

Block

3

VALUES OF SOCIAL WORK-I

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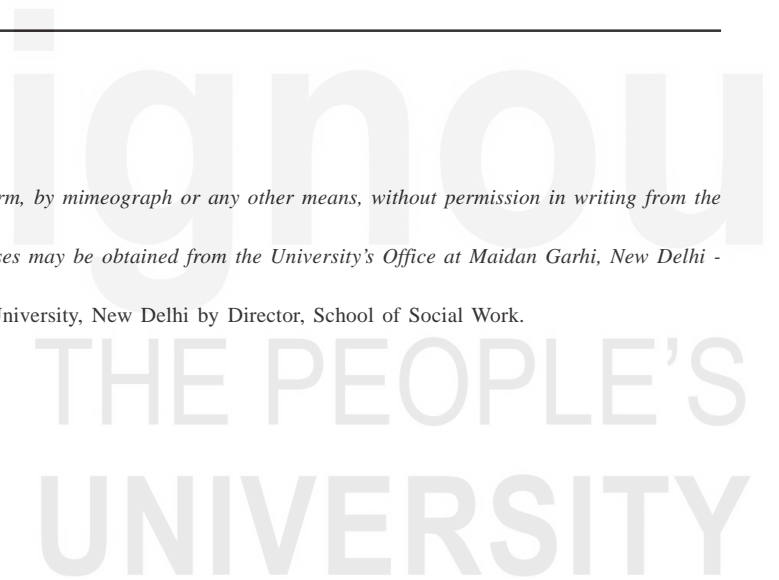
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INTRODUCTION TO BLOCK 3

Welcome to Block 3 of the course entitled 'Professional Social Work and its Values'. This block on, "Values of Social Work I" is the third block of BSW-121. It is comprised of six units.

The first unit 'Service to Humanity as a value of Social Work' explains the principles of value of service to humanity and the major services areas of social work. It further delineates the importance of value of service to humanity. The second unit 'Social Justice as a value of Social Work' further explores the concept of social justice and the principles and importance of the value of service to humanity. Unit 3 is on 'Importance of Human Relationships as a value of Social Work'. This unit analyzes the importance of human relationships as a value in social work. It explains human relationships as social capital and analyses systems approach to human relationships. The characteristics of an effective relationship and the principles of using relationship in social work intervention are also discussed in this Unit. Unit 4 on 'Dignity and Worth of the Person as a value of Social Work' explains the concept of dignity and evaluates the meaning of dignity and worth of the persons as a social work value. The unit elaborates the challenges to achieving human dignity and the role of social workers to deal with challenges to human dignity. The fifth unit 'Integrity as a value of Social Work' describes integrity as Code of Ethics for Social Work Profession. It explores the personal social and professional meaning of integrity with case examples and highlights the implications and limitations of the practice of integrity in social work profession. The last unit of this block is on 'Competence as a value of Social Work'. This unit describes the meaning, stages, types and factors determining competence. The ethical principles of competence and the core competencies in social work practice are also discussed in this unit.

On the whole, this block will provide you an overview of the values of social work.



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UNIT 1 SERVICE TO HUMANITY AS A VALUE OF SOCIAL WORK

Contents

** Aneesh Kurian*

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- 1.1 Introduction
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- 1.3 Service to Humanity as Value of Social Work
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- 1.7 Suggested Readings
- 1.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

1.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Understand the value of service to humanity
- Explain the principles of value of service to humanity
- Explain the major service areas of social work
- Enlist the importance of value of service to humanity

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The social work profession aims for the development of human potential and the fulfilment of human needs, by working with and enabling people to achieve the best possible levels of personal and social well-being. It enables individuals, groups, families and communities in the pursuit and achievement of equitable access to social, economic and political resources. Social work may include, but is not limited to interpersonal practice, group work, community work, social development, social action, policy development, research, social work education and supervisory and managerial functions in these fields. Being a social worker is a tremendous responsibility as it is a position in which one has power over the lives and well-being of others.

Service to humanity is the base of social work which is aimed at human welfare. Service to others is one of the core values of social work, from which all other values stem. Social work profession expects the value of service to humanity to ensure quality of services to the clients and seeks to improve accessibility, accountability and coordination among professionals and agencies in service delivery system. In the helping process, social work profession holds service to humanity as a primary value and objective. Being a practice profession, social workers acknowledge that serving others is more important than self-interest and place the needs of their clients ahead of their own personal interests.

1.2 CONCEPT AND NATURE OF SERVICE TO HUMANITY

Humanity is not about maintaining a gracious relationship between one another in the society but it is about building a bond amongst the members in the society with the help of sustainable values. Humanity is not about showing passion and empathy to each other at times of need but about regarding love in high esteem and kindness in all walks of life. Humanity is not just a word for symbolizing the human compassion and civilization but it goes beyond the horizons of human nature and his creations. It is all about using hearts along with the minds in all the endeavours of human kind. Humanity, in general, is perceived as a charity. The foremost activity man should engage in, is service to the fellow human beings.

In general, the term “service” refers to the variety of programs made available by individuals, public or private agencies to individuals, families and communities who need special assistance. Every society has the social and economic insecurities that accompany old age, unemployment, disability, desertion or death of the family wage earner. Religious and fraternal organizations, along with private and public welfare organizations, provide various forms of aid to the needy. Service is not only confined to isolated deeds and words of charity towards the disabled, helpless or the poverty stricken but also to all those who are affected mentally and emotionally including those belonging to the high strata of the society. Service is a value expected from every professional. The service provided by a professional social worker aimed at helping individuals, families and groups to restore or enhance their capacity for effective functioning and work towards supporting the communities in need. The field of social work focuses on interactions between people and the societal institutions that impact a person’s ability to accomplish essential life tasks and realize goals.

Service is a broad term that refers to a variety of activities performed by different professionals. Social workers can also fall under this category in a broader sense where human services, as a field, is defined as serving communities and populations in need. But the service in social work is different. As a value of social work profession, social workers spend their time interacting directly with clients to help them function in society, irrespective of their difficulties. Social workers try to help each individual as a unique person and determine a way of smoothing their difficulties not by removing every obstacle for them but supporting them along their path. This not only demands a high degree of compassion and patience, but also a distinct knowledge of resources available in the community.

1.3 SERVICE TO HUMANITY AS A VALUE OF SOCIAL WORK

Social work is a value based profession. A professional’s life is based on values. For a social worker, life is based on and directed by values which set certain standards, principles and beliefs. Values are like a road map which brings about change in one’s attitudes and direction for life (Thomas, 2016). In the field of professional ethics, ‘values’ usually take the form of general ethical principles relating to how professionals should treat the people they work with and what sorts of actions are regarded as right or wrong. Vigilante (1974) calls values the ‘fulcrum of social work practice’. When acting in a professional capacity, social workers place professional service before personal goals or advantage, and use their power and authority in disciplined and responsible ways that serve society.

Social workers elevate service to others above self-interest. Social workers draw on their knowledge, values and skills to help people in need and to address social problems (NASW, 2008). Service before self is the goal of professional social workers as they are trained to imbibe the value of service in their hearts and make it evident in practice (Thomas, 2016).

Social workers provide their service to the needy in accordance with their professional code of ethics and by administering the professional skills, methods and techniques which are guided by the principles and values of the profession (Roy and Kurian, 2016).

1.4 PRINCIPLES OF SERVICE TO HUMANITY

The ethical principles of service to humanity highlighted in code of ethics for social workers (Thomas, 2015) are:

1. Social workers ought to render their service on the ideal of brotherhood of man with an element of self-sacrifice.
2. Social workers must acknowledge that servicing others is more important than self-interest and therefore place the needs of others ahead of their own personal interests.
3. Social workers must provide remedial, preventive, developmental, emotional and supportive services to their clients-individuals, individuals in groups, groups, families and communities.
4. Keeping in view the duty towards the nation, social workers must extend every possible service to the country and its policy makers for formulating people oriented welfare policies.
5. Social workers must provide services to humanity based on the profession's theoretical base which includes all the twelve values and the principles, the twelve methods and techniques, specifically identified and promoted by the profession.
6. Social workers must connect clients with systems and institutions that provide services, resources, support and opportunities to humanity across the board.

Social workers provide their service to the needy in accordance with their professional code of ethics and by administering the professional skills, methods and techniques which are guided by the principles and values of the profession.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space given below for your answers.

- 1) Elucidate service as a value of social work.

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2) What are the principles of value of service?

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1.5 MAJOR SERVICE AREAS OF SOCIAL WORK

Social work professionals provide remedial, preventive, developmental and supportive services to individuals, groups, families and communities. These services are being provided to them keeping in view the values of social work profession. Social workers assist a diverse population of clients, who are of every age and have a broad range of issues.

Social Workers perform a broad spectrum of duties, ranging from providing support to those faced with difficult situations, emotional stress or significant change in their lives to clinically diagnosing emotional, behavioral or mental health disorders in individuals. Not only do they help the individuals cope with the situation at hand, professional social workers advocate for them and seek out valuable resources and other means of support for the affected person(s). Some of the major services provided by professional social workers are:

Child and Family Services

Child and family welfare is considered a special area of practice within the profession of social work and the principles and values of the social work profession generally fit with policies that guide modern child welfare organizations. Social workers offer assistance to children as well as to their parents and guardians. Social workers provide information about resources for children and families, coordinate services and facilitate contact with local and state agencies and community organizations. Child and family social workers also provide supportive casework with parents and offer advice about positive parenting skills.

Social workers also provide support and therapy to children who have experienced traumas, losses or extra-familial abuse. Social workers in child and family welfare agencies are involved with the planning and delivery of a variety of services for children and families, such as family support, residential care, advocacy and adoptions and foster care programs, as well as child protection. Social workers ensure that children live in safe homes and have their basic needs met in a healthy family atmosphere. The value of service ensures that these services are delivered in an effective and professional way.

School Social Work

School social workers specialize in helping students with school-related issues and personal problems that affect their lives at school and at home. Professional social workers engaged in school social work mediate between community resources and students who need special services. School social work is considered as an intricate part of student support services.

The goal of school social workers is to enhance the overall functioning and academic

performance of students. School social workers work as a part of school teams in helping students to attain their academic potential.

Geriatric Social Worker

Geriatric social workers provide services for elderly people and support them in various aspects. Social workers who assist aged clients help them to live healthy and happily in the society. The value of service enables social workers to understand the felt need of the elders and to show adequate empathy while providing the services. Whether at home or in an old age home, the elderly require the services of social workers. The nature of problems confronted by the elders in urban and rural family differ to some extent. It is the social worker, having imbibed the value of service, who can meaningfully bring the much needed service to the elderly through a variety of programmes and services.

Mental Health Services

Mental health social workers work with clients who have mental conditions and/or addictions. Social workers, with their knowledge of humans systems, can be especially effective at addressing co-occurring disorders of persons with mental health issues. Social workers in mental health are involved in the planning and delivery of a variety of services, such as building partnerships among professionals, caregivers and families; collaborating with the community, usually with the goal of creating supportive environments for clients; advocating adequate service, treatment models and resources; challenging and changing social policy to address issues of poverty, employment, housing, and social justice; and supporting the development of preventive programs. Mental health settings usually encompass services in three broad areas of health care: prevention, treatment and rehabilitation. The value of service urges the professional social workers practise exclusively within one area or cross the boundaries of all three in response to diverse client, family and community needs in the best possible manner to ensure the maximum benefits to the service seekers.

Medical and Public Health services

Medical social workers help people who have serious or chronic health problems. They advise individuals and families about methods to deal with illness. They also find services, such as nursing care, nutrition classes and therapies that are available to help sick individuals and their families. Medical conditions affect far more than the body. They can result in an onslaught of emotional, financial and social needs. Social workers are adept at helping people meet these sorts of needs – and so we find social workers in many locations where health services are delivered. They are known as medical and health care social workers.

Community Social Workers

Social workers in the field of community development can be found in many areas of practice and a variety of settings. Social workers who practise from a community development or community organizing perspective attempt to address the systemic issues that create social problems. In many cases, they may also be engaged in the kinds of individual problem-solving practices embodied in many social work positions.

Community social work involves understanding the power dynamics and social relations that govern the relationships between various structures and diverse communities and working to achieve social justice through structural change.

Community social workers help communities function in the best manner. Some work directly with individuals, conducting needs assessments and making referrals to resources within the community.

Migrant population and refugees

Migrants often need help in adjusting to life in a new situation. Social workers help them find housing, jobs, and other resources. The homeless in various urban centres, night shelters and refugee camps across the country require the intervention of service minded and professionally qualified social workers. Majority of the workforces in India are in unorganized sector, almost forty percent belong to migrant labour population. Rapid industrialization and urbanization scenario in India are also changing the migration pattern. Social workers facilitate and provide services to the migrant and refugees keeping in view the value of service and social justice.

Industrial setting

The services of a professional social worker who could be solely engaged in helping the employees overcome their problems and enable them to continue to function as usual productive human beings are sought in industrial settings. Workers of various cadres in industrial settings, including corporate sector and their offices, face various types of human problems. Apart from stress related to the work, one has to confront problems from one's own family including the care of children, aged parents, problems associated with education, marriage and health related issue of kith and kin, employees staying in industrial centers away from one's own family, and so on. Apart from these, one may also face problems pertaining to promotions, not receiving salary on time and personal issues including alcoholism, drug abuse and absenteeism. The professional social workers in the industrial settings provide the services like; helping the employees to develop their inner resources and if necessary to mobilize other services within the enterprise to bring about changes in the work environment; helping in their personal and family difficulties to act as a resource person to community services; act as liaison between the workers and the welfare services; helping the management in evolving suitable working conditions and policies, and so on. For all such professionals, the value of service to humanity is of great importance which enables them to bring in the human and welfare aspects in the industries.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space given below for your answers.

- 1) List out the major service areas of social work profession.

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- 2) What are the major roles of social worker in the child and family welfare services?

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1.6 LET US SUM UP

Social workers help individuals, families and members of groups and communities to restore their capabilities to function in society. Professional social workers provide manifold services in the areas of community development programmes, rural development, issues and concerns of children, women, education, health and hygiene, self help groups, tribal development, resettlement of the displaced, emergency services for those affected by natural and manmade calamities, care of the aged, palliative care, rescue and rehabilitation of child labours, care of the orphans and widow and similar issues. For the professionals to work in these service sectors, the value of service to humanity is very essential. Only with dedication, commitment and patriotism social workers can involve themselves for the service of humanity especially in developing countries.

