

Unit – 4

Socialization

Topic 1: Meaning and Definitions of Socialization

Introduction

Human beings are not born with knowledge of social norms, values, customs and roles. They acquire these through interaction with family, peer groups, educational institutions and other social agencies. The process through which a biological individual develops into a socially competent person is known as **socialization**.

Meaning of Socialization

Socialization is the continuous process through which an individual learns and internalizes the culture of society. It includes the learning of language, values, norms, beliefs, customs, behaviour patterns and social roles.

Through socialization, individuals learn:

How to behave in different social situations

What society considers right or wrong

How to perform roles such as child, student, parent, worker and citizen

How to develop identity, personality and a sense of self

Thus, socialization establishes a relationship between the **individual and society**. It also helps in transmitting culture from one generation to another.

Definitions of Socialization

Kimball Young: Socialization is the process through which an individual is introduced into the social and cultural world and becomes an accepted member of society.

Ogburn and Nimkoff: Socialization is the process through which an individual learns to conform to the norms and expectations of the group.

H. M. Johnson: Socialization is a learning process that enables an individual to perform different social roles.

Bogardus: Socialization is the process through which individuals learn to live and work together, develop social responsibility and adjust their behaviour according to social welfare.

Anthony Giddens: Socialization is the process through which individuals learn the values, norms and ways of life of society while also developing their personal identity.

Main Elements of Socialization

Socialization involves:

Learning social norms and values

Internalization of culture

Development of personality and self

Learning of social roles

Adjustment to society

Types of Socialization

Socialization takes place at different stages of life and in different social settings. Its major types are as follows:

1. Primary Socialization

Primary socialization occurs during early childhood, mainly within the family. Through this process, the child learns language, basic values, manners, emotional behaviour and elementary social roles. It forms the foundation of personality and self.

2. Secondary Socialization

Secondary socialization takes place when an individual enters wider social institutions such as school, college, workplace, religious organizations and political institutions. It teaches specialized knowledge, formal rules and institutional roles.

3. Anticipatory Socialization

Anticipatory socialization refers to the process in which individuals learn the values and behaviour of a group they wish to join in the future. For example, a student preparing for a

professional career begins to adopt the attitudes and behaviour associated with that profession. Robert K. Merton discussed this concept in relation to reference groups.

4. Developmental Socialization

Developmental socialization involves learning new skills and improving behaviour in order to perform existing roles more effectively. For example, professional training helps employees develop new abilities and adjust to changing responsibilities.

5. Re-socialization

Re-socialization is the process of rejecting previously learned norms and adopting new values, roles and patterns of behaviour. It may occur in prisons, military institutions, rehabilitation centres or after major changes in occupation and family life.

6. Reverse Socialization

Reverse socialization occurs when younger members transmit knowledge, values or skills to older members. In contemporary society, children often teach parents and grandparents how to use smartphones, digital banking and social media.

7. Adult Socialization

Adult socialization refers to the learning of new roles during adulthood, such as the roles of spouse, parent, employee or citizen. It helps individuals adjust to changing responsibilities throughout the life course.

Theories of Socialization

The syllabus mentions three major theories of socialization: **George Herbert Mead's Theory of Self, Charles Horton Cooley's Looking-Glass Self, and Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalytic Theory.**

1. George Herbert Mead: Development of Self

George Herbert Mead explained that the **self is not present at birth**. It develops through social interaction and communication. A child learns to understand the attitudes and expectations of other people through the process of **role-taking**.

Mead divided the development of self into three stages:

Preparatory Stage: The child imitates the behaviour of others without fully understanding it.

Play Stage: The child takes the role of significant persons such as parents, teachers or doctors.

Game Stage: The child understands several roles simultaneously and follows organized social rules.

Mead divided the self into:

“**I**” – the spontaneous and creative aspect of personality.

“**Me**” – the socially regulated aspect shaped by the expectations of others.

The **generalized other** refers to the common values and expectations of society that guide individual behaviour.

2. Charles Horton Cooley: Looking-Glass Self

Charles Horton Cooley argued that the self develops through interaction with other people. Individuals form an image of themselves by imagining how others perceive and judge them.

The looking-glass self has three stages:

We imagine how we appear to others.

We imagine how others evaluate us.

We develop feelings such as pride, confidence, shame or embarrassment.

For example, when a student receives appreciation from teachers, the student may develop confidence. Thus, according to Cooley, society acts like a mirror through which individuals develop their self-image.

3. Sigmund Freud: Psychoanalytic Theory

Sigmund Freud explained socialization through the interaction of biological instincts, social rules and moral values. He divided personality into three parts:

Id: The biological and instinctive part of personality. It seeks immediate satisfaction and follows the pleasure principle.

Ego: The rational part of personality. It balances personal desires with social reality and follows the reality principle.

Superego: The moral part of personality. It represents the values, rules and expectations learned from parents and society.

Socialization develops the superego and teaches individuals to control instinctive desires. A properly socialized personality maintains a balance between the id, ego and superego.

Note- Mead and Cooley emphasized the role of social interaction in the development of self, while Freud emphasized the relationship between human instincts, personality and social control. Together, these theories explain how society shapes individual personality and behaviour.

Agents of Socialization

Agents of socialization are the individuals, groups and institutions through which a person learns social norms, values, behaviour and social roles. The major agents mentioned in the syllabus are family, peer groups and mass media.

1. Family

Family is the first and most influential agent of socialization. It introduces the child to language, customs, values, discipline, religion and patterns of behaviour. Through interaction with parents and other family members, the child develops emotional security, personality and a sense of identity.

Family also teaches gender roles, manners, authority, cooperation and responsibility. Since early childhood experiences have a lasting influence, family is regarded as the principal agency of primary socialization.

2. Peer Groups

A peer group consists of individuals of approximately the same age and social position, such as friends, classmates and playmates. Peer groups become especially important during childhood and adolescence.

Through peer interaction, individuals learn cooperation, competition, friendship, independence and group loyalty. Peer groups may introduce values and behaviour that differ from those taught by the family. They also influence language, dress, interests, attitudes and lifestyle.

Thus, peer groups help individuals develop an identity independent of parental authority.

3. Mass Media

Mass media includes television, radio, newspapers, films, the internet and social media. It communicates information, ideas, values and cultural images to a large audience.

Mass media influences opinions, consumer behaviour, political awareness, gender roles and lifestyle choices. In contemporary society, social media platforms have become important agencies of digital socialization, especially among young people.

However, mass media may also transmit stereotypes, misinformation, violence and unrealistic standards of beauty and success. Therefore, its socializing influence may be both positive and negative.