UNIT 4: POPULATION AND QUALITY OF LIFE

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4.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- discuss the meaning of quality of life and explain its characteristics
- explain how population growth has affected the quality of life
- discuss to improve the quality of life in the context of population situation

4.2 INTRODUCTION

In the foregoing units, we have discussed the different aspects of population explosion. By now you must have realized that population explosion is one of the most fundamental problems of the world. This is especially true for the developing countries like ours because we have a very fast growing population. This has threatened not only the economic growth of our country but also the quality of life as a whole. Today, population is increasing at such an alarming rate that material resources have failed to keep pace with it. We have less land but more people. We have more mouths to feed but less food. We have more schools and yet more illiterates. The unemployment is increasing. There is very slow improvement in our

living conditions. Even with the best intentions and planning it may not be possible to solve the problems associated with expansion of education, un-employment, poverty, shortage and inadequacy of civic amenities etc. Unless these problems are tackled in the context of the total population problem of the country. Any planning to develop material or human resources is bound to fail without a concurrent reduction in the incidences of births.

4.3 QUALITY OF LIFE- MEANING

Quality of life is a complex concept. There is a great deal of disagreement among people in conceptualizing and defining it. The dictionary meaning of the term 'quality' refers to something good, beautiful and valuable. It also refers to the degree of excellence or standard when compared to other things. In this sense quality of life refers to the way of life or standard of living of the people of a country in comparison to other states or countries. Thus, quality is the characteristic of something which is good or excellent.

Quality of life emphasizes a way of life of an individual which is good, beautiful and valuable for him and for the society. In simple terms, we can define quality of life as the optimal satisfaction of physical needs and also the gratification of physiological and cultural needs. It is an accepted fact that quality of life of a country is affected by the increase in population. Maintenance of quality is possible only when an equilibrium is maintained between population growth and availability of resources. In the modern world a race to achieve quality of life has started. This race between the number and the quality of life has led to the development of the concept of population education, which is relatively a new educational innovation. It is a phenomenon of early 1970's. Despite being recent in its origin it has become a popular educational movement.

In population education the quality of life is interpreted and analyzed in the following ways: :

i) *Physical needs :* Quality of life is interpreted in terms of the satisfaction of the basic physical needs of man such as food, water, housing, clothing etc. It is well known to all that our people need nutritious and balanced

diet and pure drinking water. They need clean, airy and well lit houses for their families. If these needs are fulfilled adequately, we can say that the quality of life has improved.

ii) *Social and cultural needs :* This category of needs includes educational and employment opportunities, health and medical facilities, recreation and entertainment facilities, freedom of expression, emotional security and facilities for expressing creativity. Quality of life is also determined in terms of fulfillment of these needs. Fulfillment of these needs definitely helps in improving the quality of life.

iii) *Per capita income :* Per capital income is also an indicator of quality of life of a particular country. It means the share of each person in the annual national income of a country. Higher per capita income means higher standard of living. On the other hand, lower per capita income indicates lower standard of living. The real income of the people is a resultant factor of various variables such as, rate of economic development, the level of consumption, capacity of food intake, health and medical services, education of the people etc.

4.3.1 Characteristics of Quality of Life

On the basis of the above discussion, we can derive the following characteristics of the quality of life :

Quality of life is a broad and complex concept determined by several factors related to human life of a country.

- It is a process of life which gives emphasis on making human life good, beautiful and valuable for the individual himself and the society.
- It is related to the satisfaction of various physical, social, emotional and cultural needs of the people.
- Quality of life is the resultant factor of the real income of the people of a country, i.e., per capita income.
- Population growth has impact on the quality of life. As such, importance is given on maintaining a balance between population growth and availability of resources.

W CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: What do you mean by quality of life?

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Q 2: What are the basic physical needs of the people?

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Q 3: List the social and cultural needs of the people.

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Q 4: Write briefly on (i) population growth, (ii) per capita income.

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4.4 POPULATION GROWTH AND QUALITY OF LIFE

Population growth and quality of life are related to each other. As stated earlier, population explosion is now one of the most fundamental problems of the world, especially for the developing countries like India, where the increase of population is much higher than other countries of the world. Population explosion is creating social, economical, cultural and environmental problems to such an alarming extent that if the problem is not tackled successfully then the living standards of the people will record a perceptible decline and other vital necessities such as food, proper housing, pure drinking water, good medical facilities, proper employment, personal security, good recreational facilities and good education will be scarce day by day. Let us discuss the factors of population growth that have affected the quality of life.