Social workers connect people with systems and institutions that provide services, resources, support and opportunities for individuals and families. All these supports provided by the social workers are based on the value of service. When social work is practiced with the value of service, the mind and heart of the worker will be fully involved for the best interest of their clients. In technical terms, it is called 'the professional service' by the social worker who provides services to the clients taking into account all the values of the social work profession. In short, social work practice begins with the value of service to humanity (Roy and Kurian, 2016).

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1.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

- 1) Service to humanity is the base of social work which is aimed at human welfare. Service to others is one of the core values of social work, from which all other values stem. Social work profession expects the value of service to humanity to ensure quality of services to the clients and seeks to improve accessibility, accountability and coordination among professional and agencies in service delivery system.
- 2) Principles of value of service to humanity are:
 - Social workers ought to render their service on the ideal brotherhood of man with an element of self-sacrifice.
 - Social worker must acknowledge that servicing others is more important than self-interest and therefore, place the needs of others ahead of their own personal interests.
 - Social workers must provide remedial, preventive, developmental, emotional and supportive services to their clients-individuals in groups, groups, families and communities.
 - Keeping in view the duty towards nation, social workers must extend every possible service to the country and its policy makers for formulating people oriented welfare policies.
 - Social workers must provide service to humanity based on the profession's theoretical base which includes all the twelve values and the principles, the

twelve methods and techniques, specifically identified and promoted by profession.

**Service to
Humanity as a Value
of Social Work**

- Social workers must connect clients with systems and institutions that provide services, resources, support and opportunities to humanity across the board.

Check Your Progress II

1) Major service areas of social work profession are:

- Child and family services.
- School social work.
- Geriatric social work.
- Mental health services.



UNIT 2 SOCIAL JUSTICE AS A VALUE OF SOCIAL WORK

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- 2.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.7 Suggested Readings
- 2.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

2.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- understand the concept of social justice;
- understand the value of social justice;
- explain the principles of value of social justice; and
- enlist the importance of value of service to humanity.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The concept of social justice is central to the practice of social work. Social work has always paid attention to social justice issues. It is one of the core values of professional social work. From the beginning, social workers have wrestled with the complex relationship between “case” and “cause” and between amelioration of individual suffering and social change that addresses the structural flaws and injustices in the broader society that foster the problems people experience. Social workers are committed to social justice on both the micro, or individual, and macro, or large-scale, levels. According to the National Association of Social Workers, social justice is an underlying guiding principle of social work which essentially involves promoting equal economic, political and social rights. Social workers try to fight against inequality and oppression in a number of important ways, with a general focus on helping those who have the most pressing needs (NASW, 2014).

In simple terms social justice is promoting a just society by challenging injustice and valuing diversity. It exists when all people share a common humanity and therefore have a right to equitable treatment, support for their human rights, and a fair allocation of community resources. This view is shared by the social work profession. Social workers aim to open the doors of access and opportunity for everyone, particularly those facing unjust social situations in the society. According to the global definition of social work proposed by IFSW (2014): “Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work.

Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance well-being". It is evident from the global definition of social work that the value of social justice is always the prime goal for social work practice.

2.2 CONCEPT AND NATURE OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

The term "social justice" has a variety of meanings. Social justice is generally equated with the notion of equality or equal opportunity in society. In conditions of social justice, people are not to be discriminated against, nor their welfare and well-being constrained or prejudiced on the basis of gender, sexuality, religion, political affiliations, age, race, belief, disability, location, social class, socioeconomic circumstances, or other characteristic of background or group membership.

The values of social justice seem to be rooted in doctrines of religious faith, as well as law and politics. The concepts of justice to a great extent developed from the teachings of great minds and the world's great religions including Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Sikhism, Jainism and Hinduism (Singh & Kurian, 2016). These religions emphasize the importance of sharing, equality of treatment and not profiting at the expense of disadvantaged groups in society. Social justice is a focus for all these religions and they emphasize its importance in their teachings. The earliest recorded ideas of social justice applied solely to a particular people, group of people or nation with the intention of redressing effects of hierarchical inequalities, particularly inherited inequalities. For example, the practice of social justice was central to Hinduism and was even practiced at the time of the early Upanishads and Vedas. At the same time, Bible contains references to the jubilee year when slaves were freed, debts and obligations were liquidated, and land was returned to original owners. This redistribution was primarily between individuals and was not applied universally. One of Islam's Five Pillars is Zakât, or alms-giving is also rooted in the concept of social justice. Charity and assistance to the poor (concepts central to social justice) are and have historically remained important aspects of all religious faith (Singh & Kurian, 2016).

Plato (428-347 BC) said that justice was achieved when each person received goods they deserved based on their prescribed position in the social order. Aristotle (384-322 BC) added that justice was a principle that ensured social order by regulating the distribution of benefits. These ideas did not challenge the social structures of society, but worked within them.

Socially just societies, whenever and wherever they existed throughout history, have been egalitarian, structurally non-violent, and genuinely democratic (Kanter, 1972). It means that all people have equal rights, equal responsibilities and equal opportunities in all spheres of life, including control of resources; organization of work and production; distribution of goods, services, and rights; governance; and reproduction. Equality does not mean that everything is divided and distributed in identical shares, but that distributions are geared thoughtfully to individual differences, and everyone's different needs are acknowledged equally (David G Gil, 2004).

According to Rawls (2003), "social justice is about assuring the protection of equal access to liberties, rights and opportunities, as well as taking care of the least advantaged members of society. Thus, whether something is just or unjust depends on whether it promotes or hinders equality of access to civil liberties, human rights, opportunities for healthy and fulfilling lives, as well as whether it allocates a fair share of benefits to the least advantaged members of society". To Miller, social justice is a social virtue that

pertains to what you are due or owed, as well as what you owe others (Miller, 2003).

The United Nations (2006) approaches social justice from a human rights perspective and provides pivotal mandates for practices at the international and national levels. Social justice is about human well-being. The application of Justice to humankind is grounded solidly in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) Charter, which proclaimed that human rights are based on respect for the dignity and worth of all human beings and seek to ensure freedom from fear and want. Social justice is about the distribution of economic and social advancement for all people.

Social work histories show that the pursuit of social justice has always been both a challenge and a myth for social workers and their immediate predecessors in charity organizations and settlement houses. Social workers have typically done many different things, collectively and individually, even in the days of charity organization and settlements (Banks, 2004). In social work we have to be especially mindful that with overuse and careless use we hollow the idea of social justice, leaving it essentially meaningless (Harrison et al 2007). “Social” essentially refers to how individuals and groups of people interact, and “justice” basically means fairness, or equal treatment in important matters. So, social justice might be thought of literally as fair and equal relations among individuals and social groups (Behr, 2005).

The process of help extended to the clients by the social work professional rests on the value of social justice. The clients who seek the support for professional social workers are strongly affected by economic and social circumstances and by the economic and social structure of the society in which they live. In simple terms, social justice is defined as “... promoting a just society by challenging injustice and valuing diversity.”

2.3 SOCIAL JUSTICE AS A VALUE OF SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION

Social work is a practice based profession aimed at helping people to address their problems and matching them with the resources they need to lead healthy and productive lives. Beneath this practicality lies a strong value system that can be summarized in two words: social justice. Perhaps the most important distinction is that social workers are educated to understand the intimate and complex connection between individual suffering and the social context from which it arises. Social workers are educated from day one to understand the environmental correlates and determinants of human suffering, and those long-term solutions to the conditions that create human suffering must be addressed in the political and policy arenas. Social justice is the view that everyone deserves equal economic, political and social rights and opportunities. Social workers aim to open the doors of access and opportunity for everyone, particularly those in greatest need (NASW, 1999). Social justice is one of the values of social work which focuses on the relationship among human beings based on sharing various benefits equally or justifiably in a given society. It deals with how power, wealth, and resources in a society are distributed and used in an equitable way. In a just society, power and wealth are used for the benefit of all groups; they are not used by any particular group to control other groups (Singh & Kurian, 2016).

Social work profession’s truly unique commitment to social justice is expressed in the preamble to the NASW *Code of Ethics*: which states that “The primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty. A historic and defining feature of

social work is the profession's focus on individual well-being in a social context and the well-being of society. Fundamental to social work is attention to the environmental forces that create, contribute to, and address problems in living.”

Social workers through various methods of social work and techniques help the people to open the doors of access and opportunity especially to those in greatest need namely, the marginalized, dalits and minorities of all kinds. The value of social justice will enable the social workers to fight for the formulation of policies, programmes and activities which promote and uphold human rights, participation and protection for all the persons in the society irrespective of their differences. The value of social justice will guide the social workers for the anti-oppressive and anti-discriminative efforts and to fight against the discriminations based on national origin, ethnicity, culture, appearance, language, sex, sexual orientation, ability, age, place of residence, religion, political affiliation and social and economic differences. Social workers need to empower the individuals, groups, families and the larger communities in their fight for social justice. With homeless clients, for example, social workers make sure that their clients have access to food, shelter and health care. The same is true for children. Social workers may work to protect them from abuse of any kind or to ensure that they are receiving the educational and health benefits that are rightfully theirs. In the case of tribes, social workers will ensure that they are benefiting from the various programmes and policies of governments and to empower them to fight for their rights. Social workers also apply social-justice principles to problems in the society and to fight for justice. Social work aims at ensuring the incorporation of value of social justice in organizations and institutions, and in practice of social work with individuals, groups, families and in the larger society. It strives to ensure that these basic human rights are distributed equitably and without prejudice and social justice is protected (Singh & Kurian, 2016).

All the leading social work associations/bodies consider social justice as the core value of social work profession. International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) recognizes the value of social justice by stating that “Professional social workers are dedicated to service for the welfare and self fulfillment of human beings; to the development and disciplined use of scientific knowledge regarding human behaviour and society; to the development of resources to meet individual, group, national and international needs and aspirations; to the enhancement and improvement of the quality of life of people; and to the achievement of social justice” (IFSW, 2010). Russian code (Union of Social Educators and Social Workers, 2003) gives ample importance to the value of social justice. It states that social justice and humanism are values of social and social - pedagogical work.

Similar views can also be observed in the code of ethics of National Association of Social Workers, (NASW), Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW), Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) and so on. According to AASW “Social work profession holds that social justice is a core obligation which societies should be called upon to uphold. Societies should strive to afford protection and provide maximum benefit for all their members. The social work profession promotes justice and social fairness, by acting to reduce barriers and to expand choice and potential for all persons, with special regard for those who are disadvantaged, vulnerable, oppressed or have exceptional needs” (AASW, 2010). The professional consensus is that the goal of social work is to better the life of the oppressed and the exploited and those facing barriers to self-fulfillment. The mission of social work is to turn the skills of the disadvantaged to their own advantage and, in so doing, to solve or ameliorate social problems.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space given below for your answers.

- 1) What is social justice?

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- 2) Elucidate social justice as a value of social work.

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2.4 ETHICAL PRINCIPLES OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

The ethical principles of social justice highlighted in code of ethics for social workers (Thomas, 2015) are:

1. As change agents, social workers must challenge injustices in the society particularly in regard to vulnerable, disadvantaged, oppressed, exploited and the poorest of the poor.
2. Social workers must pursue for fair distribution of resources so that the basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing, health care, education and legal assistance are made available to everyone in the society.
3. Social workers must relentlessly work towards ensuring equal rights and equal opportunities, without any discrimination, of using the state and public social services for all citizens as ensured in the constitution of the country.
4. Social workers must focus on empowering clients by continuously convincing them that their actions and their rights for social justice are not dictated by biases of the influential and the powerful in the social, economic, religious and political system of the county.
5. Social workers must recognize and respect the cultural diversity of the population it serves taking into account the linguistic, religious, class, cast, gender and socio-economic status.
6. Social workers must challenge oppressive and unjust policies and practices by drawing the attention of those in power: policy makers, politicians, employers, legal and constitutional experts and the general public.
7. Social workers have a duty to work towards ensuring an inclusive society where resources are inadequate, social exclusion and stigmatization are rampant and the needy are well beyond the manageable limits.

2.5 EXPRESSION OF VALUE OF SOCIAL JUSTICE IN SOCIAL WORK

Social work profession has the approach of dealing with the “person in the situation” rather than merely focusing on the individual alone. It takes into consideration client’s immediate environment—the family, the work setting, and so on. The value of social justice is of vital importance in this context. This will help the social workers to understand the dynamics and consequences of social and economic injustice and that they can effectively develop and work within a definition of social justice. Social workers advocating for social justice must have a deep sensitivity to the needs of all people, especially to the needs of the poor, oppressed and marginalized in the society. The social work curriculum both at the under- graduate and post graduate levels must incorporate the value of social justice in order to enable social work students to inculcate the same and express it in the practice of the profession (Singh & Kurian, 2016).

The guiding notion of social work profession is to challenge social injustice. One of the few ideas that is almost universal in the official definitions and ethics of social work around the world is “the pursuit of social justice” (Bank, 2006., Gray and Fook, 2004). Council on Social Work Education (CSWE, 1994) makes it clear that social change, particularly with and on behalf of vulnerable and oppressed individuals and groups is vital for social work profession. CSWE further states that “Programs of social work education must provide an understanding of the dynamics and consequences of social and economic injustice, including all forms of human oppression and discrimination. They must provide students with the skills to promote social change and to implement a wide range of interventions that further the achievement of individual and collective social and economic justice” (CSWE, 1994).

According to Payne M, (2012) social work makes three main contributions to social justice, which is very distinctive from the services provided by other professions namely:

- It is concerned with the ‘social’: to improving social relations between people. Social work uniquely sets out to improve relationships between people individually and collectively. The service provided by social workers is holistic and centered on the concept of ‘person’ than ‘problem’.
- It focuses on people who lose out because they need housing or financial support but don’t fit the criteria. Social workers try not to give up on people just because they don’t fit in with the bureaucratic categories. Research over several decades shows that the people using their services value social workers trying to understand their problems and sticking with trying to get the best for them.
- Social workers have always been prepared to intervene in social relations.

