UNIT 2: FUNCTIONS OF SOCIAL CASE WORK

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2.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- Explain the characteristics of social case work
- Analyze the functions of case work in dealing with the problems of the individual, family
- Understand how environment modification plays an important role.

2.2 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit we have seen how social case work has evolved as a method of social work practics. We have its transition in the USA, UK and India. The scope of case work as a primary method of social work has broadened. In this unit we will analyze how case work plays an important role in dealing with the issues of the individual and family unit. In the practice of case work, environmental modification forms an important tool to tackle adjustmental issues of the individual or the family.

2.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF SOCIAL CASE WORK

The theories that a case worker has learnt needs to be applied in practice with specific clients in specific situations through the services provided by different organization. This unit focuses on those aspects that would equip a case worker to fulfill the responsibilities entrusted in social case work practice for the betterment of clients. Casework practice is not standardized. The individual or the client, is seen as a whole - as a thinking, feeling, and acting being who is in continuous interaction with his social environment. The social case worker, represent not only the agency which has employed but also one's profession - Social Work. That is, you have to practice (use knowledge and skills & techniques) within the professional value-system, ethics and principles and at the same time be responsible for achieving the goals of the employing agency.

While you generally work within the service delivery systems devised by the organization, you have a commitment to perform the the role of a change - agent in case these systems are dehumanizing or degrading for the clients. You have to be constantly aware of your personal self and make sure that it does not interfere in your social casework practice. It is all the more important in social casework because the clients' problems and concerns have a huge emotional component. Issues and problems related to human being and their life are complex and multidimensional and require sensitive handling. Therefore, social casework practice may often require inter-agency collaboration where the social case worker will be a part of a team of professionals. In primary settings, you are likely to be the main professional for service delivery, whereas, in secondary settings, you may have an ancillary status. It is important for you to communicate your contribution as a social work professional to other professionals in the team. Social Casework service may be offered for prevention, promotion, cure/ remedy, rehabilitation, placement, reformation, palliative care, or for modification of social environment.

2.4 VALUES OF SOCIAL CASE WORK

Social casework (or social work) values have roots in the democratic social system and it is imperative that anyone engaged in school work practice abide by the underlying value of the profession.

The values are :

1. Every human being has inherent worth and dignity. This is a fundamental value of democracy, therefore, of social work too. He or she is worth caring for the simple reason that he/she is an individual, a human being capable of contributing to the growth of society. It is because of this value that social workers attend to every person's need without any consideration of class, caste or creed etc.And serve anyone and everyone without any discrimination. They recognise the fact that every member, whatever is his handicap, has worth; therefore, he deserves to be respected and he is a dignified member of the society like anyone of the society. He has to be respected so that he can get all possible help and facilities to live a socially productive and personally gratifying life.

2. From this it follows that every individual has the right to self-determination, taking decisions about all the matters related to self as long as it does not interfere with the rights of others. One is considered to be capable of taking decisions about one's own future and the helper is only to tell him the pros and cons of his decisions to enable him to choose his own future course of action.

3. Every individual is the primary concern of society, has potential for and the right to growth and it is the responsibility of the society to provide equal opportunities to everyone to actualise his self.

4. Every individual, in turn, has to contribute to the society's development by assuming his social responsibility, discharging his functions honestly and acting properly and adequately in his social roles.

5. The individual and society in which one lives are interdependent. Neither the individual nor the society can be conceived of without each other.

6. Basic human needs have to be met by services which are not contingent upon conformity either to moral behaviour or to race, nationality, religion, caste, etc.

2.5 FUNCTIONS OF SOCIAL CASE WORK

During the casework sessions, clients talk about their problems related to their past, present and future life. Caseworkers pick up points where problems have arisen because of lack of information, knowledge and misperception of the situation. The experiences (misperceptions, feelings and reactions) are modified in and through the discussions.



Ventilating one's feelings frees one from the pressure of negative feelings.

