

Block

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BASICS OF PSYCHOLOGY FOR SOCIAL WORKERS

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February, 2019 (Revised Edition)

© Indira Gandhi National Open University, 2009

ISBN-978-81-266-3525-9

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Further information, about the Indira Gandhi National Open University courses may be obtained from the University's office at Maidan Garhi, New Delhi-110 068.

Printed and published on behalf of the Indira Gandhi National Open University by Director, School of Social Work

Laser Typeset by : Rajshree Computers, V-166A, Bhagwati Vihar, (Near Sec. 2, Dwarka), Uttam Nagar, New Delhi-110059

BLOCK INTRODUCTION

The previous block of this course clarified basic concepts related to the society. Units under the previous block explored relationship of social work to other disciplines, society and culture, composition, clarification and stratification of Indian society, social groups and social change. In this block “Basics of psychology for social workers” you will be introduced to the Psychological foundation for social work practice, various concepts of social psychology that are useful to social work practice, personality development, social learning, motivation, and defense mechanisms.

The **First Unit** “Psychological foundation for social work practice” describes the definition, branches and relevance of studying psychology for social work practice. The unit also explain the nature of personality, factors contributing to the development of the personality and discusses the theories in personality development.

The **Second Unit** “Concepts of social psychology for social work practice” further explores the key concepts of social psychology including groups and group processes; leadership-role functions and theories; introduction to social attitudes and prejudice; discrimination and stereotypes.

The **Third Unit** “Social learning and motivation” will introduce you to the definition, process and classical as well as contemporary theories of social learning. The unit also covers concepts, process and types of memory that makes learning relevant. Motivation is another dynamic concept illustrated in the unit. Relevant theories of motivation, conflict motivation and using motivation in the field practice have been discussed in the unit.

The **Fourth Unit** “Defense mechanisms and stress” describes the relevance of defense mechanisms in our day to day life, their typology and mental processes associated with it. This unit also gives you comprehensive understanding of stress, positive and negative ways of coping and stress management.

These four units will help you to have basic and introductory understanding of psychology, personality development, key concepts of social psychology, social learning, motivation, defense mechanisms, stress and coping with stress. The study of these four units will enable you to understand the basics of psychology for social work practice which will be of great help while practicing the three primary methods of the discipline.



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UNIT 1 PSYCHOLOGICAL FOUNDATION FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

Structure

Beena Antony*

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Definition of Psychology
- 1.3 Branches of Psychology
- 1.4 Need for Psychology in Social Work
- 1.5 Introduction to Personality
- 1.6 Definition of Personality
- 1.7 Factors Contributing to the Development of Personality
- 1.8 Theories on Personality Development
- 1.9 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.10 Further Readings and References

1.0 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this Unit are to provide you with a basic and introductory understanding to psychology. Why psychological foundation is essential in social work practice. The first part of this unit is devoted to the understanding of psychology. The second part deals with the nature of personality and discussing the popular theories formulated to explain personality development.

After completing this Unit, you will be able to:

- understand the subject of psychology;
- to know the different branches in psychology;
- explain the relevance of studying psychology for social work practice;
- comprehend the nature of personality;
- understand the factors contributing to the development of the personality; and
- discuss the theories in personality development.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Professional social work practice endorses social change in the society and problem solving in human relationships. The social work aims at the empowerment, liberation and well being of all persons. The social work practice mainly sees society as a laboratory and social workers work with individuals helping them to help themselves. The social work focuses on people to develop their full potential, enrich their lives, and prevent dysfunction. Thus, social workers are change agents in society and in the lives of the individuals, families and communities they serve.

The social work practice looks into the inequities and injustices that exist in the society. It addresses to the crises and emergencies and to everyday personal

and social problems. The social work uses a range of skills, techniques, and activities to focus on persons and their environments. The Social work interventions range from primarily person-focused psychosocial processes to involvement in social policy, planning and development. These include counseling, clinical social work, group work, social pedagogical work, and family treatment and therapy as well as efforts to help people obtain services and resources in the community. Interventions also include agency administration, community organisation and engaging in social and political action to impact social policy and economic development. The holistic focus of social work is universal, but the priorities of social work practice will vary from country to country and from time to time depending on cultural, historical, and socio-economic conditions.

The social work is based on a systematic body of evidence-based knowledge procured from research and practice evaluation. It acknowledges the intricacy of interactions between human beings and their environment, and the capacity of people both to be affected by and to alter the multiple influences upon them including bio-psychosocial factors. The social work profession draws on theories of human development and behaviour and social systems to analyze complex situations and to facilitate individual, organisational, social and cultural changes. Social work is an interrelated system of values, theory and practice. A lot of this profession's basic assumptions; concepts, principles, theories, methods and techniques are acquired from psychology.

1.2 DEFINITION OF PSYCHOLOGY

Psychology is a science that studies the behaviour of human beings. It is based on various theories and practical experiments dealing with different factors having an influence on the man's personality and behaviour. The word psychology has been acquired from Greek writings and is a grouping of two words: 'Psyche' and 'Logos' that stand for 'soul' and 'study of'. Initially psychology was understood as the study of the soul or spirit. Later the word soul was changed by the word mind. Over the years the nature of psychology has seen a lot of changes from assumptions to scientific support in explaining many of our day today human behaviour. Psychology is now considered the study of the mind, consciousness and behaviour of human beings.

The definition of psychology has been developing and evolving over the years. Most commonly used definition is that psychology is "the science of human and animal behaviour, it includes the application of this science to human problems."

Some of the accepted definitions of psychology are:

"Psychology is the positive science of behaviour." : J. B. Watson

"Psychology is the study of human nature.": Boring

"Psychology is the science of the activities of the individuals in relation to the environment.": Woodworth

"Psychology deals with response to any and every kind of situation that life presents. By responses or behaviour is meant all forms of processes, adjustment, activities and expressions of the organism." : Skinner

The definitions explain that psychology is a science that studies human behaviour and how this behaviour effects and gets effected by the environment.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: Use the space provided for your answer.

1) Define psychology and explain what is the psychology?

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2) What is the relevance of psychology to social work practice?

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1.3 BRANCHES OF PSYCHOLOGY

Psychology is divided into different branches according to its specialization. These different branches deal with psychology in the different aspects of human living. These branches are also called major sub-fields of psychology. The psychologists in these different branches perform different roles and deals with different clientele. These different branches are:

General Psychology: This part of psychology deals with the psychological aspects of a normal human being. In General psychology the concentration is on concepts, theories and methods related to heredity and environment, growth and maturation, physiological bases of behaviour, sensation, perception and attention, feelings and emotions, learning, remembering and forgetting, thinking and reasoning, intelligence and personality including individual differences, aptitudes and reaction time.

Child Psychology: This part of psychology deals with the childhood of human being. The development of the human being from the conception to the attainment of the age of eighteen years is the subject matter in child psychology. The child psychology deals with stages, development and maturation, interactions between the child and other members of primary and secondary social groups and the society. All along childhood and adolescent stage a child develops his physical and mental structure. The development is a continuous process and changes in the child may not be always visible. In the early childhood the changes are very

prominent, then it stabilizes and again in adolescence one can observe significant physical changes. The development is not of the same nature; it is not uniform all the time. During adolescence the child behaves inconsistently as in this stage there is confusion, whether they are children or adults. They could suffer from internal conflict between of social values and sexual freedom. In this stage the psychologist can be of help in understanding the developmental stage and its milestones and the individual need and functioning.

Development Psychology: This branch of psychology studies and describes physical, mental, emotional and behavioural changes that happen with different age groups in human beings. Human being passes through eight stages normally from conception to death unless the life is cut short because of any disease or accident. These eight stages are: prenatal, infancy, early childhood, late childhood, adolescence, early adulthood, middle adulthood and late adulthood. Each of these stages is characterized by specific needs, abilities and problems. Developmental psychology deals with these needs and problems and helps understand the physical, mental, emotional and behavioural changes that occur in these stages.

Clinical Psychology: This sub field of psychology addresses the complexities of modern life that affects human beings. Men, women and children sometimes find it difficult to adjust to their social setting. They need help to adjust to their physical, social, emotional and mental components in their life situations. For example a child may not like to go to school. There could be many reasons for this problem. Either the child suffers from separation anxiety from his mother, or he has not been able to adjust to the school environment, or he has a learning disability, so cannot keep pace with other children in school. The clinical psychologist could help understand the child's problem and provide a solution to the problem. Clinical psychologist provides assistance to individuals for better adjustment, enhancement of their social life and prevention of mental disorders.

Counseling Psychology: This branch of psychology helps persons to assist with their personal problems that are of a milder form and are not psychological disorders. Counseling is very popular with developing better interpersonal skills that affect interpersonal relationships, help in career planning and selection. Counseling psychologists help people having problems with family living; these are the family or marriage counselors. Now a days we see there is a need for counselors in all kinds of institutions and organizations as they will deal with needs and problems of the individuals involved there, this could be employee or clientele.

Educational Psychology: This branch looks into all aspects of the educational process from techniques of learning to learning disabilities. Educational psychologist investigates and promotes the factors that are required for the optimal learning among students. Educational psychologists are concerned with increasing the efficiency of learning in the school by applying the psychological knowledge of learning, memory and motivation to the school curriculum. Social worker in the school applies educational psychology when dealing with children and the scholastic requirements.

Industrial and Organisational Psychology: This form of psychology deals with industrial and organizational issues and concerns. It looks into behavioural

characteristic in work place, like employee selection, employee performance, employee work motivation, developing leadership and better communication within the organization and industry. Industrial and Organisational psychology will help in understanding employees needs, solving their problems therefore improving the moral of employees which will in turn increase their output and this directly increases the productivity of the industry or organization.

Social Psychology: Individual spends most of their time with other individuals and behaves and interacts in different ways. This sub field of psychology studies aspects of social behaviour and social interaction, how individuals think and interact with other individuals. Social psychologists investigate attitudes, prejudices and stereotypes how these develop and impact human thinking and behaviour. Social psychology has helped social workers to develop effective interventions in the community and in groups. Group, group processes and group dynamics are dealt in social psychology and are used widely in the practice of social work. Social psychology is one of the bases for social work practice.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answer.

- 1) Briefly explain why is child psychology important in today's world?

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- 2) How is industrial psychology useful to social work practice?

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1.4 NEED FOR PSYCHOLOGY IN SOCIAL WORK

An understanding of psychology is very useful for social work practice. The various branches of psychology help and support the various areas of social work practice. Like the school social worker or the industrial social worker or the community social worker or the counselor all of them will benefit from the knowledge of psychology, as it will help them in understanding and dealing with individuals better in their different settings. In today's globalized world, development

and changes are fast and it has affected the social and cultural fabric of the society. Increased competitiveness, materialism and self-centrism, changes in the family structures and employment patterns have increased the burden on individuals. All these changes have direct implications for social work practice. These changes are making it increasingly difficult for human beings to cope with the societal demands. These demands affect the way they think, feel and behave. Social workers have to tackle problems of higher mental health issues, stress and adjustment issues. Psychology provides knowledge and technique to devise ways of intervening effectively, so that social problems can be reduced and individuals can be helped to achieve better adjustment in the society.

1.5 INTRODUCTION TO PERSONALITY

Psychology also studies personality, its nature and development. Personality is another subject of great concern to social workers as they deal with human beings in different age groups and in different settings. Personality is a term that is commonly used. Personality is largely concerned with the external appearance and behaviour of individuals. Personality is usually attributed to a person on the basis of their personal appearance, or style in walking, talking, dressing, etc. Personality sometime is wrongly called “the character of the individual”. Personality is purely a psychological term.

The term ‘personality’ is derived from the Latin word ‘Persona’ which means ‘mask’. In ancient Rome, actors used masks to hide their identity on the stage. Hence persona denotes ‘as one appears to others, not as one actually is’. Persona does not indicate the internal organization of an individual that affects external behaviour. So persona does not represent the real personality.

Personality is something deeper than the outward appearance. It describes a person’s character, emotional disposition, sociability and other aspects of what a person says and does. It is the product of a long process of his physical, mental, emotional and moral development. Personality is a dynamic concept describing the growth and development of the psychological system of an individual.

Studying personality helps us to understand the functioning of an individual. It helps us to predict adult personality and personality disturbances. It will also help us to understand the behaviour of a person only if we know about the specific organization of his motives, beliefs, skills, attitudes etc. at different ages of the human being.

1.6 DEFINITION OF PERSONALITY

It is very difficult to find an ideal definition for personality. Different psychologists have different views about personality. They have defined personality according to their viewpoints. Some of the popular definitions of personality are:

Munn defined personality as the characteristic integration of an individual’s structure, modes of behaviour, interests, attitudes, capacities, abilities and aptitudes. The particular way in which these qualities are integrated in a particular person determines his personality.

According to Gordon Allport “Personality is the dynamic organization within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine his unique adjustment to his environment.” This definition explains the dynamic nature of the changing values of personality. It recognizes the importance of adjustment to the environment. It also stresses the importance of psychophysical systems, like the habits, sentiments, emotions and motives of an individual, which are psychological in nature, but have a physical base.

Walter Mischel defined personality as the distinctive patterns of behaviour, which comprise of their individual thoughts and emotions that characterize the individual’s adaptation to the situations of his or her life.

Weiten defines personality as an individual’s unique constellation of behavioural traits. Further a personality trait is a durable disposition to behave in a particular way in a variety of situations.

1.7 FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF PERSONALITY

Personality of individuals differs in many ways and is also similar in many ways. There are no specific causes leading to changes in personality. But a number of factors interact with one another in the formation of personality and in its development.

Heredity

Heredity plays an important part in determining one’s personality. An individual gets his entire hereditary endowment at the time of conception from their father and mother through the genes located in the chromosomes. The personality pattern of a person is actually framed in the womb. A child inherits the personality characteristics like physique, sex, intelligence etc. from the father and the mother. Later these develop further on with their interaction with environment.

Environment

Environment is the surrounding in which the individual is born, brought up and lives in. Unfavorable conditions in the prenatal, postnatal, childhood and adolescence environment will have lasting and damaging influences on personality development of the individual. The important environmental factors that exert pressures on our personality formation are culture in which we grow up, our family, friends social and group community we live in.

