

BLOCK 4
APPLICATION OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY-II

THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY



UNIT 11 APPLICATION OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY IN EDUCATION AND CLASSROOM*

Structure

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11.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to,

- discuss the intrapersonal process and interpersonal processes in the context of educational setup.

11.1 INTRODUCTION

Education plays a significant role in development of an individuals and the educational set up is equally important as it contributes to formation of an individuals values, attitudes and beliefs. In an educational set up, there are various influences that can shape the thinking and behaviour of the individual. Besides parents, teachers and peers play an important role in influencing an individual. Social interactions that take place in an educational setup can also have an impact on individual behaviour. Given the relevance

of education and educational system in our lives, it would be interesting to study how social psychology principles can be applied to education and classroom.

Educational set up can be seen as a system in itself and thus, the principles of social psychology can be used in order to not only understand the system but also to deal with the social issues and problems that may arise in this context.

Social psychology is the branch of the psychology that deals with the human behavior in the social settings. Several educational set-ups like school, colleges, university or an institution, not only impart education to the students but also provides a social setting to the students and also to the teachers and other school staff they come across. In this social setting students and teachers interact with each other and help each other to grow and learn novel things on a daily basis. A large amount of time have been spent in these social settings, therefore these social institutions contribute in a major way to our overall development. These educational set ups also contribute in the development of values (moral), ethics, beliefs and attitudes. Thus, it can be affirmed that social psychology does come in picture or one can say, social psychology does plays an important role in the educational setups like school, colleges, university or an institution.

Social psychology plays a significant role in the educational sector. It helps in enhancing the teaching techniques, learning practices, cognitive skills of students, motivation of students and improving teacher-student relationship. It helps in identifying the short comings of educational sets ups to make the environment conducive for learning. It guides how to cope with stress during exam time. Also, it tells about the methods of teaching according to the level or psyche of the learner, so that they can learn effectively.

There are several intrapersonal and interpersonal processes that operate in the educational environment that can be uncovered by the social psychologists. Intra means within, something that is going on inside one's individual. For example, academic motivation, attitude and belief about one's academic skills. Whereas inter means between, something that takes place between people- For example, interaction takes place between students and teachers that together can affect student's beliefs about their abilities and their levels of academic achievement.

11.2 INTRAPERSONAL PROCESSES

Let's assume, Raman, a psychology student, is worried about his performance in a Statistics course. He has a belief that he can never do well in Statistics. He just can't do it. So he does all the necessary things in order to avoid it. For example, he usually goes out with friends the night before his statistics exam. He always makes excuses for not submitting his assignments on time such as computer crashed and so on. Raman fails the Statistics exam as he has not put in efforts as were required. How would Raman feel about

Statistics now (post examination results)? Will Raman's belief about his ability about statistics becomes stronger because of his failure?

Keeping the above example in mind think, can a student's belief about their academic ability be changed? Can these changes lead to better academic achievement and drive to learn? Social psychology and years of research have shown that these changes can occur. There is a high possibility that after failing in the Statistics examination, Raman's belief that he is no good at Statistics will be further confirmed.

Intrapersonal includes something that occurs within one's mind. Thus, intrapersonal processes in the educational settings involve attitudes, achievement motivation and beliefs about one's academic skills.

11.2.1 Attitude and Academic Achievement

Academic achievement is the ability of the scholars to review and bear in mind facts and being able to speak his/ her information orally or in written, even during examination conditions. Students with high academic motivation are purpose-oriented and usually have positive feelings towards their school experiences, they own the traits of discipline, diligence, and resourcefulness, and they tend to dedicate much less time toward endeavour and amusement/leisure activities. It is by far essential for the students to possess positive thinking regarding their schools, instructors and educational subjects. With positive attitude, they will be capable to devote themselves whole heartedly in the direction of gaining knowledge of and generate the preferred instructional results (Maina, 2010).

In a classic review of research examining the association between attitudes and academic behavior, Wicker (1969) showed that attitudes and behavior may not always be associated. Also, Festinger's (1957) dissonance theory emphasises the influence of behaviours on attitudes appeared to make it hard for researchers to believe that the alternative link may be robust or even stronger. For example, Raman may value statistics as it was the part of his syllabus but at the same time his behavior (that is, going out with friends rather than study) seems inconsistent with his positive attitude. In an order to address these inconsistencies the theory of planned behavior was formulated by Ajzen (1991). According to his theory, person's behavior to behave in a particular fashion is best predicted by one's intention and these intentions are in turn predicted by attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control.

The theory of planned behavior utilises an individual's personal attitude and opinion in blend with their perceived control of the behavior and societies' subjective norms to influence their behavioural intention which will prompt the behavior or activity. Now and again, in the event that somebody has a contrary (negative) frame of mind and feel that they don't have control of this activity that will prompt the individual being less inclined to do that activity. An individual's attitude and perceived behavioural control can have a

constructive (positive) or a pessimistic (negative) effect on their expectation and the action of the behavior depending on that individual's personal views.

Using the theory of planned behaviour as a system, Sideridis and Padeliadu (2001) compared the significance of accomplishing good grades among elementary school children who were high performing readers with that who were low performing readers- Particularly the researchers needed to look at how the children's motivation to achieve good grades were related to the key components of the theory of planned behaviour:

- a) Attitudes towards high academic achievement (convictions around the results of examining and assessment of the significance of doing well in schools),
- b) Subjective norms about high academic (beliefs about the importance that other's place on the children's academic performance and how motivated the children are to comply with other's expectations),
- c) Perceived behavioural control (how simple or troublesome the children view studying to be),
- d) Behavioural intention (how determined the children are to study hard to achieve high grades),
- e) Actual academic performance in language and mathematics.

Sideridis and Padeliadu (2001) found that high and low performing readers had exceptionally diverse profiles based on the theory of planned behaviour. Compared with high performing readers, low performing readers underestimated the significance of being a good student, communicated weaker intentions to work hard to achieve, perceived weaker subjective norms about the importance of academic achievement, and illustrated poorer academic performance. It seemed that the perceived importance of doing well in school predicted attitudes about studying and beliefs about the consequences of working hard, was linked to perceived control over the ability to achieve good grades, and could also be related to the perception of subjective norms.

The theory of planned behavior has also been applied to various aspects of online learning. Irani & O'Malley (1998) utilised the theory of planned behavior to ponder cognitive innovativeness as a indicator of student attitudes and expectation in an online learning environment. Carswell & Venkatesh (2002) too investigated learners in a remote education environment, utilising the theory of planned behaviour to ponder student responses to web-based distance education. Further this theory has also been utilised in order to examine the student intentions of taking an online experimental psychology course versus a traditional face-to-face course (Robinson and Doverspike 2006).

11.2.2 Academic Self-concept and Performance

In educational settings, the term academic self-concept has already been a crucial educational and psychological construct, which is often used to describe a student's perception about their ability in a particular academic area (for example, biology, chemistry, history). Wigfield and Karpachian (1991) endorse that academic self-concept refers to an individual's understanding and awareness about themselves in academic achievement situations- Academic self-concept is an essential variable which in turn influences motivation and desires of the students on school tasks (Pullman and Allik 2008). It means where students have faith in their academic skills, they generally tend to invest greater attempt in completing tasks. Opposite to this, those who see themselves as having inadequate abilities generally tend to expose little patience or preference when problems are encountered. Thus, it can be said that, achievement scores may be affected by student's cognitive abilities as well as their notion of those abilities. Marsh and Hau (2003) have additionally argued that non-cognitive variables are important factors of academic achievement, while the rules associated with cognitive skills and previous learning possibilities should in no way be underestimated. Academic self-concept in particular appears to be a doubtlessly valuable construct for educators to consider in their attempt to understand individual student's level of achievement. The relationship between self-concept and achievement has been effectively documented (Caracosta and Michael, 1986)-

Rice (1987) said that a growing amount of evidence supports the theory that there's a correlation between self-concept and achievement in school- Successful students experience greater sense of personal well worth and somewhat better about themselves- One of the best thing that a school can incorporate in the child is good self-image and confidence, which can stem from his or her own ability to learn and grow. Students who have confidence in themselves are inspired to live up what they consider about themselves- On the other hand, if students have negative image about themselves impose barriers on their very own fulfilment (Backes, 1994).

11.2.3 Self-handicapping in the Classroom

The word self-handicap was developed and first introduced by American researchers, Berglas and Jones to the scientific community in 1978. Self handicapping can be defined as "creating barriers to successful performance prior to an achievement task" (Alexitch, 2012, page 195). Self-handicapping strategies are the strategies (excuses and behaviours) developed by an individual when performing a task that is important to them while not able to do it (Berglas & Jones, 1978; Harris, Snyder, Higgins, & Schrag 1986; Kolditz & Arkin, 1982). In many areas, such as academics, marketing and sports, self-handicapping methods can be used. The frequent use of such methods undermine efficiency and also interfere with success (Finez & Sherman, 2012; McCrea, Hirt, Hendrix, Milner, & Steele, 2008; Smith, Hrdy,

& Arkin, 2009). Self-handicapping techniques can be classified into two groups: behavioural and claimed self-handicaps (1986). The first group refers to the challenges self developed by people and put their success at risk. Symptoms in the academic context include, speaking during class, not completing the tasks assigned by the instructor and not planning for oral assignment presentation. The second group involves the arguments of students about the impediments they face in carrying out the assignment, such as the many other obligations besides college that prohibit them from studying or simply because they are too nervous to take an exam- These two groups of techniques, although similar, differ in terms of harm to academic performance and are related to external judgment (Gadbois & Sturgeon, 2011; Hirt et al 1991; Leary & Shepperd, 1986).

The actions of the students that can effectively obstruct the performance of an activity is known as Behavioural Self-handicaps (Hirt et al 1991, Leary & Shepperd 1986). For example, the night before the exam, instead of studying, student went partying, thereby could lower their possibilities to learn and acquire a good grade.

Behavioural self-handicaps and claimed self-handicaps are different from each other. In the former type, actions are observable and therefore more convincing “excuses” for failure (Hirt et al, 1991; Leary & Shepperd, 1986). Therefore, behavioural self-handicaps are more likely to be punished. If during the class, the student talks, does not complete his or her homework, and does not perform the assigned reading tasks, the instructor tends to believe the poor performance of the student is due to his or her distraction and lack of effort. Furthermore, if the student indicates, for example, that he or she is having personal problems, (claimed self-handicapping) the instructor may or may not believe the student, but he or she is likely to have more understanding and expect less from the student than the instructor might normally have.

Check Your Progress I

- 1) What is self-handicapping?

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11.3 INTERPERSONAL PROCESSES

Interpersonal denotes relationship or communication between people. Interpersonal processes in the educational settings involve teacher and student interaction and how that interaction can affect student’s beliefs about their abilities and their level of academic achievement. Besides teacher, the

students also interact with their peers and that can also have an impact on their behaviour.

11.3.1 Teacher Student Relationship

In educational settings, student achieves knowledge, skills or values with the help of a teacher- (Brophy, 2017). So without a good teacher they will not be able to excel in their lives, as they are under the direct supervision of their teacher (Brophy, 2017). Teacher prepares their students to face difficulties and challenges that they are going to encounter in their lives later on. They also build moral and ethical values in students so that they can become good human beings.

Students spend a considerable amount of time each day with their teachers. Therefore, it is of no surprise that academics have an unlimited quantity of influence upon students. This influence will have a significant impact on the educational environment which in turn will have an impact on the motivation and accomplishments of the learner (Boynton, 2015).

Studies have shown that teacher and student association is a significant interpreter of motivation and academic accomplishment among students- Students who view their teachers positively will have better accomplishment outcomes (Gehlbach, 2016).

The key variable in the learning environment, according to Whitaker (2014), is not the pupil, but the teacher. And teachers can play an important role in creating learning environments in the classroom. Creating learning environments that promote positive cultures and healthy partnership will inspire learners to use their strengths and desire to achieve objectives.

In the context of relationship between teachers and students we can discuss about a study that was carried out by Rosenthal and Jacobson in 1968 that was titled as Pygmalion in the Classroom (For those who are not aware, Pygmalion is a play by George Bernard Shaw). The main aim of the study was to find out if high expectations regarding achievement of good students. on part of the teachers can have an influence on the academic performance of the students. The findings indicated that the high expectations that the teachers have with regard to the achievement of good students can have an impact on the academic performance of the students and this was despite of teachers treating the students equally. The study met with a lot of criticism and concerns were also raised by the teachers (Alexitch, 2012). The mechanism that may operate in the context of the study could be self-fulfilling prophecy. When an individual has expectations about another individual, how he/ she behaves with that individual is affected by the expectations and this in turn will have an effect on how the other person behaves when interacting with the individual. This is termed as self fulfilling prophecy. Thus, the person from whom you have expectations, will behave in a way that confirms your expectations. To explain with the help of an example, a teacher may have high expectations from a student, which will

lead to extra effort on behalf of the student. Noticing that the student is working hard, the teacher will feel that his/ her expectations are accurate. Thus, the teacher can have a significant influence on not only the academic self concept and achievement but will also enhance the performance of the students. A study by Madon, Jussi, and Eccles in 1997 (Alexitch, 2012) was conducted with similar objective and revealed that low achieving students were more susceptible to the perceptions and expectations of the teachers when compared with students who were high achievers.