4.4.1 Factors Affecting the Quality of Life

The major areas of population growth that affects quality of life of an individual are as follows :

- *Population growth and per capita income :* There is a direct relationship

between quality of life and per capita income. The prosperity of a nation is judged by its per capita income and the standard of living of its people. When population is large, their engagement is small and their saving becomes less. As a result, there is less investment and mobilization of capital is also become less and the rate of capital formation also become very low. It is a handicap in the way of improvement of quality of life.

- *Population growth and food supply :* Rapid population growth has created a huge gap between the need and supply of food. The rate of production of food is far below the rate of growth of population. Though many developing countries have made steady progress of increase in productivity and thereby register an increase in their food supply yet it is not enough to feed their growing population. About 40% of the people are living below poverty line. As a result, one out of every four is suffering from malnutrition and two out of every four get only half of the daily required quantum of food. Due to lack of nutritious food, a number of people are becoming physically and mentally handicapped. Thus the standard of living of the people is adversely affected by population growth.
- *Population growth and unemployment :* Employment is another sector which is largely affected by rapid population growth. The sharp increase in the working population is mainly due to the growing number of young people. But employment opportunities are not increasing. Large scale unemployment has become a serious obstacle to the economic development of the country.
- *Population and migration :* Rural to urban migration is a common experience in the less developed countries. People generally migrate from rural to urban areas in search of jobs. As a result, cities are becoming overcrowded and this has created several environmental problems. Unhygienic dwelling houses, lower quality of food, polluted environment etc. create problems for the people ultimately leading to the lowering of the standard of living.
- *Population growth and housing :* Rapid growth of population creates more demand of housing which is already in a short supply in the developing countries like India. The shortage of housing and demand for more houses

are most felt by in the lower income groups of population. Due to this, nearly 30% of urban population live in slums. The developing countries are economically backward with their population having a higher dependency ratio on their government, high rate of unemployment and under employment and low level of literacy. This makes it very difficult for these countries to develop. Besides, providing housing to the rapidly growing population is a dauting challenge which can be met only by reducing high rate of population growth.

- *Population growth and education :* Enhancement of country's human resources is possible only through education. But one of the major problems of the rapid growth of population is that of providing schooling to the growing number of children. It requires a large number of schools, colleges, teachers and other resources. Though most of the developing countries have taken up different educational schemes to eradicate illiteracy and increasing enrollment ratio of school going children, they have not succeeded in keeping pace with the increase in the number of child population. Besides, the educational problems are not confined to the young people only, as more than one third of all the adults in India are illiterate. Unless adult education programmes are taken up vigorously the number of illiterates will increase among the child population and achieving the quality of life will remain a distant dream.
- *Population growth and health :* Another indicator of the standard of living is the provision of health facilities. The availability of health services is directly related to the size of population as well as economic development. The countries with higher population size and growth rate have more populations per hospital bed and the population per physician is also high. Due to heavy population growth, the health centres provided by different health countries are also deteriorating instead of improving. The chances for improving these health centres are also very low, particularly in remote areas unless the population growth is immediately controlled.
- *Population growth and Environment :* Population growth has contributed to some major environmental problems. The population connection revealed that with the growth of population since 1950, 80% of the rainforests have

been cleared, more than 10000 wildlife and plant species have been lost, green house gas emission has increased potentially by 400% and more than half of the surface land of the earth has been used for commercial purpose, which still continues (Barua,2000). With an increase in these factors, it is now expected that the population of the world is likely to be exposed to scarcity of water in the future. There is an interconnection and interdependence among the the living organisms. They share a food chain, which is dependent on the healthy habits for survival. The alarming growth of population and the ever increasing human activities have adversely affected the environment which are bound to affect the quality of life.

- *Population and Pollution :* There is a direct relationship between population size and pollution. These rapid consumption of natural resources and the waste disposal by the growing population have put a greater stress on the environment. Different industries and the alarming increase in number of vehicles have caused large scale pollution of air exposing the people to a poisonous environment. Overpopulated cities and towns do not have proper sanitation facilities and the people are not aware that they themselves are polluting the environment. The effects of air, noise, soil and water pollution is posing as the greatest threat to the survival of different species. Thus, population growth has resulted in environmental instability and imbalance. The developing countries of the world must realize that if they had to develop their economy and improve lives of citizens they have to curtail the population growth.