Culture

Culture establishes the norms, attitudes and values that are transmitted from one generation to the other. Culture is the tradition that is followed by the family, group and community the individual belongs to. Culture also influences our thinking, our behaviour and our personality.

The family

The formative years of the individual as a child are in the family with his parents and siblings. The family is the primary group of the individual. The warm and friendly relationship among the family members influences the personality

development of the individual in a significant way. The child's home environment, the school the child attends, their friends, the number of siblings, and the ordinal position of the child all contribute to their personality development. The presence of harmonious, loving, peaceful family atmosphere builds healthy personality development and vice versa too.

Economic Environment

Economic conditions of the individual is their financial status. Economic environment has a significant influence on the personality of the individual. Unfavorable economic conditions usually lead to the development of undesirable personality traits like inferiority feelings, nervousness, emotionality, and lack of social initiative or sometimes-even bitterness against society.

Social Role

The social conditions in the family are also decisive factors in personality development of an individual. Family is the first school of the child and the parents are the first teachers. Family provides training to a child to adjust to other people, to control their emotional expressions, and to adjust to different settings. There is a continuous learning process between a child, its family and its social and community group.

Social Situation

A third factor that affects personality is the social situations that the individual comes across with. An individual's personality may be generally stable and consistent. But it undergoes changes in different situations. Different demands made in different situations bring about different changes in personality. For example the sudden demise of the spouse of the individual affects the personality.

Importance of Heredity and Environment

An important question arises as to what plays a more important role in personality development? Is it Heredity or environment? The answer to this question is unanswered. Personality appears to be the result of both influences. Inherited qualities set the parameters or outer limits in shaping the personality. Social environmental factors can strengthen or weaken the inherited abilities. The social environment reinforces the development of inherited personality traits, as the child grows older. Heredity and environment are supplementary to each other. Personality development is influenced by both heredity and environmental factors.

Check Your Progress III

Note: Use the space provided for your answer

- 1) Give two definitions of personality.

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2) State the factors that contribute to personality development.

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1.8 THEORIES ON PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT

Development of personality is a unique feature of an individual. Different psychologists approach personality development from different viewpoints or perspectives. There are a number of personality theories formulated by famous psychologists that help us to understand, explain and predict the personality of individuals. Different personality theories give us different understanding of personality development. Let us see what some of the popular theories have talked off.

Allport's Trait Theory

G.B. Allport was the first personality theorist to put forward the trait approach to explain personality. He classified traits into cardinal, central and secondary traits. Cardinal traits are very effective and dominant. These are few in number. The central traits are the building blocks of personality. They are the focus of an individual's personality. Secondary traits are less important. The most recent theory of personality is developed by R.B. Cattell. Cattell viewed personality as a complex structure of traits. He used the theory of factor analysis to develop his theory. According to him there are four types of traits.

- 1) Common traits: These are traits, which are distributed to the general population, traits, which are common to all people.
- 2) Unique traits: These are unique to a person.
- 3) Surface traits: These are traits, which are recognized by the manifestation of our behaviour. They are on the superficial level. They are readily observable.
- 4) Source traits: These are the underlying structures or the sources, which determine the behaviour of an individual. Source traits are more important than surface traits. These traits are the basic source of individuality.

Criticism

Critiques have questioned the reliability of this theory. As this theory does not give us a complete and accurate picture on the personality of individuals.

Freud's Theory

The major contribution in this field of personality development comes from Sigmund Freud. He explained 'personality' as the existence of conscious, preconscious and unconscious in an individual. Freud's theory is called the Psychoanalytic Theory of Personality Development. This theory assumes that the basic dynamics of personality includes the conflict between two opposing forces — anxiety arising from the inhibition of desires and defense against those desires that arouse anxiety.

Id, Ego and Super Ego

Freud also believed that our personality is built around three interacting processes, the id, the ego and the super ego.

Id is the unconscious reservoir of psychic energy. The other two systems operate on this psychic energy. There are two basic instincts in man — the 'life' or sex instinct and the 'death' or aggressive instinct. All the drive required by a man is derived from these two instincts.

Id is present at the time of birth. It does not know any morality or reality. It is concerned only with satisfaction of its wishes. It is guided by the pleasure principle.

Ego functions as the manager of personality. It obeys the principles of reality. It controls, selects and decides what instincts of the id are to be satisfied and in what manner it can be done.

Super ego works on morality principles. It represents the values of society. Human personality is the result of the interactions among these systems.

The presence of a powerful ego ensures a well-balanced personality. The dominance of super ego leads to a neurotic personality while supremacy of id over ego and super ego ends up in the development of a delinquent personality.

Psychosexual Stages in Personality Development

In addition to the concepts of id, ego and super ego, Freud emphasized the importance of sex in personality development. He regarded the psychic energy for sex drive as the basis of personality. So Freud explained personality development on the basis of the five stages of psychosexual development.

Erogenous Zones. In each stage of development a child derives pleasure by stimulating a particular area of the body. These are known as erogenous zones. The environment, however, imposes restrictions in the satisfaction of his desires. How the child manages this conflict is crucial in his personality development.

Fixation. Too much or too little satisfaction in any stage results in fixation . This means that personality becomes emotionally fixed at a particular stage. This is also detrimental to personality development.

According to Freud the personality of a human being is developed in five stages:

a) Oral Stage (1st year)

Pleasure is obtained by the stimulation of the mouth. Satisfaction at this stage lays the foundation for a man's adult personality traits like adjustability and tenacity. If libido is fixed at this stage the personality traits developed will be fixation that results in the formation of passive personality. It is associated with over eating, smoking, drinking, or sarcastic criticism of other's ideas.

b) Anal Stage (2 to 3 years)

Eliminator/ process provides the focus of pleasure. The child achieves bowel control at this stage. We can see the beginning of the development of ego in the child. If parents are too strict in teaching toilet habits, the child develops anxiety. He manifests his anxiety and anger by excreting at the most inappropriate time and place. These are the example of all kinds of expulsive traits — cruelty, destructiveness, temper tantrums, disorderliness etc. On the other hand, praise for excreting at the proper time and place makes him feel that it is an important activity. This idea lays the foundation of creativity and productivity.

A personality that developed due to anal fixation would be a stubborn, compulsively orderly personality.

c) Phallic Stage (4-6 years)

This is a very important period in the personality development of a person. At this stage pleasurable sensation comes from self-manipulation of genital organs. In some cases sexuality produces guilt feelings in an individual. In some other cases the adult person tries to reduce anxiety by engaging in sex.

Oedipus Conflict

This stage is also marked by the emergence of Oedipus conflict in children. This is a complex in which there is a strong attraction for the parent of the opposite sex and envy for the same sex parent. At the same time the child knows that it is a wrong thing. He does not want to lose the love and affection of the same sex parent. To resolve this conflict, the child tries to identify with the same sex parent. The child tries to incorporate the sexual orientation, mannerisms and values of the same sex parent.

Resolution of Oedipus complex results in the formation of super ego.

Unresolved Oedipus complex results in many problems in later marital life. Such children can never get close to their partners when they grow up nor make normal sexual relationships. A highly seductive female continues to feel guilty about sex.

Freud assumed that every person is bisexual. There is attraction towards members of the opposite sex as well as those of the same sex. This is the constitutional basis for homosexuality. In most people this instinct remains dormant while in other they are more attracted towards the persons of their own sex.

d) Latency Period (6-12 years)

Freud thought that sexual urges were dormant at this state. The fact however, is that this is the stage in which a person learns to make friends with people

of the same sex. So boys will make friends with other boys; the girl will be comfortable in making friends with other girls. A sexually mature person should know to be comfortable in the company of people of the same sex and of the other sex. This is a stage in which this learning takes place. The child also begins to achieve emotional independence. An increase in the knowledge about their environment enhances their ego development.

e) **Genital Stage**

This is the final stage of development. Sexual interest reawakens at this stage. There is interest in the opposite sex. Sexual attraction, socialization and planning for a vocation, marriage and family life begins at this stage.

If a person is well adjusted in the previous stages, he will be capable of establishing normal heterosexual relationships. Most of the sexual problems in adult life come from failure at earlier stages. There are no sharp lines dividing the different stages of development. The final personality attained by an individual includes contribution from all stages.

Criticisms of this Theory

The critiques of this theory explain that Freud's views are derived from his clinical experiences of people with disturbed personalities. It is seen that too much importance is given to sex in explaining human behaviour. Many points raised in this theory do not have empirical support. Thus the credibility of Freud's theory is doubted. But Freud's theory cannot be accepted and rejected as a whole. Some parts can be accepted and some parts can be rejected and some parts need revision. Freud put forward some challenging ideas that have relevance even today.

Eric Erikson's Stages of Psychosocial Development

Eric Erikson formulated his theory on personality development and called it theory on psychosocial development. In this theory human being passes through eight stages from infancy to adulthood. In each stage the person confronts a specific conflict or stressful situation, and tries to master and resolves those challenges to move on to the next stage and deal with other challenges. When the challenges of a particular stage are not resolved adequately, they may reappear as unresolved issues or problem areas for the individual.

The eight stages as proposed by Erikson are:

1) Basic trust versus mistrust- infant stage (birth – 1 year)

Children begin to learn the ability to trust others based upon the consistency of the persons who take care of them. If trust develops successfully, the child gains confidence and security in the world around him and is able to feel secure even when threatened. Unsuccessful completion of this stage can result in an inability to trust, and therefore a sense of fear about the inconsistent world. It may result in anxiety, heightened insecurities, and a feeling of mistrust in the world around him.

2) Autonomy versus guilt – toddler stage (1 year – 3 years)

Children begin to assert their independence, by trying to walk on their own, refusing to do according to their mothers, choosing toys to play with on their

own, and making choices about what they like to wear and to eat. If children in this stage are encouraged and supported in their increased independence, they become more confident and secure in their own ability to survive in the world. If children are criticized, too much controlled, or not given the opportunity to assert themselves, they begin to feel inadequate in their ability to survive, and may then become more dependent upon others. They may develop low self-esteem, and feel a sense of shame or doubt in their own abilities and capacities.

3) Initiative versus guilt – early childhood (3 years – 6 years)

The children in this stage learn to assert themselves more frequently. They begin to plan activities, make up games, and initiate activities with others. If they are given this opportunity, children develop a sense of initiative, and feel secure in their ability to lead others and make decisions. Conversely, if this tendency is not encouraged, either through criticism or control, children develop a sense of guilt. They may feel inferior to others and will therefore remain followers, lacking in self-initiative.

4) Industry versus inferiority—middle and late childhood (6 years–puberty)

The children begin to develop a sense of pride in their accomplishments. They initiate projects, see them through to completion, and feel good about what they have achieved. During this time, teachers play an increasing role in the child's development. If children are encouraged and reinforced for their initiative, they begin to feel industrious and feel confident in their ability to achieve goals. If these initiatives are not encouraged, or if they are restricted by parents or teachers, then they begin to feel inferior, doubting their own abilities and therefore may not reach their full potential.

5) Identity versus role confusion – adolescence to early adulthood

The adolescents become more independent, and begin to look at the future in terms of career, relationships, families, housing, and other related issues. During this period, they explore possibilities and begin to form their own identity based upon the outcome of their explorations. This sense of search or exploration if restricted would result in a sense of confusion about themselves and their role in the world.

6) Intimacy versus isolation – early to middle adulthood

The individual begins to share more intimately with others. Relationships are explored leading toward long term commitments with someone other than a family member. Successful completion can lead to comfortable relationships and a sense of commitment, safety, and care within the relationship. Avoiding intimacy, fearing commitment and relationships can lead to isolation, loneliness, and sometimes depression.

7) Generativity versus stagnation – middle adulthood to late adulthood

In this stage the individual settles down within a relationship, has a family of his own and develops a sense of being a part of a bigger society. The person also focuses considerable attention to one's career. The person also thinks in terms of giving back to the society through raising children, being productive at work, and becoming involved in community activities and organizations. By failing to achieve these objectives, he becomes stagnant and feels unproductive.

8) Ego integrity versus despair – late adulthood to old age

During this stage the adults contemplate on their accomplishments and are able to develop integrity, if they see themselves as leading a successful life. If they see their lives as unproductive, they experience feelings of guilt, or feel that they did not accomplish their life goals. They become dissatisfied with life and develop despair, often leading to depression and hopelessness.

Criticism

This theory has given an understanding of why individuals who had been thwarted in the healthy resolution of the early phases, like learning healthy levels of trust and autonomy in toddlerhood had such difficulty with the crises that come in adulthood. This theory provides answers for practical applications. It has raised new potential for therapists and their patients to identify key issues and skills that required addressing. But this theory requires a guide or measurement that could be used to assess teaching and child rearing practices in terms of their ability to nurture and facilitate healthy emotional and cognitive developments. Erikson's theory can also be questioned as to whether his stages must be regarded as sequential, and only occurring within the age ranges he suggests. There is debate as to whether people only search for identity during the adolescent years. Does one particular stage be successfully completed before another stage could begin?

Check Your Progress IV

Note: Use the space provided for your answer

- 1) Explain the stages of psychosexual development.

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- 2) What is the main conflict that a person faces during adolescence according to Erikson?

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Carl Roger's Self Theory

Carl Rogers proposed the Self-Theory to explain personality development. Everyday and every minute, we are confronted by a number of events in our

environment. How we perceive and interpret these experiences determines our behaviour.

There are two basic systems underlying Roger's personality theory— the organism and the self. These two systems are operating in the phenomenological field of an individual. Personality is the product of this interaction. Phenomenological field means the reality as experienced by an individual or it is the personal reality of the individual. The organism represents the totality of experience (conscious and unconscious). Self is the accepted awareness part of experience.

The acquirement of self-concept is a long and a continuous process. How we perceive our experience — negative or positive — depends upon our self-concept. Self-concept is developed as a result of a person's interaction with social experience. For example, Sita's friend Rama tells her that she is beautiful and intelligent girl. Sita will internalize this compliment in her concept of herself. She will make extra effort to maintain this self-concept. Individual regulate their behaviour in order to suit the already formed self-concepts. When an individual develops a false self-image and there is inconsistency between real and imagined concepts this may result in abnormal behaviour.

A healthy personality development occurs, if there is a harmonious union of one's self image and their real experience in life.