In this context we can also discuss about stereotype threat, that is, the anxiety that is experienced by the students when they face expectations that are consistent with stereotypes about their group. For example, girls may be expected of not doing well in subjects like mathematics or engineering. Stereotype threat can negatively impact the students' academic motivation, self concept and performance in academic.

11.3.2 Peer Interaction

In an educational setup, the students also interact with each other and influence each others behaviours as they do so. Various skills like interpersonal skills, leadership skills, cooperation, resolution of conflict etc. are learnt by the students through interaction with their peers. Thus, peer interaction can lead to development of social competence. A positive social interaction can have a positive impact on adjustment, self concept and overall development of the student. Rejection by peer can thus have an impact on academic performance of the students and can lead to the student facing academic difficulties in future. Children who belong to certain disadvantaged groups like children with disability, children belonging to low Socio Economic Status etc. may also find it difficult to fit in and may face difficulties in school. Thus, enhancing positive peer relationship amongst the children belonging to such vulnerable group is extremely important and suitable interventions can be developed in this direction.

In this context, peer assisted learning can also be explained. Peer assisted learning can be explained as a strategy that mainly promotes one to one tutoring or tutoring in small groups amongst the students. Peer assisted learning can not only enhance academic self concept and motivation, but it also influences social behaviour of the students. It can also be effectively carried out with students belonging to vulnerable groups.

Besides the above, one of the main concerns in schools and colleges that social psychologist would be interested in are aggression and violence.

Baron (1977) described aggression as 'any form of behaviour directed toward the goal of harming or injuring another living being who is motivated to avoid such treatment' (Hewstone and Stroebe, 2001, page 317). Violence can be termed as "an aggression that is extreme and is also directed to seriously harm others" (Shetgovekar, 2018, page 188). In both the cases, there could be detrimental effect on not only the victims but other students as well.

Aggression and violence in school can range from bullying, verbal and physical abuse to social rejection and even shooting (Alexitch, 2012). A possible reason for why certain students behave in an aggressive or violent manner could be an interaction that takes place between the school environment and traits, skills, abilities, norms and experiences of such students (Alexitch, 2012). In order to understand violence and aggression in schools and colleges various intrapersonal and interpersonal factors need to be focused on.

Intervention in this regard thus needs to focus on prevention of violence and aggression by creating a safe and conducive environment in the educational institutions and by promoting safe practices. Awareness programme can also be carried out in this regard amongst the students, teachers and parents. Students can also be provided with counselling and psychotherapy as per requirement. Strategies that focus on acceptance and respecting diversity can also be carried out. Positive peer interaction can also be promoted. Thus, various measures can be taken in order to deal with violence and aggression and promote positive peer interaction so as to enhance overall development and wellbeing of the students

11.3.3 Cognitive Errors

In the context of teacher student relationship and peer interaction, we can also discuss about cognitive errors. Cognitive errors are errors related to the thought process of the individuals and they can have an impact on the interactions of the individuals. The cognitive errors are as follows:

- **Fundamental attribution errors:** Fundamental attribution error can be explained as a tendency in individuals where while the behaviour of an individual is attributed to the personal causes rather than situational causes. Thus, internal attributions are made rather than external attributions. For example, if a student is late to class because he/ she missed a bus, the teacher may attribute this behaviour to personal cause, that could be that the student lacks effective time management skills.
- **Believed perseverance:** Despite being exposed to disconfirming evidence, the individual maintains his/ her initial belief or ideas (Smith, 2012). In an educational set up, belief perseverance can affect learning of new and relevant information. For example, if a student believes that there is no difference between references and bibliography, then he/ she will hold on to that belief despite of disconfirming evidences.
- **Social categorisation:** This can be described as a tendency to classify other individuals in to categories or groups and this categorisation is based on certain social characteristics. In-groups and out-groups can basically form because of such a social categorisation. Social categorisation can lead to out-group homogeneity bias due to which the members of out group are perceived as homogeneous or lacking variability. There can also be in-group out-group bias where members of an out-groups are perceived as

unfavourable based on certain characteristics and the members of in-group are seen in a more favourable manner. These biases can have an impact of the interactions amongst the students.

Besides the intrapersonal and interpersonal processes, the atmosphere in the classroom also plays an important role in fostering curiosity and interest among students. If students feel a sense of control and security in the learning environment, they are more interested because they look to the learning with more eagerness and enthusiasm. Students become active participants in their own learning (Maulana, 2017). That's why creating and maintaining meaningful teacher and student engagement is the first priority to help a student become more inspired and engaged and thus educationally successful

According to the researcher Eschenmann (2016), along with many other researchers indicated that when teachers take the time to create relationships, they could inspire their students to learn. Further, Whitaker (2015), also states that educators must have a robust conviction/belief that building interactions are essential to the cycle of motivation. Teachers must verify that they fulfill educational and emotional needs of students.

Check Your Progress II

- 1) List the three cognitive errors.

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11.4 LET US SUM UP

To summarise, social psychology plays an important role in the educational sector such as school, colleges, and institutions. It helps in enhancing the teaching techniques, learning practices, cognitive skills of students, motivation of students and improving teacher-student relationship. It helps in identifying the various shortcomings operate in these educational sectors, helps in rectifying them and make the environment conducive for learning. Also there are several intrapersonal and interpersonal processes that operate in these educational sectors which have an impact upon the student's performance and academic achievement.

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11.6 KEY WORDS

Intrapersonal processes: Intrapersonal processes includes something that occurs within one's mind. Intrapersonal processes in the educational settings involve attitudes, achievement motivation and beliefs about one's academic skills.

Interpersonal processes: Interpersonal processes meaning relationship or communication between people. Interpersonal processes in the educational settings involve teacher and student interaction and how that interaction can affect student's beliefs about their abilities and their level of academic achievement.

11.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

- 1) What is self-handicapping?

Self handicapping can be defined as “creating barriers to successful performance prior to an achievement task” (Alexitch, 2012, page 195).

Check Your Progress II

- 1) List the three cognitive errors.

The three cognitive errors are:

- Fundamental attribution error
- Belief perseverance
- Social categorisation

11.8 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) Write a note on attitude and academic achievement.
- 2) Explain academic self-concept and performance
- 3) What are intrapersonal processes? Describe self-handicapping in the classroom.
- 4) Explain teacher student relationship in the context of interpersonal processes.
- 5) Elucidate cognitive errors.

UNIT 12 APPLICATION OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY TO SPORTS*

Structure

12.0 Objectives

12.1 Introduction

12.2 Teams in Sports

12.2.1 Team Cohesion

12.2.2 Team Confidence

12.2.3 Team Building

12.3 Leadership

12.4 Effective Communication

12.5 Let Us Sum Up

12.6 References

12.7 Key Words

12.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

12.9 Unit End Questions

12.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to,

- explain teams in sports;
- describe leadership; and
- discuss effective communication.

12.1 INTRODUCTION

On 24th September, 2007, the first ever ICC world cup T20 was held in Johannesburg, South Africa. In the T20 world cup finals India and Pakistan were competing each other. M.S. Dhoni won the toss and decided to bat first with a total of 180 runs in mind but able to make only 157 runs, which was a good score but considering the pressure of world cup one can add more to that. Fans had little expectation from their Indian team as it was the team of youngsters and for the very first time Sachin, Dravid, Ganguly and Zaheer

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decided to skip the T20 format for giving the young guns a go. Under the captaincy of M.S. Dhoni, this team of youngsters yield the unexpected victory by defeating their arch-rivals Pakistan over 5 runs and finally ended as a path-breaking tournament for Indian cricket. *What according to you had led Indian team win the match? Is it due to the pressure Indian team members were going through? Or Is it due to the unity or cooperation the team members shared during that time?*

When you try to look at the factors that could have played in the above context, you would come up with factors like leadership, team effectiveness, team cohesiveness and so on. When we talk about sports, there are various types of sports from indoor to outdoor sports and from sports that are played by single individuals and those by duals and a team of individuals. There are many social dynamics especially when we talk about sports that are played in teams. And understanding these dynamics is crucial for success of the team.

In the present unit, we will explain the application of social psychology to sports, mainly sports teams. In this unit we will mainly focus on the application of social psychology to understanding team and team dynamics, leadership and communication.

Box 12.1 Applied Sports Psychology

Applied sports psychology is the scientific study of psychological or mental factors that are involved in performing and participation of sports and other physical activities. The goal of the applied sports psychologist is to guide and help the athletes so that they can perform to the best of their capabilities and moreover enjoy their sport thoroughly. They are uniquely and specifically trained to impart a number of services to the athletes such as—understanding and implementation of the mental knowledge, skills required mastering the sport (athletic domain).

If you are an athlete or a part of any sports group, you must have experienced the pressure of winning a game or fear of being beaten by the competitor team. The role of the sports psychologist comes in the picture. Guidance of the sports psychologist help the athletes achieves their goals. In order to enhance the performance, various mental strategies have been taught to the athletes such as: self-talk, relaxation techniques, and visualisation. Psychologists help the athletes to compete with the pressure of competition and the pressure from coaches, parents and their own expectations.

12.2 TEAMS IN SPORTS

Teams can be described as a group of individuals that have a common goal. For example, we have a cricket or football team that mainly work in coordination with each other in order to win the match against the opposite team. Teams can be explained as a smaller group of individuals who are interdependent and possess skills that are complementary to each other. And

in the context of sports, the teams that we have include individuals from diverse background who have proficiency in the sport and have been selected to represent a Country or a State or club as a team. Thus, there could be teams for football or cricket or Kabbadi at school level or state level or organisational level and even national level.

These individuals not only come from different background but are unique in their own ways in terms of personality, skills and so on. But, they are expected to perform and succeed as a team. Thus, comes the application of social psychology not only in understanding team dynamics but also in building teams that are effective. In this context we also have to remember that teams in sports also perform in the presence of an audience and this as well can have an impact on their performance.

Great team develops when the athletes believe that they are good for the team, not to the team. While selecting the team, the athletes have to compete with each other brutally. But once the team is finalised, they have to change their mindsets and have to work with the team and put the team first. When they work together, they will more likely to succeed in their sport. It is therefore very important to consider the interplay between the different behavioural styles of different athletes within their team. This interplay is called team chemistry or dynamics.

Team dynamics can be termed as the unconscious, psychological forces that influence the direction of the team behaviour and performance. These dynamics are based upon the personalities of the team members, how they interact with each other, their working relationship, and the environment in which team member's work. Team dynamics can be good, if it leads to the improvement of the team performance or bad if it causes demotivation among the team members and stops the team from achieving their desired goal. In the context of team dynamics in sports, attention has been focused on the factors influencing team performance such as team cohesion, team confidence and team building.

12.2.1 Team Cohesion

A dynamic process by which the members of the group remain together and united to meet the goals of the team as well as the fulfilment and satisfaction of their needs is known as team cohesion (Carron, Brawley, and Widmeyer 1998). Also, cohesiveness is the feeling of the unity that binds the members of the group together voluntarily. Sports team often aim and have the ability to create cohesion and working together as one. Athletes perform better if they consider themselves to be a part of full functioning and supportive team to which all are happy to belong. Committed members of the group are tend to be more interactive, loyal, enthusiastic, and productive. Groups that have strong bond with each other works together for a long period of time, whereas those groups having a weaker bond disband in a short period of time (Pescosolido and Saavedra, 2012). As one of the saying, "even nectar is

poison if taken to excess,” meaning excess of everything is bad. Similarly, too much cohesion in a group is also not good as it leads to groupthink and hampers creativity and leads to less innovation (Wise, 2014).

In social psychology, team cohesion can be of two types:

- **Task cohesion:** In task cohesion, members of the group work together with unity to achieve a common team goal (Richardson, 2013).
- **Social cohesion:** The extent to which the members of the team like and interact with each other is known as social Cohesion (Richardson, 2013). In social cohesion team mates focus more on being socially bonded and try to gain chemistry.

According to Pescosolido and Saavedra (2012), task cohesion can be the catalyst that initially binds the player to the team and drives the player to perform. Whereas, social cohesion comes later when players are concerned about the quality of their interpersonal relationships. Task and social cohesion work in line with each other in order to encourage team work in sports team that helps them to reach their goal and achieve success. Before proceeding further, let's discuss the various factors contributing Team Cohesion.

According to George and Jones (2000), there are different factors that can contribute to team cohesiveness. These factors are: size of group, similarity among group members, competition with other groups, success and exclusiveness of the group.