4.5 HOW TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE CONTEXT OF POPULATION SITUATION

Now you must have realized that the quality of life of a country mainly depends upon the population situation of the country. Therefore, it is the duty and responsibility of the government to develop awareness and understanding of the relations between population growth and national development in both short and long terms so that the challenge of population growth can be checked by taking appropriate measures. This is the need of the hour to save mankind from disaster. Briefly, we can point

out certain steps which will be effective in the context of population growth.

- *Living in harmony with nature :* People must learn to live in harmony with nature. Human beings don't live alone in nature but in association with other organizations. They maintain a balance with their environment. Rapid consumption of natural resources and waste disposal by the growing population have put a tremendous stress on the environment. Pollution is increasingly caused by industrialization and unabated population growth. People must understand that the availability of natural resources such as land, soil, forest, water etc. available in a country is limited and any disequilibrium between the human resources and the natural resources results in serious repercussions for the economic life of a country.
- *Equitable distribution of national wealth :* There should be equal distribution of national wealth among the different segments of the population. The real income of the people is the resultant factor of various variables. Some of the important variables are the rate of economic development, the level of consumption, size of the population, capacity of food in-take, health and medical services, education of the people, housing etc. All these variables have a direct impact on the level of living. It is the primary responsibility of the government to secure these facilities for the welfare of its people. Thus, there has to be a reasonable balance of various factors for the steady growth of the economy of the country.
- *Optimum growth of Population :* Growth of population and quality of life are directly related to each other. The rapid growth of population without corresponding economic growth upsets the entire economic life. In our country the fruits of economic development have not reached the masses to the desired extent. The government should frame adequate plans and policies that would give equal importance to quantitative and qualitative aspects of population growth. An appraisal of these policies is also necessary from time to time. Have we failed in our planning? If we have failed, is it due to bad planning or bad execution, or both? The basic and inherent questions can be found only if we can critically analyse the nature and limitations of human and natural resources.
- *Provision for Population education :* It is the need of the hour to have an educational programme of population education which provides for a study of the population situation of the family, community, nation and the world with the focus on developing the students' rational and responsible attitudes and behaviour

towards that situation. The objectives of such population education should be-

a) Acceptance of small family norm.

b) To understand that the size of the family can be controlled.

c) Acceptance of marriage at a mature age as a desirable pattern.

d) To appreciate the advantages of planning, including health and economic gains for spacing and limiting the number of children.

- *Formation of the right sense of values :* It is necessary to change the attitude and values of the people with the changes of time. In order to effect any change in the growth rate of population some stress is to be given on the future parents whose changed attitude towards the family size is vital. Population education could be a potent instrument of developing these attitudes and values in them in order to enable them to take rational decisions. It can act as an effective spearhead in a frontal attack on the people blind with superstitions, dogma, fatalism etc. The government should also change their policies related to population control according to the need of the time and make continuous effort to change the mindset of the people to accept the small family norm to improve the quality of life.
- *Control of pollution situation :* A pollution-free natural environment is extremely essential for improving the quality of life. But the rapid growth of population along with industrialization contributes to the pollution of air and water causing the greatest threat to the service of mankind. If the present rate of population growth is allowed to continue, most of the people will suffer from malnutrition, hunger and diseases. As such, for national prosperity and well being happiness of all we must report to a thorough planning of the population. A general consensus must be created among the people as to the fact that to make life on the earth worth living in the coming centuries population growth must be checked.
- *Cultural consciousness :* Every culture has some value system which forms the inner beauty and refinement of intellectual, aesthetic and moral aspects of personality. Young people learn from their elders, the customs and beliefs of their community, the approved patterns of behaviour and the practical knowledge required for everyday living. A cultured society gives importance on the quality of living and should try to develop a positive attitude towards environment in the young generation. It is necessary to give them such information that would lead to an understanding of the total biophysical environment and the ill effects of

population so that it is possible for them to develop an emotional commitment for environmental quality and population control.