Self-Actualization Theory

The most well known theory on self-actualization is Abraham Maslow's theory of hierarchy of needs. Maslow believed that human personality depends upon the fulfillment of inborn potentials. He hypothesized that, within every human being the needs can be arranged in order of their importance or hierarchy, from the basic to the complex. He explained five stages of motivational fulfillment of personality development. The first stage is the most basic need to human beings and is called the physiological needs. The physiological needs include the need for food, clothing and shelter. The second stage has the safety needs. The third stage has the need for belongingness and love. The fourth stage has the self-esteem needs and at the fifth stage, the highest stage there was the need for self-actualization.

Only after the satisfaction of a need at a lower level does the next need become dominant. The satisfaction of primary needs motivates secondary needs. Every individual moves up the steps of the given hierarchy, only after satisfying the basic needs that are essential for one's survival one can think about the higher needs. An individual who is starved for food cannot think about reforming the society. There are, however, a few exceptions. There are some people. who stand for ideals, religious and social values without caring for the satisfaction of their own needs.

Criticism

Maslow's need theory has received wide recognition. This theory has contributed much to the individual's freedom, love, personal growth and values. But Maslow's theory does not have a sound research backing. Thus this theory can be regarded as good hypotheses that are thought provoking.

1.9 LET US SUM UP

This Unit gives you an understanding on the subject of psychology. You will observe that many of the fundamental assumptions, concepts, principles, theories, methods, techniques and tools of social work are based and derived from psychology. Psychology has rightly been defined as the positive science of human behaviour and social work practice deals with human beings. Thus it is very important for social workers to have a proper insight on psychology. Social work is practiced in various areas like school, hospital, clinics, industry, criminology and development sectors. In all these areas an understanding of the different branches of psychology are very beneficial.

Personality refers to the enduring personal characteristics of individuals. Personality development follows a cumulative continuity principle, which states that with time and age personality becomes more stable. Personality theorists favour different approaches to the study of personality. Several schools of thoughts have defined and explained personality from different perspectives. This unit would have broaden your understanding on some of the famous personality theories of Allport, Erikson, Freud, Carl Roger and Maslow.

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UNIT 2 CONCEPTS OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

Structure

Beena Antony*

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Introduction to Group and Group Processes
- 2.3 Introduction to Leadership in Groups
- 2.4 Introduction to Social Attitudes
- 2.5 Introduction to Prejudice, Discrimination and Stereotypes
- 2.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.7 Further Readings and References

2.0 OBJECTIVES

This Unit is an introduction to social psychology a branch of psychology. Social psychology is very useful to social work. We will look into the key concepts of social psychology—groups and group processes, leadership, attitudes and prejudices. An understanding of these concepts will be beneficial to social workers in understanding human beings better and thus performing better in achieving social work aims objectives and goals.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Social psychology is that branch of psychology that is concerned with the social aspects of life of individuals—that is how persons think about and interact with each other. Every form of social thought and social behaviour of individuals in our society is included in the scope of social psychology. Man lives in the society, how he thinks and behaves are of significant importance in social psychology. The field of social psychology is an in depth enquiry into human thought and its resultant actions and behaviour thus we are able to get many an answers to questions of human love, cooperation, and helping on one hand and of prejudices, conflict and violence on the other. The research in social psychology is of great importance as it looks into the complex web of human mind in the area of understanding how and why individuals conduct, reflect and feel as they do in different social situations. The Social psychology thus can be defined as a scientific study that searches to understand the nature and cause of individual behaviour and thought in different social situations. The Social psychology is of considerable importance to social work practitioners as social workers are involved with human beings, so a scientific study of human behaviour and actions is extremely essential.

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2.2 INTRODUCTION TO GROUP AND GROUP PROCESSES

Divya gets up in the morning gets ready for school. In the school bus she talks and discusses with her friends on way to school. In school she has another set of friends in her class. After school, at home she has lunch, does her homework and by evening she goes out to play in the park with her friends in the neighbourhood. After play she has her bath and spends time with her grandfather, parents and brother at dinner table. This analysis of Divya's day only shows the number of groups she is involved with. Like Divya most of us live in different group circles be it family, siblings, friends, professional circles. This only proves what the famous poet John Donne said that "no man is an island..." all of us are part of innumerable groups. Individuals belong to a number of groups and we behave in these groups in different manner. It is important to understand these different behaviour of human beings.

Individuals join a group to fulfill their needs. Firstly groups help the individuals to satisfy psychological and social needs, like giving and receiving attention, love or a sense of belonging. Second groups help individuals achieve what they cannot do themselves. Thirdly, group members often provide the individuals with knowledge and information. Fourthly, group provides security to the individuals. Fifthly, group membership also gives encouraging social identity.

Definition of Groups

A group can be defined as two or more persons who interact, with one another, share common goals are somehow interdependent, and recognize that they belong to a group. Examples of groups include a family unit, a football team, four or five college friends, ladies getting together to help children in the neighbourhood. Few elderly men regularly meeting for a morning walk. We come across a number of different groups around us.

Features of Groups

Groups have the following features:

- *Norms* determine appropriate behavior — implicit rules and expectations for group members to follow, like saying thank you, shaking hands.
- *Roles* that are assigned to people that determine what behaviours and responsibilities people should take up.
- A *communication structure* that determines who talks to whom within the group
- A *power structure* that determines how much authority and influence group members have.

Example: In a school there are norms, these norms tell the students how to behave, what time they should come in, what uniform to wear. The teachers have their role includes teaching, and administering examinations. The principal has a role-to manage and coordinate the whole school. The communication structure of the class demands that students listen without talking to each other while the teacher teaches. The power structure gives the principal, teachers

more authority than any of the students. Some students also may have more authority and influence than other students, such as those who are more familiar with the class material.

Development of Groups

Development of the group will show how the group progresses after its formation till it dies off. Many writers in their own terminology have given various stages to this group development. Here we will look into Tuckman's stages of formation and development of groups. Tuckman has given four stages.

- **Forming** — at this stage, group members will be uncertain of the group's structure and its goals or a strategy for achieving them; they will as a result be quite dependent on the leader. At this stage the members get together to form a group.
- **Storming** — at this stage, conflict and disagreements between the group members and the leader will arise, as well as between various sub-groups; there will be a tendency to rebel against the rules which have been established.
- **Norming** — the group becomes more mature and cohesive; group norms develop beyond any formally established rules.
- **Performing** — conflicts between individuals are resolved; the group works constructively on problem-solving and energy is directed towards the task. The group will work together to accomplish the group goals.

Tuckman has omitted the last stage that could be called the termination stage. The termination stage is when the group ends. The group loses its existence and the group members separate themselves from being together. Not all groups will go through these stages of development, though you can probably identify them in groups which you have joined, whether formally established groups such as a committee or informal groups such as a circle of friends.

Group Processes

How do individuals behave in a group? What are the processes and dynamics that are unique to groups? Group process refers to all the happenings within the group, and to the interactional and communication patterns among all members or between some members of the group. Research has focused on phenomenon like group cohesion, conformity, social loafing, social facilitation, decision-making, bystander effect, deindividuation, subgroups and group conflict.

Group Cohesion and Factors Affecting it

Group Cohesion is the extent to which members of a group exhibit a desire to achieve common goals and group identity. Research tends to support the view that high interaction teams need high task cohesion to be consistently successful, whereas for moderate or low interaction teams, cohesion is less important to success. Again, we have social cohesion; the extent to which members of the group get on with one another, and task cohesion; the extent to which members cooperate to achieve the group's goals. The following factors affect cohesion:

- **Stability:** Cohesion develops with the life of the group members being together.

- **Similarity:** Cohesion develops when there is more commonness within the group members in terms of age, sex, skills and attitudes.
- **Size:** Cohesion develops more quickly in small groups
- **Support:** Cohesive teams tend to have managers and coaches who provide support to team members and encourage them to support one another
- **Satisfaction:** Cohesion is associated with the extent to which team members are pleased with each others performance, behaviour and conformity to the norms of the team.

Carron (1980) defined a cohesive group have the following characteristics:

- a collective identity
- a sense of shared purpose
- structured patterns of communication

Group Conformity

Conformity is the process of giving in to real or imagined pressure from a group. For example, we see groups of teenagers who display remarkable similarity in the way they dress and speak, even holding similar opinions! This demonstrates the role of group conformity. Factors that influence conformity are:

- **Group size:** group size influenced whether subjects conformed. The bigger the group, the more people conformed, up to a certain point. After group size reached a certain limit, conformity didn't increase any further.
- **Group unanimity:** subjects were much more likely to conform when a group agreed unanimously. If even one person in the group disagreed with the group, a subject was much less likely to conform. This was true even when the other disagreed with the subject as well as the group.

Researchers have found that conformity also increases when:

- A person feels incompetent or insecure
- The person admires the group
- The group can see how the person behaves

People have many reasons for conforming:

- They want to be accepted by the group, or they fear rejection by the group. In this case, the group is exerting normative social influence.
- The group provides them with information. In this case, the group is exerting informational social influence.
- They want a material or social reward, such as a pay raise or votes.
- They admire the group and want to be like other group members.

Social Loafing

Social loafing, which contributes to declines in the productivity of a group, is the reduced effort people invest in a task when they are working with other people. Diffusion of responsibility contributes to social loafing. A person does not feel as responsible for working on a task if several others are also present,

since responsibility is distributed among all those present. Imagine being assigned a project to be completed by yourself. Most likely you would complete 100% of it. Now if two people are involved, the percentage will typically not be 50/50. As more people are added to the group, you will end up with a small percentage doing a large portion of the work and a large percentage doing a much smaller proportion.

Social loafing is particularly likely to happen in the following circumstances:

- When the group is large
- When it is difficult to evaluate individual contributions to a task
- When people expect their coworkers to do most of the work

Social Facilitation

When alone, we tend to be more relaxed and less concerned with the outward expression of our behaviour. Add just one other person, even if we don't know that shown that our behaviour tends to change, and not always for the better. The Studies have found that when others are present, our level of arousal is increased. In other words, we are suddenly more aware of what's going on around us. Because of this, we tend to perform better at tasks that are well learned or simple. When completing a difficult or new task, however, our performance level decreases and this phenomenon is called Social Facilitation.

Think about learning to play piano for the first time. If you are alone, you will likely be more relaxed, and better able to concentrate. When others are watching you, however, you are more likely to be self-conscious, and therefore make more mistakes. Professional piano players, however, because the task is so well learned, perform better when others are watching and they are able demonstrate their confidence and ability.

Group Decision-Making

Members of a group are often required to make decisions together. Three concepts related to group decision-making, are Group think, Group Polarisation and Minority Influence.

Groupthink

Groupthink is the tendency for a close-knit group to emphasize consensus at the expense of critical thinking and rational decision-making. In a groupthink situation, group members exert pressure to conform, disregard other opinions, suppress information from outside the group, and focus selectively on information that agrees with the group's point of view. It can lead to impulsive decisions and a failure to identify and/or consider all sides of an argument. We often read newspaper reports of peaceful demonstrations that rapidly turn into mass riots with destruction of lives and property. These are classic examples of group decisions going bad.

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

- High cohesiveness. Group cohesiveness is the strength of the liking and commitment group members have toward each other and to the group.

- Isolation from outside influences
- A strong leader
- The intent to reach a major decision

Group Polarization

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

Imagine a group of protesters, all agreeing and deciding to march on the streets. You can see how this could get out of hand because opposing views (Group Think) are not considered and the push to move forward for the cause is fueled internally (Group Polarization).

Minority Influence

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

Bystander Effect

Another phenomenon is an unfortunate reality, which has been observed far too many times in groups and in larger cities. We've all heard stories of people getting robbed, or beaten, or raped in broad daylight while people around offered no assistance. How many people rush to help an injured person on the road? We have found that the internal push to help a person in need decreases, as the group gets larger. In these situations, people tend to be followers and will only get involved if they witness another person getting involved. What results is a group of people witnessing an accident and wondering why nobody is helping. This does not occur if you are the only person witnessing the accident. If nobody else is around, a person will tend to help the victim. The more people, however, the less likely someone will offer assistance.

Deindividuation

There are varieties of group related, or collective phenomena such as the behaviour of crowds. When people are in a large group that makes them feel aroused and anonymous, they may experience deindividuation. A small example is that of a large group of young teenagers chasing and troubling a beggar. Each teenager on his or her own may hesitate to indulge in such actions. When people become deindividuated, they lose their inhibitions and their sense of responsibility and are not self-conscious about their behaviour. Deindividuation is associated with uninhibited and sometimes dangerous behaviour.

Subgroups

Subgroup formation is a common occurrence in a group situation. This dynamic has significant implications for the individual members and the total group members. The formation of subgroups and their impact on group process are varied.

There are a number of factors that lead to subgroup development. Both group and individual forces contribute to subgroup formation. When individual members have similarities like similar attitudes, values, personality traits this enhance the possibility of subgroups, members in the large group get attracted to form smaller subgroups. Group size also causes subgroup formation, larger the group more the possibility of subgroup formation. Subgroup can also be formed due to member's discontent.

Group Conflict

The members in the group interact with each other. This interaction over a period of time will cause difference of opinion among the group members. This could form a threat to the group relationship. Most of the time individuals are reluctant to confront the interpersonal differences this further leads to the widening of the gap between the group members. There is a possibility that differences around issues, opinions, priorities, values and needs could escalate into group conflict. Group conflict is common, if there is a group, there will be differences this results in group conflict.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Write your answer in the space provided below

- 1) Define groups and state the features of groups.

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- 2) Briefly explain group processes.

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2.3 INTRODUCTION TO LEADERSHIP IN GROUPS

The topic of leadership in groups has been extensively discussed and analyzed by social scientist and practitioners. Mahatma Gandhi, Adolf Hitler, Nelson Mandela and Indira Gandhi have all been well-known political world leaders. Narayana Murthy has been ranked among the world's most capable corporate leaders. We can also see a number of leaders in our daily life. A college president, the father of the family, the local leader in your community; all these are also examples of leaders.

The key dimensions that are often looked into in the phenomena of leadership are: the role and functions of the leader, the differential styles of leadership and the personality traits of the leader. Many theories about leadership tend to focus on these dimensions.

