UNIT 8 : THEORIES OF CASE WORK

UNIT STRUCTURE

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8.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- Explain the important theories of social case work
- Describe the behavior modification technique of case work
- Discuss the use of psycho-social, problem solving and role theory of case work



Theory consists of a set of assumptions, propositions or accepted facts that attempts to provide rational explanation of cause-effect (causal) relationships among a group of observed phenomenon.

8.2 INTRODUCTION

As discussed in the previous units, we have understood that social case work consists of those processes which develop personality through adjustments consciously affected between men and their social environment. **Theory** is defined as "a supposition or a system of ideas intended to explain something, especially one based on general principles independent of the thing to be explained". Theory consists of a set of assumptions, propositions or accepted facts that attempts to provide rational explanation of cause-effect (causal) relationships among a group of observed phenomenon. A technique is also a way of doing anything that

involves planning, thought; a way of performing a skillful activity, or the skill needed to do it.

8.3 THEORIES OF CASE WORK

Theories or models give the required direction to the case worker to handle the client in a way which is suited according to the client's need and social conditions. A theory is a set of tentative assumption/s that needs to be proved. Theories of case work refer to the set of ideas associated with case work practice based on assumptions that guide the therapeutic processes in dealing with the individual and his problems. Theories act as guidelines to understand the problem faced by an individual from various perspectives. A problem is usually multi-dimensional in nature and theories provide a way of understanding, assessing and dealing with it by the application of therapeutic models and strategies.

8.3.1 PSYCHO-SOCIAL THEORY

Psycho-social theory was propounded by Hamilton. She published an article on "The Underlying Philosophy of Social Case Work" in 1941 in which the word 'diagnostic' was used to express psycho-social problems. In this approach, diagnosis and treatment are directed toward person in situation. The client is seen in the context of his/her interactions and transactions with the outer world. For proper diagnosis and treatment client's social context must be understood and mobilized. Treatment must be differentiated according to the need of the client. Three stages are involved in psycho-social approach.

Psycho-social Study

Social Caseworker starts his/her work with the knowledge of the needs of the client. On this basis he then, assesses what kind of help the needs. He also finds out the perception of the client about his/her own problem, and his/her desires about the kind of assistance to be provided. He/she, then, himself/herself tries to arrive at his/her own understanding of what the client's trouble is, what factors contribute to it and what type of service

is needed to improve his/her ego strength and adaptability.

Diagnosis

On the basis of the data collected and available material social caseworker tries to assess the nature of client's trouble contributing factors and where changes can be brought in his/her behaviour without much efforts.

Treatment

Social Case worker gives much emphasis on indirect treatment or environmental modification. He/she intervenes actively in the environment and provides necessary concrete help to the client. He/she provides financial help by locating such agency, proper health care and also educational resources. Direct treatment is also provided for the ventilation of the client to accept concrete help. Psychological support, counselling, suggestions, etc. techniques are used to establish close and trustworthy relationship with the client.

8.3.2 BEHAVIOUR MODIFICATION THEORY

Behaviour modification theory is based upon the principles of learning and conditioning propounded by Pavlov and Thorndike. The researches of B.F. Skinner helped to develop the behaviour modification approach further. The behaviouristic theory viewed problem as essentially the result of a failure to learn necessary adaptive behaviours and competencies and/or the learning of ineffective and maladaptive behaviours. It may happen due to conflicting situations that require the individual to make discriminations or decisions of which he/she feels incapable. The maladjusted person has learned faulty coping patterns, which are being maintained by some kind of reinforcement and he/ she has failed to learn needed competencies for coping with the problem of living.

Techniques of Behaviour Modification

The following techniques are used for behaviour modification:

Simple Extinction

In this technique, the reinforcement is removed to eliminate a

maladaptive pattern of behaviour. This is especially helpful where maladaptive behaviour is being reinforced unknowingly by others. Through this technique, learned behaviour patterns are made weaker and disappear overtime.

Systematic Desensitization

It is designed help clients overcome anxiety in particular situations. A client is asked to describe the situation that causes anxiety and then rank this situation and related events on a hierarchial scale from aspects that cause no concern (as 0) to those that are most troublesome (as 100). To help the client avoied anxiety ad face the situation, the counsellor teaches him to relax physically or mentally. The hierarchy is reviewed, starting with low-anxiety items. when the client's anxiety begins to mount, the client is helped to relax again and theprocedure then starts anew until the client is able to be calm even when thinking about or imagining the event that used to create the most anxiety.

