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COVIDALIZATION - COVID SOCIALIZATION: A NEW CONCEPT IN SOCIAL SCIENCE

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Abstract

Socialization is an integral part of human life. It is a process of learning which begins with the birth of child and is carried out by various agencies such as family, school, religion, occupation etc and continues till death. Till the outbreak of pandemic due to Covid-19, the agencies were carrying out their role to socialize the child and adult. However, pandemic has changed the life. Everyone has started wearing masks, using sanitizers, regularly washing hands, practising social distancing, not going out necessarily, no or less partying, less outings, minimal participation in social gatherings, work from home and alike. Process of socialization has never taught us to behave like this but all human beings now have to learn these practices. Covid is bringing change in our socialization and this process will be called covidalization, i.e., covid socialization. The paper like to conclude that pandemic is here to stay and it is high time that we bring change in socialization process so as to adapt easily to new challenges in life.

Keywords: Socialization, Covid-19, coronavirus, Covidalization, Covid Socialization

Introduction

Aristotle said “Man by Nature is a Social Animal” and it is true that the process of socialization makes a human social animal. The role of traditional agencies and social interaction since time immemorial has been the building block of socialization. Technology has created space in virtual world but society will be asked to follow social distancing norms was beyond imagination. In addition to meeting in cyber space, the people use to meet others in educational institutions, workplaces, hobby classes, gyms, clubs, sports, shopping malls, parks, etc which also contributed significantly in process of socialization.

However, the pandemic of Novel Coronavirus Covid-19 has put on a brake on role of traditional agencies of socialization and new form of socialization has emerged due to Covid-19 which will be called “Covidalization”, i.e., Covid socialization. Covidalization will help in making the society and its members as “Covidable”. Covidalization will include wearing of masks, use of sanitizers, regularly washing hands, practising social distancing, not going out necessarily, no or less partying, less outings, minimal participation in social gatherings, work from home and alike. The concept of Covidalization has been introduced in social science by the author in this paper which is going to be used in everyday life.

What is socialization?

The term socialization represents the process of acquiring the cultural traits of the society. Socialization is a process of learning which begins with the birth of child and continues till death of the individual. At birth, the infant possesses merely the potential of becoming a social being. Gradually, through a variety of experience, he becomes what the sociologist calls socialized. MacIver defines Socialization, “as the process by which social beings establish wider and profounder relationships with one another, in which they develop the sense of their more obligation to and responsibility for others, in which they grow more perceptive of the personality of themselves and of others and build up the complex structure of nearer and wider association.” Samuel Koenig says that socialization mean the process whereby an individual becomes a functionary member of the society into which he is bone, that is, behaves and acts in accordance with folkways and mores.

Thus, socialization is the process by which an individual learns to behave in accordance with customs, traditions and mores. The infant is influenced by the presence and action of people around him. The infant has a tendency toward imitation and the infant is unaware of his surroundings. To begin with, gradually starts taking interest in thing and in person. He starts developing according to the environment in which he lives. The child tries to win the praise of the group in which he lives. In this way, he adopts the culture of the society. Socialization brings balance to his personality because the social aspect of his personality is determined by the culture, by the persons and their actions. The societal control realizes him his responsibility towards others and society. It is socialization which develops in him the feelings of cooperation, tolerance and belongingness. Individuals influence each other by means of imitation, suggestion and sympathy. Social institutions and association also carriage out the socialization process. The influence of societal processes, praise and blame, cooperation and conflict, submission and ascendancy help in the formation of personality and individuality.

Theories of Socialization

Various theories have been propounded on the process of socialization important ones are the theories of Cooley, Mead and Freud.

