, age, gender, disability and other demographic element contributes in organizational growth. Keeping this in mind the principles of social psychology can be adequately applied to a work setting. In the present unit we discussed about social perception in work setting. Thus, overall, social psychology can be applied to work setting by creating an environment that promotes achievement of goals, creating positive organisational culture, taking measures to promote equality in terms of

opportunities and treatment, prevent discrimination, promote respects and acceptance of diversity, encourage positive criticism, deal effectively with conflicts, build effective teams and so on.

In the present unit we mainly focused on social perceptions at workplace, social learning theory in work setup. work motivation and job satisfaction, group dynamics and conflict in work settings.

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10.8 KEY WORDS

Conflict: Conflict can be explained in terms of perceptions of incompatibility related to interests.

Job satisfaction: Coutts and Gruman (2012, page 225) defined job satisfaction as “a person’s attitude toward his or her overall job as well as toward various aspects of the job; it is a predisposition to respond to one’s work environment in a favourable or unfavourable manner”.

Motivation: Quick, Nelson and Khandelwal (2013, pg 172) defined motivation as “the process of arousing and sustaining goal directed behaviour”.

10.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

- 1) What is covariance model?

Covariance model that was proposed by Kelly in 1973. According to this model, the individual behaviours can be as a result of internal or external factors (Coutts and Gruman, 2012). Internal factors denote factors that are under control of the individual and the external factors denote the factors that are not under the control of the individual.

Check Your Progress II

- 1) What is social learning theory?

Albert Bandura’s theory of social learning theory (1980) focused on how an individual implies cognitive skills on processing their social experience. The theory argues that an individual learn both cognition and behavior by observing others’ behavior. It claims learning is an internal change in behavior and is targeted towards a goal.

Check Your Progress III

- 1) What is job satisfaction?

Coutts and Gruman (2012, page 225 defines job satisfaction as “a person’s attitude toward his or her overall job as well as toward various

aspects of the job; it is a predisposition to respond to one's work environment in a favourable or unfavourable manner".

Check Your Progress IV

- 1) State the five stages of group formation.

Tuckman's (1965) model of group formation, explains five stages namely forming, storming, norming performing and adjourning.

Check Your Progress V

- 1) What are superordinate goals?

Superordinate goals can be explained as that are perceived as significant and found to be appealing by both the conflicting parties

10.10 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) Discuss social perceptions in work setting.
- 2) Explain the concepts of work motivation and job satisfaction.
- 3) Describe group dynamics
- 4) Discuss conflicts in work setting.

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