Leadership: Roles and Functions

The construct of roles is helpful in organizing and describing categories of behaviour that leaders are involved in helping groups to manage and harness the competitive and complementary problem-solving activities. Leaders arouse and initiate ideas, make plans, call for action, interpret and clarify member behaviour, they are exercising their functions. Leaders share feelings, encourage cooperation, foster spontaneity, negotiate differences between members, they are building up group relationships.

Leadership Theories

Trait Theories

As soon as we study the lives of people who have been called great leaders, it becomes clear that they have very different and special qualities. Like Mahatma Gandhi. Instead of starting with exceptional individuals, many turned to setting out the general qualities or *traits* they believed should be present. Many early studies identified personality characteristics that appear to differentiate leaders from followers. Thus trait theory professes that leaders are born, not made. Three of these characteristics stand out as important:

- Above average intelligence, but not at the level of a genius.
- Initiative – a combination of independence, inventiveness and an urge to get things done.
- Self-assurance – a blend of self-confidence, self-esteem and high personal expectations.

Behavioural Theories

In contrast, behavioural theories describe how leadership qualities can be learned from our environment – home, educational institutions, workplaces and influences from prominent leaders in media and society. For example, a person may have been influenced by his teacher and may rise to be a great leader. We have seen in history how Adolf Hitler due to the environmental simulation became a powerful leader. Behavioural theories professes leaders are made not born.

Leadership Style Theory

Style theory is based on the assumption that it is the style of leadership that matters. Widely accepted leadership style theory is of Lewin who described leadership styles and behaviours.

Kurt Lewin and his colleagues (1939) identified three major leadership styles: authoritarian, participative and delegative.

Authoritarian Leadership (Autocratic): Authoritarian leaders provide clear expectations for what needs to be done, when it should be done, and how it should be done. There is also a clear division between the leader and the

followers. Authoritarian leaders make decisions independently with little or no input from the rest of the group and decision-making is less creative. Abuse of this style is usually viewed as controlling, bossy, and dictatorial. Authoritarian leadership is best applied to situations where there is little time for group decision-making or where the leader is the most knowledgeable member of the group.

Participative Leadership (Democratic): Participative (democratic) leadership is generally the most effective leadership style. Democratic leaders offer guidance to group members, but they also participate in the group and allow input from other group members. Participative leaders encourage group members to participate, but have the final say over the decision-making process. Group members feel engaged in the process and are more motivated and creative.

Delegative (Laissez-Faire): Delegative (laissez-fair) leadership results in the least productivity. Delegative leaders offer little or no guidance to group members and leave decision-making up to them. While this style can be effective in situations where group members are highly qualified in an area of expertise, it often leads to poorly defined roles and a lack of motivation.

2.4 INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL ATTITUDES

Rohan saw a beggar on the roadside, he could not resist himself and he took out a coin from his pocket and gave it to the old woman. Rohan knew that in India giving alms to the beggars was an illegal offence but he had always seen his grandmother very sympathetic to the needy and he too has a sympathetic attitude towards the needy. We see that Rohan has an attitude here towards the old woman beggar. We constantly form and use attitudes. We talk about the need for people to change their attitude. A schoolteacher may speak about some students having an attitude problem. We all express a variety of attitudes about a variety of topics. For example, Jenefir may have a negative attitude towards smoking and speak positively about the need for reservations for women in parliament.

Definition of Social Attitudes

Attitudes help people to understand their social world. They help us define how we perceive and think about others, as well as how we behave toward them. Many definitions exist that attempt to determine, what exactly an attitude is. A widely accepted definition describes attitudes as evaluations of various objects that are stored in memory. An attitude includes affect (a feeling), cognition (a thought), and behaviour (an action). An attitude can also be defined as a psychological readiness that prompts a person to behave or react to certain objects. The Social psychologist has conducted a lot of research on this topic as attitudes strongly influence the social thoughts of the individuals and this in turn affects the behaviour of the individual.

Formation of Attitudes

Most psychologists believe that **attitudes are learned** through exposure, conditioning, and socialization. Specifically, attitudes can be acquired from others (social learning) in the form of classical conditioning, instrumental conditioning, and modeling; as well as being acquired via direct experience.

Social Learning often referred to as “socialization” refers to the gradual acquisition of language, attitudes, and other socially approved values through reinforcement, observation, and other learning processes. This implies that one’s interaction with others, such as parents, teachers, peers, relatives, newspapers, books, television, religious groups, etc., can affect our attitudes toward various objects. This type of “learning” of attitudes occurs in diverse ways described below.

Classical conditioning is a learning-through-association process, which involves the pairing of stimuli. “When one stimulus regularly precedes another, the one that occurs first may soon become a signal for the one that occurs second” (Baron & Byrne, 1994). After frequent pairings, there exists an expectation that when the first stimulus occurs, the second will then follow. Consider for example, a machine that emits a loud noise just before it breaks down. Over time, the loud noise may serve as a signal to the unpleasant occurrence. Attitudes can be conditioned in this way as well. This can occur when an attitude object is frequently paired with other objects or experiences that are pleasant or unpleasant.

Instrumental Conditioning. Rewards and punishments are commonly used to accomplish goals. Skinner (1975) theorized that whenever responses are immediately followed by positive reinforcers (rewards), these responses become more frequent in the future. In contrast, punished responses become less frequent. These same techniques are often utilized (either consciously or unintentionally) to form attitudes.

Modeling. This third process of forming attitudes often occurs without intention. This process often referred to as “Social Learning Theory” suggests that behaviours and attitudes are acquired by observing and imitating the actions displayed by parents and peers (Bandura, 1969).

Direct Experience. Finally, attitudes can be acquired from the mere exposure to a particular object. Such direct experience, repeated over time, often results in a preference for that object when compared to objects less often encountered. For example a daughter who see her mother as a working lady will also easily follow that practice and be economically independent.

Attitude Change

Attitudes are rigid and it is a challenge to change attitudes but social workers must take up this challenge and work for attitudinal change. Information and knowledge can bring in attitudinal change in the society. Information is available from many sources on a continuous basis. Often this information is presented in an attempt to influence behaviour. Advertisements, commercials, speeches and the like are designed to change attitudes toward a given product, issue, or idea. Mass media through their widespread communication can influence the public to change their attitudes and form new attitudes. Mass media be it the print media or the televisions have made the public aware on various issues like the problem of spread of HIV. Regular information in the mass media has brought in attitudinal change towards the diseases. New information on various issues can educate the society. Correct, factual information can influence individuals to change their attitudes. For examples some parents in India have an attitude that their girl child must be married off early. This results in child marriage even today. These parents need to be educated to the status of girl child that if promoted a girl

child can rise in life and be economically independent and be a more productive member of the family and society. The parents also need to be told of the ill effects (psychological and biological effects) of child marriage on the girl child.

Attitudinal change can also be brought about by exposing individuals to external influences. For example when after India's independence the great Indian freedom fighter Vinobaji talked of 'bhoodan', he was able to motivate the rich to give up land for the poor landless Indian. It became a social movement many Indian gave up their property to the poor. Opinion leaders can also work towards attitudinal change. Thus local leaders who have a close interaction with the general public could be involved to bring in attitude change to improve the community.

It has also been observed that bringing in social legislation can also force the society for attitudinal change. Social legislation needs to be combined with awareness and information on the issue so that the legislation is implemented properly. For example Pre- Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Technique Act, 1994 legislation is a ban for sex determination test when the child is in womb. This act was passed to protect the girl child in the womb. This act has controlled the killing of female fetuses. The legislation is a step towards attitudinal change, parents need to stop the preference for the boy child and protect the girl child, as this is a crime and will have serious consequences on our society.

Resistance to Attitude Change

Resistance to persuasive attempts is affected by a number of factors such as reactance, forewarning, and selective avoidance and exposure. These concepts function to assist in the stabilization of one's attitudes. If individuals were susceptible to every attempt at persuasion, attitudinal change would be continuous because of the great number of persuasive messages encountered daily.

Reactance

This is both an emotional and cognitive reaction that individuals experience when obvious attempts are made at persuasion. When one's freedom to choose is threatened or eliminated, individuals strive to regain a feeling of autonomy. This often results in attitudes being changed in the opposite direction to that being suggested (Brehm, 1966). For example, parent forcefully restrict television viewing by children, reactance can occur. Children will probably desire to spend more time watching television.

Forewarning

Advance knowledge of someone's attempt at persuasion often results in the receiver forming counter-arguments prior to the message (Cialdini & Petty, 1979). This allows the receiver to be forearmed with relevant facts and information to assist in the resistance of attitude change. If children expect their father's objection, they are likely to be ready with a long list of reasons, why they should watch more television.

Selective Avoidance and Exposure

This protection against persuasion involves the process of attention that is given to new information that refuses or supports one's original attitude. This theory

of information processing suggests that there exists a tendency to direct attention away from information that challenges existing attitudes and to give increased attention to information that supports held beliefs (Baron & Byrne, 1994). Children may then ignore information from their father about negative effects of television and may give reasons why television watching is so important to them.

2.5 INTRODUCTION TO PREJUDICE, DISCRIMINATION AND STEREOTYPES

Prejudice literally means pre-judgement. The judgement is passed even before looking into the details, this pre-judgement because it is unscientific, illogical and baseless thus it has to be wrong. Prejudice is an attitude where the attitude object is a social group. This attitude has been defined as a negative bias or disliking of people because they belong to a particular group. The group is often an ethnic, racial, or other social category. This is the most widely researched attitude. Some of the prejudice observed in our society was against Jews in Nazi Germany or the caste system in India.

A related but different concept, **discrimination**, has also been widely studied. Discrimination refers to negative action toward individuals for whom we hold prejudicial attitudes. Thus, discrimination stems from prejudices. However, not all prejudices result in discriminatory actions. Prejudice like attitudes consists of an affective and cognitive component, while discrimination serves as the behavioural component.

Stereotypes are beliefs about people based on their membership in a particular group. Stereotypes can be positive, negative, or neutral. Stereotypes based on gender, ethnicity, or occupation are common in many societies.

Stereotypes have several important functions:

- They allow people to quickly process new information about an event or person.
- They organize people past experiences.
- They help people to meaningfully assess differences between individuals and groups.
- They help people to make predictions about other people's behaviour.

Stereotypes can lead to distortions of reality for several reasons:

- They cause people to exaggerate differences among groups.
- They lead people to focus selectively on information that agrees with the stereotype and ignore information that disagrees with it.
- They tend to make people see other groups as overly homogenous, even though people can easily see that the groups they belong to are heterogeneous.

Formation of Prejudice

Several theories and perspectives provide insight as to why prejudice occurs.

Psychological Theories

Psychological contributions include the concept of *ego-defense*. This theory suggests that some people feel threatened and uncertain about their own worth. Because of this, they reject people unlike themselves.

Another psychological source of prejudice stems from the belief that people will blame frustration and setbacks on others. This “*scapegoating*” can be a way of venting frustrations.

Economic Theories

Perhaps the oldest explanation of prejudice involves the Realistic Conflict Theory. This theory claims that prejudice is a result of competition between groups for limited resources such as territory, wealth, status, etc.

Social Learning Theories

The formation of prejudices can also involve the interpersonal processes of social learning and modeling of others behaviour as well as the accepting the norms of society. Society tell us many do's and donot's.

Social Identity Theory

This theory attempts to explain within group bias or favoritism, maintaining that self-esteem and identity is derived from group membership and group success. Sometimes poor relations between groups occur simply because there are two groups, This occurs wherein people find out, they are members of one of two groups that have been defined in a trivial and arbitrary way. They will favour members of their own group over members of the other group.

Cognitive Theories

Cognitive causes of prejudice stem from the tendency for people to categorize others into groups; particularly groups of “us” and “them”. This categorization is then affected by several biases and errors.

- **Ingroup-Outgroup Bias** is the idea that we favour our own group, its members, and products and reject the out-group, its members, and its products.
- **Outgroup Homogeneity Bias** is the assumption that all members of the out-group possess similar characteristics and are therefore “all alike”. We also often engage in biased information processing, seeing those aspects of other groups that confirm our stereotypes and failing to see facts that are inconsistent with them.
- **Ingroup Differentiation Bias** is the opposite assumption, namely that the in-group is composed of members who possess unique and distinctive qualities. Distinctive groups (minority) tend to be associated with distinctive behaviours. This sort of paired distinctiveness results in our attributing properties to groups that are illusory.
- **Extremity Bias** suggests that we make more extreme judgements about people in the out-group. The law of Small Numbers states that we base judgements about another group based on observations of a small number

of individuals from that group, this is mainly because there is lack of exposure to that group.

- **Group Attribution Error** asserts that we base judgments about individuals on the general characteristic of the group and often hold the group responsible for the behaviour of the individuals. Finally, stereotypes are developed as a result of these cognitive processes.
- **Self-fulfilling Prophecies** may be unknowingly created wherein we apply stereotypes to members of outgroups and then behave toward them in such a way as to bring out the very behaviours that fit our stereotypes.

The existence of prejudice in society a result of a combination of factors and the interaction of the different factors cause this negative attitudinal called prejudice.

Prejudice can be Changed

Prejudice attitudes are formed due to the interaction of complex factors, this prejudices can also be removed, for the improved of our society.

- 1) Psychological approaches suggest the use of therapy to deal with the ego-defensiveness and scapegoating. Individuals need to work on their low self-esteem. Improved self-esteem will reduce prejudice among groups.
- 2) Cognitive approaches offer the tactics of finding ways to undo categorization. By removing the boundary between “us” and “them”, people may find they have things in common with the previous “out-group”. Knowledge of the cognitive bias processes may assist in reducing prejudice. Research that reduces stereotypes and biases will form the base of removing the discriminations.
- 3) Interpersonal approaches involve the formal and informal teaching of equality and multiculturalism, in the home, school, social, and media settings.
- 4) Finally, the increased opportunity for contact and exposure through cooperative settings will help reduce inter-group prejudice. For example students in an exchange programme between hostile countries will be benefited by encouraging them to be exposed to each others cultures that will reduce their negativity which many a time steps in from ignorance.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Write your answer in the space provided below

- 1) What are the different leadership style?

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2) Define attitudes and explain how they are formed.

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3) Briefly discuss the theories of prejudice formation.