Size of group: Team cohesiveness depends upon the size of the group i.e. the number of members pertaining in the group. It is believed that the bigger the group the lesser the team cohesiveness tends to be (George and Jones 2000). When the size of the group is small, there is more face to face interaction, communication with each other. However, when the size of the group increases this face to face interaction decreases and it becomes more difficult to get the group to agree upon the common goals and activities. Another difficulty with the larger size group is the formation of smaller groups within the large group. Which would lead to the dilution of the common group goal and hinders the team cohesiveness as a whole. Small groups tend to be more cohesive than the larger groups. This is supported by the theory of Social Loafing, according to which when there are more members in the group, there will be diffusion of responsibility. According to this theory, when individual is working in a group, he/she exerts less pressure than working alone.

Competition with other groups: According to Luthans (2002), presence of external competition tends to develop greater Team Cohesion. Members willingly put their issues aside and work toward solving the issue at hand. In an organization, competition between groups tends to increase Team cohesion as the members of the group will try their best to work together to

achieve their group goals (George and Jones, 2000). However, it is further claimed that only a minimal level of competition is healthy across groups and helps in maintaining cohesiveness of the group, too much competition will be unhealthy and dysfunctional for the group effectiveness.

Similarity among group members: According to George and Jones, (2000) Homogeneous groups who share certain common characteristics such as attitudes, values, ethics, ideas, experiences and other characteristics tends to be cohesive. Further in contrast to George and Jones, researchers claimed that heterogeneity not homogeneity which could shape productivity of the team by facilitating mutual leaning (Hamilton, Nickerson and Owan 2003). However too much heterogeneity will also be problematic as it will result in uncertainty and confusion among the group members which in the long run hinders the achievement of the goals (Nelson and Quick 2003).

Success: According to George and Jones (2000), groups that will be able to fulfil their goals and achieve success, becomes attractive for their members and leads to be more cohesive. Team cohesion naturally depends upon the success of the team (Luthans 2002). When the team achieves a goal, the success belongs to all the members of the group and each one feels responsible for the achievement. For example, if any sports team wins a match the entire team congratulate each player of the team for the success.

Exclusiveness: Social status or the prestige of the group determines the extent of the group cohesiveness. Groups high in prestige tend to be more cohesive as they receive more loyalty and determination from their members.

Team cohesion and performance are related to each other. Cohesion leads to greater commitment of the members towards the goals, which results in higher individual effort and performance. Members of a cohesive group communicates in a positive way with each other, reports higher satisfaction and lower anxiety, which results in improved decision making and greater participation.

Team cohesion can also have the negative consequences, as it does not allow the members of the team to keep their personal goals over the common goals. Also, it will increase the social pressure for individual speech to conform or restrict. Further, it can be stated that the members of a cohesive team tend to perform at the same ground, conforming to the established group norms whereas members belonging to the less cohesive group have wider range of individual performance levels and standards.

Bray and Whaley (2001) conducted a study to see the relationship between team cohesion and the individual efforts made by the high school basketball players (both male and female) over a course of a season. By the end of the season, researcher found that cohesion predicts individual performance. Also, at the group level, Mullen and Copper (1994) conducted a meta-analysis of Team cohesion and team performance, and found the highly significant relationship between cohesion and team performance. This effect was

stronger among smaller groups rather than the larger groups, also the effect was there among real group as compare to artificial groups.

Thus, it can be concluded that there is a stronger and bi-directional relationship between team cohesion and performance. Simply, the members of the team who enjoyed their success together are tend to be cohesive and also the team cohesiveness leads to the success of the team members particularly in terms of their goals and objectives.

12.2.2 Team Confidence

The secret ingredient that all the great athlete seems to possess regardless of what level they are competing at is team confidence. Confidence doesn't grow overnight but rather it is a process, where each positive experience builds to develop into real confidence. Having confidence is as important as having a particular physical skill for a sport. It is the self confidence that allows the athlete to work and try again and again until they achieve success. Self confidence offers the strength and power to an average athlete or team to beat a stronger opponent. Self confidence inspires one to try to make the impossible come true. Similarly, an individual or team can regularly perform well below their ability without self confidence. Low self confidence will destroy the enjoyment of the sport of an athlete and make him/her a dropout statistic.

Self-efficacy theory developed by Bandura (1977) is the one that can be applied to the real world of sport. Self -efficacy is the belief of the individuals that one can perform successfully to achieve certain goals under a given set of circumstances. It is particularly a situation-specific form of self-confidence. Both the terms, i.e. self-efficacy and self confidence are used interchangeably in sports psychology (Feltz & Chase, 1998). However, according to Albert Bandura self-efficacy is related to self confidence but they are not the same thing. Self confidence allows the person to be confident in his/her abilities which increases the likelihood to be succeed and in turn paves the experiences to develop self-efficacy. This increase self-efficacy makes the person more confident about himself and round it goes. Self-efficacy is derived from different sources such as: performance accomplishment, vicarious experience, social persuasion, and lastly, physiological and emotional states.

Performance accomplishment: One of the effective ways to develop self-efficacy is through mastery experiences. Previous success of a task increases the chances to complete the similar tasks (high self-efficacy) while repeated failures tend to decrease it (low self-efficacy).

Vicarious experience: Learn by observing others is known as Vicarious experience. It is also known as modelling. When one has positive role model who display a healthy level of self-efficacy then there are chances to develop the some of the same positive attributes of the self.

Social persuasion: Activities in which people are led to believe, by encouragement, that they can perform particular tasks with success. Coaching and providing evaluative performance feedback are common ways of social persuasion.

Physiological and emotional states: The physiological and emotional states also tend to increase the self-efficacy judgements. For example: if someone is experiencing an emotional state, say anxiety, it will lead to negative judgement regarding the ability to complete a task.

When athletes are full of confidence, they will be easily able to convert their sporting potential into successful performance. However, when they feel unsure about their sporting potential, even the smallest hurdle can have an undue effect on their performance. According to Bandura (1977), there is a recursive/repetitive relationship between confidence beliefs and performance. It means, performances have been influenced by mastery expectations, although these expectations get altered by the cumulative effect of efforts made by an individual.

If a team wins a match, the confidence of winning the next match are probably more. However, if a team loses a match, they might lack the confidence of performing and winning the next match. According to Covassin & Pero (2004), success has affected the level of confidence and the level of confidence has affected the rate of success. Further, Hays et al (2009) revealed that Elite Athletes performance has been affected by the level of confidence through their thoughts, behaviours and feelings. Also, a statistically significant and positive relationship has been found between the subjective performance and confidence (Levy, Nicholls, and Polman 2010)

12.2.3 Team Building

Varun and Karan are working in a company under the headship of Manoj. Manoj had a tremendous faith on both of them and often appreciates them in front of others. He usually takes his team out on dinner. His team always complete his targets on time and always perform better than the other teams. Manoj was the most admired team leader. Manoj never had to force Varun and Karan to take up new assignments, they were always ready to take the new assignments willingly.

So, what according to you, makes Varun and Karan eager to work? The answer to this question is the various efforts Manoj, the team leader, took to motivate and extract the best from them. This explains team building.

Simply, the various activities undertaken by the leader in order to motivate the team members to perform well and to achieve the end goals is known as team building. The members are not expected to work well by their own. The motivating factor is essential. In sports, Team Building is time consuming as it requires the coach to build a culture that leads to success. Further, according to Yukelson (1997), teams are the collection of coordinated and

interdependent individuals who are structured into several task-efficient positions for the motive of obtaining objectives which are deemed important for that particular team. In sports, team building helps in instilling the sense of shared destiny among the members of the team., so that the focus of all the members is towards that goal only. Team building also helps in the development of the behaviour and the skills of the members which leads to improve the team functioning as a whole.

In the beginning of the session, Team building helps to develop confidence and trust among the members, they interact easily because of early Team Building, which further motivates the climate of mutual understanding and honest self-evaluation (Hardy &Crace, 1997; Yukelson, 2006).

In order to teach the importance of cooperation to team members, the various team building interventions are often used so that members of the team can effectively share their skills, knowledge and resources with each other. Team Building intervention approach can be both: direct or indirect intervention (Carron &Hausenblas 1998). In direct team building intervention, the consultant (e.g. sports psychologist) works directly with the team members or athletes in order to provide a common vision and sense of identity to the members of the team and to increase cohesion among them. Whereas in the latter, i.e. the indirect intervention, the consultant works with the team coach or the manager rather than works directly with the athletes or the players, who then implements the intervention programme developed to the team. In this type of approach, Team Building Intervention can be filtered by the team coach or manager.

Indirect team building interventions are most often used in sports rather than direct intervention approach because of following three reasons (Carron and Hausenblas et al 1998; Estabrooks and Dennis 2003):

- 1) Most of the team coach/manager want to know their individual athlete well therefore they mediate the interventions provided to their team members by the consultant.
- 2) Many consultants don't want to give up the control over their team completely to an outsider.
- 3) Many coaches might be suspicious that the consultant concerned may use his or her work with the team for personal promotional purposes.

Let us discuss about direct and indirect team-building interventions in detail:

Direct team-building intervention: According to Yukelson (1997), there are four stages of direct team -building intervention working with athletes- assessment, education, brainstorming and goal-setting.

Assessment: In the first step, consultant assesses the current team situation as accurately as possible. For this, the consultant has to meet the team's coach/manager and also understand and listen to the team members in order

to determine the team objectives, opportunities and concerns of the whole team.

Education: At the second stage, the consultant gives the team with the basic education regarding how the team develops and works over time.

Brainstorming: At the third stage, several brain storming techniques should be used by the consultant in order to facilitate the team members how to generate and prioritise their current needs.

Goal-setting: At the fourth and the final stage, the consultant analyses these needs in order to determine the goals of the team-building intervention.

The methods of direct team building are becoming increasingly apparent in sports, often in games that are viewed as individual practices such as golf.

Indirect team building intervention: As discussed earlier, in this type of approach the consultant deals with the team coach/manager not with the team members directly. Within this approach, Carron et al (1997) developed an influential theoretical model which follows a four-step intervention process.

- **Introductory stage:** In the introductory stage, the consultant outlines the essence and benefits of team building to the team manager/coach. This stage typically last about 25 minutes.
- **Conceptual stage:** In this stage, the consultant explained the team coach/manager that the team cohesion is the result of three main factors i.e. the environment around which the team surrounds, the team's norms and the communication processes.
- **Practical stage:** In this stage the consultant and the team's manager/coach do practical work collaboratively and generate as many team building strategies as possible.
- **Intervention stage:** This is the final stage, in which the team's manager/coach implement the team building interventions under the assistance of trained consultant if necessary.

Check Your Progress I

1) What is team cohesion?

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12.3 LEADERSHIP

A team leader plays an important role in directing and guiding the team for goal attainment. He/ she is also needs to ensure effective coordination and communication amongst the team members. Given the relevance of a leader in team, it is obvious that a lot of thought needs to be put in while selecting a leader for a particular team.

When we talk about teams in sports, one leader would be the captain of the team. But often there is a coach as well who also plays a role in directing the team. Further, besides the captain and the formal leader, there could also be informal leader (s). In the context of team in sports, the leaders, whether the captain, the coach or the informal leaders, all need to work in tandem with each other and there should not be any conflict amongst them. This would be extremely important for effective performance of the team. The principles of social psychology can be applied here in order to understand the leadership styles and the role of the leader.

Yukl in 1998 defined leadership as the process in which the members in a group are influenced by one of the members in the group (its leader). Shetgovekar (2018, page 218) defined leadership as “a process that involves one person (the leader) influencing other persons or members of the group (the followers) in order to achieve the purpose or objectives of the group”. Who becomes a leader can be determined based on both personal characteristics of the person and the situational factors. Some of the personal characteristics include ability, expertise, effective interpersonal skills, high motivation and confidence. Personality factors could also play a role in this context. Situational factors could include the nature and size of the group, communication network and so on.

Theories of leadership: In the context of social psychology, leadership can be explained with the help of various theories:

- **Great person theory:** The theory states that a prominent leaders display certain factors that are inherent and dispositional. The theory also emphasises that there are certain traits that are commonly displayed by the leaders. For instance, high extraversion, openness etc. The theory has been criticised of error of attribution (Shetgovekar, 2018).
- **Contingency model:** The model states that behaviour of the leader and situational determinants determine the leadership. Thus, besides the dispositional factors that the great person theory focused on, the situational factors are given equal importance. Under this model, we can discuss about the task oriented leaders and the relations oriented leaders. task oriented leaders, as the name suggests, the focus is on the task and the relations oriented leaders focus is on the relationship.
- **Social identity theory:** The theory states that being part of a group, a social identity is shared by the leader and the group members. Thus, the

group members are likely to support the leader because he/ she reflects the group identity and therefore the leader will be required to represent the group values and perspective.