It is a technique to deal with a wide variety of maladaptive emotional behaviours, particularly involving anxiety, irrational fears and phobias and other forms of dysfunctions i.e. neurotic tendencies. There are five basic steps in systematic desensitization: (1) assessment, (2) construction of anxiety hierarchies, (3) training in muscle relaxation, (4) imaginary training, and (5) implementation.

Impulsive Therapy

In this technique, instead of banishing anxiety, the social caseworker attempts to elicit a massive flood of anxiety.With repeated exposure in a safe setting where no harm is felt by the client, the stimulus loses its strength to elicit anxiety.

Assertive Therapy

It is needed to develop more effective coping mechanism. In such therapy, the opportunity is given to the client for role-playing.

Aversion Therapy

This technique is used for the modification of undesirable behaviour by the method of punishment. Punishment may involve either the removal of positive reinforcements or the use of aversive stimuli.

Family Therapy

Family is a system which is composed of three sub systems : marriage, parenthood and siblings. There are continuous interactions and transactions among these sub systems. It is quite often observed that sometimes relations may not be harmonious and at that time outside help is required to bring the family on proper track.



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Family therapy is based on the assumption that marital relationship system influences the family adjustment and therefore it is necessary to understand the nature of marriage. It is also true that the nature of the marital equilibrium affects all family members but its effect differ on each of the member. The development of children is affected also by the nature of the marital equilibrium because they interject the parents as models and guides. Further each developmental phase in the family has stressful situation which requires new relationship.

Family therapy is significant because whenever one member of a family is in trouble, all are in trouble. Communication in the family is the channel through which members of the family interact. Whenever there is problem in the family communication become faulty or dysfunctional. In family therapy, the diagnosis is confirmed on the basis of various types of interviews with the client and family. The social case worker tries to know family structure and the processes in the family responsibilities, roles patterns of daily living, role performance, role relationship, dependency, separateness, independence level, capacity, tolerance and control of feelings, intimacy, anxiety, regression, taboo, etc. He/she records the family history and analyses its contents. The social caseworker uses most of the techniques in one to one treatment, such as guidance, advice, education, suggestion, clarification, and interpretations.

Self-control and Self Management Therapy

Helping clients to help themselves is an old casework phrase. Self-

control refers to the ability of individuals to change behavioural patterns that they or others perceive as harmful. The role of social caseworker in this process is to help the client to develop the knowledge about how, when and where to use strategies for change. The worker acts as an instigator and motivator to help the client to start the programme and have motivating force to complete it. A multi-step guide has been presented by Watson and Tharp to develop a self-control plan.

1) List a current dissatisfaction.
2) Select one particular problem of behaviour that occurs in a particular situation.
3) Describe the effect of problem on behaviour.
4) Be as precise as possible in stating the behaviour that occurs and the situation in which they occur.
5) Gather baseline data. Count every instance of target behaviour and keep a record of count.
6) Catalogue enforcements. Answer three questions for each potential reinforcer. (a) Is it a reinforcement or specially formed, (b) Is it a strong reinforcer? (c) Is it accessible?
7) List and attempt to verify through observation possible antecedents to problem behaviours. Devise a plan for intervention for altering antecedents.
8) Identify the emotional components of the problem and plan for desensitization.
9) Select one of the plans that you have developed.
10) Continue to collect data on the problem behaviour. Make a graph of the data to determine that the intervention plan is working.
11) If the plan is successful, consider termination of relationship.

Rational Emotive Therapy

This technique is used in the area of modifying irrational elements control over the self. Some of the irrational ideas at the core of emotional and behavioural problems are as under :

1) It is dire necessity for an adult to be loved by everyone for everything

he/she does.

2) Certain acts are awful or wicked, and people who perform such acts should be severely punished.
3) It is horrible when things are not the way one would like them to be.
4) It is easier to avoid rather than face life's difficulties and self-responsibilities.
5) One needs something stronger or greater than one self on which to rely.
6) Human happiness can be achieved by inertia and inaction.
7) One has virtually no control over one's emotion and one can not help feeling certain things.

Rational Emotive Therapy includes four stages:

1) Presentation of Rationale

The worker attempts to elicit the problems or significance of self-statements in general without mentioning the client's problems.