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2.6 LET US SUM UP

This Unit has dealt with social psychology concepts, which are extremely important to social workers. The first section gives us an understanding of groups and group processes. Most of our daily interactions and activities occur in the group settings. Individuals think and behave differently in different groups. This unit has discussed various phenomena that occur in groups like group cohesion, group conformity, social loafing, social facilitation, group decision making and others. The knowledge of these phenomena will help in understanding why individual behaves differently in the group situations.

The second section deals with leadership another key concept that is beneficial to be understood by social workers. A brief review of leadership theories indicates there are no simple answers to what makes some leaders more effective than others.

The third section describes the concept of attitudes and prejudice. How these are formed and how prejudice results in discriminations in our society. It is very essential for social workers to reduce and remove the negative attitudes present in our society that chain our society from progressing. Prejudices need to be eliminated from our society, so that we have an equal society where discriminations between the different sections of our society are minimized.

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UNIT 3 SOCIAL LEARNING AND MOTIVATION

Structure

Archana Kaushik*

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Social Learning
- 3.3 Learning and Memory
- 3.4 Learning: Translating knowledge into Practice
- 3.5 Motivation
- 3.6 Theories of Motivation
- 3.7 Relevance of Motivation in Social Work Practice
- 3.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.9 Key Words
- 3.10 Further Readings and References

3.0 OBJECTIVES

Social learning and motivation are the two basic concepts in psychology, which are of vital importance for social workers. In this Unit, you would be studying about these concepts at length with many relevant field examples. More specifically, in this unit, you would learn about definitions, process and classical as well as contemporary theories of social learning. The unit also covers concept, process and types of memory that makes learning relevant. You would appraise the usage of these learning principles in social work practice.

Motivation is another dynamic concept illustrated in the unit. Relevant theories of motivation, conflict motivation and using motivation theories in the field practice have been delineated at length in the unit.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This Unit is broadly covering two very important aspects of psychology – social learning and motivation. These are the basic and yet highly dynamic and multifarious concepts that influence personality in a significant manner. There is no dearth of literature in psychology on these subjects that impact every human being's life.

To a layman, learning may mean acquiring knowledge through a formal setting like schools or colleges. However, psychologists understand, it as a continuous, life-long process and it covers practically every information that we acquire to live a life – survival strategies, coping strategies, values, norms, role expectations, skills, knowledge and so on. It is an integral part of socialization and social life. The Social learning is a relatively permanent change in the behaviour of a person as a result of experience or due to practice. Many eminent psychologists have given different perspectives and theories related to social learning, which would be dealt with in the following sections. Learning and memory are intricately

related and the stages of memory also reflect the depth of learning. In the same way, learning goes hand in hand with performance, which is an integral part of behaviour.

The other concept motivation is equally vital. It is the intrinsic driving force, the intention to carry out a particular activity. It refers to the driving and pulling forces that result in persistent behaviour directed towards set goals, desires and aspirations. Motivation has been taken as initiation, direction, intensity and persistence of behaviour. It is very basic to everyday life and includes our hunger, thirst, relief from pain and suffering, aspiration to be appreciated by others, to influence others, to have prestige, power and so on. Motivation can be intrinsic as well as extrinsic. Motivation has main dimensions like biological and/or social. Experiments have shown that biological motives such as hunger, thirst and sex are driven or regulated by the hypothalamus (a part of human brain) and various hormones in the body. Social motives may include need for affiliation, power and prestige, to mention a few.

Apart from the biological motives, motivation has been categorized into social as well as psychological components. Several theories have been postulated to describe various dimensions of motivation such as the Maslow's theory, drive theory, opponent process theory and the like. There are theories stating that humans are motivated to behave in ways to maintain an optimal level of arousal. Motivation is undoubtedly interplay of different and numerous intrinsic and extrinsic factors.

3.2 SOCIAL LEARNING

It is often maintained that human behaviour is 'learnt'. Through the process of socialization we learn innumerable things about our culture, language, customs, role expectations, values, mores, attitudes, beliefs, mental images about ourselves and others that in turn become an integral part of our personality. In fact, learning is basic to human life as it enables the persons to adapt to their environment. The term 'social learning' was coined by Neil Miller and John Dollard (1941). It is defined as any relatively permanent change in behaviour that occurs as a result of practice or experience. The definition signifies that learning is essentially 'a change in behaviour' of an individual. However, learning does not always have positive connotation, it can be faulty and mal-adaptive. Further, the change in behaviour is relatively permanent and not momentary. Permanent, here, does not mean essentially life-long but nevertheless long lasting. Learning may be a conscious attempt and we also learn many things unconsciously.

How Learning Takes Place

Many psychologists and social scientists have experimented in this direction and one of the most prominent one is by Ivan Pavlov in late 1890s commonly known as classical conditioning or Pavlovian conditioning. In the beginning of his experiment, he noted that dog did not salivate with the ringing of the bell. Then shortly after ringing of the bell (Conditioned Stimulus), food was presented to the dog (Unconditioned Stimulus) and it salivated (Unconditioned Response). This sequence was repeated many times. Pavlov noted that with the ringing of the bell dog salivated (even when food was not presented), which was a learnt

behaviour – a Conditioned Response. From this experiment, it may be inferred that conditioned stimulus becomes a signal for the unconditioned stimulus. Therefore, when a conditioned stimulus is presented, the unconditioned stimulus is expected and the learner responds in accordance with the learned expectation.

Further, if conditioned stimulus alone is presented many times, without the unconditional stimulus, the likelihood of conditioned response gradually decreases and finally gets extinguished [Dog salivated with ringing of bell as it learnt that after ringing of bell food comes. When many times food was not presented after ringing of bell, the dog stopped salivating – it is called **extinction**]. Thus, if learning does not remain ‘useful’, it may be un-learned. Added to this, experiments have, beyond doubt, proved that re-conditioning or re-learning can also take place.

The next noteworthy model of learning given by B. F. Skinner (1935) is popularly known as **Instrumental or operant** conditioning. In his experiments, Skinner found that a rat, after a few hit and trials came to know that by pressing bar, it would get food and following that whenever rat felt hungry, it pressed the bar. It shows that a response that results in positive outcome or reinforcement is more likely to be repeated. Thus, it may be inferred that an environmental event that is the consequence of an instrumental response and that makes that response more likely to occur again is known as a reinforcer or a reinforcement.

Reinforcement

Reinforcement can be positive as well as negative. A **positive reinforcer** would be a stimulus which when followed by a response, increases the likelihood of that response. To exemplify, a child getting patting and appreciation when she finishes her food properly, would tend to repeat the same behaviour that is finishing food properly, in future too. On the other hand, a **negative reinforcer** would be an event or stimulus or event which, when its cassation or termination is contingent on a response, increases the likelihood that the response will occur again. For instance, a child is fearful to enter his friend’s house because he was scared of the dog staying there. Dog’s absence from friend’s home would increase the likelihood that child would freely go there. Further, a punisher is a stimulus, which when occurs, reduces the likelihood of the associated response. For example, a child steals his classmate’s pencil box, gets punishment for that behaviour, he would less likely to repeat the same behaviour again in future.

Modeling and Observational Learning

Next, significant theoretical proposition of Modeling or Observational learning was given by Albert Bandura. Along with Richard Walters and other social psychologists, Bandura, through their experiments propounded that observation and modeling are vital means of learning. They discussed the learning of social behaviours like aggression by watching and imitating those one is exposed to. They showed that people could learn to imitate without direct reinforcement. However, whether that learning would be translated into behavioural disposition, would depend on reinforcement(s) given. Let us take an example, a child picked up abusive words from the movie he was watching on television. He used those words while conversing with his elder brother and received bashing from the brother. This punishment decreased the likelihood of usage of those words in his behaviour in future. Thus, learning took place but not got reinforced.

Cognitive Learning

Cognitive Learning is another important form of learning, which is different than the earlier two Stimulus-Response based associations. In cognitive learning links are made among various stimuli so that stimulus-stimulus associations are learnt. Koffka, Kohler, Lewin, Piaget, Ausubel, Bruner, Gagne have been pivotal in propounding this model. Cognition means the processing of information about the environment that is received through the senses.

Morgan et al. (1993) describe the process of cognition as:

- 1) selection of information,
- 2) making of alterations in the selected information,
- 3) the association of items of information with each other,
- 4) the elaboration of information in thought,
- 5) the storage of information in memory and when needed,
- 6) the retrieval of stored information.

Thus, cognitive learning would mean change in the way the information is processed, which is then stored in the memory for future use. A person or animal develops cognitive maps of information gained from the environment and makes use of it at appropriate time. Most of our academic learning falls in this category. Cognitive learning further includes latent learning, insight learning and imitation, details of these are as follows:

Latent Learning: the meaning of the word latent is 'hidden' and this type of learning is not reflected in the behaviour immediately but until later when conditions for its appearance are favourable. For example, a child learnt to use bottle opener by observing his father doing it, he might not immediately make use of this but may do so in future.

Insight Learning: in this type of learning, a problem is posed, a period follows when apparently no progress is made, and then the solution comes suddenly. You have experienced this kind of learning in solving puzzles, where you apply previously learnt knowledge to newer stimuli.

3.3 LEARNING AND MEMORY

In the last section you learnt about some popular principles of learning. In this section, we would pay attention to a related concept – Memory – defined as encoding, storage and retrieval of what was learnt earlier. Encoding process involves receiving sensory input and transforming message (input) into a code or form which can be stored. Storage process puts this coded information into memory. Retrieval process covers gaining access to this coded and stored information, when needed.

Learning is intricately related to memory as what is learnt is observable by what is remembered. Hence memory is of vital importance in the process of learning and re-learning. Memory can be of short term or long term. Short term memory is one that can hold information received through sensory register (storage function

of sensory channels to hold information for a very brief span of time) for about 30 seconds while long term memory may last for days, months, years or even a life-time depending on many intrinsic-extrinsic factors. When we talk about memory, it is usually the long term memory. In this, information is organized, categorized, classified like a library system. Long term memory is divided into semantic memory (that is, rules, meanings for using language) and episodic memory (remembrance of events that have happened in life and that carry significance for us).

Many theories have been put forth regarding types of memories and information processing theories saliently believe in memorizing process into various steps or stages. In this regard, the Atkinson-Shiffrin information processing theory propounds that the stages in which short term memory is converted into long term memory are – (i) very brief storage of incoming information in a sensory register; (ii) transfer of some part of this information into short term memory; and (iii) rehearsals and information transfer from short term memory to long term memory.

Forgetting

Further, we know that we do not tend to remember a lot of things and forgetting is quite common phenomenon. In fact, forgetting refers to the apparent loss of information already encoded and stored in long term memory. There can be numerous reasons for forgetting – lack of attention may lead to inadequate encoding, poor rehearsals or even failure to reach to long term memory from short term memory. Further, without appropriate retrieval cues, the sought-for items stored in long-term memory may not be found, that is forgetting occurs. Another significant reason of forgetting, often termed as motivated forgetting is explained by Freud as person's emotional unhappiness attached with that information and hence repression, defence mechanism is utilized (Details of defence mechanisms are given in the next unit of this Block).

Amnesia

Next, Amnesia is an overwhelming memory deficit either due to loss of what has been stored or inability to form new memories. It may have biological reasons as caused by brain malfunctioning. Alcoholism, drug abuse may induce short term amnesia. Alzheimer's disease and senile dementia, more common in old age, are primarily due to death of certain brain cells. Though learning disabilities and faulty memory functions may seem highly technical issues, it affects the social functioning of the persons concerned.

Check Your Progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of this unit.

1) Differentiate between Learning and Memory.

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2) Enlist different ways of learning.

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3.4 LEARNING: TRANSLATING KNOWLEDGE INTO PRACTICE

You may wonder how the information provided in this unit about learning process and memory would be useful to you as social worker in the field. This section would give you an insight in this regard.

Through learning people develop coping strategies and, at times, these coping strategies may further lead to mal-adaptation. This faulty learning or mal-adaptation is reflected in behaviours like physical, verbal, mental abuse, aggression, hostility, coercion, bullying, self-destruction tendencies, withdrawal, delinquency, and so on and so forth. Person may come in conflict with self, with family members, with neighbours and peers, school, workplace and other systems in the social environment. All such mal-adaptive behaviours provide the scope of social work intervention, at the preventive, curative, management and promotive levels. Settings may be schools, colleges, families, workplace, community, youth clubs, Mahila Mandals, hospitals and health care centres, family counselling/ family welfare organizations, child guidance centres, to mention a few.

Social workers have remained an integral part of the inter-disciplinary team where family therapy, group therapy, behaviour therapy and behaviour modifications form the part of intervention in which methods are developed to alleviate psychological disorders which focus on changing behavioural problems by using techniques of classical conditioning, instrumental conditioning and observational learning.

Learning or Conditioning

The basic assumption in behavioural modifications and behavioural therapies is that the psychological problems that come about through learning or conditioning can be undone via the same processes. For instance, in instrumental conditioning, we have seen that the behaviour that is rewarded tends to be repeated whereas the behaviour that goes unrewarded has less probability of recurrence. So, behaviours that seem maladaptive or abnormal are assumed to follow the same rule: they persist because they have been rewarded in some way, they should be reduced or eliminated if they are made less rewarding.

Instrumental conditioning approaches emphasize the role of reinforcement in establishing and maintaining unwanted behaviour. The behaviourists make use of

functional analysis of behaviour that explains which behaviour can be changed (say, stressed out person smokes for coping), then positive and negative reinforcers are identified. Adequate reinforcers and token economies (people earn objects or tokens which they can exchange for desirable items, services and token is given to the client whenever he/she exhibits desirable response), punishment (rarely used), etc., are used to design behavioural modification intervention.

The classical conditioning techniques rely on pairing of conditioned and unconditioned stimuli as the basis for therapeutic learning. Many techniques like systematic desensitization (aversive stimuli are broken down into lesser degree of anxiety/tension and presented in a sequential way. For example, a child fearful of darkness would be encouraged to go first with adult to dark place, then alone to a bright place, with gradual dimming of lights to the level of darkness, which was earlier an aversive stimulus), flooding (in this, client is exposed to the stimuli, which arouse fear over and over again based on the principle of extinction. To exemplify, exposing a person who fears height to elevators, hill-tops, etc.) and aversive therapy (in this, stimuli eliciting the behaviour to be eliminated is paired with unpleasant states of affairs and in time, these stimuli tend to be avoided).

