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SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL PROBLEMS

Social problems refer to the situations faced by the people in which achievement of genuine goals of a community or group are not achieved due to difficulties at the level of system. People get harassed, live under disadvantaged conditions, do not get good education, and are subjected to discrimination and prejudice. These are examples of social problems. These problems have many aspects including social, economic psychological and historical and other solution requires efforts from many angles. Indian society is undergoing socio-economic transformation. Also it has a very rich and old cultural heritage. India is also aspiring to be a strong country at a global level. all these pressures are causing problems and other kinds of development. Some problems like illiteracy, social tension and gender discrimination are well known. Educational problems refer to issues of school dropout, stagnation and wastage. They are also social problems. This lesson will help you understand the psychological aspects of some important social problems faced in the society.



OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson, you will be able to:

- explain important psychological aspects of social problems: poverty, drug addiction, and dowry;
- reflect upon the ways to solve these problems; and
- discuss the extent of school dropout, stagnation and wastage.

16.1 POVERTY

In our country, there are many people living in poverty. Poverty denies individuals and their family of basic rights such as **equality, justice, dignity, health, basic comforts** and **personal security**. Poverty is basically an outcome of inequalities. **Poverty** is usually



defined in terms of **objective poverty**, which is lack of **material belongings** that is, lack of economic resources such as it is difficult to achieve an adequate level of living. Hence we can say that poverty divides the population between those who have an adequate level of living and those who do not. **Subjective poverty** refers to the perception and experience of poverty as felt by a person. **Deprivation** on the other hand refers to loss of opportunities and privileges that are normally available to the general population. It means lack of basic necessities for the survival of an individual. This can take the form of inadequate environmental conditions, impoverished experiences and characteristics of the socially disadvantaged sections.



Fig. 16.1: *The Urban Slums*

Causes and Consequences of Poverty

Poverty needs to be understood as a cause as well as consequence. It is caused by several factors and in turn causes several other problems. An important aspect of poverty is deprivation. **Deprivation**, a lack of opportunity, reduces access to availability of resources and is due to poor economic conditions. For example, education and employment have a two way relationship with reduced opportunity to be gainfully employed. There are many consequences of poverty. They interact with each other to bring about physical and psychological effects on the persons. Let us examine some of the key consequences of poverty.

Malnutrition and Development: Malnutrition influences both physical growth and affect psychological development. A good diet helps a child to be active and happy. Malnutrition and social impoverishment are major factors that bring about mental retardation. Children of poor families start life with a handicap of limited food supply, widespread infections, poor health, inadequate stimulation, and lack of education and awareness among parents.

Socialization Patterns Socialization patterns under poverty conditions are characterized by inadequate stimulation, poor or no schooling, lack of role models, and lack of social and emotional support from the peer group. Lack of such aspects has a detrimental influence on the cognitive and emotional development of the growing child.



Personality Development: Different **personality patterns** are suggested for the deprived and non-deprived groups. Highly deprived children are likely to be high on neuroticism and introversion, and low on extraversion than non-deprived children. Deprivation is also related to social maladjustment, immaturity, and withdrawal. It also predisposes children to delinquency, and proneness to more external and chance orientation than non-deprived young adults.

Activity 1

Understanding the concept of poverty.

Talk to people belonging to different backgrounds - friends, family, neighbours, students, employed/unemployed, slum dwellers, amongst others. Ask each person to define poverty and list the five most important reasons for the occurrence of poverty in India. Add your own answer and tabulate the data. You can calculate the frequency of each cause stated by the people. Discuss your findings with your family.

Motivational Consequences: The experiences of rewards and punishments help in the formation of one's **motivational orientation**, poverty condition leads to low need for achievement, low extension need, and a high need for dependence.

Mental health: There is increasing evidence of a strong association between poor **mental health** and the experience of poverty and deprivation. The type and extent of mental health problems range from health problems, adjustment is higher if the individual is a migrant and comes from a low socio-economic status. Although mental illness occurs in all ages, gender and backgrounds, the risk is higher among the **poor and homeless, unemployed, and with low education**.