- **Transactional and transformational theories of leadership:** Transactional leadership denotes the transaction between the leader and his/ her followers. The focus of this leadership is on rewards on punishments that are used by the leader in order to ensure performance on the part of the team members. Transformational leadership inspire, motivate and encourage the group or team members to achieve the goal.
- **Multidimensional model of leadership:** The model suggests that how effective a leader is will depend on the dynamism of the leader and also on the pattern of interaction between the leader and the group or team members. The model also suggests that there is a need for balance between the behaviour of the leader, the leadership preferred by the group members, the behaviour as per the demand of the situation, in order to increase satisfaction amongst the team members and to enhance their performance. The characteristics of the leader and the group members will also play a role in influencing the behaviour of the preference of leadership on part of the group members.

Leadership styles: Leadership styles can be autocratic, democratic or laissez faire.

- **Autocratic style:** In this style the leader has control and will take all the decisions with regard to the group and often the point of view or option of the group members is not taken in to consideration.
- **Democratic style:** In this style, the leader will not retain the control with himself/ her self but will promote the participation of the group members.
- **Laissez faire style:** In this style the leader will not be much involved and the group members take leads and decisions and work in the direction of the goal.

Which leadership style is effective will depend on the nature of the task, group and varied situational factors. Studies have indicated that democratic leadership style is more effective especially in order to increase the task cohesion of the team (Sullivan et al. 2012).

The leader, in the context of sports team, the captain or the coach will also play an important role in developing a clarity amongst the team members about the role that need to play in the team. Role can be explained as the set of behaviours that a team member is expected to display when he/ she is in a social setup. Thus, a wicketkeeper in cricket has certain role as has the bowler. It is important that the team members have clarity about their role and display role acceptance, that is, they accept and follow the set of behaviours as expected from them and thus fulfil the demands of the role

leading to role performance. Role performance can be explained as completion of all the responsibilities based on the demands of the role given to the team member.

Thus, leadership can play an important role in team effectiveness and social psychologists can not only use the social psychology theories to understand leadership but suitable intervention strategies can be used by them in order to identify the leaders from amongst the group members. various workshops and training programmes can also be designed to develop effective leadership skills amongst the sports persons.

Check Your Progress II

- 1) List the three leadership styles.

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12.4 EFFECTIVE TEAM COMMUNICATION

Consider a team consisting of players who all are well versed in their sport but the only problem is, they are not interacting properly due to personal grudges they hold towards each other? Do you think this team will be able to achieve success or even able to play together in a coordinated manner? “No” the instant response that comes in your mind. So, from this one can concludes that communication is a key factor in every successful team. If the communication is good among the team members then the chances of the members to achieve their goal is more than members having inadequate communication. Before, proceeding further let us first discuss what is the role of communication in sports.

The word communication has been derived from a Latin terms ‘communis’, meaning common/ sharing (Charlton and Charles, 1879). Communication can be described as a process that is continuous in nature and involves give and take of information. There are necessarily two parties in the communication process who have the ability to convey the information as well as listen. Feedback is an integral part of effective communication and the message that is communicated can be verbal (example: written or spoken) or it could be nonverbal (example: by means of symbols, signs or gestures).

According to Sullivan, et. al, (2012, page 126), communication can be defined as “the interpersonal acts or interaction among team members that will improve the team’s and its members performance”. Communication can be considered effective if the message conveyed among the players would

result in improved team performance or lead to more satisfaction among the members of the team. In sports, effective communication among the coaches and athletes tend to bring an established rapport among them, which in turn have a significant role in contributing to the athletes sporting performance. New skills can also be learned through effective communication as athletes will receive clear feedbacks on skill execution from their coaches as well as team members. According to Attle and Baker (2007), effective communication and learning of new physical skills are related to each other. Any negative communication pattern that affects the skills coach transfers to its members can have a negative impact on the athlete's performance while training and competition. Therefore, communication should always be positive, clear and up to the mark, so that it will help to satisfy the athletes needs for self-regulation, helping them to enhance their performance.

Teams that can communicate effectively during the game are able to perform better, make lesser errors and also, they are ready for the challenges of the game. Conversely, bad communication by the team on the field makes more errors and often leads to destroy the game. Effective communication helps the player to understand his/her role completely and also everyone's else role in the team. In this regard, study was done by Cunningham and Eys (2007) to find the relationship between role clarity and effective communication. It was found that frequent social communication among teammates and perception of role clarity among athletes was positively correlated. A research on golf and tennis teams was done and it was found that the winning teams are more engaged in communication during and between the games rather than the losing team (Lausic, Tennebaum, Eccles, Jeong, & Johnson, 2009; Widmeyer & Williams, 1991). Thus, it can, concludes that in order for the team to be able to perform at their ability best, effective communication should be there, both on and off the field. If the team becomes unsuccessful in maintaining effective communication, the team will not be able to achieve their end goals i.e. winning the game.

There are four main styles of communication as proposed by Hain in 1992 (Sullivan et al, 20120

- **Orientation messages:** This includes messages related to planning. Team members often indulge in discussion of strategies and techniques that they could use while playing the game. Planning is an important aspect of effective team work.
- **Stimulation messages:** These include communication related to reinforcement and motivation. Team members and especially the leader needs to use the stimulation messages in order to encourage the team members to perform to their best,
- **Evaluation messages:** As the name suggests these are related to the assessment of performance and are based on the efforts put in by the team

members, their ability and performance. Based on these feedback can also be given to the team members.

- **Task irrelevant messages:** Communication that cannot be categorised in above three categories can be termed as task irrelevant messages.

Communication is non-verbal as well and this also can play an important role in effective performance of the teams. A study on the effect of facial and verbal congruency on perceived verbal and emotional coaching feedback was carried out by Corcker in 1990 (Shetgovekar, 2018) The study used 2 x 2 randomised design and included 71 participants, 32 female students and 39 male students. The participants were assigned randomly to four conditions. The participants were asked to watch videotape of facial verbal pairings and then they had to evaluate keeping in mind the positive and negative statements and expression of emotions by the coach. The results indicated that an inconsistency in facial verbal expressions influences the perception of verbal feedback and emotional state.

Further, interaction between the team members during the game could also be crucial to the effective performance and winning of the team.

Thus, suitable interventions can be developed by social psychologists in order to enhance the communication skills of the players. Workshops and training programmes based on these can be effectively organised and the focus can be on building an effective team.

Check Your Progress III

- 1) List the four main styles of communication as proposed by Hain.

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12.5 LET US SUM UP

To sum up, in the present unit we discussed about application of social psychology to sports and in the process we focused on team in sports, leadership and effective communication. Teams can be described as a group of individuals that have a common goal. In the context of team, we also discussed about team dynamics. Team dynamics can be termed as the unconscious, psychological forces that influence the direction of the team behaviour and performance. In this context the factors influencing the team performance, namely, team cohesion, team confidence and team building were discussed in details. Leadership in the context of sports team was also

discussed. Yukl in 1998 defined leadership as the process in which the members in a group are influenced by one of the members in the group (its leader). Various theories of leadership and leadership styles were also discussed in this subsection. In the last subsection of the unit, we discussed about communication. Communication can be described as a process that is continuous in nature and involves give and take of information. The four main styles of communication as proposed by Hain in 1992 were also explained

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12.7 KEY WORDS

Communication: Communication can be described as a process that is continuous in nature and involves give and take of information

Leadership: It is “a process that involves one person (the leader) influencing other persons or members of the group (the followers) in order to achieve the purpose or objectives of the group” (Shetgovekar, 2018, page 218)

Teams: Teams can be described as a group of individuals that have a common goal.

Team cohesion: A dynamic process by which the members of the group remain together and united to meet the goals of the team as well as the

fulfilment and satisfaction of their needs is known as team cohesion (Carron, Brawley, and Widmeyer 1998).

Team dynamics: Team Dynamics can be termed as the unconscious, psychological forces that influence the direction of the team behaviour and performance.

12.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

- 1) What is team cohesion?

A dynamic process by which the members of the group remain together and united to meet the goals of the team as well as the fulfilment and satisfaction of their needs is known as team cohesion (Carron, Brawley, and Widmeyer 1998).

Check Your Progress II

- 1) List the three leadership styles.

The three leadership styles are autocratic, democratic and laissez faire.

Check Your Progress III

- 1) List the four main styles of communication as proposed by Hain.

The four main styles of communication as proposed by Hain are:

- Orientation messages
- Stimulation messages
- Evaluation messages
- Task irrelevant messages

12.9 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) Discuss team cohesion and team confidence in sports
- 2) Elucidate team building.
- 3) Explain leadership in the context of sports.
- 4) Describe communication patterns.

UNIT 13 APPLICATIONS OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY TO SOCIAL MEDIA*

Structure

- 13.0 Objectives
- 13.1 Introduction
- 13.2 Social Media: Meaning, Types and Usage
 - 13.2.1 Types of Social Media
 - 13.2.2 Usage of Social Media
- 13.4 Human Attributes and Social Media
- 13.5 Application of Social Psychology to Social Media
 - 13.5.1 Cyberspace and Self
 - 13.5.2 Cyberbullying
 - 13.5.3 Social Media and Mental Health
- 13.6 Let Us Sum up
- 13.7 References
- 13.8 Key words
- 13.9 Activity
- 13.10 Unit End Questions

13.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you will be able to:

- discuss social media with a focus on its meaning, types and usage;
- explain human attributes and social media; and
- discuss application of social psychology to social media.

13.1 INTRODUCTION

Neha has an expertise in making tasty pickles and jams. She would make these for her family and friends and get complimented for her skill at it. With the support and encouragement from her husband and children, Neha decided that she could add on to the family income if she sold pickles and jam to the locals. She got a bit worried with the thought of having to go out

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and make contacts which would be time consuming and tiring and what would happen if the sale did not take off. Her older son decided to put an end to her worries and used social networking platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram etc. to post about the products, order details and availability/ delivery options. Within minutes there was a downpour of wishes to the new initiative, orders, queries and Neha had got started on her new business at such a great scale than she ever imagined. With minimal investment she saw a positive future for her commitment and skills in her venture.

Roy is working abroad and is currently confined to his home due to COVID - 19 outbreak. The entire country is in lockdown and people have been instructed to not leave their houses unless extremely necessary. In such worried moments, Roy is using social media not only to keep in touch with his loved ones back at home but is also responsibly sharing updates on safety measures, facilities available, government policies etc. Since he is also working from home, social media is the best way to continue work related communication and allowing him to remain employed in such crucial times.

Kajal, a 17-year-old college student constantly looks at her Instagram feeds filled with photos of friends and relatives wearing trendy clothes, going on expensive holidays, eating at fancy restaurants, playing with pets etc. She comes from a middle-class family and cannot afford the luxuries many others she knows can. The image in her mind is that everyone else, except for her, have a beautiful and colourful life. She keeps feeling unfortunate for herself most often without realising that just like her all others have their pain and struggles but cover them with the digital curtains of their social media feeds.

At some point in time social media was more of a leisure activity used on our computer screens but this has changed. Today, being portable and more accessible than ever before, it has profound effects on how the world functions in a classroom, an office and the government alike.

Our understanding of media is the various communication tools that deliver information. It occurs in forms of print media, publishing, photography, broadcasting (TV, radio etc.), cinema and advertising among others. For such information to reach an audience resources employed would be thousands of skilled writers, filming crew, editors, broadcasters etc. A newspaper house would hire reporters, editors, designers, typesetters, delivery persons in order to get the final product to the audience.

Today, however, with the advent of digital technology, lower cost of computers, high speed internet access, easy to use software's, means that communication can reach the audience within minutes. Live blogs, video uploads, audio messages, facetime and the like have made media reach the masses with minimal effort and time thereby making it a communication of mass media or social media users.

By creating a profile for oneself on a social network site and moving ahead to build on a network by connecting with others on it, one can engage in strong social communication on topics of relevance and interest. Such networks keep attracting new members by providing information and services that interest them, entertain and encourage adding new members to expand their networks. Twitter, for example, allows users to communicate through short messages of 280 characters known as 'tweets', which makes it a short, simple, free and very attractive forum to share updates. Another example is Blogging which is personal blogs of people and their everyday lives or political blogs on political updates or business blogs that allow communication between companies and professionals. Media companies like the BBC also have blogs for their reporters and journalists as a platform for sharing journalism insights, personal views or professional interests.

Various media outlets influence our lives – what we watch, eat, read, who we make friends with and most often how we think and feel. The internet, radio, television, magazines etc. surround most human existence. Thus, social media has become a part and parcel of our life. And there are advantages of social media that are multifold there are negative impacts as well. In the present unit, we will look at social media and its influences through the lenses of social psychology.

13.2 SOCIAL MEDIA: MEANING, TYPES AND USAGE

As social beings, we humans need social interaction. Besides the interaction with our family and friends around us, today, humans have a need to use technology to make new communications and build new relationships and contact even beyond ones geographical area. Social networking sustains most human interactions today. Social media sites and apps provide opportunities like connecting with people across international borders, join groups with similar interests like cooking, sports, psychology, reading etc., be a part of specialised forums that could widen perspectives and also provide job opportunities, news updates etc.