Observational Learning

Modeling therapies use observational learning as their principal means of inducing change. This may include participant modeling, which are quite effective in certain phobias. Client's feeling of personal efficacy plays a crucial role in success of these types of therapies. Bandura also explained that observation and modeling of aggressive behaviour in the family, neighbourhood and media is making many children violent and overtly aggressive. The children of physically punitive parents tend to use similar aggression when relating to others. Within families, violence often leads to violence. Similarly, the social environment where 'macho' images are admired, aggression is readily transmitted to young children. Television also offers a much wider range of violent models. Watching programmes with contents of violence would increase aggressiveness and violence among children. To counter-act, modeling should be set right – parents should learn right way of handling frustration and aggression, television programmes need to be checked for unsought for contents on aggression and violence.

Further, cognitive therapy, often known as cognitive restructuring is an approach that maintains that maladaptive behaviour comes from mal-adaptive ideas and the therapy should focus on changing these ideas. For example, information about the harmful effects of smoking and futility of its apparent relevance as stress-buster may automatically lead to giving up smoking.

3.5 MOTIVATION

Many of you have joined this course and reading the material because you want to be a good social worker, or want a job along with satisfaction and contentment of serving the society. Some of your friends/relatives may aspire to become doctor, engineer, chartered accountant, get married to a beautiful/smart, intelligent, loving, caring person. In every day life, we observe many intentions — a patient may want quick recovery, a desperate unemployed youth wanting

job, a child looking forward for his birthday party, a frail elderly wanting to get rid of life—all these are motives, the driving force that influence our action and behaviour.

This driving and pulling force that results in persistent behaviour directed towards particular goals is termed as motivation. To understand Motivation better, Kleinginna and Kleinginna (1981) have defined it as

- an internal state or condition that activates behaviour and gives it direction;
- a desire or want that energizes and directs goal-oriented behaviour;
- an influence of needs and desires on the intensity and direction of behaviour.

It is the prime force that leads us towards our daily life, short term as well as long term goals. We cannot directly observe motivation, but their existence is felt in our commitment, conviction, persistence and perseverance to achieve goals. Motives are reflected through our behaviour. Motivation is quite dynamic concept and is a dominant instrument that explains the behaviour and even predicts future behaviours.

Biological and Psychological Motives

Motives can be biological and/or psychological. The biological motives, to a large extent, are rooted in the physiological state of the body, examples of which are hunger, thirst, sleep, pain avoidance and desire for sex. Many of the biological motives are considered as triggers to maintain homeostasis or equilibrium among many internal physiological processes. This homeostasis is highly crucial for survival – food, water, optimum temperature, are needed so that the body can perform vital functions needed to remain alive. We feel hungry or hunger motivation is initiated when blood levels or rates of use nutrient substances fall below a certain set point. Likewise, we feel thirsty when cellular dehydration and decrease in volume of blood is reported to hypothalamic osmoreceptors. Sexual motivation is a controversial topic as some scientists maintain that it is physiological drive while others consider that external stimuli and learning also play significant role in eliciting this drive rather than merely the sex hormones.

Social Motives

Further, social motives may broadly be covered under need for achievement, need for power and need for creative expression. The need for achievement is a motive to accomplish things and to be successful in performing tasks. The People high in need for achievement prefer to work on moderately challenging and risky tasks which promise success and on tasks where their performance can be compared with the performance of others. Likewise, power motivation is a social motive in which the goals are to influence, control, persuade, lead, charm others and enhance one's own reputation in the eyes of others. The behavioural expression of power motivation takes many forms, among them, impulsive and aggressive action, participation in competitive sports, the collection of possessions, association with people who are not particularly popular, the choice of occupation which have high impact on others, and the building of disciplining of the body. Among men it also takes form of drinking and sexual domination of women. A special form of power motivation, termed Machiavellianism, is characteristic of people who express their power motivation by exploiting others in a deceptive and unscrupulous fashion.

Motivation process is not as simple as it seems to be. You may wonder if this driving force is behind every goal and intention, then why most of the desires, goals, and intentions remain unfulfilled. Many people in the world fail to meet the basic survival needs, unemployment and under-employment are rampant. Safety, security, affection, affiliation also remain unfulfilled needs in majority of cases. There may be lack of perseverance and persistence or presence of conflicting goals that often create hurdles in realizing out set targets which in turn creates frustration. Thus, if motives are blocked, people may feel depressed, fearful, anxious, angry, guilty or frustrated.

There are primarily three reasons why people feel frustrated over unfulfilled needs and goals: one, certain environmental forces may block motive fulfillment; two, there may be personal inadequacies that get in the way of reaching to the goals; and three, there may be conflicts between and among various motives.

Environmental obstacles may be any external stimuli – locked door, lack of money, people in the social environment like parents, friends, spouse, children, police, government officials – to mention a few. Lack of money to study further, parental refusal to study abroad, welfare officials not releasing pension of aged persons on time are some of the situations that make persons involved frustrated because of environmental factors.

Personal shortcomings also obstruct fulfillment of goals and desires, which are mostly socially learnt. For example, a mediocre student failing to clear medical or engineering entrance test, a child not being able to perform dance was not involved in stage performance in which all his other friends are participating – these situations undoubtedly lead to frustration and despair.

Motivation Conflicts

Motivational Conflicts are the major source of frustration in which expression of one motive interferes with expression of other motives. For instance venting out pent up emotions through aggression and fear of social disapproval are the conflicting motives which are quite common. Motivational Conflicts can be of following types:

- a) **Approach-approach conflict:** it is a conflict between two positive goals, which are equally attractive at the same time. A working lady, who wants to give proper time to her kids and at the same time wants her career graph to shoot up faces such kind of dilemma.
- b) **Avoidance-avoidance conflict:** it is conflict between two negative goals. The example can be: a working lady, the sole earner of the household, may have to continue with her job, she dislikes a lot or else face the consequences of losing only livelihood option.
- c) **Approach-avoidance conflict:** in this a person is both attracted and repelled by the same goal object. In this, because of the positive valence of the goal, the person approaches, it but as it is approached, the negative valence becomes stronger and the person stops before reaching the goal. To exemplify, a lady wants to get married to a man, she loves but she would

have to leave her job as he stays in other city. In this case, she wants to get married as it would bring stability to her life but at the same time she does not want to give up her job that provides her status, freedom, creative satisfaction and worthiness. Further, a multiple approach-avoidance conflicts would involve several goals with positive and negative valence.

Check Your Progress II

- 1) Write short note on utility of learning theories in anger management.

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- 2) Briefly describe different types of motivational conflicts with examples.

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3.6 THEORIES OF MOTIVATION

Theories of motivation give us a general set of guidelines and principles to increase our understanding of factors involved in motivation that reflect our dreams and desires, aspirations and goals. Many theories have been put forth to discuss the intriguing phenomenon called motivation, salient ones are as follows:

Drive Theory

Drive theory is also known as 'push theory of motivation'. It says that when an internal driving state is aroused, the individual is pushed to engage in behaviour, which will lead to a goal that reduces the intensity of the driving state. The motivation process is in a cyclic fashion which is comprised of the stages as follows: (1) a driving state (2) the goal directed behaviour initiated by the driving state (3) the attainment of appropriate goal and (4) the reduction of the driving state and subjective satisfaction and relief when the goal is reached. Physiological motives are the best examples – we feel hungry, take food from the kitchen, eat it, feel satisfied and after a few hours hunger pangs again erupt.

Incentive Theory

In contrast to push theory, this incentive theory is also known as pull theory as the goal objects pull the desired behaviour of people towards them. The goal objects that motivate behaviour are called incentives. An important characteristic of this theory is that individuals expect pleasure from the attainment of positive incentives and from avoidance of what are known as negative incentives. In everyday life our social behaviour is more often driven by this kind of motivation. Salaries, perks motivate us and demotion, punishment due to non-compliance to timelines are negative incentives.

Opponent-process Theory

This theory takes the hedonistic view of motivation and is based on pleasure-pain principle. It maintains that we are motivated to seek goals, which give us good emotional feelings, and to avoid those resulting in displeasure and pain. Let us take an example: A lady working in the office received a phone call that her husband has met a severe accident. She was terrified and rushed to hospital. Throughout the way, she was crying and all kinds of worst negative thoughts wandered in her mind. On reaching hospital, she found that her husband escaped with minor scratches. She had a sigh of relief and then was elated that everything is fine. You may analyze whole range of emotions from extreme fear, grief to relief and elation experienced by the lady in the example.

Optimum Level Theory

This theory is also known as 'just right theory'. It maintains that there is a certain optimum level of arousal that is pleasurable is maintained. Stated differently, the individual is motivated to behave in such a way as to maintain the optimum level of arousal. If the arousal is too low the person would seek external stimuli to increase level of arousal while if it is too high, behaviour will be directed towards decreasing it. For example, after a very hectic day, you may just relax switching off mobile phones and closing door, while if you have nothing significant to do, you may search something in the environment to engage yourself such as watching television, visiting a friend.

Maslow's Need Hierarchy and Motivation

Maslow postulated five levels of hierarchy of needs — **physiological or survival needs** (hunger thirst and sex), **safety needs** (need for security, stability and order), **belongingness and love needs** (such as need for affection, affiliation and identification), **esteem needs** (such as need for prestige, success and self respect) and the **need for self actualization** (individual's needs to develop his/her own potentials). He maintains that when the lower level needs, that is, the basic needs (survival and safety) are met, the individual is motivated to fulfill higher level needs. The levels of needs are often depicted in the form of a ladder reflecting the sequential fulfillment of needs from below (survival needs) to the top (self actualization needs).

From the time a child is born, motivation plays an important role in sustaining and promoting growth. Lack of motivation may result in and detrimental to the very aspect of living. Motivation can be intrinsic (in this, individuals participate in an activity for their own enjoyment) or extrinsic (individuals look outside for

rewards). A mother playing with her child is intrinsically motivated while a lady running a crèche for making money is extrinsically motivated.

3.7 RELEVANCE OF MOTIVATION IN SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

Motivation acts like a fuel that drives us to achieve our goal objects. There are many situations that call for social work intervention vis-à-vis motivation. Let us examine some of these factors in some detail:

When there is conflict between various motives, the social worker may provide better insight to the clients by any of the following ways:

- Giving additional information about varied choices. For example, group worker providing choices to group members on recreational activities they can take up, with pros and cons of each.
- Helping clients to know their own values and preferences, which, at times, may not form the part of conscious self. This would enable them to make choices in consonance with their inner drive and value system, reducing chances of choosing the wrong option. It may seem a simple task, but its applicability is widespread. For example, social worker helping a housewife to make a decision to accept or reject a job offer, after analyzing her level of achievement motivation and her preference for home or career.

Networking with many agencies for skill/knowledge upgradation of clients who fail to achieve their goals because of personal shortcomings is another task. Social worker arranging for remedial classes for first generation learners would be an example in this regard.

Another significant area of intervention is helping clients cope with frustration arising out of failure to achieve set objectives. Suicidal tendencies, drug addiction, alcoholism, aggression, violence are all the forms of faulty coping with frustration due to unfulfilled motives. Enabling adolescents learn positive ways of dealing with examination related stress and frustration is one of the numerous instances that require social work 'help'. Social work intervention can be at preventive, curative as well as promotive levels.

Motivation is one of the prime tasks carried out by social workers in almost all the social situations. As caseworker, social worker studies the motives of his/her clients and takes needful steps to maintain desired level of motivation among the clients and target groups to bring about needed change in their social environment and social functioning. Group worker encourages and facilitates and, in turn, motivates group members to achieve the set objectives. Community organizer seeks people's participation and ensures that community folk collaborate and cooperate to achieve common goals. This also calls for maintaining optimum level of motivation among the community people. The Social actionist increases the motivation level of people of disadvantaged section of population to mobilize themselves to raise voice against injustice. Motivation forms the crux of all the interactional activities carried out by the social worker.

Further, social workers play vital role in staff-motivation not only in social welfare organizations and human service delivery organizations but also corporate bodies, industries and other workplaces. As school social workers, medical social officers, welfare officers and human resource managers, social workers consciously make use of theoretical framework of motivation to enhance work efficiency and commitment among people at work place. Dealing with burn-outs, lack of motivation, sustaining interest and conviction, especially in human service delivery have been crucial tasks of social workers.

After this, generalized overview, let us look at specific targeted interventions where social workers. Opponent process theory describes emotion led motivation stages. This learning is useful in aggression management among clients. Machiavels (power-motivated people expressing behaviours of exploitation and deception, hostility and violence) also require social work intervention. Likewise, knowledge about Maslow's need hierarchy, would give insight to social workers in dealing with excessively shy and lonely children feeling frustrated for not being able to make friends and fulfill need to belongingness. In group work too, deviant group members may be encouraged to be a disciplined participant in order to fulfill the need for affiliation.

Further, motivation to help others may be utilized in resource raising or arranging voluntary help for human service organizations, especially in times of natural or man-made calamities. Contrary to this, some individuals with high self esteem may feel threatened to seek help as brought out by Jeffrey Fisher and Arie Nadler, in their 'Threat-to-self-esteem model'. Refusing to take help on account of damaging self esteem could become a 'self destructive paradox.'

Next, doing harm to others in a human society could range from a word of insult to rape, homicide and war. In the ancient societies, aggression was a way of protecting themselves from the others, both animals and human beings who did not belong to the same group. The goal of aggression could be different Drives theories which suggest that the motivation to harm others comes from within. Social Psychologists could not agree that aggression could be intrinsic as Freud and others argued. So they rejected this theory of aggression stemming from within. It can be historically seen (as discussed in 'history of motivation,' earlier in this paper) that there is prevalent disapproval to the thinking that human aggression is intrinsic or instinctive as the animals.

3.8 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit you gained extensive knowledge about social learning. You understood about classical conditioning, operant conditioning, cognitive learning and imitation, modeling and observational learning. More specifically, you learnt about stimuli-response associations in classical conditioning, reinforcements, positive, negative and punishment in operant conditioning for shaping behaviours. Bandura's observational learning stressed on the principle of imitation and modeling and cognitive learning is more suited for academic learning. Latent learning and insight learning were discussed.

Memory is the encoding, storage and retrieval of information gained through the process of learning. You understood the process of memory, long term, short

term memory and problems in effective learning. Theoretical application of learning principles and memory into field practice were discussed in the form of behavioural modification, behavioural therapy and so on.