Emphasis should be laid on the discussion of day-to-day behaviour of the client in relation to his problem and in doing so,enable the client change his misperceptions which may be unrealistic because of underlying emotions, past incidents, unrealistic future expectations or unsuitable lifestyle. Once the caseworker starts taking care of these points in the day-to-day life of the client, he slowly starts perceiving and changing his ways of behaving.

Apart from this, talking alone helps in many ways. It helps in ventilating one's feelings and thus frees one from the pressure of these feelings. Talking to an expert is in itself quite reassuring. Talking by itself in many cases results in gaining insight into one's behaviour, thus equipping oneself with better ways of managing the affairs of his life.

It is through these processes that the client substitutes his unrealistic and irrational beliefs by realistic ones, straightens his attitudes, develops self-control over his feelings, and changes his lifestyle necessary to achieve what he desires to achieve in life. Material resources are used as tools to effect desirable changes in his situation and functioning.

Mary Richmond (1915):"Social Case work may be defined as the art of doing different things for and with different people by cooperating with them to achieve at one and the same time their own and society's betterment."

Swift (1939): "Social Case work is the art of assisting the individual in developing and making use of his personal capacity to deal with problems

which he faces in his social environment." According to the above definitions, the social caseworker shall assist individuals in handling their problems and enabling them adapt to the environment by making change in oneself and thereby develops the capacity to deal with difficult situations in life.

2.5.1 CASE WORK WITH INDIVIDUAL

Social case work is a process concerned with the understanding of individuals as whole personalities and with the adjustment of these individuals to lead socially healthy lives (Taylor, 1926). Social case work is a process used by certain human welfare agencies to help individuals cope more effectively with their problems in the society as stated by Perlman (1957).

Lack of resources, non-fulfillment of need, unpleasant social reactions and unfavourable physical conditions make human development and functoning (i.e. adaptation) difficult and sometimes impossible. An individual, under these stressful conditions, seeks help, sometimes from the near and dear ones (like parents, siblings, friends. etc.) and sometimes from the professionals (priests, teachers, lawyers, doctors, social workers, etc. A social case worker therefore is an important professional rendering help to individuals to deal with their problems and issues.

At times, his social circle fails to come to his rescue. In such a situation,he is left with no option but to seek the help of experts in dealing with his situation.Experts are available in different areas of life (medical, legal, business, social, sexual) who are trained and experienced in helping people in their area of operation.

The experts in social life, i.e., trained social workers, help individuals, groups, communities through various methods of social work known as social casework, social group work, and community organisation. A social caseworker, when someone comes to him for help in dealing with his situation, tries to know and locate (study) various possible factors (including people) responsible for creating the problem-situation.

His knowledge of human behaviour (achieved through study of various subjects like psychology, sociology, health and illness, etc.) helps in finding

out these factors easily. In collecting information on these aspects, he talks to the client, his family, friends, relatives or employer and consults records wherever important to understand the problem-situation.

These factors lie either in the nature of the person, his way of dealing, or in the situation the person is placed. In the first phase Caseworker (therapist) collects in formationabout the resources available with the person. Resources mean capacities of the person, his social contacts, and his financial and material possessions. In the second phase, he shares and discusses his understanding of the problem and the plans to manage or tackle the problem with the client (diagnosis and treatment planning).

Help is rendered either through discussion or providing service, material or financial resources wherever available and required. The discussion or talk is conducted in a purposeful manner. Talking equips the needy person to gain confidence, knowledge and information necessary to deal with the situation.



Case worker helps the person see how emotions lead to misperception or a block in perceiving the reality.

It also helps the person see how emotions lead to misperception or a block in perceiving the reality. (example can be given), In addition he can understand his own role in creating the problem-situationand, to evaluate and his ways of taking decision and the resultant consequences.The give an idea about how his beliefs are unrealisticand how feelings and attitudes affecting his behaviour with the people in his current situation.

The caseworker can help the client to formulate his family budget, schooling of children, etc., according to the principles of economics and education. He can guide and advise him in certain situations. If need be, talking (interview) sessions are also conducted with persons (like parents, teachers, spouse, etc.) important for solution of the client's problem-situation.