Many of our internet experiences could involve logging to a news website or a shopping site and getting the information you need. There is no communication with anybody. Social media, on the other hand, involves a two-way communication with friends, family, professionals and others with similar interests as you. More than downloading information it is sharing and communicating information.

With the spread of social media usage across varied age groups, we as students of psychology need to understand how it is affecting individuals and the society at large. The endless amount of communication and connection between people is changing the way we think and absorb information.

Social media can be described as a technology that is computer based and provides a platform where individuals can share their ideas, thoughts, views, opinions, information and so on. It is internet based and it can be used in order to communicate content like documents, videos, photographs, information and so on. It can also be explained as an umbrella term for the applications and websites that facilitate communication, interaction, sharing of content and so on. Social media is use not only by family and friends to keep in touch and interact with each other but it has found its application in business as well.

Social media involves forms of media that permit interactive participation. Often, the development in media can be viewed from two different ages (Manning, 2014):

- **The broadcast age:** Wherein media was a single entity like the radio, television, newspaper and distributed messages to many people. Feedback was often indirect, delayed and impersonal.
- **The interactive age:** Wherein interaction has become much easier than before. Individuals can now communicate to many others and provide instant feedback where necessary. The revolution of social media has made seeking information and sharing ideas convenient at the click of a button.

Some common form of media interactions are:

- **Email:** Electronic mail involves logging on to an account inorder to send or receive messages from other users. Anyone who uses electronic mail must have an account on any of the service providers available. Email is a quick and reliable way to send documents/ updates to a large number of people.
- **Text messages:** Texting is a two-way communication that allows individuals to communicate with others in very little time. Earlier thought of as a more youthful activity, today people of all ages have adapted to texting. With advancements in technology it is possible today to text images, copy and paste content and links to share.
- **Blogs:** The word 'blog' comes from the word 'weblog'. It is a webpage where an individual/ group share ideas or information to a larger audience via the internet. These blogs are updated regularly and cover a wide range of topics. People can provide feedback on such a media forum.
- **Message boards:** These are online discussion sites where people can hold conversations on specific topics. Within a forum, each new discussion started is called a 'thread' and can receive replies from any number of people. Usually such forums have moderators who are also users and are granted access to posts and threads of all members for the purpose of moderating discussions and handling any issues that may arise.

- **Apps (Applications):** Mobile applications are used to help people connect to the various forms of social media like Facebook, Twitter etc.
- **Games and Entertainment:** Online games and entertainment have a social dimension wherein many of these allow friends to challenge each other for scores or help people with gifts and points to sustain in a game etc. A very common example is Farmville where people build a virtual farm, town or business and others in the game can help the players.
- **Social networking sites:** The many networking sites today are becoming a widespread attraction among people. Even those who choose not to make online profiles tend to hear from others about what is happening on their profiles. These networking sites are a great way of connecting people provided that people are responsible to avoid adding unknown people to their friend list. Besides the personal interactions, these sites also become a public space to share social, political, business, international news and updates.

13.2.1 Types of Social Media

Some of the types of social media (Hudson, 2020) include:

- 1) **Social networks:** According to Wasserman & Faust (1994), a social network is 'a social structure that is made up of social actors (such as an individual or organization), sets of dyadic ties, and other social interactions between actors. The social network perspective provides a set of methods for analysing the structure of whole social entities as well a variety of theories explaining the patterns observed in these structures.' A social networking service, social media or social networking site is an online platform that allows people to build social relationships with others who have similar interests, backgrounds and other real - life similarities. Examples of social networking platforms include Facebook and Twitter.
- 1) **Media networks:** The main speciality of media networks is distribution of photographs and videos. Examples of media networks are Instagram and Youtube.
- 2) **Discussion networks:** These mainly involve in depth discussion on certain issues and topics. Examples of discussion network are Reddit, Quora and Digg.
- 3) **Review networks:** These mainly focus on the review of services and products. These networks facilitate interaction between the individuals who provide the review and the users. Examples are TripAdvisor and yelp.
- 4) **Blogging and publishing networks:** With the help of these networks, content can be published online. Examples are Blogging and WordPress. There are also some microblogging services, for example, Tumblr.

Besides the above there are various other types like, interest-based networks, that mainly facilitate sharing of interests and hobbies. There are also shopping networks, that facilitate online shopping, There are sharing economy networks that mainly focus on trading of good and services.

Social media, thus, comes in different forms. You can choose what is best suited to your task at hand and ensure that you know what you aim to achieve, think creatively and keep it human.

13.2.2 Usage of Social Media

Today it can be rightly said that social media is a critical part of people's lives either in their communication or a key way of getting work done. It changes all the time and so it is important to keep up with the evolution of the various platforms and keep looking for ways to optimize the use of these platforms.

According to a survey by the Digital and Social Media Landscape in India (2019), the internet users had increased in urban as well as rural areas of the country. Facebook and YouTube were the most popular social media networks while Amazon and Flipkart were the most popular shopping sites. TikTok was the most popular app downloaded. WhatsApp had a boosted app usage with a massive increase especially in rural areas. Instagram was the other popular app used.

With the internet becoming more accessible, average Indian users spend 2.4 hours on social media every day. In line with global trends, the Indian consumer is increasingly consuming various content on digital platforms. This trend is seen in content related to the news (text), music (audio) and video formats.

A report of social media usage over a decade (2005 – 2015) was compiled by Andrew Perrin and his colleagues at the Pew Research Centre, USA. The trends observed across various demographic groups indicated as follows:

- 1) **Age differences:** Young adults (ages 18 to 29 years) are the most likely to use social media, as 90% reported they do. However, usage among the elderly, 65 years and older, had more than tripled (in 2010 only 11% used social media). In 2015, 35% of 65 years and older reported using social media, compared to just 2% in 2005.
- 2) **Gender differences:** Women and men used social media at similar rates – Women were more likely than men to use social networking sites, although since 2014 these differences have been modest. In 2015, 68% of all women used social media, compared with 62% of all men.
- 3) **Socio-economic differences:** Those with higher education levels and household income led the way. It was observed that in the decade under assessment (2005-2015) those in higher-income households were more likely to use social media. More than half (56%) of those living in the

lowest-income households used social media, though growth has levelled off in the past few years. With regard to educational attainment, a similar pattern was observed. Those with at least some college experience had been more likely than those with a high school degree or less to use social media over the past decade. 2013 was the first year that more than half of those with a high school diploma or less used social media.

- 4) **Racial and ethnic similarities:** There were no notable differences by racial or ethnic group: 65% of whites, 65% of Hispanics and 56% of African-Americans used social media by 2015.
- 5) **Community differences:** More than half of rural residents used social media by the end of the assessment. Those who lived in rural areas were less likely than those in suburban and urban communities to use social media, a pattern consistent over the decade. By 2015, 58% of rural residents, 68% of suburban residents, and 64% of urban residents use social media.

Though this survey was carried out in United States, we can see similar trends in India.

Social media is a very exciting mode of digital communication and is full of opportunities to educate oneself and educate others too. At the same time it is a platform accessible to the world around us. How we interact with it affects the nature of feedback we receive from the diversity of human minds on our lists. As students of psychology we will now proceed further to understand how the basics of social media existence today is affecting human life. Every post is a reflection of oneself and should come with an equal amount of responsibility to safeguard oneself. Hence, it is our role to communicate to people that with the ease of media usage comes a need for responsible and sensible behaviours from oneself.

The topics above have listed what makes up social media and how it can be used. In the topics to follow we will associate the presence of social media to human psychology.

Check Your Progress I

- 1) List the types of social media.

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13.3 HUMAN ATTRIBUTES AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Social psychology studies how individuals think, feel and behave in a social context and today social media is an example of such a context. There is actual and implied presence of others through connections of friends and followers and each user is aware of the presence of other users. Social media behaviours give people a sense of acceptance, conformity and belonging. The socio-psychological needs of establishing new relationships, bonding, and staying connected is effortlessly fulfilled by this domain. In the real world, this would seem more complex.

Personality and behaviour theorists have identified core sets of human characteristics that explain the way people think, feel and behave. To be active and visible social media users people need to use their core characteristics to make a social media presence. The nature of social media is that it encourages socialising. In this section we will highlight 4 human attributes that sustain social media presence and act as key drivers of social media engagement.

1) **Personality:** The World Wide Web has opened immense opportunities for people to interact, socialise, create and promote. One of the factors that makes web content designers open wider access among people is underlying human traits. Personality is defined by Gordon Allport as the dynamic organization within an individual of those psychophysical systems that determine his/her characteristic behaviour and thought. An important framework used in research on digital media and personality is the Big Five Factor Model by Robert McCrae and Paul T. Costa. It categorises personality into five measurable domains: Extraversion, Emotional stability, Openness to new experience, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness.

- *Extraversion:* Extraverted people were more connected to others through social networking sites than in the 'real world' (Gosling et.al., 2011; Zywicki & Danowski, 2008).
- *Emotional stability* (also referred to as *neuroticism* in reverse form): Linked to different levels of anxiety, instability and excitability studies show that people high on neuroticism prefer instant messaging rather than face to face interactions (Ehrenberg et. al., 2008). This is believed to be because online messaging allows more time to contemplate responses and emotionally unstable people find it easier to communicate in time.
- *Openness to new experience:* Evidence suggests that people who are open to new experiences are more likely to use social media networks (Guadagno et. al., 2008; Ross et.al., 2009). High openness to experience is reflected in curiosity and novelty seeking while low

levels adhere to conventional established patterns. Because of the diversity on social media, people high on this domain are more likely to experiment and share on the various sites.

- *Agreeableness*: This domain includes traits such as being courteous, flexible, trusting, good natured and tolerant. According to Landers & Lounsbury, 2006, individuals low on agreeableness report struggles in forming online relationships and this leaves them with fewer friends and acquaintances on their lists. These people have been noted to prefer more direct contact and communication.
- *Conscientiousness*: According to Bogg & Roberts, 2013, conscientiousness involves an individual's inclination to obey socially prescribed norms and rules. These researchers revealed that people high on this domain refrain from using much of social media as they feel these networks lead to high levels of procrastination and distraction thereby taking them away from more important tasks.

2) **Age**: More than 80% of every generation use social media atleast once per day as part of their daily routines. According to the Pew Research Centre, 9June, 2019), 69% adults between 50-64 years and 40% of those above 65 years use social media. Young adults were the earliest social media adopters and slowly its usage considerably increased among older adults. 13 – 34 year olds use social media multiple times a day but 18 – 34 year olds specifically referred to as millennials are more likely to use varied networking sites or platforms. Posting images is the most common content among all age groups. Listed below are the range of experiences people across age groups hope to gain through their social networking habits:

- Staying connected with family and friends
- Building a sense of community
- Being a help to those who may need you
- Getting solutions to concerns and problems
- Look for ideas and inspiration
- Promote and expand professional endeavours

3) **Gender**: Men and women use social media differently. Men often look to form new relationships while women focus more on sustaining existing ones. An investigation by Facebook revealed that female users shared more personal moments (family, relationships) while men discussed more abstract topics (politics). A Twitter experiment by journalist Martin Belam showed that women tended to receive more abusive comments when expressing their opinions on abstract topics.

- Pinterest, Facebook and Instagram have larger female users while Reddit and Twitter have more male users.

- Women and men differ in their self-presentation on social media. Women post more photos which have direct eye contact while men prefer full body shots and those that include the company of other people.
- John Hopkins University analysed the language of Twitter users and found that women used more emoticons and paid attention to punctuations.
- Men are more likely to engage in trolling and aggressive language which psychologists believe is related to the fact that men use the media platform to vent out their anger rather than face-to-face communication.

Men and women communicate differently in real life and this difference is certainly reflected in their online language and communication. These differences are visible in the topics of their posts, the platforms they choose etc.

4) **Self-Esteem:** In earlier days, magazines and advertising agencies were criticized for depicting unrealistic standards of success and beauty. Now, however, these standards are easily accessible on our phones. The internet and social media is carving the lives of most humans today. As seen in Kajal's case at the start of this unit, the posts and feeds of people in our lists are very appealing and show only the best and enviable moments of peoples lives. The struggles and not so good experiences remain concealed. Self esteem is a persons positive or negative evaluation of self – their self-worth and self-competence. Humans have an innate tendency to compare themselves to others. Two forms of such social comparison are

- *Upward Social Comparison:* Occurs when comparing oneself to others superior from them who have positive characteristics.
- *Downward Social Comparison:* Occurs when comparing self with those inferior than them having negative characteristics.