The process of strengthening the pursuit of social justice lies in the inculcation of social justice as a value by professional social workers which is made evident in their lives and actions. The methods of social work namely, social case work, group work, community organization, social work research, social action, social welfare administration and the ‘contemporary’ methods which include awareness campaign, resource mobilization, public interest litigation, networking, advocacy and strengths based practice will serve as a foundation for social workers and their alliances with people who have been treated unjustly. All these methods of social work relies on similar assumptions namely, social justice and social welfare. Social work professionals have to provide assistance to

individuals, groups, families and communities through the methods of social work in their fight for social justice. The integration of methods of social work with social justice will enhance social worker's pursuit for:

- Fair and equitable access to public services.
- Equal treatment and protection under the law and challenge injustices, especially injustices that effect the vulnerable and disadvantaged.
- The client, when services in the best interest of that client are not available or accessible.
- The elimination of all forms of discrimination and make reasonable efforts to promote conditions that respect the diversity of people.
- The elimination of poverty.
- The equitable distribution of society's resources to all persons. They bring to the attention of employers, policy makers, politicians and the general public, situations where resources are inadequate or where distribution of resources, policies and practices are oppressive, unfair or harmful (CASW, 2008).

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space given below for your answers.

1) What are the principles of value of social justice?

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2) Briefly explain the importance of social justice in social work profession.

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2.6 LET US SUM UP

The value of social justice urges every social worker to fight against social injustice prevailing in the society. Social workers must understand the major economic, political and social forces that have shaped the development of social policy in individual countries and in the international context. They should know and understand how a policy is developed at the local, state and national levels. Social workers should be able to analyze them and be able to assess the impact that those policies have on the individuals,

families, groups and communities with whom they work in the context of social justice. This will help the social workers to make use of the existing policies and programmes for effective social work practice and to demand for constructive changes at the policy level to ensure social justice in the practice context. Social work professionals need to take part in social action movements and to stand with the community in the efforts to advocate for social justice (Singh & Kurian, 2016). Social workers have the professional obligation to spread critical consciousness by forming collective movements to root out injustice and the value of social justice is the key towards this goal.

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2.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

- 1) The term “social justice” has a variety of meanings. Social justice is generally equated with notion of equality or equal opportunity in society.
- 2) Social justice is one of the values of social work which focuses on the relationship among human beings based on sharing various benefits equally or justifiably in a given society.

Check Your Progress II

- 1) Principles of social justice are:
 - Social workers must challenge injustices with regard to vulnerable and poorest of the poor.
 - Social workers must pursue fair distribution of resources.
 - Social workers must relentlessly work towards ensuring equal rights and equal opportunities.

- Social workers must focus on empowering clients.
 - Social workers must recognize and respect cultural diversity.
 - Social workers must challenge oppressive and unjust policies and practice.
 - Social workers have duty to work towards ensuring inclusive society.
- 2) Social Justice is one of the values of social work which focuses on sharing of resources equitably and justifiably among all members of the society. In order to ensure social justice, a social worker aims for fair and equitable access to public services, equal treatment and protection under the law, challenge injustices, elimination of all forms of discrimination and poverty and equitable distribution of society's resources to all individuals.



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UNIT 3 IMPORTANCE OF HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS AS A VALUE OF SOCIAL WORK

Structure

* Malathi Adusumalli &
Namita Jainar

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Importance of human relationships as a value and ethic in social work
- 3.3 Human relationships as social capital
- 3.4 Systems approach to human relationships
- 3.5 Relationship and social work intervention strategies
- 3.6 Characteristics of an effective relationship
- 3.7 Principles for using relationship in social work intervention
- 3.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.9 Suggested Readings
- 3.10 Answers to Check Your Progress

3.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Understand the importance of human relationships as a value in social work;
- Explain human relationships as social capital;
- Discuss the systems approach to human relationships;
- Enlist the characteristics of an effective relationship; and
- Highlight the principles for using relationship in social work intervention.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The profession of social work is founded on the principles of social justice and human rights. In 2001, the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) and International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) defined social work as profession aimed at promoting social change, problem solving in relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being. Social work is an interdisciplinary field that aims to make human lives better by reaching them in various possible settings such as hospitals, educational settings like schools, colleges and also, families. Historically and fundamentally, a significant area of social work practice is about addressing problems related to humans' social life and their existing relationships.

In July 2014, IFSW General Meeting and the IASSW General Assembly approved the following global definition of social work:

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“Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing.

The above definition may be amplified at national and/or regional levels”.

This latest definition mentions ‘social cohesion’ as one of the important goals of social work practice. This goal is closely related to the previously mentioned goal that is ‘problem solving in human relationships’ which was emphasized by the 2001 definition given by IASSW and IFSW. This goal brings to forefront the value and importance placed by social work profession in human relationships and its significance as ‘social capital’ for addressing social issues. In fact, the NASW code of ethics mentions ‘the importance of human relationships’ as an important value for all social workers alike. It is considered to be an important component of the helping process deployed by social workers world over.

3.2 IMPORTANCE OF HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS AS A VALUE AND ETHIC IN SOCIAL WORK

Social work is among the most value based of all professions. It is deeply rooted in fundamental set of values that ultimately shape the profession’s mission and practitioners’ priority. Social workers act in accord with these values. Values have been important in social work in several respects such as in identification of the nature of social work’s mission, finding methods of intervention and most importantly in resolution of ethical dilemmas in practice. Ethics in fact are values in operation. Ethical awareness is essential to the practice of social work. Ethical responsibilities flow from all human relationships, from personal, and familial to the social and professional. Thus, social workers’ ability and commitment to act ethically is an important aspect of social work practice while engaging with people. It is a must for social workers throughout the world to be guided by the principles of respect for human rights and a commitment to promoting social justice in their practice.

The awareness of ethical principles that reflect the profession’s core values is a prerequisite for establishing ethical standards to guide social work practice. Such ethical awareness is also essential to help social workers in situations when conflict or ethical uncertainties arise. The socialization of social work practitioners into social work’s mission and values requires that the knowledge of ethical principles that are the guiding principles for professional integrity be given to social workers in their training.

Deriving from the principles of human rights, in 1999 the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) published NASW code of ethics to identify core values on which social work’s mission is based and that must be part of ethical training of social workers. The six core values listed by NASW are:

1. Service
2. Social Justice
3. Dignity and Worth of the Person

4. The Importance of Human Relationships
5. Integrity
6. Competence

All of social work practice is rooted in these core values and these principles set forth ideals to which all social workers should aspire. The NASW derives ethical principles for social work practice from each of these core values. For example, the value 'importance of human relationships' is translated into an ethical principle that states that "social workers recognize the central importance of human relationships. Social workers understand that relationships between and among people are an important vehicle for change. Social workers engage people as partners in the helping process. Social workers seek to strengthen relationships among people in a purposeful effort to promote, restore, maintain and enhance the well-being of individuals, families, social groups, organizations, and communities." It has been highlighted by the NASW that while these core value are universal to all contexts, it is important that these value and the principles that flow from them are understood and applied by social workers keeping in view the context and complexity of the human experience. The holistic focus of social work is universal, but the priorities of social work practice vary from country to country and from time to time depending on cultural, historical, legal and socio-economic conditions.

In order to effectively use relationships in social work practice, it is important for social workers to consider the following points:

1. An understanding of human relationships in the cultural context is essential. For example, there is a considerable difference in the way family as an institution operates in the western context and in the Indian context. So, the use of relationship by the social worker for any intervention must be culturally informed.
2. An understanding of the essentials of maintaining good relationships is needed by the social workers. Social workers can only use human relationships as vehicles of change by practicing good relationships.
3. The use of human relationships by the social worker is not just limited to the maintaining of relationships with the people in need or the justice seekers. While working in the service delivery systems, social worker also maintain and use their relationships with co-workers, own organizations, other stakeholder organizations that are closely networked together for the delivery of services and problem-redressal of people in need.
4. In the process of using relationships for social work practice, social workers are simultaneously improving human relationships at all levels in their practice. This is directly co-related to the skills of the social worker and his/ her competence to handle relationships.

3.3 HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS AS SOCIAL CAPITAL

Social capital as a concept has gained considerable importance in the contemporary times as the concept of capital has been widened to include non monetary aspects of capital resources. For example, human networks and relationships are considered to be important non monetary and non financial resources. Social workers need resources for achievement of their goals and aims of the profession and organizations that they work with. One of the important resources that the social workers use in the achievement

of their tasks is human relationships and networks in problem solving and resource mobilization.

In relation to relationships, it is important to understand that the broken estranged relationships can bring considerable pain and suffering leading to a feeling and sense of despair about themselves, other people in their lives and the world around them. So, for this reason, building and maintaining healthy relationships that are functional is vital to help people reach their full potential.

Human relationships are also considered important social capital in social work because humans are resources for the national development. They form substantial part of the social capital that is considered as important as other types of capital and are discussed below:

1. **Financial Capital:** It includes income, credit and investments. It is a more popularly assumed to be the only capital source.
2. **Social capital:** It includes the benefits that come through relationships with people and institutions. It is created through changes in the relations among persons that facilitate action. It is less tangible, for it exists in relations among humans.
3. **Natural capital:** It includes the stock of natural resources like air, water, forest, plantations, etc. It is the basis of all human economic activity. The notion of natural capital is gaining importance in view of the climate change and conceptual frameworks of sustainable development.
4. **Physical capital:** It includes actual physical things that people own, control, or have access to accomplish a task. It is created by changes in materials to form tools that promote production. It is wholly tangible because of being embodied in observable material form.
5. **Human capital:** It includes skills, knowledge, abilities and capabilities that aid in the development of other asset areas. It is created by changes in persons that bring about skills and capabilities that make them able to act in new ways. It is also less tangible as social capital because of being embodied in the skills and knowledge acquired by the individual.

The concept of human relationships as social capital is utilized in social work practice while addressing social problems associated with the human relationships like divorce and juvenile delinquency. Family and relationship issues are challenges across the lifespan which emerge as a major concern in relation to the transformation of the world. Some noteworthy examples are the issues related to the needs of following groups:

- Children and families
- People with Disabilities
- People needing health and mental health services
- People who are ageing
- People with drugs and substance abuse problems
- People suffering from violence within domestic and intimate relationships

In the process of helping people, social workers acknowledge the role of relationships in building the fuller potential of an individual. The primary role of social workers in this

process is to make human relationships and social institutions more humane and responsive to human needs.

They adopt various roles as an advocate, mediator, educator, etc., in order to maximize the use of human relationships to the advantage of person in need. The communication bridge that the relationships provide act as an imperative link- or point of human connection across the two worlds, that is the world of social worker and the world of service user, carer, or other person.

3.4 SYSTEMS APPROACH TO HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS

The work of a social worker cuts across various fields, that is to say, it extends to all humans. One is dependent on the other in one way or the other. Both Plato and Aristotle have emphasized that man [sic] is a social or a communal being. Humanists (humanist thinkers like Maslow and Rogers) have gone one step further to lay emphasis on humans and their relationships. They emphasize upon self and refer to the relationship as a mutual respect for individuality between the self(s) involved. Thus, I (self) is in relationship to I (the other self); and this other self can be the one in your family, neighbourhood or a social worker. Often one needs to maintain a harmonious relationship with the other(s) for maintaining a family order to worldly order to a universal human order.

Human relationships may be thought of as a series of concentric and overlapping radii of relationships of many types. The developmental theorists have emphasized the role of relationships in human development. One of the significant theories in this regard is the Bronfenbrenner Ecological Systems theory of Development. According to this theory, human beings live in a complex system of biological, emotional, cognitive and social elements. Persons also experience reciprocal relationships with present and past environments. The environment is conceptualized as a group of nested structures. Each structure is contained within the next and is a part of the whole. The person is in the center of the group of structures. Bronfenbrenner (1974) proposed that a person's development is affected by their surrounding environment. He divided the person's environment into five different levels: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and the chronosystem. Each of these systems is representative of the various human relationships and they are as follows:

1. **Microsystem:** The microsystem is closest to the person. Some of the closest human relationships are part of the microsystem making it the most influential system. It includes family, peers, religious institutions, caste affiliations and neighbourhood.
2. **Mesosystem:** The mesosystem consists of the interactions between the different parts of a person's microsystem. The mesosystem is where a person's individual microsystems do not function independently, but are interconnected and assert influence upon one another. These interactions have an indirect impact on the individual. The interactions between the parents and teachers of a child are an example of meso system.
3. **Exosystem:** The exosystem refers to a setting that does not involve the person as an active participant, but still affects him/her. This includes decisions that have bearing on the person, but in which they have no participation in the decision-making process. An example would be a child being affected by a parent receiving a promotion at work or losing his/her job.
4. **Macrosystem:** The macrosystem consists of the overarching pattern of micro-,

meso- and exosystems characteristic of the culture in which the person lives, with particular reference to the belief systems, political beliefs, etc. For example, a child living in India would have completely different cultural environment vis a vis a person living in the western world.

- 5. Chronosystem:** This system encompasses change or consistency over time not only in the person but also in the cultural environment in which the person lives. For example, the upbringing of a person in the pre- independence time would be starkly different from that for the person in the present time.

This view of person- in environment as offered by the Bronfenbrenner Ecological Systems theory of Development is significant because the profession of social work is characterized by the consideration of all the systems and the reciprocal impact of persons and their environments. The job of social workers is about holistic service. The size and focus of the service depends on the nature of the problem, who is experiencing the problem and the best way to resolve it. For example, an adolescent experiencing depression might be seen individually by a social worker yet benefit greatly from work with the family and perhaps even becoming part of a group focusing on adolescent depression. It is possible that an unusually large number of adolescents in a community suffer from depression. The problem could also be caused by a lack of suitable recreational facilities, high crime rates or community wide problems with drugs and alcohol. It might then be a good idea for the social worker to also work with community leaders to create community wide change. In social work we work with systems, and as those systems pertain to our clients, for improving their social functioning, we may have to interact with a number of systems.

Social work is carried out within a network of human relationships. Indeed, it is human relationships and the many types of problems associated with them that are usually at the root of social workers' professional tasks. And it is this relational dimension in social work practice which often draws students into making it their career – fulfilling their wish to 'work with people'. The place of relationships in social work practice is of significance so as to explore ways in which workers can use relationships to promote creative outcomes in their encounters with people in need.