- *Imposing restriction over migration :* Migration changes the demographic pattern of the population of a country. However, rural to urban migration is a common experience in the less developed countries. But migration from one country to another may take serious form if it affects the socio-economic, socio-cultural and the political life of the indigenous population of the host country and it may also destroy its economic infrastructure. Therefore, strict rules and regulations should be imposed on migration and the government should seek the cooperation of the international organization in this respect, if necessary.
- *Powerful steps to be taken by the Government :* It is the constitutional duty and responsibility of every elected government to adopt a suitable policy for controlling population explosion and to improve the quality of life of the people. To achieve these objectives it must take steps to make the people understand the current problem of population explosion, its determinants and consequences. The government should enact certain laws in the form of an Act and steps should be taken to implement them. Moreover, the government should encourage the adoption of different birth control measures on the part of people and try to motivate them by offering various incentives from time to time. Thus, to develop the country demographically every democratically elected government must take appropriate measures to inculcate rational attitude and responsible behaviour among its citizens towards population control.

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Q 5: What should be the objective of population education in the context of developing quality of life?

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Q 6: State the role of the government in controlling population growth of a country.

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2 4.6 LET US SUM UP

- Quality of life is a complex concept. In simple terms, it means the optimal satisfaction of physical and psychological needs and also the gratification of the social and cultural needs of the people.
- In population education the quality of life is interpreted and analysed in terms of satisfaction of these needs. It is a way of life which gives emphasis on making human life good, beautiful and valuable for the individual himself and the society at large.
- Population growth affects the quality of life. Various factors are responsible for deteriorating the quality. These are: lower per capita income, shortage of quality food, proper housing facilities, health facilities, shortage of schools for providing elementary education etc.
- Besides these, it has contributed to the various types of environmental problems. The paramounts necessity is to bring population growth under control.
- Thus quality of life of a country depends mainly upon the population situation of that country. It is the duty of the government to bring population growth under control by bringing awareness among its citizens and save the mankind from disaster. For that the government can take certain effective steps such as educating the people how to live in harmony with nature, making provision for equitable distribution of national wealth among the different segments of population, taking adequate plans and policies for economic development and above all, planning an educational programme of population education which provides for a study of the population situation of the family, community, nation and the world with the objectives of developing a rational attitude in the students towards that situation.

O 4.7 FURTHER READING

1) Barua, Jatin (2009), Parivesh Aru Janasankhya Siksha, Chandra Prakash, Guwahati

2) Gupta, P. K. (2003), Population Education, R. Lall Book Depot, Meerut.

3) Nanda, S. K. (2005), Population Education, Doaba House, Delhi.

K 4.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: Quality of life means standard of living of the people of a country. In simple forms, it means the optimal satisfaction of the physical, psychological and cultural needs of the people.

Ans to Q No 2: Basic physical needs are food, water, housing , clothing etc.

Ans to Q No 3: Educational and employment opportunities, health and medical facilities, recreation and entertainment facilities, freedom of expression, emotional security and facilities for expressing creativity.

Ans to Q No 4: (i) Population growth means increasing number of population which affects the quality of life of a country.

(ii) Per capita income means the share of each person in the annual national income of a country.

Ans to Q No 5: The objectives of population education in the context of population growth are :

(i) To educate the people to accept the small family norm.

(ii) It will make the people understand that the size of the family can be controlled.

(iii) Acceptance of marriage at a desirable age.

(iv) Population education will help educate the people to appreciate the advantages of planning including health and economic gains for spacing and limitation in total number of children.

Ans to Q No 6: The role of the government in controlling the population growth of a country is-

(i) To introduce a good programme of population education for the students of the country so that they can be educated about the ill effects of over population growth and to encourage the people to adopt different birth control measures.

(ii) To motivate the people by offering different incentives for the acceptance of the small family norm, and

(iii) To enact laws for population control and to take appropriate measures to implement them.

4.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Very Short Questions (Answer each question in about 50 words)

Q 1: What do you mean by quality of life?

Q 2: How do you like to explain population growth?

Q 3: Mention the physical needs of the people.

Q 4: What do you mean by per-capita income?

B) Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q 1: Write short notes on :

a) Population and quality of life

b) Population growth and environmental hazards

c) Duties and responsibilities of the government to control population growth

C) Long Questions (Answer each Question in about 300-500 words)

Q 1: What do you mean by quality of life? Discuss how population and quality of life are interdependent on each other.

Q 2: Discuss the major areas of population growth that has affected the quality of life.

Q 3: Write a note on the need for population education for leading a better life.

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