Motivation is the driving force behind various behavioural objectives, desires and goals. Motivational conflicts were delineated. Salient theories describing various facets of motivation like Drive theory, Incentive theory, Optimum Level theory, Opponent Process theory, Maslow's Need Hierarchy were discussed. Application of knowledge about motivation into the field was also discussed.

3.9 KEY WORDS

Stimulus	: anything in the environment that can be detected by the senses.
Classical Conditioning	: is a type of learning in which a neutral stimulus comes to bring about a response after it is paired with a stimulus that naturally brings about that response.
Neutral Stimulus	: is a stimulus that before conditioning, does not naturally bring about the response of interest.
Unconditional Stimulus	: is a stimulus that brings about a response without having being learned.
Unconditional Response	: is a response that is natural and needed no training.
Conditioned Stimulus	: was once a neutral stimulus that has been paired with an unconditioned stimulus to bring about a response formally caused only by the unconditioned stimulus.
Conditioned Response	: is a response that after conditioning follows a previously neutral stimulus.
Reinforcement	: is defined as anything that increases the probability of a behaviour occurring.
Punishment	: is defined as anything that decreases the chance of the behaviour occurring.

3.10 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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UNIT 4 DEFENSE MECHANISMS AND STRESS

Structure

Archana Kaushik*

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Concept of Defense Mechanisms
- 4.3 Types of Defense Mechanism
- 4.4 Stress
- 4.5 Coping with Stress
- 4.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.7 Key Words
- 4.8 Further Readings and References

4.0 OBJECTIVES

Defense mechanisms are the mental processes that have universal existence cutting across societies, class, and creed. In this Unit, you would be studying the coping mechanisms, especially the defense mechanisms. The unit describes the relevance of defense mechanisms in our day to day life, their typology and mental processes associated with it. Section one, introduction gives the coping mechanisms and their utility. Detailed descriptions of defense mechanisms are presented in second and third sections.

Next, stress has become an inevitable social reality, affecting almost everybody, though in varying degrees. Stress and stress management form the part of fourth and fifth sections of this unit. After reading this unit, you would be able to have comprehensive understanding of defense mechanisms, stress, positive and negative ways of coping and stress management. This knowledge gained through the unit would be handy in gaining better understanding about your clients' psyche in various settings.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Life may be taken as a long series of adaptation and adjustment, coping and compromising. Our bodies adapt to changing atmosphere to maintain homeostasis or equilibrium. We adjust to social environment which may call for any of the broadly categorized three strategies – fight, flight or compromise. As studied in the earlier units that an individual is driven (or motivated) to meet physiological, psychological and social needs and his/her behaviour is directed towards fulfilment of these needs. In case, the needs are not gratified soon, it leads to tension, frustration and guilt.

Coping is, therefore, an important behaviour exhibited by individuals in everyday life. Coping may be defined as all attempts made by the individual to master, reduce or tolerate the demands created by stress. Hence a coping skill can be considered as a behavioural tool that an individual uses to overcome a stressful

situation. Perception of stressor (whether individual can cope with it successfully or not) plays important role in coping mechanism. An individual weighs the stimuli and then decides whether his/her already learnt coping mechanisms would be useful in this situation or not. This type of coping is conscious coping. It may be interesting to note that individuals use coping mechanisms unconsciously as well. These unconscious coping mechanisms are referred to as defense mechanisms. In this unit, you would be studying various types of defense mechanisms like repression, regression, reaction formation, displacement, and so on.

Stress has almost become a way of life, especially in cosmopolitan and metropolitan cities due to cut throat competition in almost all walks of life. We all have had experienced stress in our respective life situations and have differential perceptions and coping styles. These coping mechanisms are considered healthy, when they are able to resolve the conflict(s) successfully. On the other hand, coping mechanisms can be unhealthy or dysfunctional when the coping method does not help in solving the situation.

Stress does have substantial influence on our physical and mental health. In this unit stress and coping are dealt with in substantial detail. Let us first look at the unconscious coping mechanisms, that is, defense mechanisms.

4.2 CONCEPT OF DEFENSE MECHANISMS

Defense mechanisms are essentially coping mechanisms. In order to acquire comprehensive understanding about defense mechanisms, let us quickly revise personality structure as given by Sigmund Freud that form the basis of these, more often than not, unconscious coping mechanisms. According to Freud, personality is made up of three interlinked parts – id (most primitive part containing biologically based urges, the biological self), ego (it includes elaborate ways of behaving in a socially acceptable way, the realistic self) and super ego (it consists of prohibitions learnt from parents and other authorities, the moral self). The dynamics of personality is reflected through ego's continuous task to strike a balance between id's desires for instinctual gratification and strict rule following sought by the super ego.

According to Freud defense mechanisms originate in conflicts among the id, ego and super ego. Psychoanalytic theory holds that because the id's unconscious demands are instinctual, infantile and amoral, they must, often, be blocked by ego and superego. This continuous conflict between id and ego and super ego, in turn, creates tension, anxiety and guilt. An individual, therefore, seeks ways and means to protect ego from this anxiety and guilt and sets up defenses. The mechanisms by which ego reduces its anxiety and guilt are termed as Defense Mechanisms.

How does Defense Mechanisms Work

Let us now appraise 'how' defense mechanisms work. Freud has postulated that unconscious defense mechanisms protect the individual from painful emotions, ideas and drives. When anxiety becomes too overwhelming then the ego employs defense mechanisms to protect the individual. These defense mechanisms are, in fact, the processes that distort or exclude information or feelings from the

individual. Stated otherwise, these defense mechanisms tend to help an individual to distort information and perceive situations in a different way, so that the individual feels secured. Thus, the purpose of these defense mechanisms is to deal with internal conflicts or intra psychic conflicts as well as help individual to adapt to recurring interpersonal conflicts.

Certain characteristics of these defense mechanisms may well be delineated. These defense mechanisms are, indeed, powerful tools to manage biological instincts and associated emotions. More often than not, they are unconscious. There are as many as 17 types of defense mechanisms as identified and noted by Freud, which are unique and distinct from each other.

Defense mechanisms are dynamic and reversible. Another noteworthy feature is that they can be adaptive as well as pathological. Stated differently, 'normal person' uses defense mechanisms in a moderate manner to protect themselves from perceived danger or threat or psychic pain, while a person suffering from some mental ailment uses them too often.

Relevance of Defence Mechanisms for Social Work

Though defense mechanisms are psychic functions, they have great significance for social work profession too. After carefully reading about these defense mechanisms, you may gain insight into the personality of human beings and may help you to understand the coping patterns of your clients in a better way. During your day to day interactions with family and friends, colleagues and neighbours, you may observe people making use of these defense mechanisms differentially depending upon their own perception of self, of social reality, socialization pattern and experiences of life events. You may even introspect your own behaviour in certain social situations and appraise usage of certain defense mechanisms. However, certain assumptions regarding defense mechanisms may well be delineated so as to enhance your comprehensive understanding about these defenses.

The foremost aspect, as described above is their universal existence. There would hardly be any exceptions in this regard. These psychic processes often go unnoticed and form the reality of our unconscious self. Others, through careful observation of our behaviour may tell about our certain behaviours as 'particular defense mechanisms'. Further, while going through these defence mechanisms, you may come across terms like 'threatening stimuli', 'painful reality', anxiety, frustration, and so on. These are the conflicts arising out of interplay of id impulses and superego and ego trying to mediate.

People react differently to same types of situations, consciously and unconsciously. Defenses are unconscious coping patterns that try to protect and help ego to strike a balance between id impulses and superego. It is normal and natural to use defense mechanisms but problem begins when certain people start overusing them, which, then calls for professional intervention by experts in psychology and psychiatry.

4.3 TYPES OF DEFENSE MECHANISMS

The following are some of the common defenses identified by Freud and his contemporaries.

Repression

As per Freud's theory, repression is the fundamental technique individuals use to relieve anxiety caused by conflicts. Repression is the active mental process by which a person 'forgets' by 'pushing down' into the unconscious the thoughts causing anxiety. Stated in other words, it involves forgetting emotionally painful memories. These painful thoughts may not surface at conscious level and person apparently might have forgotten about them, they definitely remain at unconscious level and may be a cause of certain mental ailments like phobias. At times, these 'forgotten' thoughts may be reflected in what is commonly termed as 'slip of tongue'. According to psychologists and psychiatrists, repression is an expensive defence mechanism as it silently causes harm to mental health of the individual. Since memories are repressed and actually not forgotten, it may become a precipitating factor for neurotic symptoms later in life. An example of repression: a man under the influence of alcohol may attempt to murder his friend and later on gaining senses, may not genuinely recall what and why of his behaviour.

Projection

You must have heard the popular saying that 'man projects what he is not'. Dishonest person may talk a lot about honesty, pretending that he is honest but the world is dishonest. Blaming others or projection is a way of coping with one's undesirable motives by projecting or shifting them on to someone else. This unconscious shifting of vices and id impulses on others reduces the anxiety arising from the internal conflict. Individuals projecting their own unacceptable hostile feelings about others in their social environment are said to be using projection defense mechanism. A man urging to make easy money by accepting bribe in his office, may face internal conflict with his own value system and may maintain that all other people in his office are corrupt and dishonest. Excessive use of this defense mechanism may act as a trigger for behavioural disorder known as paranoia.

Rationalization

You may recall Aesop's famous fable of the fox trying hard for grapes but couldn't reach to them and finally goes away saying, "grapes are sour". This is rationalization where people 'make excuses'. This defense mechanism substitutes an acceptable conscious motive for an unacceptable unconscious one. Rationalization may not be confused with lying as the individual believes in his/her explanation. In this, something we cannot get becomes something we did not want. A man who desperately wanted to go abroad to work and earn, tried hard and couldn't succeed. He maintained that since his parents are old and there is none to look after them, he dropped the idea to go abroad. He gives excuse or rationalizes because bringing out reality that he lacked necessary calibre would have been really painful for his ego. If overused, it can prevent us from coping with situation head-on.

Regression

Regression involves going back to an old, less sophisticated method of doing things. Whenever, a threatening situation arises, an individual may retreat to an earlier form of adaptation, generally a childish or primitive one. A five year old child may revert to bed-wetting or thumb sucking on being upset with the

arrival of new baby at home that has apparently reduced his importance in the family. Another little 4 year old girl finding it difficult to cope with demands of school may go back to 'baby talk' or demand cuddling. Adults, too, with dextrous communication skills and maturity may regress to shouting and physical altercation rather than controlling impulses and letting go of an argument. Such behaviour may ward off anxiety by focussing attention on earlier ways of achieving tranquillity.

Intellectualisation

Intellectualisation refers to using excessive use of intellectual processes to avoid affective expressions or experiences. This defense mechanism uses reasoning power and looks at the 'threatening situation' in a detached way. It is said that using this intellectualisation process, anxiety is reduced by a retreat into detached, unemotional and abstract language. An educated unemployed youth may discuss about rampant unemployment rate in the country in the light to government's new economic policy – in this, what he is doing – discussing at an intellectual and impersonal plane the problem he is facing in a very personalized way. By doing so, he is dealing with his own anxiety and self-esteem. It is believed that by temporarily discussing the cognitive and emotional components sometimes helps the individual to deal with parts of an experience when the whole is too much to handle. In fact people involved in human service professions like doctors, nurses, social workers often intellectualise the sufferings that they see in their clients to avoid being overwhelmed by emotional involvement, which may be regarded as 'weakness'. A person might talk about feelings in an emotionally disconnected manner and unduly emphasize on the inanimate and external reality. It is also a higher order version of Isolation and is related somewhat to rationalization.

Reaction Formation

Reaction formation refers to transforming an unacceptable impulse, feeling or thought into its opposite. Reversal of motive is a method by which individuals attempt to cope with conflict arising out of unsought for impulses. The underlying principle operative here is 'the best defense is a good offence'. To exemplify, a man obsessed with sexual feelings surging on the surface, may out rightly condemn sexual stimuli in the form of media portrayal (movies, contents of television programmes, advertisements) and go to the extent of joining crusades against sex in the media. Likewise, people, in order to hide their evils like alcoholism, womanizing, abuse, exploitation, may become too affectionate, too modest, too strident in order to nullify their unconsciously harbouring the opposite feelings.

Displacement

In displacement, the individual substitutes a different goal object for the original one, though the prime motive remains unaltered. This defense mechanism is generally observed in the cases of anger and frustration, when person finds it difficult to vent out on the source of anger or frustration. For instance, a woman is ridiculed by her boss in the office and couldn't ventilate her anger anywhere else but in turn scolds her child in any petty issue at home. A child depressed by lack of attention from her parents might vent out anger and

frustration on her toys. In displacement, the person ventilates his/her negative emotions, mainly anger and frustration, on a relatively harmless person/object.

Sublimation

According to Freud, sublimation is the highest level of ego-defense and is taken as one of the most constructive defense mechanisms. It is resolving a conflict by changing a socially objectionable aim to an acceptable one. For example, sexual energy is often sublimated into creative tasks and aggression into hard work. A writer may sublimate his libido into creation of a book. In fact, Freud has maintained that much of our cultural heritage in terms of literature, music, art and the like is the outcome of sublimation. This is the manner by which an individual converts his/her negative energies into something creative, positive and healthy.

Introjection

Introjection refers to internalising the qualities/traits of an object or person to oneself so as to reduce the painful awareness of or threat or fear of separation from that loved one. To exemplify, a little child who is left alone frequently as their parents go out to work, may try to become 'mom' or 'dad' so as to reduce fear. Through the introjection of a loved one or a loved object the painful awareness of separateness or threat of loss may be avoided. It may be taken as opposite to regression in which, instead of going back, individuals tend to behave like grown ups, powerful, mature and composed adults. You may have come across small children pretending to behave like adults, copying their smoking habit, making mustachios on their faces, especially girls putting on bindi, lipstick like their mothers. This gives a sense of power and reduces the feeling of anxiety and frustration.

Denial

Avoiding the awareness of some painful aspect of reality is denial. Individuals using this defense mechanism may often exhibit strong denial of reality in a repeated and forceful manner. People who are in crisis situation, more often than not, display denial mode initially. For instance, an HIV positive person, when his HIV status is disclosed to him in a counselling session, may strongly negate the finding. A wife may deny the authenticity of the news of her husband. This denial provides relief from a harsh, bitter reality only for a short span of time.