3.5 RELATIONSHIP AND SOCIAL WORK INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

Relationships have always been integral to social work both historically and fundamentally. These have been described in many ways under social work practice in terms of the case work relationship (Biestek, 1957), a therapeutic relationship (Sudbery, 2002), and in recent times as 'relationship- based social work' (Trevithick, 2003). Each of these is described below:

- 1. The case work relationship:** One of the most influential texts in the field of social work was entitled 'The casework relationship' by Felix Biestek (1957) who defined the case work relationship as "the dynamic interaction of attitudes and emotions between the case worker and the client, with the purpose of helping the client achieve a better adjustment between himself and his environment" (Biestek, 1957). The emphasis here is on individual change or 'adjustment', rather than external and environmental changes—on seeing 'people with problems not as problems'. Biestek also listed 'appropriate attitudes, knowledge and abilities' required of a social worker in terms of seven principles which include: individualization, purposeful expression of emotion, controlled emotional

involvement, acceptance, non-judgmental attitude, client's self-determination and confidentiality.

2. **The therapeutic relationship:** It is emphasized by Sudbery (2002) that all of social workers' concerns like welfare administration, advocacy, social action, practical assistance or social control endow them with the core responsibility for outcomes which are therapeutic, empowering and developmental. The key components of this relationship include attention to basic needs, response to aggressive impulses and the lessening of punitive self criticism. Such work requires a managerial supervisory function which supports and enables this use of therapeutic relationship.
3. **Relationship- based social work:** This approach emphasizes that historically the social worker–client relationship was considered central to effectiveness and good practice. The quality of the relationship that social workers strive to create, within a psychosocial perspective can be seen to be important in relation to eight areas of social work practice namely- assessment task and process; relationship difficulties; people who are vulnerable or reliant on others for their well-being; situations that require practitioners to be able to hold and contain anxiety; the relationship as a foundation for capacity building, empowerment and developing people's potential; and in relation to disadvantaged and marginalized sections of the population, how social workers can use the 'front-line' knowledge they have gained through the relationships they have created in political ways—to bear witness and report on 'social ills' as they impact on the lives of service users (Trevithick, 2003).

3.6 CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EFFECTIVE RELATIONSHIP

Caplan & Caplan cited in Hutchison (2014) listed the following characteristics of effective support system that are equally applicable to an effective relationship:

1. Nurtures and promotes an ordered worldview
2. Promotes hope
3. Promotes timely withdrawal and initiative
4. Provides guidance
5. Provides a communication channel with the social world
6. Affirms one's personal identity
7. Provides material help
8. Ensures adequate rest
9. Mobilizes other personal supports

Using relationships requires social workers to use themselves and thus requires an enhanced knowledge of the self. Self-awareness in the social worker is a major theme. Social workers' relationships with people are not neutral and free-floating. Rather, they are influenced and shaped by wider socio-economic, political and cultural contexts of legislation, or protocol, or departmental budgets. Social work is also influenced by cultural practices within a context that holds particular attitudes towards fundamental dimensions of life such as sexual relationships, child-rearing practices, roles associated

with gender, homosexuality, marriage and divorce, etc. The qualities such as listening and communicating are important in the context of a relationship.

3.7 PRINCIPLES FOR USING RELATIONSHIP IN SOCIAL WORK INTERVENTION

It is important to consider the following principles while using relationships for social work intervention:

1. Any recent role transitions that may affect social functioning. In such cases, assist families and groups to renegotiate unsatisfactory role structures. Also develop networks of support for persons experiencing challenging role transitions.
2. Always consider power arrangements and forces of oppression and the alienation that need social work intervention. Assist in the development of advocacy efforts to challenge patterns of dominance.
3. Consider the patterns of exchange in the social support networks of individuals, families and organizations, and assist to renegotiate unsatisfactory patterns of exchange.
4. Engage people in thinking about the environments while working in situations characterized by differences in belief systems, assist members to engage in sincere discussions and to negotiate lines of action. Assist clients in expressing emotional conflicts and in understanding how these are related to past events. Help them develop self-awareness and self-control.
5. Assist in locating and using needed environmental resources.
6. Consider the familial, cultural and historical contexts in the timing and experience of developmental transitions. Recognize human development as unique and lifelong.
7. Consider the variety of processes by which behavior is learned. Be sensitive to the possibility of learned helplessness when people lack motivation for change. Consider issues of social justice and fairness before engaging in behavior modification.
8. Be aware of the potential for significant differences between own assessment of the situation and the distressed individual's own assessment; value self-determination. Focus on strengths rather than pathology.

Check Your Progress I

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

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

- 1) Describe human relationships as social capital.

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- 2) List out the characteristics of effective relationship.

3.8 LET US SUM UP

Social workers seek to sort out problems of people; most of these problems are social as these arise due to many social factors- these factors make it difficult for people to realize their full potential. The factors can be multi-fold such as poverty, unemployment, unequal opportunity, racism, regionalism, child abuse, crime and substance abuse, etc. These factors may affect one directly or indirectly, thus it becomes important to address such issues. Problems can be contextual too. One country may face one problem whereas another country may be facing different social problems.

Social work deals with both internal aspects (values, beliefs, emotions and problem solving capacities) and external aspects (the neighborhoods, schools, working conditions, social welfare systems and political systems that affect us) related to human conditions. By doing this, social work is able to provide a uniquely encompassing service to people in need by using human relationships to help in problem solving and maintaining social cohesion.

The “importance of human relationships” is listed by the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), USA as one of the 6 core values that are foundations of social work profession. Social work professionals worldwide seek to promote, restore, maintain and enhance the well being of individuals, families, social groups, organizations and communities. In order to achieve such social cohesion, it is important to acknowledge the centrality of importance of human relationships between and among people as an important vehicle of change.

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3.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

- 1)
 - Human relationships are considered important social capital in social work because humans are resources for national development. They form substantial part of the social capital that is considered as important as other types of capital.
- 2) Characteristics of effective relationship are:
 - Nurtures and promotes an ordered worldview.
 - Promotes hope.
 - Promotes timely withdrawal and initiative.
 - Provides guidance.
 - Provides communication channel with social world.
 - Affirms one's personal identity.
 - Provides material help.
 - Ensures adequate rest.
 - Mobilize other personal support.

UNIT 4 DIGNITY AND WORTH OF THE PERSON AS A VALUE OF SOCIAL WORK

Structure

* Malathi Adusumalli &
Namita Jainer

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 The concept of dignity
- 4.3 Dignity and worth of the person as a social work value
- 4.4 Dignity and social work practices
- 4.5 Challenges to achieving human dignity
- 4.6 Role of social workers to deal with challenges to human dignity
- 4.7 Preparation of social workers to deal with challenges to human dignity
- 4.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.9 Suggested Readings
- 4.10 Answers to Check Your Progress

4.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Understand the concept of dignity;
- Explain dignity and worth of the person as a social work value;
- Discuss the challenges to achieving human dignity; and
- Enlist the role of social workers to deal with challenges to human dignity.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the absence of any universally accepted list of values of social work, United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (1948) is considered as a document that is most representative of values propounded by social work professionals across the world. The preamble of the declaration reads as follows-

“Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,

Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people,

Whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law,

Whereas it is essential to promote the development of friendly relations between nations,

Whereas the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

Whereas Member States have pledged themselves to achieve, in co-operation with the United Nations, the promotion of universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Whereas a common understanding of these rights and freedoms is of the greatest importance for the full realization of this pledge,

Now, Therefore THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY proclaims THIS UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction.”

India is also a member of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly and is bound by the provisions of the above declaration. India being a signatory to various other conventions of the UN such as the International Convention on the Rights of the child is obligated to take measures to ensure human rights and social justice in the country based on the conventions’ guidelines.

The UN Declaration of Human Rights is particularly important for social work profession because our profession has a special commitment to achieving the goals of human rights and social justice. The first line of the declaration places utmost importance to the “recognition of the inherent dignity” and reaffirms faith in human rights and dignity and worth of the person. This declaration is one of the important documents for social work professionals as we strive in everyday practice to achieve human rights and social justice. Dignity is an important social work value and ethic. All ethical guidelines by professional bodies of social work like the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), British Association of Social Workers (BASW) and Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) mention ‘dignity and worth of the person’ as a universal value that social workers across the world should strive for.

4.2 THE CONCEPT OF DIGNITY

Dignity, most generally, is defined as self-worth or inner worth typically characterized as a kind of worthiness of respect. To recognize someone’s dignity is to recognize his or her worth as a human being independent of his or her status or role in society. Dignity, therefore, is not a possession. Dignity is part of who we are, not something we have. It is a right to be treated with respect and inner worth as a fundamental aspect of humanity. ‘The dignity of the human being’ is a fairly common place phrase in various contexts. It is used often in pleas against, say, the dehumanizing conditions of a slum culture, to plea against the dehumanizing practice of manual scavenging.

4.3 DIGNITY AND WORTH OF THE PERSON AS A SOCIAL WORK VALUE

The Universal Declaration of Human rights (1948) is the guiding principles for social workers across the globe to practice the value propounded by it in their everyday engagement. Human dignity is based on human rights and human rights constitute the foundation of human dignity, while both are grounding principles and core values for social workers world over.

The NASW code of ethics mentions ‘dignity and worth of the person’ as one of the core social work values along with service, social justice, importance of human relationships, integrity and competence. The NASW (1999) derives an important ethical principle from this universal value and states that “social workers respect the inherent dignity and worth of the person”. It is further elaborated by the NASW code of ethics that-

“Social workers treat each person in a caring and respectful fashion, mindful of individual differences and cultural and ethnic diversity. Social workers promote clients’ socially responsible self-determination. Social workers seek to enhance clients’ capacity and opportunity to change and to address their own needs. Social workers are cognizant of their dual responsibility to clients and to the broader society. They seek to resolve conflicts between clients’ interests and the broader society’s interests in a socially responsible manner consistent with the values, ethical principles, and ethical standards of the profession.

Social work values and ethics provide the foundation for social work practice around the world. Almost all countries where social work is a recognized profession have a code of ethics. Although there are many similarities among codes of ethics in different countries, cultural and societal differences have influenced their content and focus. The extent to which codes of ethics have a direct effect on social work practice has been debated. While codes of ethics reflect societal and national differences, what is universal and fundamental to social work practice from a human rights perspective should prevail.

Even in India, the indigenized Declaration of Ethics for Professional Social Workers published in the year 1997 mentions dignity as an important social work value and ethic. The declaration also states that “As a professional social worker, I pledge to promote the following values in myself, in the profession and in the society. I pledge to perceive people as having inherent worth and dignity irrespective of their attributes and achievements and having the capability of continuing development.”

The essence of these codes of ethics and ethical guidelines lies in giving recognition to one’s own value and worthiness and in so doing they are experiencing dignity. This dignity experience should not be understood as pity or welfare but rather as a matter of right of the individuals.

Another striking similarity in each of these ethical codes and guidelines is that all of them are particularly centered on dignity as value in social work primarily in relationship to the practice with person in need or clients. But we need to move beyond this limited understanding of the dignity as value at various other levels. Practice of dignity as value can be at four levels that are given below-

- 1. Direct practice with person in need/ clients/ justice seekers:** This entails the most popular connotation of dignity practice. It means that the social workers

need to have faith in the inherent worthiness and respect of all individuals, groups and communities. For example, the social workers should not discriminate on the basis of caste/ religion/differential abilities/sexual orientation/region/ethnicity or any other difference.

2. **Practice of dignity with organizational staff and colleagues:** The responsibility of the social workers is not restricted to person in need. It also extends to the institutional practices with colleagues and staff. For example, the value of respect and dignity should be practised within staff by not discriminating on the basis of gender/or position/status in the institution/organization.
3. **Practice of dignity by state and structural institutions:** State machinery is increasingly being used for infringement of rights through violations of human rights through laws like Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA). In such a scenario, the practice of dignity would entail responsibility of the social workers to work towards policy making and programmes that ensure the respect and worthiness of all people. For example, the policy of reservation and schemes for persons with disability and their enforcement mechanisms are important for practicing dignity by the state. Other examples of promotion of dignity by the state machinery may include proper rehabilitation of the displaced persons when acquiring land because rehabilitation measures are not matters of charity but rights of people.
4. **Practice of dignity by the society at large:** Social work agenda should also include promotion of dignity as a way of life in society at large by spreading awareness. Indian society is marked by inequalities. Concerns like caste, religion, gender based discrimination, all these inequalities reflect the societal norms that reject the inherent dignity, worth and respect of human beings. It is important to challenge these structural inequalities rampant in society and the only way to challenge these is by stating the value of dignity by all people in society at large.

It is important to note that dignity and worth need to become a part of all institutions and social workers practice in their daily lives and in practices of daily behavior.

4.4 DIGNITY AND SOCIAL WORK PRACTICES

Many social work perspectives like the strengths perspectives, anti-oppressive social work, anti-discriminatory social work, feminist social work and radical social work are working towards ensuring practice based on the value of dignity. One of these perspectives that is, strength based social work practice is discussed in detail below.

The strengths based perspective brought in a significant change of thinking for professional social workers as it demands a different way of looking at individuals, families and communities seeking to develop in clients their natural abilities and capabilities. It requires a helping process that discovers, explores and makes best use of strengths and resources of individuals and communities in the service of assisting them to achieve their goals.

A strengths based approach operates on the assumption that people have strengths and resources for their own empowerment (Pulla, 2012). This method has its roots in the humanistic philosophy which emphasizes the potential of the individual, his/ her inherent worthiness. It entails a fundamental view of human beings as being capable of change which is the central focus of social work practice. The strengths based method is originally developed in mental health practice concepts, and is now adapted for a broad range of social work practice contexts. Usually persons with cerebral palsy, down's syndrome,

are seen with pity and considered incapable of functioning on their own. With the coming of strength based perspective, the attitudinal change from inabilities to abilities, brought in a paradigm shift in outlook towards vulnerability and problems.