Although upward comparison is beneficial and inspires people to be like persons they look up to, it can often cause feelings of inadequacy, poor self-evaluation and negative affect (Marsh & Parker, 1984). On the other hand, downward communication can make people feel negative but often leads to improvement in affect and self-evaluation. According to psychologist Jill Emanuele, social media alone is unlikely to be at the heart of concerns but it does make a difficult situation harder. Social comparisons are high and feelings of inadequacy are increasing. Technology helps cover our face blemishes, makes bodies look toned, thin and attractive and these digital alterations are not permitting any sense of self-worth and self-competence. In another perspective though, while the internet is provoking cases of cyber bullying and attacking people's private space and self-esteem, it is also a

boosting the self-esteem and self-competence of shy, introverted persons who build relationships and images of themselves online, which they would find difficult in the real world.

Check Your Progress II

- 1) What are the five categories of personality as given in Big Five Factor Model of Robert McCrae and Paul T. Costa?

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13.4 APPLICATION OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY TO SOCIAL MEDIA

With a certain amount of dependency on social media today it is important to discuss how it is working with the psychology of human existence. Is social media altering who we really are? Do people create social media images of themselves in order to fit in? Do they follow certain trends to make others think of them in a certain way? Is it keeping us connected yet increasing incredible amount of loneliness?

Everything comes with its pros and cons. So does this revolution of social media. It has become an important part of people's lives today be it to communicate with others or get work done. Programmers/ developers on networking sites keep making changes on networks to make it user friendly, accessible and productive to users.

Being a very exciting mode of digital communication social media is full of opportunities to get educated and educate others. All users must be aware that they have to be responsible in its use. What is put up on media sites becomes a reflection of oneself and is available for others to see, share, store, edit and provide feedback. Hence, it is extremely essential that any user of networking sites or any form of social media is aware, responsible and sensible of their online behaviours.

In line with the above it is important to discuss how social media works on the human mind and behaviour and vice versa. A few questions that arise are, is social media altering who we really are? Do people create social media images of themselves in order to fit in? Do people follow trends to make others think of them in a certain way? Is social media keeping us connected yet increasing incredible amount of loneliness? Everything has its pros and cons and so this medium of the digital world.

If you have ever lost your smartphone, you surely have experienced panic and anxiety to some extent. This occurs because we associate so much with our devices with a major part of our living stored in its memory. On an average every person spends about two hours on the smartphone every day. Some people report that they sometimes experience the feeling of a cell phone buzzing in their pockets when it is actually not even there. The hyper—social environment that these technical devices provide us with tend to make us dependant and sometimes addicted to them. We carry our social worlds in our pockets. The smartphone technology is very beneficial to society but its costs are also increasing like lack of sleep, increased anxiety and depression, risk of car injuries or deaths. There will still be a part of the population that would want to spend less time on their phones but find it very difficult to disconnect.

According to a Harvard University Researcher, Trevor Haynes, the moment a person gets a social media notification, the brain releases a chemical messenger or neurotransmitter called Dopamine that makes a person feel good. A neurotransmitter is a chemical that is released from a nerve cell which thereby transmits an impulse from a nerve cell to another nerve, muscle, organ, or other tissue. It is a messenger of neurologic information from one cell to another. Neurotransmitter Dopamine is associated with desire, ambition, addiction, sex drives and now, social media usage.

Just like in substance abuse, social media addiction involves broken reward pathways in our brains. We get immediate rewards – the attention from networking sites- with minimal effort. The brain the re-wires itself making you desire the likes, retweets, shares, emoji's etc. Positive social stimulation results in release of dopamine thereby reinforcing the behaviour that preceded it. Cognitive neuropsychologists have indicated how rewarding social stimuli like likes, recognition from peers, messages activate dopamine reward pathways.

The more 'likes' on our profiles, the more shots of dopamine. The more the shots of dopamine, the more we want. This creates a loop for the human mind. A study by Sherman et. al. (2016) indicated that the effects of social media likes on the adolescent brain is the same as when they eat a chocolate or win money. It also stated that people are more likely to engage with posts that have been liked by a large number of their peers indicating a 'crowd mentality'. This is an inclination for people to be influenced by others to adopt certain behaviours on a largely emotional rather than rational basis.

Social psychology behind social media is based on the following major activities:

- 1) **Posts:** People post on social media networks because they generally like to talk – about themselves, the world around them or matters of concern. Talking face to face can be a challenge to some and so people may choose to avoid it. Online communication gives them time to construct

and refine what they want to say with no rush. Psychologists call this 'self-presentation' which involves expressing oneself and behaving the way you want to be perceived.

- 2) **Shares:** Humans tend to have an impulse to pass on information. Just the thought of online sharing activates the brain's reward centres. People share to remain connected to others while many others may share to give a better picture of who they are and what they care about.
- 3) **Likes:** Liking others' posts are seen as a way of maintaining connections and relationships. When people like each other's posts they feel that they reinforce the connections/ relationships. The likes also create a reciprocity effect where others feel obliged to reciprocate as a positive gesture.
- 4) **Comments:** This section allows people to share their experiences of something. Commenting or responding to comments can be a form of appreciation, feedback, suggestions for change, reviews etc.

Social media allows us to use knowledge, creativity and understanding to bring the world closer when used resourcefully. If not, it provokes elements of dependency, addiction, anxiety and vulnerabilities.

When we are discussing about social media, we also need to explain the term Cyberpsychology. Cyberpsychology (also known as Internet psychology, web psychology, or digital psychology) is a developing field that encompasses all psychological phenomena associated with or affected by emerging technology. Cyber comes from the word cyberspace, the study of the operation of control and communication; psychology is the study of the mind and behavior. Research in this domain involves topics like online identity, online relationships, personality in cyberspace, addiction to technology, cyberbullying etc. By studying aspects like online gaming, social media, virtual reality, online learning among other aspects, cyberpsychology helps understand the interactions between humans and technology.

13.4.1 Cyberspace and Self

Self was first proposed by William James in 1890 and he suggested that there are three elements of experiencing self. The very first element is the material me, that deals with the self that is related to one's body and the physical objects that are present in the environment of the individual. The second element is the social me, that denotes the individual's awareness about how others perceive him/ her. The third element is the spiritual me that denotes the individual's thoughts and feelings. Self can also be explained as awareness about one self, how self is underplayed in social context and how self determines an individual's behaviour and decisions. Self has been well researched and studied in social psychology. Though in the present subsection our focus is on self in relation to cyberspace.

The term cyberspace was first proposed by William Gibson in the year 1984. Gibson used the term in his novel titled “Neuromancer” which was fiction based on science and he derived the term from cybernetics. The term was explained by Gibson as “space that exists within the computer networks” (Chester, 2005, page 51). In 1995, Turkle explained cyberspace as “Life on the Screen” (Shetgovakar, 2018, page 99). Thus, this is space where individuals are able to express themselves, share their opinions and views and this can be done even by maintaining anonymity. The identity of the individual is not limited to his/ her physical form. Thus, there is disembodiment of self. Internet provides individuals to reinvent themselves and an opportunity is available to the individual to explore aspects of his/ her own self that were not explored earlier (Turkle, 1999). Cyberspace not only provides anonymity but the users can also interact through multiple domains. Thus the boundaries between self and role can become vague (McCorduck, 1996).

13.4.2 Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying can be explained as “an aggressive intentional act carried out by a group or individual, using electronic forms of contact, repeatedly and over time against a victim who can not easily defend him or herself”. Smith et al (2008, page 376). Whitty and Young (2017, page 78) defined cyberbullying as “intended and repeated harm caused by communication via use of computers, mobile phones and other electronic devices”. Cyberbullying can be perceived as a serious problem as the victims not only face social embarrassment but may experience anxiety, depression and paranoia (Schenk and Fremouw, 2012). The victims also experience anger, frustration and are prone to develop psychological issues and may even attempt suicide (Whitty and Young, 2017). Yet another term in this context is cyberstalking, that can be explained as stalking an individual by using electronic devices of communication. This again can have detrimental effects on the wellbeing of the individuals being stalked.

Interventions in this regard need to focus on stricter norms and laws besides awareness programmes and workshops to understand the emerging problem in a better way. Workshops need to focus on effective use of social media. This is an area where research can be carried out by applied social psychologists in order to understand the problem in a better manner and suggest and develop suitable intervention strategies.

13.4.1 Social Media and Mental Health

As we are all aware, most social media platforms are free. They rely on revenue from advertisers in order to make profits. Today social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube observe your viewing habits and sell your data to advertisers. These advertisers then keep providing related content on your account to keep you attentive and attracted to your device. In simple

words we would call this behaviour social media addiction and this fulfils the intention of the advertisers and generates revenue to the network developers.

Social media users tend to compare the lives of others to their own. Engaging in constant comparisons lowers self esteem and feelings of self-worth (Copeland, 2015). A decreased sense of self-worth and self-esteem could increase feelings of depression. Savastio, 2014 found that participants in her study who spent more time on Facebook had decreased feelings of wellbeing and increased feelings of depression. The virtual world of connecting with friends, family, acquaintances and strangers can increase feelings of loneliness instead of feeling socially connected. Liu Yi Lin et. al. (2016) found that excessive social media usage increased feelings of social isolation. Research data by Matthew et.al. (2012) indicated that social rejection or ostracism in a virtual environment threatens the four needs of belonging, control, self esteem and meaningful existence. The individuals may also experience Fear Of Missing Out (FOMO), that is seen as a byproduct of excessive social media interactions. Such a fear develops from a user's repetitive and obsessive checking of posts, updates, status etc. with a strong feeling of being 'left out' if these events are not checked or accessed.

Social media addiction is a behavioural addiction characterised as being overly concerned about social media, driven by an uncontrollable urge to log on to or use social media, and devoting so much time and effort to social media that it impairs other important life areas. This addiction is due to the dopamine induced social environments provided by the various networks. The neural circuits activated during activities like gambling or recreational drugs are similar to those during social media usage. People who meet the criteria of media addiction usually report feelings of tolerance (when able to use social media over time), withdrawal (irritable when unable to access) and intense cravings to reach out and use a device to access media sites. While these networks have their benefits, overuse can lead to mental health concerns like poor self-esteem, anxiety, loneliness etc.

We will look at some of the positive and negatives of social media usage on mental health.

Social media also has a role as a determinant of aggression. Through various platforms of social media, the individuals, especially, children and adolescents, could get exposed to violent content and this can have detrimental effect on their behaviour as well as mental health. Social media can have a short terms as well as long term impact on the individual and this is determined by various factors as discussed below:

- Social environment, including parental influence and influence of significant others.
- The extent of identification with the character displaying aggressive behaviour,

- The attractiveness of the aggressive or violent content displayed on the social media.

Thus, it is important that, there is some control over the duration and degree of exposure to social media especially for children and adolescents. Awareness programmes mainly based on effective use of social media needs to be created amongst the children, adolescents, parents and general public. Various dangers pertaining to usage of social media also need to be highlighted through intervention strategies.

Social media usage can have positive influences on mental health like:

- Social media gives an opportunity to read, watch, listen to other individuals who have successfully coped or fought mental health issues.
- Today young people may turn to social media as a means for emotional and social support. This builds a community spirit even with geographical distance.
- Social media connections help people who may feel socially isolated.
- It can be a strong tool to dissolve stigma around mental health issues.
- Crowdsourcing (practice of getting needed ideas, content etc by soliciting help from large groups of people) allows people to attain their goals and empowers them.
- Social media gives people a platform to express and be creative. This could foster their self-concept and self-identity.
- Some negative influences of social media usage on mental health are:
- Overuse of social networking sites can cause problems to children and young adults as their brains and social skills are still developing.
- The constant display of perfect, filtered photos and images can cause low self esteem and eating disorders in young adults.
- The competition for acknowledgement and attention through likes and shares can lead to online bullying through spreading of rumours and false information, indecent images and photos without their consent, harassment etc. Such abuse has led to increased suicide rates in recent years.
- Over dependence on media sites can lead to stress, depression, anxiety associated to long term mental health issues.
- Compulsive checking of social media updates is now linked to the Fear Of Missing Out (FOMO).
- Sleep related issues are prominent today as sleep tends to be disturbed by constant beeping notifications. Our electronic devices used too close to our sleep schedules have proven to disrupt sleep due to the blue light

emissions which delay the release of sleep-inducing melatonin. The time spent in social networking behaviours affects the amount of sleep needed by the individual.

Social media has a great impact on our lives and it is going to grow in the future. It gives people a voice, allows self-expression, connects people and has the power to create a change. It has its dark side too. As with most other things in life, it is important to use social media in balance and moderation. Our attitude towards media and its use are crucial towards preserving or damaging our mental health.

Check Your Progress III

- 1) What is cyberpsychology?

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- 2) List any one positive influence of social media on mental health.