2) Overview of Irrational Assumption

The worker presents a number of irrational self statements before the client and tries to makesthe client realize that his/her statements are irrational.

3) Analysis of Client's Problem in Rational Emotive Terms

Client is made aware of his/her problem rationally and is provided with the knowledge of how he/she has labeled the event.

4) Teaching the Client to Modify Internal Statement

In this stage the client is taught to change his/her opinions and attitudes which are anxiety provoking.

Thus, Rational Emotive Therapy is one of the significant behavior modification technique.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: What is a Theory?

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Q 2: What does Rational Emotive therapy involve?

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Behavioural Modification Techniques

A variety of behavioural techniques have been developed to help clients 'unlearn' maladaptive behaviours by normal adaptive behaviour.

Use of reinforcers

Reinforcers are those events that when they follow a behaviour, increases the possibility of the behaviour repeating. A reinforce may be either positive or negative. Reinforcers should be given in the beginning, every time when the behaviour occurs. Gradually, it can be reduced once the new behaviour is learned and established. Eg; Child with bedwetting problem. The child is given a chocolate or any gift on days when there is no bedwetting. Slowly, the intervals of giving chocolate can be reduced and also stopped once the behaviour is completely practiced.

Punishment

It involves presenting an aversive stimulus to a situation to suppress or eliminate negative behaviour.

Behavioural Rehearsal

The Rehearsal exercise involves behavioural rehearsal where the client role plays a new behaviour until it is performed in the desired way. This is done to reduce stage fright, anxiety or fear that may be felt if they feel they are not performing their new behaviour correctly. This encourages

spontaneity and a willingness to experiment with new behaviours.

Contingency Contracts

A technique used to structure behavioral counseling by making each of the necessary elements of the process clear and explicit that they may be written into an agreement for behavior change that is understandable to everyone involved. It is also a means of scheduling the exchange of positive reinforcements (rewards or desirable events) between two or more persons.

Behavior Contracting

It is a therapeutic technique in which an agreement is reached with a client, usually in the form of a written, signed contract. This begins with a verbal or written contract that discusses a patient's desired behaviors and includes both positive and negative reinforcements geared towards bringing about change. Contracts provide a written record of goals that the counselor and client have agreed to pursue and the course of action to be taken. If such a contract is broken down into smaller sections a client may get a clear feeling that goals can be attained and problems solved.

Environmental Manipulation

A way to improve the well-being of people by changing living conditions is environmental manipulation. As part of diagnosis, counsellor identifies the major factors or environmental cues responsible for the client's problem. Some aspects in the client's environment may be contributing to the problem situation. Bringing changes in the environment could be helpful. The treatment plan shall involve a lot of environmental manipulation. To bring about behavioural change, client has to alter the environment and readjust himself. To enable the process of adjustment to become a habit, reinforcements of all sorts are often introduced. For eg; a drug addict could be told to avoid the company of friends who persuade him to take drugs. This is part of alleviating his aversive life situation.

8.3.3 THE PROBLEM SOLVING THEORY

This theory was propounded by Helen Harris Perlman in the book

"Social Case Work : A Problem Solving Process". This model stands firmly upon the recognition that life is an outgoing problem encountering - problem solving process. Every person is involved every time in coping with his/her problems. Sometimes he/she is capable of coping and sometimes fails to resolve the crisis situation. Through problem solving process individual or family is helped to cope with or resolve some difficulty that he/she is currently finding difficult to solve. Thus the primary goal of problem solving model is to help a person cope as effectively as possible with such problems in carrying social tasks.

In the initial phase the attempts are made to engage the client with his/her problems and to do something about it in a working relationship with the agency. The problem solving process starts at once, from the first movement with treating the person. The client is not treated for his/her problem but he is treated for the purpose of helping him/her to know himself/herself i.e. strength and weaknesses and how to remove those weaknesses. In short, the problem- solving casework process involves the following steps:

1) It tries to release, energize and gives directions to the client's motivation for change.
2) It tries to release and exercise the client's mental, emotional and action capacities for coping with the problem.
3) It tries to find and make accessible to the client such aids and resources as are necessary to the solution of the problem.