According to Saleebey (1992), the strengths perspective assumes four views: (1) All clients and environments possess strengths that can be marshalled to improve on quality of life. (2) Motivation should occur with a consistent emphasis on self-defined client strengths. (3) It is only through exploration between family and the helping person (listener and teller relationship) that discovery of client strengths can occur, (4) “Blaming the victim” is counteracted by the prominence of the client’s strengths even in the most adverse of environments, which leads to the fifth assumption that all environments, no matter how unfavourable, contain utilizable resources.

The principles of strengths based method are different from that of problem focused approaches. Some principles of the strengths perspective are given below:

1. Every individual, group, family and community has strengths.

Strengths based method is based upon the assumption that clients who are already in possession of various competencies and resources come for help that may be made possible by the worker to improve their situation and address their concerns.

2. Trauma and abuse, illness and struggle may be injurious but they may also be sources of challenge and opportunity.

This principle enables the worker to look for strengths even in the adverse and downtrodden situations. Saleebey admits that there are traumas that can overwhelm the coping capacities of any child or adult, which require extra-ordinary measures to help such individuals getting back to normalcy.

3. Assume that you do not know the upper limits of the capacity to grow and change and take individual, group and community aspirations seriously.

This principle urges the worker to go beyond the set parameters in the process involved in helping. We cannot know the limits of the client’s capacities and that it cannot be assumed.

4. We best serve clients by collaborating with them.

Saleebey cautions that we make a serious error when we “subjugate client’s wisdom and knowledge to official views.” He suggests that ultimately a collaborative stance may make us less vulnerable to the more political elements of helping: paternalism, victim blaming or victim-creating, and preemption of client views.

5. Every environment is full of resources.

This principle shapes perspective of the social workers to see the strengths hidden in the environment: the family, community groups, associations, institutions and so on. Saleebey explains that such resources usually exist outside the usual matrix of social and human service agencies, which are unsolicited and untapped.

6. Caring, caretaking and context.

Here Saleebey speaks of caring in the family, caring extended by the care givers and the need of care everybody expect from the others.

The strengths perspective as a philosophical principle of social work practice emanates

from social work values: self-determination, empowerment, inherent worth and dignity, hard work, cultural sensitivity, competence, integrity and loyalty to profession. The belief in the dignity and worth of each individual and the corresponding belief in individual and collective strength as potential for effective change were overshadowed in the problem focused approach. The strengths perspective makes it easier for social workers to uphold the social work values, even when dealing with clients in very serious situation, facing a problem. This perspective enables clients, who often lack confidence and feel like failures when seeking services, to have improved self-esteem and feel confident of themselves.

Check Your Progress I

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

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

1) Define the concept of Dignity.

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2) List out the principles of strengths based approach.

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4.5 CHALLENGES TO HUMAN DIGNITY

The explicit usage of the word dignity and worth in the universal declaration of human rights or code of ethics calls for social workers to work towards practising this value in their daily engagements in the field with issues. But it is not an easy endeavor and met by several challenges. Some of these challenges in Indian context are discussed below:

- 1. Poverty:** Poverty and its sister evils like unemployment, illiteracy etc., remain challenges to meet the goals of social justice and equality for the poor. Facilities like housing, education, basic primary health are important human right concerns for ensuring a dignified life for human beings but remain elusive dreams for the poor. The United Nations has set eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to address human right issues across the world and eradicating poverty and hunger remains its number one goal.
- 2. Blind approach to development:** In the name of development projects like dams, river linking projects; a large number of people are being displaced by the state that is following a blind approach to development. An example of such

approach to development was observed during Common Wealth Games 2010. The government removed many slum dwellers from the centre of the city, forcing them away to the peripheral areas like Bawana. While the rich remain close to the centre of the city and benefit from this development, the poor are swayed farther from the resources of the city and made to travel long distances to access jobs, health facilities and access to resources. Social workers need to challenge this view of development and liaison/challenge and lobby with the state to benefit the poor with a poor centered development/equitable development.

3. **Caste:** The Indian society is characterized by the hierarchical caste system based on age old *varna* system, according to which Hindus are divided into four varnas. The shudras lie at the bottom of this caste pyramid. The caste system is marked by inhumane practices against the shudras. One of the most dehumanizing practice being the practice of untouchability. The practice has been abolished under the Article 17 of the Indian Constitution, but this practice still continues. The caste system and its associated practices of untouchability, endogamy, are serious threats to dignity and worth of human beings. Such challenges have been encountered through the work and practice of social reformers like Jyotiba Phule, Gora, Periyar, Savitribai Phule for reforming the injustice in Indian society.
4. **Patriarchy:** The constitution of India has given all individuals equal rights under various articles like Article 15. The Article 15 of the Constitution states that “The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them.” Several legislations, schemes and programmes are in place for achieving gender equality. In spite of all these safeguards in place, rampant misogynistic practices like female foeticide are persisting. Son preference is not uncommon in Indian family and discrimination against the girl child is common practice. The root cause of these problems is patriarchy. Patriarchy is the social system or social order in which male hold power and women are largely excluded from it. These issues of gender discrimination are violations of dignity and worth of the person because it is indicative of the social practices that consider females as inferior to male.
5. **Communalism:** The preamble of the constitution upholds India as a secular nation that identifies with ideals of unity in diversity. In spite of such claims, India has witnessed horrific crimes like Anti Sikh riots of 1984, Gujarat genocide of 2002, Muzaffarnagar violence of 2013 and more recently in Bisada, such intolerance took the worst turn when a man was killed because of supposedly eating beef. India is a country with people from different religious and ethnic backgrounds residing together, yet religious intolerance and communalism remains challenges in front of social workers to achieve human rights and social justice for the victims of these heinous crimes.

Like the examples shared above, various social practices (cultural, welfare, institutional practices) pose challenges to achieving human rights. For example, demographic groups like children, elderly, persons with disability are all vulnerable groups whose dignity and worth is often put to question. It is important for social workers to believe in equality and social justice principles while addressing issues of rights violations. All these demographic groups must be viewed as capable, able and with strengths. Vulnerability of a person must not force her/ him to live an undignified life. Measures must be put in place to ensure a dignified life for everyone as a matter of right and not charity.

4.6 ROLE OF SOCIAL WORKERS TO DEAL WITH CHALLENGES TO HUMAN DIGNITY

Social work practice addresses the barriers, inequities and injustices that exist in society. It responds to crises and emergencies as well as to everyday personal and social problems. Social work utilises a variety of skills, techniques and activities consistent with its holistic focus on persons and their environments. Social work interventions range from primarily person-focused psychosocial processes to involvement in social policy, planning and development. These include counselling, clinical social work, group work, social and family therapy as well as efforts to help people obtain services and resources in the community. Interventions also include agency administration, community organization and engaging in social and political action to impact social policy and economic development.

In the practice of social work, very often social workers are faced with problems of conflicting interests and competing rights in their role in the support, protection and empowerment of people. In such situations, social workers should promote and contribute to the development of positive policies, procedures and practices which are anti-oppressive and empowering. They should respect people's beliefs, values, culture, goals, needs, preferences, relationships and affiliations. Social workers should recognize their own prejudices to ensure they do not discriminate against any person or group. They should ensure that services are offered and delivered in a culturally appropriate manner. They should challenge and seek to address any actions of colleagues who demonstrate negative discrimination or prejudice.

4.7 PREPARATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS TO DEAL WITH CHALLENGES TO HUMAN DIGNITY

Social work training has an important role in preparation of social workers to address the challenges to human dignity and given below are some tenants for preparation of social workers:

1. **Knowledge:** In everyday contexts, we seek and use knowledge in order to understand ourselves, others and the world around us. Understanding others and understanding of self are equally important for an effective practice. Social workers must be trained to theoretical, factual and practice knowledge (Trevithick, 2008), in order to understand themselves and the world around them. For example, the knowledge about caste and its roots is essential to address the problem of casteism and its associated evils. Social work knowledge should include theories that illuminate our understanding of people, situations and events. Along with appropriate knowledge, the other significant component important for social workers to make use of that relevant knowledge is a belief in the philosophical position that reaffirms faith in dignity and worth. If a social worker fails to maintain the philosophical stance and belief in the value of dignity then he/she is going to reproduce the unequal and unjust norms of the society such as casteism. Thus, having a philosophical stance grounded in the value of dignity and worth of the person is important to all social work practice.
2. **Skills:** Social work practice is not an easy task. A practice needs skills of negotiation, communication, networking, persuasion, etc., to support people in

need. Social work practice can at best meet its goals in a meticulously planned manner with apt strategy to address the issue. For example, the advocacy for rights of persons with disability for access to public transport needs to be a planned exercise involving various stakeholders by making them realize the violation of human rights and dignity of the person who are being denied mobility and thus hindering their growth in other spheres of life.

3. **Values/ ethics:** Social workers must be trained to understand the values they stand for and ethical principles that must be part of their practice. The basic values of social work remain universal for example the respect for the inherent worth and dignity of all people. In order to ensure this, social work should promote the rights of individual for self-determination, participation in society and encourage acceptance of differences in anti-oppressive or culturally sensitive practice. Human dignity is closely related to the idea of human rights, and that the concept of dignity should become indispensable in theoretical investigations on human rights. The belief in the values and principles must be real not superfluous. A dignified attitude involves respect for such 'rights' in others and a claim to one's own 'rights' being likewise respected by others though, according to circumstances, that claim may manifest itself in the form of active assertion, of disdainful silence, or even of charitable admonition or a sympathetic attempt to make the offender understand it. Dignity and the belief in 'human rights' converge in the ethical model of human relationships based on mutual respect and indeed tinged with a reverent acknowledgment of the differentness of individuals.
4. **Attitudes:** This is a very important component for any social work practice. If the social worker is believer in human rights and social justice then naturally he/ she will acknowledge the inherent worth and strengths of the person in need. If one is guided by prejudice and stereotypes like a physically challenged person should not work because they have restricted mobility then it is a negation of the strengths of that person with disability like ability to think, do mental tasks, etc. Thus, attitudes are an important component of social work training to make social workers true believers in dignity and worth principle and value of any person.

Check Your Progress II

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

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

- 1) List out the challenges to human dignity.

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- 2) Explain the role of social worker in dealing with challenges to human dignity.

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4.8 LET US SUM UP

Human rights and social justice are the basic fundamentals of a dignified life. All human beings have the right of a dignified life. Strengths perspective in social work as also other perspectives like anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory social work focus on individual's strengths and abilities to deal with their problems and challenges. Social work as a growing profession has to adapt to the needs of the people and demand of society. Dignity and worth of the person can be ensured in the social work practice by focusing from deficits to strengths. The strengths perspective emphasizes the personal and community assets of a client rather than their deficits and offers possibility, promise and hope for the future. There are various challenges to achieving dignity such as communalism, casteism, patriarchy. They can only be addressed by social workers with requisite knowledge, skills, value and attitudinal changes.

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4.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check your progress I

- 1) Dignity, most generally, is defined as self-worth or inner worth typically characterized as a kind of worthiness of respect. Dignity is part of who we are, not something we have.
- 2) Every individual, group, family and community has strengths.

Trauma and abuse, illness and struggle may be injurious but they may also be sources of challenges and opportunity.

Assume that you do not know the upper limits of the capacity to grow and change and take individual, group and community aspirations seriously.

We best serve clients by collaborating with them.

Every environment is full of resources.

Caring, caretaking and context.

Check your progress II

- 1) Challenges to human dignity are:

Poverty

Blend approach to development

Caste

Patriarchy

Communalism

- 2) Social workers should promote and contribute to development of positive policies, procedures and practices which are anti-oppressive and empowering.



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UNIT 5 INTEGRITY AS A VALUE OF SOCIAL WORK

Contents

* Malathi Adusumalli &
Namita Jainer

- 5.0 Objectives
- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Definition of Integrity
- 5.3 Integrity as Code of Ethics for Social Work Profession
- 5.4 Integrity: Personal, Social and Professional
- 5.5 Integrity: Case examples
- 5.6 Practice of Integrity: Implications and Limitations
- 5.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 5.8 Suggested Readings
- 5.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

5.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Understand the concept of integrity;
- Explain integrity as Code of Ethics for Social Work Profession;
- Explore the personal, social and professional meaning of integrity; and
- Discuss the implications and limitations of the practice of integrity in social work profession.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Integrity is one of the basic human values. Yet the term integrity is defined somewhat vaguely as a value or virtue. Integrity can simply be understood as a constant reflection on oneself during every thought, conversation and action that one performs in their day to day lives in order to maintain consistency. Integrity as a value is primarily about consistency and wholeness. Simply put, 'doing what you believe in' is integrity. In the context of the social work profession, the term integrity is referred to as moral integrity, by which one can understand that it is about reflection on oneself in terms of one's own beliefs and value systems. Thus, professional integrity in social work is the degree of adherence and coherence to one's morals and human values to achieving the goals of social justice and human rights.

5.2 DEFINITION OF INTEGRITY

The Panchatantra stories and folk tales are the first moral lessons that all of us learn in our childhood. Let us take an example of one of such stories-

“A lion was very hungry and looking for food. He saw a cow grazing in the fields and attacked it. Just when the lion was about to kill the cow, she pleaded with him to give her a chance to see her calf for one last time. The lion hesitated at first but agreed to the cow's request on the condition that she would come back. The cow goes to the calf

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and gives him advice and life lessons that he must follow for life. She asks the calf to always move in herd and never go too far from it else it might put him in danger. After wishing the calf good bye, the cow returns back to lion. The lion was moved by the cow's honesty and spares her life."

In stories like these, the cow is cited as an example of a person of integrity. The concept of 'integrity' is derived from the Latin word *integritas* that means 'completeness,' and 'purity.' When a person's words and deeds match then such persons of consistency are valued in our culture. Even if the person of integrity in such stories suffers, they are valued and talked about in moral stories.

The usage of the term 'integrity' in everyday lives is usually in a moral sense often centered on lapses or deficiencies in integrity with the use of antonyms like dishonesty, division, fragility. Thus, the closest synonyms to integrity may be identified as 'honesty', 'probity', 'righteousness', 'trustworthiness'.

Two dimensions of integrity are as follows:

a) Integrity as identity

Integrity is not a matter of intentions alone. Intentions are a necessary but insufficient condition for speaking of integrity. Integrity is also a matter of conduct. Good intentions alone are a job half done. Not only is the quality of one's intentions evident from one's actions, but the quality of one's actions is evident from one's intentions. A good deed that lacks substance is as empty as no good deed in the presence of substance. Persons of integrity match their intentions with deeds. They conscientiously translate their intentions into actions, which can be traced back to good intentions. Thus, integrity is about constant alignment.