Undoing

Undoing covers usage of some actions or thoughts to neutralise the effects of something that was said or done. For example, after beating and abusing his wife, man may bring flowers and gifts for her, may try to be extra accommodating and caring. Working mothers, to avoid their guilt of not being able to give sufficient time to their children due to their demanding jobs, may 'compensate' by giving in to their undue demands, making special foods for them, buying them gifts too often and even ignoring their disdainful behaviours.

Acting out

It is expressing an unconscious wish or impulse through an action to avoid being conscious of an accompanying affect. The unconscious feeling or thought

is lived out impulsively in behaviour, thereby expressing the undesirable feelings, emotions and thoughts and not blocking it. For instance, in utter hatred, a man may actually physically hurt the person (object of hatred). In fact, some so called calm and composed persons have murdered the other person as the boiling anger and hatred against him/her burst out. A wife who was quietly tolerating the atrocities, exploitation, abuse from her husband, kills him in a fit of rage is an example of acting out.

Dissociation

In dissociation, in order to avoid emotional distress, the person disassociates or disconnects himself/herself from the painful reality. This defense mechanism, temporarily but drastically, modifies a person's sense of identity and social reality in order to shun away the utter agony and pain. Hearing the news of death of her only child, mother may cut off herself from all the sense of self and reality. It is entirely an unconscious mechanism. In extreme cases of dissociation, the person might develop a parallel identity in himself/herself to avoid emotional distress. Common clinical manifestations of this defense mechanism are multiple personality disorders and fugue states.

Isolation

Isolation refers to severing the connection between the feeling and the situation in order to avoid the painful reality. For example, someone may totally immerse himself in the social obligations surrounding the death of a loved one.

After studying some of the significant defense mechanisms, let us look at their relevance in social work practice. They are of great importance to understand those psychic processes of your clients, by which, most of them not, they are unaware. During case work, you may come across some of the 'repressed memories' of your client through slip of tongue and you may not like to miss those cues so as to design effective intervention plan. Careful appraisal of interaction with clients and target audience would give you signals through these defense mechanisms about their subtle psychic processes and personality types. For instance, during your community work if a person stresses too much on honesty, may actually be using reaction formation defense mechanism.

Though defense mechanisms are situation specific, disassociation and isolation defense mechanisms may reflect that existing coping patterns of your clients are not sufficient to deal with the crisis situation at hand. Sublimation is considered a positive way to channelize energy into constructive activities. Rationalization and reaction formation among children may be an indicator to teach them better coping patterns where they enhance their skills and expertise and work harder rather than finding excuses and blaming others.

Projection, in fact, is used for research purposes too. Many projective techniques and semi-projective techniques are heavily been used to seek the 'real' answers and preventing the respondents to merely give politically correct responses to your queries. In child guidance centres too, when little children are unable to express their fears and anxieties, projective techniques are used to get cues about their fears, anxiety and emotions. For example, cards with pictures of animals (say, mumma bear with baby bear in one side and another child bear standing in the corner is shown) and the child is asked to construct a story out

of that to appraise his psyche. [If the child says mumma bear loves baby bear and not her other child, it reflects sibling rivalry and being upset with the sharing of his parents' love and attention with his younger sibling].

Likewise, excessive repression might lead to acting out, which needs to be prevented. As social workers you may make your clients aware of adequate and healthy ways of coping and may train them with effective and positive coping skills that would minimize the probable harm caused by excessive reliance on defense mechanisms. Therefore, knowledge about these defense mechanisms is of vital importance for social work professionals in almost all the settings.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answer

1) What are Defense Mechanisms?

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2) Briefly describe five main defense mechanisms with examples.

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4.4 STRESS

Stress has become an inevitable reality of contemporary times. Baum (1990) has defined it as a negative emotional experience accompanied by predictable biochemical, physiological, cognitive and behavioral changes that are directed either toward altering the stressful event or accommodating to its effects. Though, apparently, stress is considered a negative avoidable feeling, it has a positive connotation too. In fact, psychologists and social scientists maintain that a minimum level of stress is needed to 'push' us towards our set goals. Non-existence of stress would lead to lack of motivation to perform. This positive stress is termed as **eustress**. This eustress helps students prepare for exams, unemployed to search for job, people to finish their respective work. Stress becomes a

cause of concern, when it starts affecting out social functioning and is commonly referred to as **distress**. Certain situations like loss of job, bereavement, divorce, may result in distress.

Why do we become stressful?

There are certain events or stimuli in the physical and social environment that are considered as stressors. What makes events or incidents stressful? In fact, events in themselves are not inherently stressful, it is our perception that makes the event stressful or not. In general, eustress results when the stimuli are known and the individual is assured that learnt coping patterns would be able to respond successfully. However, when the stimuli are perceived to overpower the existing coping skills, stress sets in. So, perception is an important function in stress and the manner in which the individual views and evaluates the stressful experience is termed as **Appraisal**. The appraisal has two stages – primary appraisal covers the intensity of threat and secondary appraisal makes judgement about the coping options. Appraisal is a subjective experience so as the stress. The individual may perceive the event as positive, negative or neutral in terms of their consequences. Negative or potentially negative events are further appraised for their possible harm, threat or challenge qualities.

Likewise, ‘harm’ is the assessment of the damage already done by the event, for example, a man having lost his job and experiencing low confidence. On the other hand, ‘threat’ is the assessment of possible future damage that may be caused by the event, say, possibility of losing job which may result in financial crunch. Events may also be appraised in terms of their ‘challenge’, which is the potential to overcome and even profit from the event. For example, a man feeling that the loss of job has given him a chance to try a new area of work that he has been considering. Thus, reactions to potentially stressful events depend on their meaning for the individual.

Researches have beyond doubt shown that stress is a precipitating factor in causing physical as well as psychological ailments. Blood pressure, coronary heart diseases, diabetes, body ache, muscle tensions, sodalities, are some of the ailments that get triggered due to stress and tension. Many people, in order to curb stress may opt for unhealthy coping patterns like alcoholism, smoking, tobacco chewing, drug addiction and so on. These, in turn, have lethal effects on the health of the body, if consumed beyond proportions chronically.

Psychological Dimensions of Stress

Stress has psychological dimensions too. It may trigger many of the psychological ailments like neurosis, psychosomatic ailments, schizophrenia and other personality disorders. You may know that in our country, mental health ailments often go un-noticed and un-recognized, labelled and stigmatized. Mental health services are often denied and not accessed by the needy persons. These stress related, both physical as well as psychological, disorders create problems in social life of the persons affected for obvious reasons.

It may be noted that stress is not only affecting the youth and adults but also taking children into its clutches. More and more young children are suffering from stress and tension related to academics. Increasing social Darwinism coupled surging parental expectations are taking heavy toll of students’ physical and

mental health. Children are adopting faulty coping styles in terms of taking in prohibited and prescribed (for enhancing memory) drugs, resorting to alcoholism, and even committing suicides.

Let us see the physiological processes during encounter with stress. When the organism perceives a threat, the body is rapidly aroused through the sympathetic nervous system and the endocrine system. The organism readies to attack the threat or to flee/ avoid the stressor. This is the “flight or fight” response. In a situation where the organism is unable to either fight or flee and is exposed to prolonged stress, the state of prolonged physiological arousal may continue for an extended period of time and lay the foundation for health problems.

Individuals cope with threatening stimuli both consciously as well as unconsciously. It may be important to understand how individuals appraise and cope with stress. Let us now understand about coping in the next section.

4.5 COPING WITH STRESS

Coping with stress is a universal phenomenon. The factors influencing coping behaviour are both person centered and situation specific. Coping, in itself, is not adaptive or maladaptive in nature. It is defined as an individual’s cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage (reduce, minimize, master or tolerate) specific internal or external demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the persons resources (Folkman and Lazarus, 1980).

Coping is broadly divided into two categories— **Emotion focused** (this type of coping is directed toward regulating the feelings or affect surrounding a stressful experience) and **Problem focused** (this category of coping involves direct efforts to modify the problem causing the distress). However, in most of the situations, a combination of both these types of coping is used. Another commonly used coping behaviour is accessing **social support** to deal with stressful situations which is also an amalgamation of emotional support and practical or informational support.

Physiological Aspect of Coping

Let us look at the physiological aspect of coping. Hans Selye in 1956 formulated the general adaptation syndrome, which explains how individuals adapt themselves and cope with stressful situations, in the following three stages: first is **Alarm reaction stage** when an individual recognises the existence of a threat or stress or a situation that is difficult to cope with. **Resistance** is the second stage which is experienced, when the stress gets prolonged and the person decides the responses like fight-or-flight. **Stage of exhaustion** is the final stage which is experienced, when stressful situation still persists. During this stage the individuals’ resistance declines and this might make the individual more prone to stress related diseases.

Psychological Aspects of Coping

Now we look at psychological aspects of coping. Emotion focused coping includes various strategies like **distraction** (includes taking up activities that would help in taking the mind off from tension and stress. for instance, watching movie, listening to music), **denial/blame** (using defense mechanisms), **use of**

religion/faith (for instance, praying to God) and **acceptance/redefinition** (this is the positive coping style where the individual accepts the reality and acts with a positive attitude in mind).

The People have differential coping styles, which are the outcome of interplay of various factors like socialization pattern, modelling, imitation, previous experiences to mention a few. Based on personality coping has been categorized into **neuroticism** (associated with the increased use of escapist fantasy, self blame and hostile reaction and maladaptive cognitive distortions) and **extraversion** (associated with the use of rational action, positive thinking, adaptive problem oriented coping and support seeking).

Coping Mechanisms

Overt behavioural responses in the coping process may well be delineated here. Some of the common coping mechanisms are:

- i) Striking out at others or aggression directed intentionally to hurt someone. This coping is not very helpful as in certain situations the aggressive expression might become the source of stress. For example, in interpersonal relations when we have a fight with a friend, as result of an aggressive feelings felt, the fight might become a source of added stress for the person.
- ii) Giving up and withdrawing from a situation is another coping behaviour frequently exhibited by some individuals. This is also referred to as learned helplessness which includes passive behaviour produced by exposure to unavoidable aversive events. When an individual experiences constant stress over a long period of time he develops apathy and stops making any attempt to consciously cope with the situation. This coping behaviour is usually seen when the situation is appraised to be beyond the control of the individual.
- iii) Indulging oneself or self indulgence is another coping mechanism in the face of stress. In the face of stressful situation individuals indulge in excessive behaviours like excessive eating, drinking, smoking, or spending. One indulges in such kinds of behaviour to get satisfaction from other substitute sources.

Coping Styles

As social work professionals your role lies in helping the clients learn resilience or healthy coping styles, while reducing the dysfunctional ones. Constructive coping styles would involve the following aspects:

- Interpreting the environment as benign, generally expect things to go well and believe that people do not intent to harm unless there are reasons to believe otherwise. This positive outlook towards life goes a long way in providing spiritual strength to the individuals.
- Putting negative experiences into a perspective and interpreting them as part of a larger picture would help a great deal in looking at the problem at hand in an objective unbiased manner. By doing so, the individual may realize the failures as lack of necessary calibre and may work harder to acquire needed competence and expertise.

- When life is taken as something that can be influenced and acted upon, stressful events are perceived as challenges. Fatalistic and pessimistic attitudes, therefore, must be replaced by the optimism, confidence in self and dynamism.
- Individuals should be taught to handle their emotions like frustration, anger, jealousy in the right manner (using catharsis, yoga, relaxation therapies, meditation, sports, physical exercises, sublimation). Emotional stability goes a long way in and do not have the tendency to experience negative emotions.

These form the general description of what constitutes an intervention package to reduce stress. Specific tailor-made intervention components for students, women at workplace, people in corporate and other demanding jobs, may be developed to meet differential needs and problems of target groups. For example, some of the components of intervention programme for working women may include information about significance of physical exercise, balancing relaxation techniques, networking them with support services like crèche, day care centres for elderly, bill-payment agencies and so on. Likewise, students may be given tips to develop schedules for studying, rehearsals, taking in exams, career guidance and so on. Their parents and teachers should simultaneously be counselled to have realistic expectation from them and becoming sensitive to identify cues for any faulty coping patterns like drug addiction, suicidal tendencies, etc.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answer

- 1) Describe the role of social workers in stress management at school level.

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4.6 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit, you have studied defense mechanisms, which are unconscious coping patterns adopted by the ego to strike a balance between id impulses and super ego. Some of the important defense mechanisms are – Regression that involves going back to an old, less sophisticated method of doing things; Rationalization involves offering rational explanations in an attempt to justify; Reaction Formation is transforming an unacceptable impulse or feeling or thought into its opposite; Repression involves forgetting an emotionally painful memory; Projection defense mechanism pushes the clients' unacceptable thoughts, feelings, or impulses outward, onto another person; Displacement is replacing one goal object with another; Sublimation is resolving a conflict by changing a socially

objectionable aim to an acceptable one; Acting out is expressing an unconscious wish or impulse through action; Dissociation involves temporarily but drastically modifying a person's character or one's sense of personal identity; Introjection involves internalising the qualities of an object or person to oneself; Intellectualisation is excessive use of intellectual processes to avoid affective expressions or experience; Isolation refers to severing the connection between feeling and the situation; Undoing uses some actions or thoughts to neutralise the effects of something that was said or done; and Denial is avoiding the awareness of some painful aspect of reality. Usage of defense mechanisms in social work practice has been discussed.

In the Unit, stress was dealt with at length. We understood that concept of stress and its physiological and psychological dimensions. Stress is experienced by individuals occurs in the form of life events, chronic stressors and daily hassles. The role of stress in the development of physical and psychological illnesses was discussed. Characteristics of the stressor in terms of the domain and type of stress were also described. In the last section, coping mechanisms, both healthy and dysfunctional, to deal with stress were discussed in great detail.

4.7 KEY WORDS

Stress	:	an internal state which can be caused by physical demands on the body or by environmental or social situations which are evaluated as potentially harmful, uncontrollable, or exceeding the individual's resources for coping.
Stressors	:	the situations or events that cause stress.
Defense mechanisms	:	unconscious strategies used to avoid anxiety, resolve conflict and enhance self-esteem.

4.8 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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