8.3.4 ROLE THEORY

Role is mainly behavioural concept. The concept of social role has been used in all fields of social work practice. The role theory is concerned with analysis and intervention in case work treatment. The case worker first identifies the client's wishes, defendses, pressures and so on and then elects a role that will enable the client to utilize the skills and expertise of the case worker in aiding the client's socialization process.

Role may be seen as a product of an interplay between (i) individual member's needs and resources, (ii) the solution in the social network, and

(iii) the forces acting on the social network from the environment. When there are internal or external difficulties, which are beyond the capacity of an individual, he/she feels the problem and fails to perform his/her role. Social Caseworker with such clients suggests new ideas and ways of facing the problem and suggests solution for a difficulty that the external factors have encountered. He/she offers facts, which relate to his/ her own experience for understanding the problem. He/she gives suggestions in terms of examples, and tries to explain how suggestion would work if followed by the client. He/she mediates between other members, attempts to reconcile disagreements, and relieves tension in conflict situation. His/her efforts are also directed to keep communication channels open by encouraging others to participate in the business of the client.



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Roles are clustered subsets of norms that refer to expectations for individuals who hold a particular position in a group. Roles assume relationship since every role presumes some counter role. The term role has been differentiated as conventional roles dealing with broad, structural conceptions of everyday performance, and interpersonal roles that define unique human interaction in specific roles and the resulting expectations. Depending on such expectations, relationships take two types of forms: primary and secondary. Primary relationships possess an element of quality and involve a degree of unique emotional attachment. Secondary relationships are based on a necessity of cooperation that exists for the fulfillment of aims or goals of the individual participants. Secondary relationships usually involve interaction of short duration with little emotional or personal involvement. Social workers engage in both types of relationships. Depending upon the setting and how the situation is defined, some workers engage exclusively in primary or secondary relationships, while other practitioners alternate between the two forms.

Role theory is used because of its emphasis on the varying abilities and capabilities participants bring to a role, and their own unique interpretation of the role which determines their style of interaction. Role theory places emphasis on expectations evident in micro social units and it ultimately attempts to account for types of role performance by individuals.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 3: State the main perspective of the problem-solving model?

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Q 4: What are 'roles'?

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8.4 LET US SUM UP

- Theory consists of a set of assumptions, propositions or accepted facts that attempts to provide rational explanation of cause-effect (causal) relationships among a group of observed phenomenon.
- A technique is a way of doing anything that involves planning, thought; a way of performing a skillful activity, or the skill needed to do it.
- In the psycho-social approach, diagnosis and treatment are directed toward person in situation. The client is seen in the context of his/her interactions and transactions with the outer world.
- Family therapy is significant because whenever one member of a family is in trouble, all are in trouble. Communication in the family is the channel through which members of the family interact.
- Environmental manipulation thies to improve the well-being of people by changing their living conditions. As part of diagnosis, counsellor identifies the major factors or environmental cues responsible for the client's problem.

- Reinforcers are those events that when they follow a behaviour, increases the possibility of the behaviour repeating. A reinforce may be either positive or negative.
- Depending on role expectations, relationships take two types of forms: primary and secondary.



8.5 FURTHER READING

1. Hamilton, Gordon. 1923. *Theory and Practice of Case Work*. Columbia University Press
2. Perlman, HH. 1957. *Case Work- A Problem Solving Process*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press
3. Richmond, Mary. 1922. *What is Social Case Work?* New York; Russell Sage Foundation.



8.6 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

Answer 1. Theory is defined as "a supposition or a system of ideas intended to explain something, especially one based on general principles independent of the thing to be explained".

Answer 2. Rational Emotive Therapy mainly consists of- Presentation of rationale, overview of irrational assumption, analysis of client's problem in rational emotive terms, teaching the client to modify internal statement.

Answer 3. The Problem-solving model stands firmly upon the recognition that life is an outgoing problem encountering - problem solving process. Every person is involved every time in coping with his/ her problems.

Answer 4. Roles are clustered subsets of norms that refer to expectations for individuals who hold a particular position in a group. Roles assume relationship since every role presumes some counter role.



8.7 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q.1: Why is understanding theory necessary in case-work practice?

Q.2: Explain the psycho-social theory.

Q.3: How does Rational Emotive Therapy function?

Q.4: Discuss the main approach of the problem-solving approach in case work.

Q.5: Why are social roles important?

Q.6: How does disruption in meeting role expectations impact the behavior and functioning of an individual?