Social caseworker, thus, helps the client to understand his self, his situation and his ways of deciding and acting to enable him to modify (or enrich) his style of thinking, feeling and acting and to solve his immediate and future problems.

Social casework is a method of helping people as it is individualized,

scientific, and artistic. It helps individuals with personal as well as external and environmental issues that affect them through the use of definitive tools, techniques and processes. As taught in Indian schools of social work, has been imported from the West, especially from the USA.

Every individual, child or adult, in order to grow and develop, has various needs (psychological, physical and social) to fulfill. In this task, he has to interact with different types of people and face different environmental conditions. Very often, the individual fails in his attempts fully or partially and sometimes, he has to face non-helpful reactions of the people around him. Thus, case work becomes necessary in such cases.

Working with Individuals in Primary and Secondary Settings

Case work settings are of two types: Primary and secondary.
Primary settings: are those settings that are concerned with family,and child welfare.
Secondary settings: are those settings that are functioning for the general; development of a community.

2.5.2 CASE WORK WITH FAMILY

Human being is a bio-psycho social entity. Man lives in the society. He is engaged in different interpersonal relationship like family, neighbors, colleagues etc. sometimes there comes some problem in maintaining these relationships. As a result, family disturbances and divorce are the outcomes of all these problems. When a person is unable to solve this problem by his own he comes to the social worker in an agency and get helped by the professionals.

Family and its problems- Family is a small social grouping but in it individuals secure most of the satisfaction of their basic needs. It is a primary index of human personality. Some of the problems that arise in families can be pre-marital problems, husband-wife conflicts, violence, unequal spouse relationships, parent-child relationship, sibling rivalry, jealousy, etc.

Democratic influence:

Family is not static, it is changing slowly. The older pressure of law,

authority, and tradition are disappearing and new trends are setting in.

The democratizing of the family has removed certain factors which interfered in the past with personality development and healthy adjustment.

Other influential factors:

Notable shift from rural to urban lifestyle,

Housing problems,

Birth control- from joint family to nuclear family,

Women empowerment,

Attitudes towards sex and morality and has changed.

Nature of family casework:

Family casework is principally concerned with aiding families to secure and maintain a normal healthy existence. Helping the family to cope with problems that arise due to :-

Problem arising from external situations, those fundamentally within the persons themselves, those concerning external and internal factors, etc

Treatment : family therapy i.e, restoring communication. between the family members and sorting out the differences between them.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: State the nature of problems faced by an individual.

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Q 2: Mention the family therapy process.

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2.5.3 ENVIRONMENTAL MODIFICATION THROUGH CASE WORK

Social case work means those processes which develop personality

through adjustment consciously affected, individual by individual, between men and their social environment. Richmond (1922)

According to Hamilton, environmental modification refers to all attempts to correct or improve the situation in order to reduce strain and pressure. Case work process generally involves bringing changes in their clients and their environment by modifying certain elements in both the system. Environmental modification refers to the means by which the situational modification and the interpersonal adjustment are achieved. The situational modification involves the family or any other segment of client's environment. The purpose is to minimize the external pressures or strains on individual and to improve the client's environment. (For example a case of client with substance abuse the case worker will have to work with the family and community through awareness about problems of substance intake)

Social Casework and Counseling - Similarities And Differences

Social case work intervenes in the psycho social aspect of a person' s life to improve , restore, maintain, or enhance his social functioning to perform according to his role in Society. Since social functioning is the product of interaction among intra psychic, somatic and social forces, social case work involves assessing the internal and social factors which impair the person's role performance.

On the other hand, Counseling is a process to assist the individuals in understanding himself vis-à-vis his situation and problems, in exploring problems, in exploring alternate solutions, in taking most appropriate decisions and in enhancing his capacity to solve problems independently. Bertha Reynolds in 1932 started counseling in casework.

Aims of Counseling :

- to enable the individual to solve present problems,
- to prepare themselves for future tasks,
- to attain higher standards of efficiency, and
- to develop personal resources for growth.