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13.5 LET US SUM UP

Human beings are social creatures and seek companionship. The strength of these connections has a huge impact on one's mental health. Being in a social world can relieve stress and anxiety, boost self-worth, spread joy and give a fulfilment to life. On the flip side, lacking the right social connections can make one lonely and risk his/her emotional and mental health. One way people make social connection is the use of social media. Live blogs, video uploads, audio messages, facetimeing and the like have made media reach the masses with minimal effort and time thereby making it a communication of mass media or social media users. The common form of media interactions are email, text messages, blogs, message boards, mobile applications, games and entertainment and social networking sites. Various demographic factors that affect the usage of these media forms are age differences, gender differences, socio-economic differences, racial and ethnic similarities and

community differences. According to a Harvard University researcher, Trevor Haynes, the moment a person gets a social media notification, the brain releases a chemical messenger or neurotransmitter called Dopamine that makes a person feel good. The more 'likes' on our profiles, the more shots of dopamine. The more the shots of dopamine, the more we want. This creates a loop for the human mind. Personality and behaviour theorists have identified core sets of human characteristics that explain the way people think, feel and behave. To be active and visible social media users people need to use their core characteristics to make a social media presence. The key drivers are personality, age, gender and self-esteem. Psychology behind social media is based on the major activities such as Online Posts, Shares, Likes and Comments. In line with these behaviours a growing domain is cyberpsychology (also known as Internet psychology, web psychology, or digital psychology) which is a developing field that encompasses all psychological phenomena associated with or affected by emerging technology. The relationship between social media usage and mental health is strong. Social media addiction is a behavioural addiction characterised as being overly concerned about social media, driven by an uncontrollable urge to log on to or use social media, and devoting so much time and effort to social media that it impairs other important life areas. As with most other things in life, it is important to use social media in balance and moderation. Our attitude towards media and its use are crucial towards preserving or damaging our mental health.

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13.7 KEY WORDS

Cyberbullying: Cyberbullying can be explained as “an aggressive intentional act carried out by a group or individual, using electronic forms of contact, repeatedly and over time against a victim who can not easily defend him or herself” Smith et al (2008, page 376).

Cyberpsychology: Cyberpsychology (also known as Internet psychology, web psychology, or digital psychology) is a developing field that encompasses all psychological phenomena associated with or affected by emerging technology.

Social media: Social media can be described as a technology that is computer based and provides a platform where individuals can share their ideas, thoughts, views, opinions, information and so on. It is internet based and it can be used in order to communicate content like documents, videos, photographs, information ad so on.

Social media addiction: Social media addiction is a behavioural addiction characterised as being overly concerned about social media, driven by an

uncontrollable urge to log on to or use social media, and devoting so much time and effort to social media that it impairs other important life areas.

Social networking: A social networking service, social media or social networking site is an online platform that allows people to build social relationships with others who have similar interests, backgrounds and other real - life similarities.

13.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

- 1) List the types of social media.

The types of social media are:

- Social networks
- Media networks
- Discussion Networks
- Review networks
- Blogging and publishing networks

Check Your Progress II

- 1) What are the five categories of personality as given in Big Five Factor Model of Robert McCrae and Paul T. Costa?

The five categories of personality as given in Big Five Factor Model of Robert McCrae and Paul T. Costa are:

- Extraversion
- Emotional Stability (also referred to as neuroticism in reverse form)
- Openness to New Experience
- Agreeableness
- Conscientiousness

Check Your Progress III

- 1) What is cyberpsychology?

Cyberpsychology (also known as Internet psychology, web psychology, or digital psychology) is a developing field that encompasses all psychological phenomena associated with or affected by emerging technology.

- 2) List any one positive influence of social media on mental health.

Social media gives an opportunity to read, watch, listen to other individuals who have successfully coped or fought mental health issues.

13.9 UNIT END QUESTIONS

Applications of Social
Psychology to Social
Media

- 1) Explain the meaning, types and usage of social media.
- 2) Explain human attributes in the context of social media.
- 3) Discuss the application of social psychology to social media.
- 4) Describe how social media can have an influence of mental health



UNIT 14 APPLICATIONS OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY TO HEALTH, MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING*

Structure

14.0 Objectives

14.1 Introduction

14.2 Application of Social Psychology to Health

14.2.2 The Social Influences on Health

14.2.2 Social Norms and Social Support

14.3 Application of Social Psychology to Mental Health and Wellbeing

12.3.1 Social Structure and Mental Health

12.3.2 Social Stigma and Mental Health

14.4 Application of Social Psychology in Promoting Health and Healthy Behaviours

14.5 Let us Sum up

14.6 References

14.7 Key Words

14.8 Answers to check your progress

14.9 Unit end Questions

14.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you will be able to:

- discuss the role of social frameworks in health related behaviours;
- examine the influence of social relationships and behaviours in individual mental health; and
- derive ideas to plan interventions to promote healthy behaviours.

14.1 INTRODUCTION

Today we notice huge changes that have occurred in peoples lives. The way we eat, exercise, the food we consume, the lifestyles we adopt has tremendously changed. There are high numbers with regards to malnutrition, smoking, alcohol consumption and an overall unhealthy lifestyle. As much as technology and the internet are a boon to our generations, it is also proving to

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be a challenge in our physical activities and consumption behaviours in general. This, in turn, threatens our physical and mental health in ways we most often cannot see.

In the earlier units you have read on the influence of our social world in various aspects of our lives. In the current chapter we will highlight the role of social psychology and its application in health and mental health areas.

14.2 SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY AND HEALTH

The term health has been derived from an old English word 'Hoelth', meaning 'the state or condition of being whole or sound' (Melquiades, 2015, page 3).

The Constitution of World Health Organisation (WHO) in the year 1946, came up with a definition of health as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity". Later in its 1998 constitution, WHO again modified its definition and defined health as "a dynamic state of complete physical, mental, spiritual and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity".

The key points of definition of health include the following

- health is not denoted by absence of disease or symptoms.
 - the nature of health is dynamic.
 - health encompasses physical, mental, social and spiritual wellbeing.
- Health is thus a combination of these dimensions.

Thus, health can be explained in terms of presence of wellbeing and not the absence of illnesses.

As the concept of health is clear, let us now focus on how principles of social psychology play a role in health.

14.2.1 The Social Influences on Health

We know that good health matters not only to individuals but to society at large as well. It is also, however, true that not everyone has the same opportunities to live healthy lives. There are varied social factors that influence our health related behaviours.

- **Our social surroundings:** Health is greatly influenced by things around us and the opportunities they create for us. For instance we need to have an understanding of whether the places we live in or have access to allow us to be more physically active, feel secure, have facilities to socialize, play and stay active. These opportunities can be encouraging and push people towards being active and healthy. In a study by Livingston et. al. (2017) nine key factors of dementia were identified. Among these were social isolation, physical inactivity and other associated diseases like Type 2 diabetes. Researchers suggested that these can be prevented if there are

factors in the wider environment that encompass physical activity and an opportunity to socialise.

- **Housing Conditions:** Our homes provide more than just physical shelter to us. They act as units where we socialise with family and friends. Our houses are places where we spend most of our time. How does housing contribute to our health? A warm/ clean home provides a feeling of safety and security while living in crowded, unhealthy households can result in stress, anxiety and overall poor health. A socially secure neighbourhood and connected services to housing can promote healthy behaviours.
- **The food we eat:** You must be wondering how this one becomes a social influence. Food is vital for our health. Today, however, we have two sections of people in society. One group which has access to all types of food and do not have limits or control and thereby tend to have obesity related conditions and another group of people who may know very well what is important for their bodies but cannot afford basic meals and so experience hunger and related conditions. The economic and social factors usually determine what food people can afford in order to live healthy lives. Another social perspective to the food we eat is a reflection of culture that we belong to. The nutritional value of the food we eat in our cultures requires to help our bodily nutritional needs and keep us healthy.
- **Transport:** Transport systems connect us. It provides access to jobs, markets and goods, education, social groups and networks and helps in building healthy and fulfilled lives. Busses, trains, cycling, driving are transport options which connect people to various resources. Having well designed and accessible transport facilities reduces social isolation and allows people to get food, medicine and social contact that are crucial health determinants. Making streets safe for pedestrians and cyclists can also provide people opportunities to walk or cycle to places rather than use vehicles always thereby protecting the environment and also encouraging physical activity.
- **Family, friends and social communication:** We humans need to feel a sense of belongingness deeply. A warm, supportive family, a friendly neighbourhood, people greeting each other on the streets makes one feel a part of the community they live in. Community participation also provides with a sense of empowerment by being a part of positive networks and relationships. This community empowerment address a lot of health inequalities and provides support to care for and support each other.

14.2.2 Social Norms and Social Support

In the health domain we are all aware of the role of health workers. They work tirelessly with patients in diagnosing, treatment and after treatment care. These health workers have their medical knowledge set but what is challenging for each of them is to execute their roles to each of their patients. Each patient having varied background, socio-cultural setup, lifestyle,

thought and behavior patterns among other factors. If you examine that perspective it is of importance to note that these professionals function a lot on social norms and conduct along with their professional roles. Thus, social psychologists have laid emphasis on the role of social norms in forming health related ideologies in the community. The patients carry these ideologies and so it sometimes could pose a challenge to health professionals to encourage and promote healthy behaviours.

Most often one of the core challenges faced in the health sector is behavior change in the target population. As seen in previous unit, each community or social group has its implicit and explicit social norms and frameworks and these explain the values, beliefs and behaviours of communities. The ideologies of a close knit rural community is more based on their reliance on nature and natural remedies for cure as compared to the people living in more individual setups in cities relying on science and doctors for medical treatment. These ways of life could also determine how health policies and behavior changes will be accepted and practiced by communities.

The social norms approach is well known and accepted as an intervention strategy that promotes positive health related behaviours. According to this approach individuals perceive/misperceive the behaviours and attitudes of their peers. They also seek peer approval for a range of their own positive and negative behaviours. The higher the misperceptions, the greater the chances of engaging in unhealthy behaviours such as over-consumption of alcohol, smoking, unhealthy eating etc. This approach is widely used today in promoting healthy behaviours.

Alongside, the role of social support is also gaining a lot of attention in health related research. We are aware that people are always surrounded by others in their own networks. Research (Antonucci, 2001) indicates that family and friends are especially effective in providing and receiving social support. The same researcher in 1990 had also found that women provide more support, have more frequent contact with networks, are more satisfied having friends around and have more multifaceted social networks compared to men.

In a study by Campbell et. al. (2000), a group of African-American church members participated in a four year nutritional intervention research. They found that church members were more successful at increasing their fruit and vegetable intake when they felt a part of the close-knit congregation than those who were less successful at changing to a healthier diet. Allgower et. al. (2001) found that low social support was also related to sedentary behaviors, irregular sleep and increased alcohol consumption in his study with university students.

Berkman and Glass (2000) indicated a conceptual model of the role of social support on health. They suggested that the effect of social support is a multilevel process starting with the larger social context that shape our social

networks. These social networks, in turn, influence our health through social support and social influence.

Gallant et. al. (2007) highlight that physical activity is easier when an individual has a friend or relative to exercise with. These occasions also provide opportunities for companionship and recreation.

These findings indicate that health does have a strong connection with a persons social network. Lifestyles are usually a consequence of socially constructed choices and hence interventions can focus on social norms and social networks aiming to facilitate healthy behavior.

Check Your Progress I

- 1) How do housing conditions influence our health?

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- 2) State some healthy behaviours people of any age can follow?

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14.3 SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY AND MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Good health is, both, physical and mental wellbeing. Our emotional, psychological and social health influences our physical health and vice versa. Our mental health affects and influences how we think, feel, act, relate to others and make choices.

Before we go on to explain how social psychology can be applied to mental health and wellbeing, let us look at the concepts of mental health and wellbeing.

The WHO defines mental health as “a state of well-being in which the individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community”. Thus, it is not denoted by absence of

mental illness or disorders but presence of psychological wellbeing. Thus, the terms mental health and wellbeing are related to each other.

According to Shin and Johnson (1978, page 478) “wellbeing is a global assessment of a person’s quality of life according to his own chosen criteria”. Shah and Marks (2004, page 2) explained that “well-being is more than just happiness. As well as feeling satisfied and happy, well-being means developing as a person, being fulfilled, and making a contribution to the community.

The concept of wellbeing can be related with the concepts of mental health, life satisfaction, and happiness. It mainly refers to the subjective feelings that include and evaluation of cognitive and affective life aspects that get affected directly or indirectly by disease and illness. It includes an evaluation of sense of happiness, contentment and belongingness as well as achievement and of being without distress and discomfort (Dalal and Misra, 2006). Wellbeing can be categorised as subjective wellbeing and objective wellbeing. “Subjective well-being consists of three interrelated components: life satisfaction, pleasant affect, and unpleasant affect. Affect refers to pleasant and unpleasant moods and emotions, whereas life satisfaction refers to a cognitive sense of satisfaction with life” (Diener and Suh, 1997, page 200). And objective wellbeing denotes whether the basic needs to the individuals are met or not and it is measures using objective measures like mortality rate etc. Wellbeing can also be categorised in to emotional wellbeing, physical wellbeing, social wellbeing, workplace wellbeing and societal wellbeing (Davis, 2019).

