**Question 1: Discuss the Consequences of social stratification in the society.**

Social stratification is the main reason for relational set of inequalities in economic, social, political and ideological dimensions. It is a system whereby people rank and evaluate each other. On the basis of such evaluation, one is rewarded with more wealth, authority, power and prestige.

It is broadly organised into three parts: upper class, middle class and lower class on the basis of power and wealth. This has resulted in the creation of a number of levels within our society.

Consequences include;

1. Social stratification causes social disparity and many problems as it is an unjust system with monopoly of power and wealth in a particular group. It affects life chances, lifestyles and prestige.

2. It creates emotional stress and depression for the people belonging to lower social stratum as they have unequal access to wealth, power and prestige.

3. It creates a huge gulf between the people in terms of their incomes and a range of measures associated with social position, education, health, and psychological well-being.

4. It is distinctly perceived that disparity causes chaos in society. These are the stumbling blocks in the way to progress and development of the country.

**Other Consequences of social stratification include;**

One’s position in the social class hierarchy has far-reaching effects on their health, family life, education, etc.

**Physical Health**

1. A person’s social class has a significant impact on their physical health, their ability to receive adequate medical care and nutrition, and their life expectancy.

2. To having an increased level of illness, lower socioeconomic classes have lower levels of health insurance than the upper class. Much of this disparity can be explained by the tendency for middle and upper class people to work in professions that provide health insurance benefits to employees, while lower status occupations often do not provide benefits to employees. For many employees who do not have health insurance benefits through their job, the cost of insurance can be prohibitive. Without insurance, or with inadequate insurance, the cost of healthcare can be extremely high. Consequently, many uninsured or poorly.

3. The role of socioeconomic status in determining access to healthcare results in heath inequality between the upper, middle, and lower or working classes, with the higher classes having more positive health outcomes.

**Mental Health**

Different classes have different levels of access to treatment and encounter different mental health stressors.

Mental health describes a person’s level of psychological well-being, or the presence/absence of mental disorder. Mental health can include one’s ability to enjoy life and demonstrate psychological resilience.

1. What counts as healthy enjoyment and resilience depends upon one’s class perspective. Members of different classes encounter different stressors—lower class people likely face more financial stress as it pertains to day-to-day sustenance and well-being, while upper class people might experience stress from the intense social pressures associated with elite circles. The evaluation of which mental states can be considered healthy and which require medical intervention also varies by class.

2. Members of different social classes often hold different views on mental health. Similarly, different social classes have different levels of access to mental health interventions and to information about mental health. Thus, the diagnosis and treatment of mental disorders varies widely by social class.

**Family Life**

Family life, including marriage, childbearing and household composition are strongly influenced by social class.

1. The probability of a first marriage ending is substantially higher for couples with low socioeconomic statuses than for those in the middle or upper class. Research shows that the higher rates of divorce for individuals in lower social classes can often be attributed to the greater financial stress these couples face.

2. Globally, the birth rate in countries with large impoverished populations is much higher than in wealthier countries, indicating that income and wealth play a role in shaping family structures. Demographers have identified a direct relationship between average number of children per household and the economic development of a nation. Today, less developed countries struggle with overpopulation while many governments in developed countries are instituting policies to deal with low birth rates.

3. Today, less developed countries struggle with overpopulation while many governments in developed countries are instituting policies to deal with low birth rates. In nations with high levels of fertility, upper class individuals tend to have more children than their lower class peers. In nations with low levels of fertility, upper class families exhibit even lower fertility than average.

4. Social class has both a cause and an effect relationship with family composition. For example, single-parent households are likely to have a lower social class because they violate social norms. At the same time, single-parent families can contribute to financial and social instability. A single parent will often face higher costs (in the form of paid childcare), lower earnings (loss of the second parent’s income or loss of time spent at work), or both.

**Education**

Educational attainment is tied to social class, with upper class individuals acquiring higher degrees from more prestigious schools.

1. Because members of high social classes tend to be better educated and have higher incomes, they are more able to provide educational advantages to their children as well.