Psychological Interventions: There are many causes and consequences of poverty. It affects the individual, group and society. Psychologists work with the idea that human development is shaped by the experiences faced by the individual. The aim towards helping the person then is to train the individual by building up and increasing support to the deprived person in terms of cognitive, motivational and behavioral skills. Such guidance will increase the competency levels for effective functioning in society.

Psychological interventions do help the deprived and disadvantaged. However we must keep the following aspects in mind. First, **continuous help** may lead to **psychological dependency** and reliance on others. Under such conditions the deprived will not take responsibility for their actions and not become self-sufficient. Second, psychological interventions should be operable at all three levels: the **individual, community and societal**. For example, simultaneous changes of educational practices, social policy and economic input will have far reaching impact. Community involvement brings about commitment and the desire to achieve success in the programmes.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 16.1



Notes

1. Complete the following statements:

1. Poverty is defined in terms of _____ and _____ poverty.
2. Objective poverty is the lack of _____.
3. Subjective poverty refers to the _____ and _____ felt by the person.
4. _____ refers to loss of opportunities and privileges that are normally available to the general population.
5. Deprived person must be trained in terms of _____, _____, and _____ skills.
6. Psychological interventions for poverty must operate at the _____, _____, and _____ levels.

2. Explain the causes and consequences of poverty.

16.2 SOME OTHER SOCIAL PROBLEMS

Drug Addiction. Drug addiction is a **chronic problem** that involves **compulsive drug seeking and dependence** on it despite the fact that it has harmful effects on the individual. It is often difficult to understand as to why some people become addicted to drugs. It could be due to a combination of **risk factors** such as individual biology, socioeconomic status, peer pressure, stress, quality of parenting, role models, and age are some important aspects. **Genetic and environmental factors** interact with developmental and maturity stages in a person’s life. The earlier a person takes to consuming drugs the more serious the addiction. It is a common problem and a challenge during adolescence, when peer pressure to experiment with new things is present. Drug addiction is closely related to crime and HIV/AIDS. The effects on physical and mental health are also well documented. **Treatment** is available to help people counter their addiction; however **prevention** of drug addiction is a better approach. Involving families, schools, colleges, community and media are effective ways of countering addiction. Public figures and youth icons can participate in anti-drug campaigns.

Dowry. Dowry refers to the cash, gifts, property and material goods the man receives from the wife’s family at the time of marriage. Dowry was earlier a way of helping with the marriage expenses but now it has become a way of paying the groom’s family for taking on the **burden of a woman**. Due to this aspect the birth of a girl in a family is considered as an expense, and if the family is poor it puts more strain on the family. There are many



reasons for dowry giving and taking. The concern by the girl's parents to provide a good and happy life to their daughter forces them to pay large amounts as dowry much beyond their means. Borrowing money at high interest rates to pay dowry often puts the family in perennial debt. Dowry is a **social custom**, practiced for generations. Changing such customs is very difficult. This custom puts the young woman at very high risks. The woman who brings in little dowry is at the mercy of the husband's family, as they may ill treat her, harass her and indulge in violence and torture. It is sad to note that even in the presence of the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961, dowry deaths, are becoming more prevalent, and indicating that mere laws do not help in the eradication of this social evil. Effective implementation, active involvement and cooperation of society in removing of this evil must be sought. Boys and girls must be educated, taught to respect each other, and refusals of dowry are some ways of eradicating this social evil.

16.3 SCHOOL DROPOUT, STAGNATION AND WASTAGE

The **right to education** is a fundamental right. Yet we note that children who join school often drop out of schooling. **Dropout rate** is defined as the proportion of children who discontinue school after enrolling in the schooling system. Thirty percent of children leave school before completing five years of schooling and 50 percent leave before completing 8 years of schooling.