A person of commitments is a person of integrity. Here, 'commitment' is used as a broad umbrella term covering many different kinds of intentions, promises, convictions and relationships of trust and expectation. Also, one may be committed in many different ways to many different kinds of things: people, institutions, traditions, causes, ideals, principles, projects, and so on. Integrity is precisely the ability to remain oneself in trying situations. It is exactly in situations like these that integrity materializes.

b) Integrity as Virtue

Another close interpretation of the term integrity underscores the value of 'wholeness' inherent in integrity. 'Wholeness' concerns the values and principles a person upholds. It is thus closely linked to consistency in the sense that the values, principles, actual conduct and the goals to be achieved form a coherent whole. This perspective on integrity is based on the 'virtue ethics theory' that argues that integrity is the capacity to respond to change in one's values or circumstances. This is a much more dynamic account, which does not require a concept of an unchanging self or rigid identity. It acknowledges the continual remaking of the self, as well as a capacity to balance responsibility for one's work and thought. And in the post modern world where we understand 'change' as an important phenomena, this view of integrity as being constant can be seen as 'archaic' and old-fashioned.

Integrity as a virtue is usually regarded as an excellence of character that contributes towards human flourishing and takes cognizance of principles of social justice and human rights. Here, it is given a positive meaning from this perspective because integrity hereby refers to the implementation of good practices to ensure that one remains whole, in one

piece, or unblemished. The words and deeds of a person of integrity are in conformity with each other. Integrity, therefore, concerns the degree to which people are integrated, both on a personal level (towards oneself) and in relation to society (towards others). Integrity is an integrative judgment and control of character, conduct, and consequences. It is not an ad hoc affair but is about constant alignment with pattern, stability and self-integration.

5.3 INTEGRITY AS CODE OF ETHICS FOR SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION

Values are tendencies to action or directions in action or the actual behavior of individuals in active interaction with their environment as they perceive themselves operating in their life situation. It involves a preference of one action over the other, which in turn involves a value judgment. The overt behavior is merely a part of the value whereas the other part is the internal perception and judgment involved in deciding or choosing a particular action or direction of action.

Human values are foundations for any human society. They are important guidelines for any society to function smoothly and in coherence. Human values are above any sort of differences that our society has or experiences. They are the basis of any decisions taken to promote welfare, peace, or simply put 'sanity' in any society. The values are above any personal interests but also promote personal space and freedom. They take into account a society as a whole that is interconnected, inter-related and interdependent and also diverse in every sense. The values monitor as well as promote these relationships among the members of any society. Though there are political and ideological differences, across the world, in the manner which the human values are named, classified, discussed and put forth. But yet there are attempts to generalize certain human values that are accepted worldwide.

Values when codified become ethics. Ethics provide us with tools to determine the course of action in a given situation or dilemma. Values and ethics both guide the behaviour of the individuals. The linkage between values, ethics and behavior is depicted in figure 1. This linkage is of utmost significance for professional because it lays the foundations for establishing code of conduct and ethics in order to guide the professionals through ethical dilemmas.

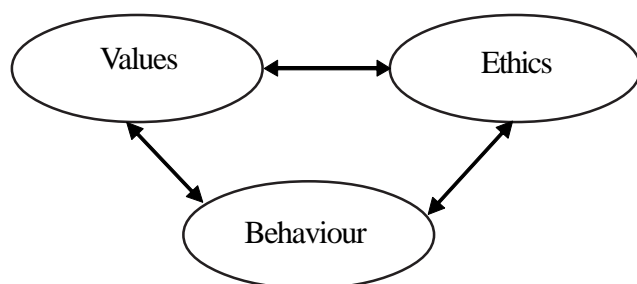


Figure 1: Relationship between values, ethics and behavior

The social work professionals are guided by values and principles that are integrated into a code of ethics that identifies broad principles, values and standards of ethical conduct. Banks (1995) identifies four general functions of code of ethics. She argues that codes of ethics are a guide for the following purposes:

- a) Conduct and ethical decision making
- b) Protection for users from malpractice and abuse

- c) The professional status of social work
- d) Establishing and maintaining professional identity

Several attempts have been made to codify the core values in social work practice and discipline. NASW Code of Ethics (NASW, 1999) has declared six core values of social work practice, which include:

- service
- social and economic justice
- dignity and worth of the person
- importance of human relationships
- integrity
- competence in practice

The NASW codes of ethics maintain integrity in practice as a core value for social work. This would mean that the social workers should be acquainted with the profession's mission, values, ethical principles, and ethical standards, and be responsible to act in consistency with the ideals of social justice and human rights.

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) and other associations like British Association of Social Workers (BASW) have listed integrity as one of the important core values. The NASW code of ethics (1999) states the following principle for the value of integrity: "Ethical Principle: Social workers behave in a trustworthy manner."

The code further states that "social workers are continually aware of the profession's mission, values, ethical principles and ethical standards and practice in a manner consistent with them. Social workers act honestly and responsibly and promote ethical practices on the part of the organizations with which they are affiliated." It is implied that the social workers have a responsibility to respect and uphold the values and principles of the profession and act in a reliable, honest and trustworthy manner.

Integrity of the Profession (NASW Code of Ethics, 1999)

- (a) Social workers should work toward the maintenance and promotion of high standards of practice.
- (b) Social workers should uphold and advance the values, ethics, knowledge, and mission of the profession. Social workers should protect, enhance, and improve the integrity of the profession through appropriate study and research, active discussion, and responsible criticism of the profession.
- (c) Social workers should contribute time and professional expertise to activities that promote respect for the value, integrity, and competence of the social work profession. These activities may include teaching, research, consultation, service, legislative testimony, presentations in the community, and participation in their professional organizations.
- (d) Social workers should contribute to the knowledge base of social work and share with colleagues their knowledge related to practice, research, and ethics. Social workers should seek to contribute to the profession's literature and to share their knowledge at professional meetings and conferences.
- (e) Social workers should act to prevent the unauthorized and unqualified practice of social work

The practice of integrity by social workers may be understood as follows:

1. **Uphold principles of social justice and human rights:** A person of integrity has the expectation that the norms and values that she/he upholds are also subscribed to by others. That implies a willingness to analyze and discuss the norms and

values that are advanced and to relinquish them for better norms and values should it be necessary. It is duty of the social workers to work towards the principles of social justice and human rights, thus, upholding the values and reputation of the profession.

2. **Trustworthiness:** Practice of integrity demands that social workers should work in a way that is honest, reliable and open, clearly explaining their roles, interventions and decisions and not seeking to deceive or manipulate people who use their services, their colleagues or employers. Social workers should act at all times in accordance with the values and principles of the profession and ensure that their behavior does not bring the profession any disrepute. Social workers should make judgments based on balanced and considered reasoning, maintaining awareness of the impact of their own values, prejudices and conflicts of interest on their practice and on other people especially the clients.

5.4 INTEGRITY: PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND PROFESSIONAL

a) Integrity at Personal level

Integrity is a personal value. It is about coherence in one's principles or morals. Integrity helps predict one's behavior, the others would know how one would react in a particular situation. This is not an absolute right prediction, humans change with changing situational demands. But still we do get an idea of one's principle or standards of choice and judgment, and thus a reliable accountability factor is known. It is a partial image of an individual created beforehand by observing her/his past decisions of life. What we place emphasis and importance on inevitably in the aspirations and choices, for both oneself and others. Since coherence is an important factor or feature of integrity, personal integrity involves acting in accordance with one's own values, commitments and principles.

b) Integrity at Social level

When we talk about integrity at social level, we have to refer to the set of human values discussed earlier. It is these set of human values that help groups or societies to stay together and in harmony. Integrity at social level is about coherence between individual actions or behavior and the values of a particular social group, social circle or a social institution like family, religion, etc. When we talk about integrity at social level, we refer to a '*socially responsible self*.' Personal integrity gets to prosper or develop further only with certain set of environment, institutions, social circle, etc. Any institution or a group would have a set of values and principles to adhere to. And to understand and reflect upon one's desires, commitments, one often tries to correlate with the larger set of values. It is here that the integrity at social level comes in. What one is at personal level with own set of desires and commitment and how one tries to stick to them is personal integrity. And the membership to a particular social group, or social institution with their set of values and principles, shall bring in social integrity. It is important for social workers to not follow and perpetuate regressive social values. They must be challenged and changed in favor of social justice and human rights.

c) Integrity at Professional level

The meaning of professional integrity is "morally good/ right conduct," "standing for something" and "a capacity/ moral competence." It entails acting in accordance with the values, goals and principles of the profession to which one belongs. It involves high level of 'commitment' to one's profession, especially when we talk about social work

professionals. Integrity is seen as a 'virtue' that one would expect to find in her/his life partner, a good friend, an employer/employee, minister/leader, teacher, doctor and of course in a social worker. This therefore implies that the integrity that one displays in their personal life, i.e. their personal integrity, will actually have an influence on one's professional life and thus is defined as, professional integrity. Reflection, self knowledge and self integration are important qualities needed to maintain this level of integrity.

5.5 INTEGRITY: CASE EXAMPLES

Two case examples from national dailies are given below to help understand the meaning of integrity for professional practice:

Case I:

Caught in the devastating floods in Srinagar, a social worker refuses to leave his autistic students behind and swim to safety.

30-year-old George Johnson, project coordinator at Life Help Center (LHC), a school for children with special needs run by an NGO in Natipora area of Srinagar is waging his own battle with a bunch of nine children affected with autism, cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy and Down syndrome.

"I refused to leave this place without my students when the local volunteers came for rescue operations. It is difficult to evacuate these children via boats as the flood water can cause panic among them.

"Keeping them in rescue shelters is also not feasible as the people there would not know how to deal with them. I choose to be with these children in their hour of need," Johnson adds.

Case II:

Bharti is a rehabilitation psychologist and runs an NGO named Saarthi in Jodhpur city of Rajasthan. All alone, she has been able to stop as many as 850 child marriages in the state, till date. And her struggle sees no limits even after receiving continuous death threats. She is at present working on a case in which a 15-year-old Ajmer (Rajasthan) girl has been married to a 55-year-old man, on busting of which she is receiving death threats from across the border.

She says to the newspaper, *"My childhood was suffocating. For some reasons, it was disastrous. Me and my mother were left out to feed on our own. And that's when it all started."*

"These death-threats don't bother me anymore. Though, I had informed police a couple of times, but then they can't be with me all the time. I can understand that. But, I have seen the worst that life can offer me already," she tells DNA. There have been countless threats she has received and attacks planned, but all that hasn't deterred her from hounding people who get their kids married at a tender age.

She has a group of around five volunteers to assist her but on almost all child bride-saving missions, she prefers to go alone. "I don't want to put lives of others at risk, so I choose to go on my own," she tells DNA. "I had started my career working with other NGOs where I didn't have freedom to personally go and stop such marriages. Then I came up with my own trust in 2011 named Saarthi and till now we have busted around 850 child marriages," Bharti adds.

Both cases I & II provide us with an example of consistency between personal integrity and professional integrity. Both George and Bharti demonstrated strong moral integrity in their respective situations. Firstly, it is an example of their commitment to themselves and their own human values and secondly, their commitment towards professional duties. In both the cases, George and Bharti have risked their lives to prove true to their own selves and their respective duties. Bharti especially forced herself into danger and risks all alone without any involvement of her colleagues, every time a situation arises. George himself exercised his personal choice of staying with the children and not leaving them behind in the flood waters. He strongly felt that it was his duty to protect them till the end.

Similar sort of cases can help us understand the level of commitment required for a duty of a social worker, but at the same time we should not forget that they are humans themselves with their own set of desires and personal values. Not every social worker would be or should be willing to risk their lives every time; she/he might give up some times. And it is these desires and personal values that sometimes create a conflict between the individual social worker and the expectations of the organization one belongs to. Also that occupational constraints of limited funds, targets to be achieved, nature of work and non cooperation between various authorities and employees as well as incoherence between the values of the individual social worker and the authority and/or the professional values, and many more such issues serve as limitations of integrity within the social work profession as well as at the personal level.

5.6 PRACTICE OF INTEGRITY: IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

The ethics and values in social work profession or discipline in India has been highly influenced by the West. Yet we do not have an Indian code of ethics for social work. And we follow the USA code of ethics. The issue here is to understand the difference between India and the USA, as different societies altogether. The other disciplines of social sciences and sciences have faced a similar problem. Various theorists in India too have called for attention to this issue in the discipline of social work and thus have tried to develop their own understanding in the Indian context. India has been diverse always but the recognition of diversity in academics came quite late. Social work is a discipline dealing with people and their social problems directly. Thus, it becomes highly evident to have ethics and values contextual and sensitive to India and its citizens belonging to diverse religions, gender, age groups, economic groups, castes and ethnicities, and of course their interplay in determining further more complicated diversities. The value system in India in general is based on group norms and such norms differ across these social groups. It is important to recognize and respect these diversities, and at the same time within social work practice, to insist on worth and dignity of persons irrespective of their social group origins. Universal values of respecting diversity, and worth and dignity of persons, and their right for a dignified living are not to be forgotten in dealing with context specific concerns.

Ethics is about 'what ought to be'. It guides the social worker to simplify the complex situations in which he/ she will often find himself/ herself. The social worker is required to meet the high professional standards as laid down in the codes. It is the degree to which one meets such standards, is integrity or professional integrity. And it is in this process not only a social worker's personal credibility gets affected but also of the whole profession. At the time of a difficult situation, where in the personal integrity or the professional integrity of the worker comes into question, a dilemma arises.

Being a person of integrity is a difficult task as one faces a lot of conflicting situations day by day. Suppose hypothetically, one holds speaking the truth as the highest value in a person and yet is faced by a situation wherein she/he has to hide a particular truth from causing any further harm to any other individual or saving the situation from getting worse and probably wait for the right time to share the truth. When it comes to being a social worker, it is further difficult to be a person of integrity, upholding the values of oneself and also the organization. But yet integrity is an important factor and a value for any social worker. We have discussed a lot on its importance earlier.