The Theory of "Looking glass self" (Cooley) The theory of "Looking glass self" has been propounded by Cooley. According to him, man develops the concept of self with the help of other. He does not form opinions about himself unless he comes in contact with other and knows their opinion about himself just as the picture in the mirror gives an image of the social self the knowledge about ourselves comes of us form the reaction of other persons. The other persons comprise our social looking glass through which we form the image of ourselves

Looking glass concept

There are three principal elements of the looking glass concept (1) our perception of how we look to other; (2) our perception of their judgement of how we look; (3) our feeling about these judgements. Take an example suppose that whenever you enter a room and approach a small group of people conversing together the members promptly leave the room with lame excuses this has taken place several times. Would it not affect your own feeling about yourself? Or if whenever you appear, a group quickly forms around you how would this attention affect self-feelings? Thus we, discover ourselves through the reactions of others about us this self-knowledge is first gained from parents and is modified later by the reaction of the people about us are not similar or we may misjudge their reactions. An ego - boosting remark may be a more flattery thus, the looking-glass self which the individual perceives may differ from the image others have actually formed. There is often a significant variation between the individual perceptions of how other picture him and the views they actually hold.

Cooley points out that the approaches of the traditional psychologists are wrong and misleading in the sense that they separate the individual from the society. Similarly, social scientists' fallacy lies in the fact that they lay too much emphasis on society. Cooley considers human nature "as a consequence of habits acquired through experience with other members of society—thus as an indirect consequence of social order." When a man comes into contact with others only then he can have consciousness of a social self. The social self is invariably expressed through such terms as I, Me and Mine. A child may have his mother as his model and his social self would be patterned on the mother. According to Cooley, primary groups play a significant role in the process of socialization. In family, a child learns cooperation, sharing and self-sacrifice which are essential requisites for leading a healthy social life. They are primary because they are of universal nature and they are fundamental in forming human social nature. Cooley stresses that for the development of human nature, social contact with other members of society is essential. Thus, in his Theory of Socialization, Cooley explains rationally the most controversial issue of his days as to who is more important—individual or society.

Mead's theory

In the theory put forward by G.H. Mead, emphasis has been laid on the sociological character of process of socialization. According to Mead, the self develops out of the child's communicative contact with others. The new-born infant has needs like food and clothing that press for satisfaction. The mother satisfies these needs and the child is satisfied physically and emotionally. But course of time the child differentiates himself from his mother dad then he has to integrate himself and mother into a new social system, a two person, two role system, with the child talking a subordinate role to the superior role of the mother of significant other's increase for the child: and the child internalises the role of these other and then respond to his own words and act in terms of the meaning they would convey to the other person. In this way the self develops and grows. An essential characteristic of the self develops through their eyes. He learns to imagine how he appears to others and how do they judge this appearance. Then he reacts to himself as an object as well as subject. According to him, Man's consciousness of self is the basis of the process of socialization. The development of the consciousness of self is an essential part of becoming a human being.

At the time of birth child is only a biological organism. Gradually society influences him and he becomes conscious of what type of behaviour society expects from him.

Mead talks about three stages of socialization, i.e., Imitation, Play and Game stage. In first stage, the child imitates the behaviour of others. In second stage, the child plays different roles and in the final stage the child learns rule of the game. He said that there are two parts of self I and Me. 'I' is the acting self and 'Me' develops during the process of socialization. Mead argues that through the process of role taking the individual develops a concept of 'self'. By keeping himself in the position of others he is able to look back upon himself. He places himself outside in such a way that he becomes an object to himself. To do this he must observe himself from the standpoint of others. The notion of the self is not inborn, it is learned during childhood. Mead sees two stages in the development of self. The first is known as the play stage, where the child plays the role which is not his own. For example, child may play the role of mother, father, doctor or nurse. In doing so he becomes aware that there is a difference between him and the role he is playing. Thus, the idea of a self is developed as the child takes the role of a make believe other. The second stage in the development of self is the 'game stage'. In playing a game, the child comes to see himself from the perspective of the various participants. In order to play a game e.g., football, a child must become aware of his relationship to other members of his team. He sees himself from a collective viewpoint of the other players.

Without the development of self an individual cannot direct action or respond to the action of others. By becoming 'Self-conscious', he can direct his action with thought and deliberation. He can see himself as others see him and observes himself from the standpoint of others. The individual will become aware of what is expected of him and tends to modify his actions accordingly. In this way conduct is regulated in terms of the expectations and attitudes of others. Mead argues that, "It is in the form of the generalized other that the social process influences the behaviour of the individual involved in it that the community exercises control over the conduct of its individual members."