Two additional concepts of **stagnation and wastage** are important in the educational setting. Education is necessary for the development of the person and effective contribution of the person towards society. When the education received is of little or no help to the person then it is termed as wastage of education. It is important for the growing child to use the knowledge he or she has gained from education, in its absence there is wastage of the resources. In addition the educational system needs to keep pace with demands and needs of the context and bring about changes in the curriculum and knowledge content of different educational fields. If it cannot do so then educational stagnation takes place. Thus at the primary school level students initially join and after a few years leave school, leading to wastage of the resources employed to educate the child. It becomes essential to retain the child back in school to complete his/her education. Often children are retained in the same class due to unsatisfactory progress. This further demotivates the child to continue studying in school.

There are various reasons for school dropout, stagnation and wastage. These reasons fall into three categories, namely, socio-economic, psychological and educational. The absence of schooling activities in the vicinity, lack of awareness of necessary education among parents, poverty, lack of interest in education, absence of educational environment, examination failure and, the need for children to work for economic reasons are major reasons for leaving school. In addition, poor systemic support in terms of rules and procedures of the schooling system, curriculum that is alien to the needs of the students, poor quality of education, and poor equipment also play a role in increasing school dropouts.

Efforts to **decrease the school dropout rate** are government programs such as National Literacy Mission, *Sarv Sikhsha Abhiyan* (Total Literacy Campaign) and Mid Day Meal Scheme. Kerala has the highest literacy rate in the country, and other states are also doing their best to decrease school dropouts.

Social problems described above deal with different domains of life. However you must have noted that these problems are closely related to each other and in fact influence each other also. Hence the solutions to these problems is not easy, inputs from various disciplines is required to help out these social problems. The role of psychology to understand human behavior cannot be under estimated. Modification of attitudes, feelings and pattern of behavior are significant. Psychologists along with other social scientists can provide strategies for achieving these changes.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 16.2 AND 16.3

Fill in the blanks:

1. The sex ratio of male and female is unfavorable towards _____ .
2. Two women leaders who have emerged as leaders at national level are _____ and _____ .
3. Drug addiction is a chronic problem that involves _____ and _____ by the individual.
4. _____ refers to the proportion of children who discontinue school after enrolling in the schooling system.
5. Students initially join and after a few years leave school, leading to _____ of the resources employed to educate the child.



WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT

- Poverty is the outcome of inequalities.
- Poverty may be objective or subjective.
- Deprivation refers to loss of opportunities and privileges that are available to the normal population.
- The causes and consequences of poverty include, malnutrition, socialization patterns, personality development, motivational consequences, and, mental health.





- Psychological interventions aim to train the person to build up and provide support in terms of cognitive, behavioural and motivational skills.
- Drug addiction and dowry seeking are other social problems.
- In the educational setting the drop out rate of students from school is high. The issues of stagnation and wastage are related to school dropout.
- There are various reasons for school dropout, wastage and stagnation - socio economic, psychological and educational.

**TERMINAL QUESTIONS**

1. Define poverty. Explain the causes and consequences of poverty.
2. Write short notes on :
 - a. Drug addiction
 - b. Dowry
3. Explain the terms 'stagnation' and 'Wastage' in the educational setting. What efforts are being made to reduce school dropouts.

**ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS****16.1**

1. Objective, subjective
 2. Material belongings
 3. Perception, experience
 4. Deprivation
 5. Cognitive, motivational and behavioral
 6. Individual, community and societal
2. Deprivation, malnutrition, socialization patterns, personality motivation and mental health.

16.2

1. Women
2. Sarojini Naidu and Indira Gandhi
3. Dropout

Social and Educational Problems

4. Wastage
5. Compulsive drug seeking, dependence

Hints for Terminal Questions

1. Refer to section 16.1
2. Refer to section 16.2
3. Refer to section 16.3

MODULE - IV

Social Psychological Processes



Notes