Emotional wellbeing can be described as ability of an individual to adequately manage stress, display resilience and display positive emotions. Physical well-being is denoted by improvement in one’s bodily functioning by having a healthy lifestyle by exercising and eating healthy. Social wellbeing can be explained as effective communication and ability to develop relationships and having adequate social support. Workplace wellbeing is ability of an individual to develop in his/ her profession and pursue one’s interest, values and gain meaning and happiness. And societal wellbeing can be explained as active participation in community and environment related activities.

Mental health concerns are usually caused by sudden occurrences of major life events or by intense and unpleasant emotional experiences that have been present in ones life. One of the key factors (just like in physical health) is social support. Social support is when individuals perceive or receive material, emotional, spiritual support from individuals or groups. This can promote empathy, attention, emotional stability, trust and most importantly a sense of belonging. It can enhance a sense of protection and reduce a persons psychological stress. We will discuss three aspects of social life and mental health.

14.3.1 Social Structure and Mental Health

Does social structure have any influence on our physical wellbeing and mental health? We are aware of the role of social support and now we will delve into the influence of social structure. There is a relationship between aspects of social structure like socio-economic-status, gender, race, occupation and an individual's behavior patterns. In this section we will focus on 3 social structural variables:

- **Social position and mental health:** One's mental health is determined by a wide range of factors including personal factors like genetics, lifestyle, education as well as social factors like family structure, peers etc. There has been recognition of the importance of socio-economic determinants of mental health as well as the socio-economic inequalities in mental health. According to the World Health Organization there is a universal association between poverty and mental health. Pickett et. al. (2006) indicate that greater the gap between the rich and the poor, the greater the differences in mental health. For example, one possible indicator for such inequality could be self assessment for one's health for which education plays a crucial role.

The social-causation hypothesis states that the stress associated with a low social position contributes to the development of mental disorders. This could be as a result of socio-economic deprivation. On the other hand, the social selection hypothesis assumes that people with mental health problems drift downwards in their socio-economic position because of their mental health problems and also their inability to achieve expected role obligations.

- **Social stressors and mental health:** There exist numerous social stressors that can have detrimental effects on our mental health. Traumatic life events, gender discrimination, social position, inequality, prejudice and discrimination just a few to mention. People in society experience deep frustrations due to restricted opportunities for education, employment and overall social advancement. Such stressors lead to distress. Psychological disorders like depression and anxiety are often associated with negative social interactions, overcrowding, lack of social support, migration etc. Such experiences tend to have less access to favourable economic, social and environmental conditions through life and also have minimal support facilities. Such difficulties could be present before birth and thereby accumulate over a lifetime making them vulnerable in adulthood.

The effects of these stressors can usually be buffered along one's life by providing love, support and stable relationships with others. Encouraging positive beliefs related to optimism, self esteem and a sense of control can help in managing the effects of social stressors on mental health.

14.3.2 Social Stigma and Mental Health

WHO indicates that mental and behavioural health conditions affect a considerable number of the world population. There are several reasons for these, a few of which we have discussed in the previous section. It has also been noted that there are two critical explanations for this.

- Those with mental health conditions may be so disabled by their condition that they may not be able to seek treatment.
- These people may not be able to identify their own condition and therefore do not seek services available.

Besides these a key factor of social stigma may also interfere in the lives of individuals with mental health concerns. Social stigma is a structural aspect in society which means that it is a belief held by a large section of society and where stigmatised persons are considered less equal or part of an inferior group. Stigma is embedded in the social framework and creates inferiority.

Social psychologists often suggest three specific models of stigmatisation.

- Socio-cultural model which suggests that stigma develops in order to justify social injustice. For example, labelling individuals with mental or behavioural illnesses as unequal.
- The motivational model which focusses on the basic psychological needs of an individual. For example, persons with mental illness coming from lower socio-economic groups are inferior thereby disregarding the persons need for having a good social position.
- The social-cognitive model which attempts to make sense of the basic society using a cognitive framework, such that a person with a mental illness would be labelled in one category and differentiated from non-ill persons.

The stereotyping of mental illness affects societies at large. People with mental health concerns can have problems finding work, being in steady and long term relationships, living in decent housing and being included in the mainstream society. Social isolation, unemployment and poverty are all linked to mental illness and therefore social stigma and discrimination can put people in a trap of a cycle of illnesses.

Besides social stigma, Crocker (1999) demonstrates a concept of self stigma which is stigma internalised by the person about his/her condition. The continuous effect of self stigma can make an individual feel guilty and inadequate about their own condition. In self stigma, the knowledge that stigma is present in society can have an impact on an individual even if the person has not been directly stigmatised. This can affect the person's self esteem, self efficacy and can directly alter their behavior.

An important way to do away with stigmatisation is by educating individuals that have an opportunity to make a difference – through social work education. Policy makers can also advocate to include strategies to mitigate stigma.

Mental health concerns are present across the world. The number of persons affected could continue to grow. Individuals who receive treatment do not always continue to remain in care once they begin. The WHO (2001) has suggested that stigma could be one of the largest barriers to following of treatment for patients.

Check Your Progress II

- 1) State two social stressors.

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- 2) What is self stigma?

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14.4 APPLICATION OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY TO PROMOTING HEALTH AND HEALTHY BEHAVIOURS

The principles of social psychology can be applied not only to understand the health related behaviours but also to promote such behaviours.

Individuals often know that consumption of junk food can have a negative impact on one's health. But they still consume junk food on regular basis. The same is true with smoking as well and various other health behaviours. It can be said that healthy practices, lifestyle and attitudes can go a long way in ensuring positive health and wellbeing of an individual. Thus, in order to promote health we need to focus on the relationship between health behaviour and health related attitudes.

Some of the beliefs that are relevant in the context of relationship between health behaviours and health related attitudes (Sears, Peplau and Taylor, 1991) are:

- Values with regard to general health, that is the interest and concern that the individual has with regard to the health.
- Danger and threats to health, denoting the severity of the disease/ disorder and its threat
- Individual vulnerability to the disease or disorder, denoting how vulnerable he/ she thinks he/ she is to the disease or disorder.
- Individual's self efficacy (confidence about one's ability) for dealing the threat of the disease or disorder.
- Response efficacy denoting whether the efforts taken by the individual for dealing with the illness will lead to outcomes desired by him/ her.

When our objective is promoting health, one of the important aspects that we need to focus on is awareness. That is how aware the people are with regard to health related issues. What is their knowledge, attitude and practices? This is important because, based on this suitable intervention or awareness programme can be developed and implemented. However, before that is done, we also need suitable tools to measure the health related knowledge, attitude and practices amongst the individuals. One such scale is Health Modernity Scale by A. K. Singh. Health Modernity can be defined as "Scientifically correct information, attitudes and behaviour in relation to physical and mental health, diet and nutrition, family planning and child-care including breast feeding, personal hygiene and environmental sanitation and such other issues which are essential pre-requisites for healthy living and, therefore, for human and social development" (A. K. Singh, 1983). The scale constitutes ten dimensions, namely, Physical Health, Mental Health, Nutrition and Diet, Family Planning, Child Care, Breast Feeding, Mental Retardation, Attitudes towards Females, Cancer, and AIDS. With the help such scales and other tools misconception and ignorance can be identified and accordingly a suitable intervention strategy or awareness programmes can be developed. Further, while dealing with any issue or problem, we need to deal with it at different levels, like, individual level, family level, community level, national and international level. So that the issue/problem is dealt with at every level.

In this context we also need to focus on few models that can be utilised to bring about health related changes in health related behaviour. Some of these models are discussed as follows:

- **Health Belief Model:** According to this model the health related behaviour displayed by an individual will depend on:
 - a) His/ her perceived vulnerability/ susceptibility to the illness,

- b) The severity of the illness as perceived by the individual,
 - c) The benefits of health behaviour as perceived by the individual, that is, whether the perceived vulnerability/ susceptibility will decrease if the health related behaviour is followed,
 - d) And lastly, the perception with regard to barriers or obstacles regarding the health related behaviour.
- **Theory of Planned Behaviour:** This theory was proposed by Ajzen and it mainly highlights behaviour intentions of an individual that can play a role in health related behaviours. And behaviour intentions can be determined by attitude towards behaviour. And attitude towards behaviour is determined by
- a) The beliefs and evaluation related to outcome of following certain health related behavior,
 - b) Subjective norms, that denotes the belief related to the expectations of significant others,
 - c) And the motivation of individual to follow the health related behaviour.
- **Stages of Change Model:** This model was proposed by Prochaska and Diclemente. The stages in this model are described as follows:
- Stage 1: Precontemplation (the individual does not intent change the behaviour).
 - Stage 2: Contemplation (realisation and contemplation regarding need to change the behaviour)
 - Stage 3: Preparation (steps and measure ti change behaviour)
 - Stage 4: Action (bringing about change in behaviour)
 - Stage 5: Maintenance (maintaining the changed behaviour)

Based on the models discussed above various intervention strategies can be developed in order to promote health and healthy behaviours amongst the individuals. These interventions can also be evaluated and further improved.

Researchers and health care professionals highlight healthy habits that define healthy lifestyles. These include a healthy diet (intake of vegetables, fruits, wholegrain, healthy fats and avoiding unhealthy processed foods, trans fats etc.), physical activity (at least 30 minutes per day of moderate to vigorous activity), healthy body weight (maintaining a normal BMI), no smoking and moderate alcohol intake among others. Healthy habits make a huge difference to one's life.

Individual human beings as well as the society as a whole have to maintain and improve health and wellbeing. Healthy behaviours across the lifespan

indicate a great investment in one's health for a long term. One's experiences, behaviours and childhood habits shape the long term outcomes. These are in turn supported and shaped by our environment and social networks.

Overall, no matter what age or culture we belong to, we must eat healthy and have habits that sustain good health. Eating healthy meals, staying physically active, prioritising happiness, nurturing your social network, being more conscientious and having good sleep habits are keys to good health and wellbeing.

Social psychology can play an important role in promoting healthy lifestyle as certain intervention strategies can be developed that can be used in order to create awareness and also promote certain health behaviours

Check Your Progress III

- 1) List the stages in change model.

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14.5 LET US SUM UP

As much as technology and the internet are a boon to our generations, it is also proving to be a challenge in our physical activities and consumption behaviors in general. This, in turn, threatens our physical and mental health in ways we most often cannot see.

In the current chapter we have highlighted the role of social psychology and its aspects in our Health and Mental health areas. Various influences on health are discussed with an emphasis on social support as a key factor.

Our health does also have a strong connection with a person's social network. Lifestyles are usually a consequence of socially constructed choices and hence interventions can focus on social norms and social networks aiming to facilitate healthy behavior.

No matter what age or culture we belong to, we must eat healthy and have habits that sustain good health. Eating healthy meals, staying physically active, prioritizing happiness, nurturing your social network, being more conscientious and having good sleep habits are keys to good health and wellbeing.

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14.7 KEY WORDS

Social stigma: Social stigma is a structural aspect in society which means that it is a belief held by a large section of society and where stigmatised persons are considered less equal or part of an inferior group.

Self stigma: Self stigma is stigma internalised by the person about his/her condition.

Prejudice: Prejudice is an affective feeling towards a person based on their perceived social membership. It refers to preconceived, often unfavourable, evaluation of another person based on gender, beliefs, social class, disability, race/ethnicity etc. (Dovidio, 2010).

Community: Community is 'the people living in one particular area or people who are considered as an unit because of their common interest, social group or nationality.

14.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

- 1) How do housing conditions influence our health?

A warm/ clean home provides a feeling of safety and security while living in crowded, unhealthy households can result in stress, anxiety and overall poor health. A socially secure neighbourhood and connected services to housing can promote healthy behaviours.

- 2) State some healthy behaviours people of any age can follow?

A healthy diet (intake of vegetables, fruits, wholegrain, healthy fats and avoiding unhealthy processed foods, trans fats etc.), physical activity (at least 30 minutes per day of moderate to vigorous activity), healthy body weight (maintaining a normal BMI), no smoking and moderate alcohol intake

Check Your Progress II

- 1) State any two social stressors.

Traumatic life events and gender discrimination, are two social stress

2) What is self stigma?

Stigma internalised by the person about his/her condition is termed as social stigma.

Check Your Progress III

1) List the stages in change model.

- The stages in change model are described as follows:

Stage 1: Precontemplation (the individual does not intent change the behaviour).

Stage 2: Contemplation (realisation and contemplation regarding need to change the behaviour)

Stage 3: Preparation (steps and measure to change behaviour)

Stage 4: Action (bringing about change in behaviour)

Stage 5: Maintenance (maintaining the changed behaviour)

14.9 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) How does social support influence human health?
- 2) What role do transport facilities play in health related behaviours?
- 3) Explain how social stressors influence mental health.
- 4) What is the role of stigma in mental health?
- 5) Describe how social psychology can be applied to promoting health and healthy behaviours.

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