According to Mead, the most important vehicle of socialization is the process of interaction. Human beings interact in terms of symbols. A symbol does not simply stand for an object or event. It defines them in a particular way and indicates a response to them. Symbols provide the means whereby man can interact meaningfully with his natural and social environment. Thus, the symbol, chair not only represents a class of objects and defines them as similar; it also indicates a line of action that is the action of sitting. Without symbols there would be no human interaction. Symbolic interaction is necessary since man has no instincts to direct his behaviour. Social life can only proceed if the meanings of symbols are largely shared by members of society. If this were not the case, meaningful communication would be impossible.

Talcott Parsons in his study has classified socialization into primary and adult socialization.

According to Parsons, although the nuclear family performs reduced functions, it is still the only institution that can perform two core functions in society – Primary Socialisation and the Stabilisation of Adult Personalities.

1. Primary Socialization – The nuclear family is still responsible for teaching children the norms and values of society known as Primary Socialisation. An important part of socialisation according to Functionalists is gender role socialisation. If primary socialisation is done correctly then boys learn to adopt the 'instrumental role' (also known as the 'breadwinner role) they go on to go out to work and earns money. Girls learn to adopt the 'expressive role' doing all the 'caring work', housework and bringing up the children.

2. The stabilisation of adult personalities refers to the emotional security which is achieved within a marital relationship between two adults. According to Parsons working life in Industrial society is stressful and the family is a place where the working man can return and be 'de-stressed' by his wife, which reduces conflict in society. This is also known as the 'warm bath theory'. He also argued that families helped to prevent adults from behaving in disruptive or dysfunctional ways, instead encouraging them to conform to social norms, especially at the time of stress. It provides emotional support to its members. Talcott Parsons claimed that one of the main purposes (or functions as he called it) of secondary socialisation is to "Liberate the individual from a dependence upon the primary attachments and relationships formed within the family group". What Parsons meant by this was that, in modern societies, the vast majority of people that we meet will be strangers to us. It would not be possible or desirable to relate to them in the same way that we relate to people that we love and for whom we have affection. We have, therefore, to learn how to deal with people in terms of what they can do for us and what we can do for them in particular situations.

The sociological theories highlight the traditional process of socialization. They were critically analysed and most of our socialization process revolved around these viewpoints. However, pandemic that broke out due to coronavirus has changed the world and it has affected significantly the socialization process. The process of socialization has to be redefined and has to include use of masks, sanitizers, online learning techniques for both children and parents, social distancing and other social processes.

COVID-19 & SOCIALIZATION

COVID-19 has forced most of us to be confined inside our homes. Human history will record this period as a time of unparalleled separation and crisis but also of great courage, learning and collaboration. Each one of us is having to review the way they function and their way of life itself. As we have seen across the world in multiple situations of crisis, children and senior citizens being the most vulnerable are often the worst affected. To fight Covid-19, the country is under lockdown to contain the spread of the pandemic. Initially people enjoyed “Stay at Home” but gradually they started craving for outside food, alcohol, outings, social gatherings etc.

In the current milieu of lockdown and restriction of movement, children have controlled access to socialization, play and even physical contact, necessary for their psycho-social well-being and development. Closing of schools is preventing children from access to face to face learning and restraining their interaction with peers. Children are feeling confused and at loss with the current situation with online learning, communication and interaction and is leading to frustration and anxiety. It is going to increase with the overexposure to mass media and social media, especially among adolescents. Parents are themselves struggling to cope with the situation and may find it difficult to explain and communicate with children about the current crisis, which can agitate young minds. From no entry of mobiles to schools, it is ironical that schools are now run with the aid of mobiles. The most energetic generation has been forced to sit idle at a time when they require maximum inputs from their peer groups for socialization.