Counseling in Case Work :

Counseling services are mostly used in educational settings, employment offices, rehabilitation centers, prisons, sanatoria, and family welfare centers. Etc. case worker gives much importance to th process of counseling in all settings, for the releasing of clients inner burdens ie, anxiety and stress. Counseling helps the client to release his feelings, to find new solutions, to adjust problems etc.

Concept of Existential Casework :

The human being is not just an existing entity. But he is also 'aware' (feels) of his existence and is capable of inputting meaning into his existence.

A person does not necessarily become victim of external forces. Every person has the potential to overcome the external forces. For every person there are static and dynamic aspects to his/her existence. Freedom is not a license to do anything that one wants to do, it is a right that has to be used consciously and responsibly.

Role of existential casework :

Helping in the process of disillusionment: i.e, making the person understands reality. Illusions are unrealistic, eg: I want 2, 00,000 to start a job.

Helping the client to make commitment to the task of changing old habits.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 3: What is existential case work?

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Q 4: How does environment modification take place through case work?

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2.6 LET US SUM UP

- Social case work is a process concerned with the understanding of individuals as whole personalities and with the adjustment of these individuals to socially healthy lives (Taylor, 1926).
- During the casework sessions, clients talk about their problems and related past, present and future. Caseworkers pick up points where problems have arisen because of lack of information, knowledge and misperception of the situation. The experiences (misperceptions, feelings and reactions) of the cllent are corrected through the discussions.
- The experts in social life, i.e., trained social workers, help individuals, groups, communities through various methods of social work known as social casework, social group work, and community organisation. A social caseworker, when someone comes to him for help in dealing with his situation, tries to know and locate (study) various possible factors (including people) responsible for creating the problem-situation.
- Social case work intervenes in the psycho social aspect of a person' s life to improve , restore, maintain, or enhance his social functioning by improving his role performance. Since social functioning is the product of interaction among intra psychic, somatic and social forces, social case work involves assessing the internal and social factors which impair the person's role performance. On the other hand, counseling is a process to assist the individuals in understanding himself vis-à-vis his situation and problems, in exploring problems, in exploring alternate solutions,

in taking most appropriate decisions and in enhancing his capacity to solve problems independently.



2.7 FURTHER READING

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3. Hamilton, Gorden (1956), Theory and Practice of Social Case Work; Columbia University Press, New York.
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2.8 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

Answer 1. An individual may face issues due to lack of resources, non-fulfillment of needs, unpleasant social reactions and unfavourable physical conditions that make human development and functioning (i.e., adaptation) difficult and sometimes impossible. An individual, under these stressful conditions, seeks help, sometimes from the near and dear ones (like parents, siblings, friends, etc.) and sometimes from the professionals (priests, teachers, lawyers, doctors, social workers, etc.

Answer 2. Family casework is principally concerned with aiding families to secure and maintain a normal healthy existence.

Helping the family to cope with problems that arise due to :-

Problem arising from external situations, those fundamentally within the persons themselves, those concerning external and internal factors, etc

Treatment: family therapy is focussed on restoring communication betwween the family members and sorting out the differences between them.

Answer 3. The human being is not just an existing entity. But he is also 'aware' (feels) of his existence and is capable of inputting meaning into his existence. A person does not necessarily become victim of external forces. Every person has the potential to overcome the external forces. Thus existential case work helps an individual to deal with such issues where the client feels clueless.

Answer 4. Environmental modification refers to all attempts to correct or improve the situation in order to reduce strain and pressure. Case work process generally involves bringing changes in the client and his /her environment by modifying certain elements in both the system. Environmental modification refers to the means by which the situational modification and the interpersonal adjustment are achieved. The situational modification involves the family or any other segment of client's environment.



2.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q.1: Discuss the values of social case work.

Q.2: How does case work function for the welfare of the individual?

Q.3: Explain the issues faced by a family. Why is case work necessary in the family setting?

Q.4: How is counselling used in case work?

Q.5: What does environmental modification comprise of?

Q.6: Describe the characteristics of social case work.