Integrity has to be understood as ‘a capacity to respond to change in one’s values or circumstances, a kind of continual remaking of the self, as well as a capacity to balance responsibility for one’s work and thought.’ Thus whatever the situation arises, integrity is about keeping oneself intact and yet reflect on the changing situations and situate oneself in the new situations. It is important to develop understanding of integrity in practice by sharing, understanding and reflecting on the stories of social workers. It is important to understand their conflicts. The nature of social work has to be more reflective in order to be more sensitive. There should be more focus on the sharing of experiences rather than paper work, though one can’t deny paper work’s importance. But reflection on personal stories is what is required. The ethics first of all has to be contextual to a particular society or the group.

Check Your Progress I

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

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

1) Define Integrity.

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2) Define integrity at personal, social and professional level.

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5.7 LET US SUM UP

Integrity is a core social work value. It is considered an important universal value by social workers across the world. Upholding the values of integrity by the social workers implies that social workers need to be continually aware of the profession’s mission,

values, ethical principles, and ethical standards and most importantly their practice needs to be consistent with the principles of social justice and human rights that are the guiding principles of social work practice world over.

5.8 SUGGESTED READINGS

1. Banks, S. (1995). *Ethics and Values in Social Work*. London: Macmillan.
2. NASW (1999). *NASW Code of Ethics*. Retrieved from <http://www.vet.utk.edu/socialwork/pdf/NASWCodeofEthics.pdf>.
3. Malcolm Payne (1999) The Moral bases of Social Work. *European Journal of Social Work*, 2(3), 247-258

5.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check your progress I

- 1) The concept of 'integrity' is derived from the Latin word *integritas* that means 'completeness' and 'purity.' When a person's words and deeds match then such persons of consistency are valued in our culture and talked about in moral stories.

- 2) Integrity at personal level

Integrity is a personal value. It is about coherence in one's principles or morals. Integrity helps predict one's behavior, the others would know how one would react in a particular situation.

Integrity at social level

It is a set of human values that help groups or societies to stay together and in harmony. Integrity at social level is about coherence between individual actions or behavior and values of particular social group, social circle or social institution like family, religion etc.

Integrity at professional level

The meaning of professional integrity is "morally good/right conduct", "standing for something" and "a capacity/ moral competence."

UNIT 6 COMPETENCE AS A VALUE OF SOCIAL WORK

Structure

* Sheeba Joseph

- 6.0 Objectives
- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Definition and Meaning of Competence
- 6.3 Stages of Competence
- 6.4 Types of Competencies
- 6.5 Factors Determining Competence
- 6.6 Competence as a Value of Social Work
- 6.7 Value of Competence Reflected in Code of Ethics
- 6.8 Ethical Principles of Competence
- 6.9 Core Competencies in Social Work Practice
- 6.10 Let Us Sum Up
- 6.11 Suggested Readings
- 6.12 Answers to Check Your Progress

6.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit would acquaint you with competence as a value of social work. This would also give you an insight on the core competencies social workers should possess, in order to deal with the clients, group members or the community members. Most importantly, this unit will appraise you the types, determinants and core competencies mentioned by various professional bodies in social work. The chapter would also brief you about the expected quality of a professional social worker in the field of social work. After reading this unit, you will be able to understand how the social work values and ethics will be integrated to work effectively for the welfare of client system.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Competence is considered as one of the core values of social work profession by various associations of social workers, practitioners and academicians across the globe. Competence expects the professional to be well aware of the professional code of ethics, guiding principles, values, philosophy and methods of social work. A professional is expected to continue to enhance his/her knowledge and skill base of social work, the emerging knowledge on various social and environmental aspects as well as the diversity of new problem areas. The profession seeks to strengthen the values of competence by way of research studies, dissemination of such research findings among the professionals and institutions as well as recording and exhibiting of individual and institutional experiences. One's loyalty to the profession, hard work and cultural sensitivity will enable the professional to make valuable contribution to the knowledge base of the profession. This chapter will help the trainee to understand the various aspects of competence as a hard core value in social work profession.

Social workers practice within their areas of competence for the effective functioning of social work as a helping profession. Social workers continually strive to increase their professional knowledge and skills and apply them in practice. Social workers should aspire to contribute to the knowledge base of the profession through research as part of professional competence. Competence of a social worker is shown in diverse areas. The worker should be aware about the ethical responsibilities to client, to himself and to the organization. Professional social work practice involves the dynamic and interactive processes of intake, exploration, assessment, intervention, and evaluation at multiple levels. Social workers have the knowledge and skills to practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Practice knowledge includes identifying, analyzing, and implementing evidence-based interventions designed to achieve client goals. The value of competence ensures that the services provided by the social workers are effective and aimed at the best interest of the client.

6.2 DEFINITION AND MEANING OF COMPETENCE

Competence refers to a potential ability and/or a capability to function in a given situation. Competency focuses on one's actual performance in a situation. This means that competence is required before one can expect to achieve competency. Thus, competence makes one capable of fulfilling his/her job responsibilities. Competency is determined by comparing current work functioning with established performance standards developed in the work environment according to a specific role and setting (Schroeter, Kathryn, 2008).

Competency was originally defined as being about behaviours, while Woodruffe (1993) defined competence as: "A work-related concept which refers to areas of work at which the person is competent. Competent people at work are those who meet their performance expectations." Competencies are sometimes known as 'hard skills'.

Across disciplines, competence refers to being able to demonstrate that the knowledge, values and skills learned can be integrated into practice (Carraccio et al., 2002). The concept of competence is essentially about performance in any field. Mansfield (1999) defines competency as 'an underlying characteristic of a person that results in effective or superior performance'. Rankin (2002) describes competencies as 'definitions of skills and behaviours that organizations expect their staff to practice in their work', and explains their meaning as: the language of performance. They can articulate both the expected outcomes from an individual's efforts and the manner in which these activities are carried out. Because everyone in the organization can learn to speak this language, competencies provide a common, universally understood terminology of describing expected performance in many different contexts.

From all the above definitions given, we can cull out the following key features of Competency:-

- *Potential ability*
- *Capability to function in a given situation*
- *Capable of fulfilling his/her job responsibilities*
- *At work, to meet the performance expectations.*
- *Also known as hard skills.*

- *An underlying characteristic of a person that results in effective or superior performance*
- *Skills and behaviours that organizations expect their staff to practice in their work*
- *Language of performance.*

To simplify, competence means having the knowledge, skills and self-awareness required to perform social work tasks in an effective manner. The specific skills and knowledge required depend on the specific tasks to be undertaken. Many of the subjects or topics that are dealt in the initial classes of social work will enable one to become competent to work with a range of clients presenting variety of problems. However one must be careful to stay within one's competencies. If one is not competent to handle a particular situation, then the value of competence suggests that he/she should link clients with other social work professionals who possess the required skills and knowledge.

When clients are experiencing social problems different kinds of people can provide help: family, friends, neighbours, charity workers and professionals. What distinguishes professional help from the other types of help is the use of professional knowledge and skills. When a client asks for help, a social worker cannot simply give advice from personal experience or intuition. The social worker should apply professional knowledge and skills as appropriate to the situation.

Competence is not something that we achieve through the completion of a single course. Gaining competence is an ongoing process. All social workers may continue to gain competence, learning how to carry out certain cases effectively, and by being open to the knowledge from new research findings with different population groups. Thus, a commitment to competence is an ongoing endeavour. Some of the key components (acronym) of competence are as follows:

- C - Communication*
- O - Observation*
- M - Mentor*
- P - Prudent*
- E - Empathy*
- T - Time Management*
- E - Energetic*
- N - Non Judgemental*
- C - Critical Analyzer*
- E - Enthusiastic*
- *Communication*

“Communication is a process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behaviour” (Webster, 1983). Communication as a component of competence means the ability of the social worker to interact well with his/her client with accuracy, clarity, comprehensibility, coherence, expertise, effectiveness and appropriateness.

- **Observation**

Observation is an important part of learning and development. As a component of competence, observation enables the worker to develop his/her knowledge, skills and attitudes in the professional life and reflect on the same in the practice with individuals, groups and communities.

- **Mentor**

A mentor is a guide who can help the mentee to find the right direction and who can help them to develop solutions to their issues. As component of competence, mentoring support and encourage social workers to maximize their potential, develop their skills, and improve their performance and abilities in the social work intervention process.

- **Prudent**

Prudent means being wise in the handling of practical matters, or in exercising good judgment over diverse situations. The virtue of prudence strengthens the competence of the professional social workers in dealing with diverse problems.

- **Empathy**

Empathy as a component of competence means the ability of the social workers to feel and understand what someone else is feeling in the best possible way. To make it more understandable *empathy is stepping into the shoes of another person and seeing the problem*. It is the foundation for rapport building or good relationship with the clients.

- **Time management**

Time management is the act or process of planning and exercising conscious control over the amount of time spent on specific activities, especially to increase effectiveness and efficiency. It will enable social workers to be effective and appropriate in the use of the knowledge and skills, and delivering services.

- **Energetic**

Energetic persons are cheerful and spontaneous. They keep a clear head and have holistic perspective even in difficult situations. Quality of being energetic makes social workers effective problem solvers. Their ability of being able to absorb and process information will enhance social work interventions with individuals, groups, families and communities.

- **Non- judgemental**

The virtue of non – judgemental attitude is one of the essential qualities required to improve any relationship. Avoiding categorical and negative judgements about the self and others will help social workers to develop competence and better relationship.

- **Critical analysis**

Critical analysis will enable social workers to be able to think critically and objectively about an issue, and develop a well defined plan of action. It helps them to develop a holistic vision of the situation.

- **Enthusiastic**

Enthusiasm means intense enjoyment, joy and interest. If social worker is enthusiastic he/she can bring about new spirit and new creative skill into their practice.

Cheetham and Chivers (1996, 1998) speaks of a holistic model of professional competence, comprising five sets of inter-connected competences and competencies. Their competence framework comprises five dimensions:

- Cognitive competence refers to theoretical, conceptual and the informal implicit knowledge gained experientially.
- Functional competences (skills or know-how), those things that a person who works in a given occupational area should be able to do or/and able to demonstrate.
- Personal competency (Behavioural competencies, ‘know how to behave’), defined as a relatively stable characteristic of a person related to effective or superior performance in a job.
- Ethical competencies, defined as the possession of appropriate personal and professional values and the ability to make sound judgments based upon these in work-related situations.
- Meta-competencies, concerned with the ability to cope with uncertainty, as well as with learning and reflection.

6.3 STAGES OF COMPETENCE

Initially known as the “four stages for learning any new skill”, the four stages of competence was a learning model originally introduced by Noel Burch, an employee of Gordon Training International. The concept was first drafted in 1970’s, “conscious competence” learning model is described as the psychological states that are involved in transforming skill incompetence to competence or outright mastery (<http://examinedexistence.com/>). The following segment will help you to understand the different stages of Competence.

Unconscious incompetence

The individual does not understand or know how to do something and does not necessarily recognize the deficit. They may deny the usefulness of the skill. The individual must recognize one’s own incompetence, and the value of the new skill, before moving on to the next stage. The length of time an individual spends in this stage depends on the strength of the stimulus to learn.

Conscious incompetence

Though the individual does not understand or know how to do something, he or she does recognize the deficit, as well as the value of a new skill in addressing the deficit. The making of mistakes can be integral to the learning process at this stage. Learning from mistakes or learning by doing can be an appropriate phrase to describe what happens at this stage.

Conscious competence

The individual understands or knows how to do something. However, demonstrating the skill or knowledge requires concentration. It may be broken down into steps, and there is heavy conscious involvement in executing the new skill.

Unconscious competence

The individual has so much practice with a skill that it has become “second nature” and can be performed easily. As a result, the skill can be performed while executing another

task. The individual may be able to teach it to others, depending upon how and when it was learned.

The above different stages give the picture of the journey of a social work trainee to a hard core professional with required competencies. It is very much evident that a budding social worker goes through all these stages in the process of learning and developing skills.

6.4 TYPES OF COMPETENCIES

There are different types of competencies. The following passage helps you to have a better idea about the various types and the context in which they are observed.

Core competencies

Core competencies are the skills, attributes and behaviors which are considered important for all staff of the organization, regardless of their function or level (United Nations). In other words, it is the capabilities and/or technical expertise unique to an organization. An organizational core competency is an organization's strategic strength. Some of the NGOs, aid agencies and welfare agencies have strategic strengths in a particular area such as child welfare, community development, case work, social action, public interest litigation, resource mobilization, advocacy, etc. In the domain of social work depending on the area of expertise and interest, Human service Organizations (HSOs) choose the field to work upon.

Technical competencies

Technical competencies are those which are related to the skills and knowledge that are essential in order for a person to do a particular job properly (British Council). Depending on the position, both technical and performance capabilities should be weighed carefully while making employment decisions. For example, organizations that tend to hire or promote solely on the basis of technical skills, i.e. to the exclusion of other competencies, may experience an increase in performance-related issues (e.g. systems software designs versus relationship management skills). In the practice of professional social work, we need to place our objective beyond technical competencies, although expertise in technology cannot be ignored within the present day context and years to come.

Behavioral competencies

Behavioral competencies are observable and measurable behaviors, knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics that contribute to individual success in the organization (e.g., teamwork and cooperation, communication). Behavioral competencies are specific to a person rather than to a job (Janet Hecht, 2008). Individual performance competencies are more specific than organizational competencies and capabilities. As such, it is important that they be defined in a measurable behavioural context in order to validate applicability and the degree of expertise (e.g. development of talent). In professional social work practice, behavioural competencies of individuals are very important for every agency. Social work professional possessing values of cultural sensitivity, social justice, integrity, hard work, loyalty to profession and patriotism are assets to aid agencies and NGOs. It means every professional social worker is expected to imbibe the cardinal values of social work to enhance behavioral competency.

Management competencies

Management competencies are those specific attributes and capabilities that illustrate

an individual's management capacity. Unlike leadership characteristics, management characteristics can be learned and developed with proper training and resources. Competencies in this category should demonstrate pertinent behaviors for effective management. When it comes to the use of various methods of social work such as group work, community organization, social welfare administration, resource mobilization, advocacy, networking, etc., management competencies play a very important role. In short, management competency is one's ability to manage things in an appropriate way, in the given time by optimally utilizing the existing resources.