Today, we are witnessing an age where every person is looking at others with suspicion of being a potential virus carrier. This change in behaviour has adversely affected the confidence of individuals across the age group which may lead to large scale discriminatory practices. Covid-19 has impacted social interaction and socialization as people are now being accustomed for “Social Distancing”. Shaking hands was considered to be the most effective mode of greetings in the pre-pandemic period for formal as well as informal social interactions. In addition, hugging, kissing, and high-fives were also used for more intimate greetings. However, in Covid-era, these things are now a matter of history and have been quickly replaced with namaste, waving of hands, leg shake, bow greeting and the elbow bumps. All forms of physical, social interaction and cultural exchange facilitated by tourism, meetings, adventure, etc. has been stopped. The physical interaction of people has been confined to family members, close relatives and neighbours. The generation which was relatively free has become sandwich generation. The Sandwich generation is a generation of people who care for their aging parents while supporting their own children. Athithi Devo Bhav (The Guest is God) culture has given way to closed-door culture for guests as they could be potential carriers of coronavirus.

Wearing of masks, use of sanitizers, social distancing, no dining outside, no fast food order, regularly washing hands, fruits, vegetables, etc. are such buzz words which have entered our life with a fast pace. We are being made to learn how to deal with Covid-19 and the process of Covidalization has to become part of socialization across all the globe. It is a gender, race, caste, class neutral social process. New born children will have to learn to live with masks and social distancing like adults and world without these things will be a dream. Pandemic has changed the face of the world. In order to survive, we have to become covidable and for this we have to redesign socialization and training programs. We have to rewrite school books to include curriculum on Covidalization and it has to begin from kindergarten. It is the first-time post industrialization and globalization, that we have witnessed a pandemic of such scale which looks like is here to stay.

During lockdown, the society has realized that socialization and care work is not just task of women and men have also contributed extensively in childcare and household work. We have also learnt to live without assistance of maids and has made us self-dependent in household work. A big change can be seen in office work by introduction of ‘Work from Home’ which earlier was limited to IT companies. We use to get ready for office and rush for biometric attendance. But during Covid era, we are little relaxed though completing our official duties. Our marriages which use to be grand gala affair has been reduced to fifty persons with minimal expenditure on marriage and socialized to keep social distance in a social ceremony meant for more interaction.

We use to count number of persons joining us in our last journey but that has been limited to twenty persons and in many cases last rites were performed by unknown persons at times even belonging to different caste, race, religion, etc. inexplicably promoting unity and aiding in removal of social barriers globally to an extent.

In pandemic period, family, neighbours, resident welfare associations, residential committees, religious organizations, village committees, village panchayats, tribal committees, and local bodies have become highly important for social interaction and social life. The anonymity in urban life is fast disappearing and now people are more concerned about the health and activities of their neighbours. The local associations are contributing a lot in assisting the government and local authorities. They have also demonstrated their competences in taking over local governance and replacing NGOs at the micro-level. This is a drastic change from the individualistic urban societies during the Pre-Covid era.

With norms of social distancing, we have entered the age of Virtual Social Interactions: Life would have been worse without the cyberspace. Today, people are forming social groups, hobby groups, and hosting parties such as tea parties, birthday and marriages, etc. on internet-enabled social media and other AI (Artificial Intelligence) based

technologies. We may be creating virtual guests and online gaming and other innovative modes of social interaction are also being explored in the cyber world. Webinars has replaced traditional seminars and it has emerged as easier way to connect with the world with minimal cost.

Though COVID 19 has changed the whole world, but schools are continuing to do online teaching with the pre-pandemic curriculum. There is need to revise the curriculum and include, the implementation of social distancing measures such as no handshake, no hugs, no high-fives, no kisses, etc., wearing of masks, use of sanitizers, washing hands, keeping hygiene, etc. Pandemic and post-pandemic period require improved communication skills and a new set of non-verbal communication for formal as well as informal social interactions. The feelings communicated through various measures of touch will require strong linguistic and non-verbal expressions. Furthermore, the schools will require to protect their students from increased susceptibility to cybercrime and new approaches to counselling to deal with difficult situations such as crime and suicidal tendencies. Most of us have become tech-savvy thanks to internet and society has taken a reverse turn and has become more family oriented. Though it is early to project society of future but it is sure that the process of socialization be it primary, secondary or adult socialization will change and Covidalization, i.e., covid socialization will become a reality. The paper like to conclude that due to Covid-19 we have to bring changes in our socialization process so as to survive and sustain in the world. If we do not change our traditional practices of socialization, we will be reducing in numbers at a faster pace.

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