6.5 FACTORS DETERMINING COMPETENCE

Now let us look at the key determinants of competency.

Initiative and Creativity

A professional social worker should plan his/her work and carry out tasks even without detailed instructions. They are expected to make constructive suggestions which are gained overtime only through experience. A competent person will be proactive and prepares for problems or opportunities in advance. He/she should always be ready to undertake additional responsibilities. Creates novel solutions to problems and evaluates new technology as potential solutions to existing problems are some of the other characteristics. Innovation and creativity help the professional for evidence based practice of social work in the area of intervention. Social media and other technologies can be used to apply various methods of social work in the field.

Judgment

A social worker should make sound decisions and it should be on the basis of facts rather than emotions. The capability to analyze problems skillfully and to relate logic to reach solutions is part of good judgment. In the helping profession of social work, a worker uses his skill for judgment while applying various methods of social work, keeping in view the goals set for intervention.

Cooperation and Teamwork

A social worker works harmoniously with others to get a job done and also responds positively to instructions and procedures. He/she is able to work well with staff, co-workers, peers and managers and makes sure the sharing of critical information with everyone who are involved in a project. He/she works effectively on projects that has involvement of cross functional lines and helps to set a tone of cooperation within the work group and across groups. Another feature is that they coordinate own work with others, seek opinions, values in working relationships. Cooperation and team work are key aspects to any successful intervention. These factors are relevant to community organization, social action, advocacy, resource mobilization, networking as well as strengths based practice.

Quality of Work

Despite pressing deadlines related to target driven projects, a professional maintains high standards. They correct their own errors and regularly produces accurate, thorough, professional work. Loyalty to profession, cultural sensitivity, hard work, responsibility and commitment, service before self and the value of integrity enable the worker to assume high standards and quality of work done in the best interest of clients and the profession itself.

Reliability

A professional social worker is personally responsible and completes work in a timely, consistent manner. They are expected to work for hours necessary to complete the assigned work or walk an extra mile to accomplish the task. They are regular and punctual and ready for work. They work in the best interest of the organization and are devoted to do the best job possible. They keep commitments and thus convey the quality of reliability. Such a worker would be of worth for by social welfare agencies and clients. This quality of the worker will also enable the clients for better acceptance. Thus, reliability is very essential in professional social work practice.

Commitment to Safety

A social worker understands, encourages and carries out the principles of integrated safety management. He/she complies with code of ethics of the profession and its principles, and takes responsibility within the framework of the profession. Safety of the client is of utmost importance in the helping profession and a professional social worker is committed to client's safety to whatever extent possible in the framework of code of ethics of the profession.

Support of Diversity

Keeping in view the values of dignity and worth of the person and importance of human relationships, the worker treats all people with respect. They value diverse perspectives, participates in diversity training opportunities, provides a supportive work environment for the multicultural workforce, shows sensitivity to individual differences, treats others fairly irrespective of race, sex, color, religion, or sexual orientation. They recognize differences as opportunities to learn and gain by working together. Recognizing the importance of support and diversity is core to the practice of social work in any society.

Knowledge of Work or Technical Knowledge

A professionally qualified social worker demonstrates knowledge of techniques, skills, equipment, procedures and materials for one's job. They apply knowledge to identify issues and internal problems, and works to develop additional technical knowledge and skills which will be of help to the profession and the client system. These new knowledge and skills are to be recorded and made available to the social work fraternity as part of the value of competence in social work.

Quantity of Work

A well qualified social worker produces an appropriate quantity of work, does not get bogged down in unnecessary detail, is able to manage multiple projects (multi tasking); is able to determine project urgency in a meaningful and practical way and organizes and schedules people and tasks. Hard work is one of the values of social work. A professional does not shy away from work pertaining to his/her area of specialization. The training provided to the worker during his/her BSW or MSW programme enables the worker to perform well.

Communication

A social worker is trained to write and speak effectively, using conventions proper to the situation, state one's own opinions clearly and concisely, demonstrate openness and honesty, be a good listener during meetings and feedback sessions, explain reasoning behind one's own opinions, ask others for their opinions and feedback, ask questions

to ensure understanding; exercise a professional approach with others using all appropriate tools of communication and use consideration and tact when offering opinions. In order to practice any of the methods of social work, one is expected to acquire adequate communication skills.

Problem Solving

A professional social worker is a social doctor trained to handle problems of varying nature. He/she sees how a problem will affect other units and gathers information before making decisions. He/She weighs alternatives against objectives and arrives at reasonable decisions to help the client in finding solutions. He/She is adaptable to changing priorities, deadlines and directions. He/She works to eliminate processes which do not add value and is willing to take action even under pressure. Criticism or tight deadlines does not affect him/her. More the experiences one gains, greater would be his/her ability to handle complicated problems.

Flexibility

A professional is expected to remain open-minded and changes opinions on the basis of new information. He/She performs a wide variety of tasks and is able to change focus quickly as the demand changes. He manages transitions from task to task effectively and adapts to varying needs of the client.

Staff development

Using the method of social welfare administration, a professional tries to improve the performance of oneself and others by pursuing opportunities for continuous learning/feedback. He constructively helps and coaches others in their professional development, exhibits a “can-do” approach, inspires associates to excel and develops a team spirit so that sustainability is ensured in the agency where client satisfaction remains the top priority.

Responsiveness to requests for service

The worker responds to requests for service in a timely and thorough manner and does what is necessary to ensure client’s satisfaction. In the process, client’s needs are prioritized and follow up is done to evaluate client’s satisfaction. One of the main tasks of the social worker is to empathize with the client and work with him/her in the problem solving process.

6.6 COMPETENCE AS A VALUE OF SOCIAL WORK

The NASW code of ethics states that social workers should offer services and represent themselves as competent only within the boundaries of their education, training, license, certification, consultation received, supervised experience, or other relevant professional experience. It is expected that once the workers are equipped, they should provide services in substantive areas or use intervention techniques or approaches that are new to them. That should be done only after engaging in appropriate study, training, consultation, and supervision from people who are competent in those interventions or techniques. When generally recognized standards do not exist with respect to an emerging area of practice, social workers should exercise careful judgment and take responsible steps (including appropriate education, research, training, consultation, and supervision) to ensure the competence of their work and to protect clients from harm. One can

always take the help of other person who is proficient in the area. If he/she feels that he/she is unable to handle the case, considering the welfare of client it should be referred to another person competent in the field.

6.7 VALUE OF COMPETENCE REFLECTED IN CODE OF ETHICS

The Indian Social work has adapted the code of ethics of various associations of social workers including NASW, CASW, AASW and Russian Association of Social Workers who have laid down certain expectations from the social work professionals based on the value of competence. Let us look at the underpinning variables mentioned by them.

- Social workers shall understand the environment and its function in human behaviour and recognize the strengths that exist in all societies.
- Social workers shall have a knowledge base of their clients' background.
- Social workers shall obtain education about and seek to understand the nature of social diversity and oppression with respect to race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, political belief, religion, and mental or physical disability.
- Social workers shall accept responsibility or employment only on the basis of existing competence or when they have the intention to acquire the necessary competence.
- Social workers shall strive to become and remain proficient in professional practice and the performance of professional functions.
- Social workers shall critically examine and keep updated with emerging knowledge relevant to social work.
- Social workers shall routinely review the professional literature and participate in continuing education relevant to social work practice and social work ethics.
- Social workers shall function in accordance with the values, ethics, and standards of the profession, recognizing how personal and professional values may conflict with or accommodate the needs of clients.
- Social workers shall seek to develop an understanding of their own personal values and beliefs as one way of appreciating the importance of multicultural identities in the lives of people.
- Social workers shall have and continue to develop specialized knowledge and understanding about the history, traditions, values, family systems, and artistic expressions of major client groups that they serve.
- Social workers shall use appropriate methodological approaches, skills, and techniques that reflect the workers' understanding of the role of culture in the helping process.
- Social workers shall be knowledgeable about and skilful in the use of services available in the community and broader society and be able to make appropriate referrals for their diverse clients (NASW, 2001).

A practising professional social worker must have the proficiency to work and assess

together with individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities, their felt needs and situations. The social worker should have the ability to establish professional rapport in order to identify the most appropriate form of intervention when they intervene with individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities to help them make informed choices about their needs, circumstances, risks, preferred options and resources. They should assess needs and options to guide an intervention strategy.

Another area which necessitates the competency is assessing the urgency of requests and requirements for action. The ability to prioritize or rank the needs and then plan, implement and record action taken to meet needs and requirements. They need to interact with the target group to achieve change, realize potential and improve life opportunities. It is very imperative to apply and filter social work methods to achieve change and monitoring the intervention. To take account of these changes, regular monitoring, record keeping, reviewing and evaluating changes in circumstances is needed and accordingly planning should be done.

6.8 ETHICAL PRINCIPLES OF COMPETENCE

The ethical principles of competence highlighted in the code of ethics for social workers (Thomas, 2015) in the Indian context are:

1. Social workers must practice within their areas of competence with responsibility and commitment to help the profession and clients.
2. Social workers must aspire to contribute to the knowledge and skill base of the profession through research and sharing its results with other professionals, professional institutions and schools and departments of social work across the country.
3. Social workers must ensure that the services provided are of highest quality, effective and aimed at the best interest of the client.
4. Social workers should represent themselves as competent only after study, followed by successful completion of the degrees/diplomas; guided training; consultations with experts from relevant fields; and supervision from people who are competent in the areas of interventions.
5. Social workers must continue to gain competence by being open to new knowledge and skills from research findings; sharing of experiences from other professionals; and participation in continuing education programs of various nature (Thomas, 2015).

6.9 CORE COMPETENCIES IN SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

To have more understanding about the international perspective of Competency, ten Core Competencies of Social Work Practice described by the Council for Social Work Education (CSWE) are mentioned below:

1. **Identify oneself as a professional social worker and conduct oneself accordingly.**

The Social Workers must advocate for client access to the services of social work. They must practice personal reflection and self-correction to assure continual professional development. It is also important to attend to professional roles and boundaries,

demonstrate professional conduct in behaviour, appearance, and communication and should engage in career-long learning and use supervision as well as consultation.

2. Apply social work's ethical principles to guide professional practice.

The Social Workers must recognize and manage personal values in a way that allows professional values to guide practice. They must accept ambiguity in resolving ethical conflicts and apply strategies of ethical reasoning to arrive at principled decisions. One should be able to overcome ethical dilemmas which can hamper professional competency.

3. Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments.

Social workers must have the capability to distinguish, appraise, and integrate multiple sources of knowledge, including research-based knowledge, and practice wisdom before coming to a judgement. They must also analyze models of assessment, prevention, intervention, and evaluation and demonstrate effective oral and written communication in working with individuals, families, groups, organizations, communities, and colleagues.

4. Engage diversity and difference in practice.

Social Workers should recognize the extent to which cultural structures and values may oppress, marginalize, alienate, or create or enhance privilege and power. They must gain sufficient self-awareness to eliminate the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse groups. They should recognize and communicate their understanding of the importance of difference in shaping life experiences. It is appreciable to view themselves as learners and engage those with whom they work as informants.

5. Advance human rights and social and economic justice.

Social Workers must gain knowledge to understand the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination. They must act as advocate for human rights, social and economic justice and must engage themselves in practices that advance social and economic justice.

6. Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research.

Social Workers must use practice experience to inform scientific inquiry and use research evidence to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of practice. A social worker should be a keen researcher as well. This will help him to enhance the quality of service by way of explaining better ways of intervention.

7. Apply knowledge of human behaviour and the social environment.

Social Workers must utilize conceptual frameworks to guide the processes of assessment, intervention, and evaluation and also apply knowledge to understand person and environment. He should have the understanding about the dynamic behaviour of human being and the understanding about man and his environment.

8. Engage in policy practice to advance social and economic well-being and to deliver effective social work services.

Social workers must analyze, formulate, and advocate for policies that advance social well-being; and collaborate with colleagues and clients for effective policy action.

9. Respond to contexts that shape practice.

Social workers should continuously discover, appraise, and attend to changing locales, populations, scientific and technological developments, and emerging societal trends to

provide relevant services; and provide leadership in promoting sustainable changes in service delivery and practice to improve the quality of social services.

10. Engage, assess, intervene, and evaluate with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

Social workers should substantively and effectively prepare for action with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Use empathy and other interpersonal skills and develop a mutually agreed-on focus of work and desired outcomes. Social workers collect, organize, and interpret client data, assess client strengths and limitations, develop mutually agreed-on goals and objectives as part of intervention phase and select appropriate intervention strategies. They should implement strategies that enhance client's abilities, help clients resolve problems, negotiate, mediate and advocate for clients. Social workers must critically analyze, monitor, and evaluate interventions and do necessary follow-up as well.

6.10 LET US SUM UP

Competence as a value in social work practice means the integration of knowledge, values, and skills in the practice of profession. Value of competence demonstrates the integration and application of the competencies in the practice of social work with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. It is not something that we achieve through the completion of a single course. It is an ongoing process. All active social workers should continue to gain competence, learning how to carry out certain situations effectively, being open to the knowledge from new research findings, identifying ways to develop skills to work with different population group. The chapter gave an idea about the different stages, core components and various other aspects related to competency. Thus, a commitment to competence is an ongoing endeavour which will help the professional to work effectively.

Check Your Progress

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

- 1) Define Competency & mention the core competencies required for a professional social worker.

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- 2) Explain the different type of Competencies. Illustrate with examples from the field of social work.

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6.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

- 1) Competence refers to a potential ability and/or a capability to function in a given situation. Competency focuses on one's actual performance in a situation.

Core competencies in social work practice are:

- Identify as a professional social worker and conduct one-self accordingly.
- Apply social work ethical principles to guide professional practice.
- Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments.
- Engage diversity and differences in practice.
- Engage in research-informed practice and practice-informed research.
- Apply knowledge of human behaviour and social environment.
- Engage in policy practice to advance social and economic well-being and to deliver effective worker services.
- Respond to contexts that shape practice.
- Engage, assess, intervene and evaluate with individuals, families groups, organizations, and communities.

- 2) Types of competencies are:

- Core competencies
- Technical competencies.
- Behavioural competencies.
- Management competencies.