2. Education is a major component of social class, both directly and indirectly. Directly, individuals from higher social classes are more likely to have the means to attend more prestigious schools, and are therefore more likely to receive higher educations. Indirectly, individuals who benefit from such higher education are more likely to land prestigious jobs, and in turn, higher salaries.

3. Educational attainment refers to the level of schooling a person completes — for instance, high school, some college, college, or a graduate degree. Upper class individuals are likely to attend schools of higher quality and of greater prestige than those attended by their lower class counterparts.

4. Because members of high social classes tend to be better educated and have higher incomes, they are able to offer greater educational advantages, such as private schooling, to their children as well.

Upper-class parents are better able to send their children not only to exclusive private schools, but also to public state-funded schools. Such schools are likely to be of higher quality in affluent areas than in impoverished ones, since they are funded by property taxes within the school district. Wealthy areas will provide more property taxes as revenue, which leads to higher quality schools. Educational inequality is one factor that perpetuates the class divide across generations.

**Religion**

Social class is associated with individuals’ religious affiliations and practices but not with religiosity itself.

1. Social class is an indicator of religious affiliation, with upper class members concentrated in formal denominations and lower class members concentrated in informal denominations.

2. Social class, measured by socioeconomic status, is associated with individuals’ religious affiliations and practices. This affiliation has more to do with how religion is practiced rather than degree of religiosity.

3. Members of lower classes tend to be affiliated with more fundamentalist religions and sect-like groups. Members of the middle class tend to belong to more formal churches.

**QUESTION 2: What is Social Mobility? Citing examples, discuss how stratification system can impact social mobility both positively and negatively.**

What is Social Mobility?

Social mobility refers to the shift in an individual’s social status from one status to another. The shift can either be higher, lower, inter-generational, and intra-generational, and it cannot be determined if the change is for good or bad.

Social Mobility

Origin of the Social Mobility Concept:

Russian-born American sociologist and political activist Pitirim Sorokin first introduced the concept of social mobility in his book “Social and Cultural Mobility.” He states that there is no society that is completely open (such as the class system) and no society that is completely closed (like the caste system in India).

According to Sorokin, no two societies are the same in terms of movement allowed and discouraged, and that the speed of the social mobility can change from one time period to the next. It depends on how developed the society is.

Such societal shift can happen over time as individuals move from one position to another due to various social interactions. Mobility, more or less, provides people with benefits as they are motivated by different factors in society and work to reach towards new roles that offer them a better standard of living and greater rewards. People compete and cooperate with others in society to move up the social mobility ladder.

**Social Mobility**

Social mobility is the degree to which an individual’s family or group social status can change throughout the course of their life through a system of social hierarchy or stratification. Subsequently, it is also the degree to which an individual’s or group’s descendants move up and down the class system. This movement can be the result of achievements or factors beyond control (Grusky & Manwai, 2008; Stark, 2007).

Sociologists were fascinated to first learn of social mobility because of the regularity with which people ended up in roughly the same social position as their parents with each passing generation. Despite some intergenerational movement up and down the social ladder, those born into wealthy and influential families are likely to live their lives as wealthy and influential people, while those born into abject poverty are not. This regularity in social mobility, according to sociologists, is the result of inherited wealth, useful social contacts and education.

**Types of Social Mobility**

Social mobility can take different forms, and people can experience different types of mobility in different stages of their lives. The type of mobility are now independent of one another and can often overlap. They are only distinguished for the purpose of analysis.

**1. Horizontal mobility**

It occurs when a person changes their occupation but their overall social standing remains unchanged. For example, if a doctor goes from practicing medicine to teaching in a medical school, the occupation’s changed but their prestige and social standing remains the same. Sorokin describes horizontal mobility as a change in religious, territorial, political, or for family and other horizontal shifts with no change in the vertical position.

**2. Vertical mobility**

It refers to a change in the occupational, political, or religious status of a person that causes a change in their societal position. An individual or social object moves from one social stratum to another. Vertical mobility can be ascending or descending.

Ascending involves an individual moving from a group in a lower stratum to a higher one or the creation of a similar group with a higher societal position, instead of side by side with its existing group. Descending mobility occurs for example when a businessman incurs losses in his business and is forced to declare bankruptcy, resulting in a move to a lower stratum of society.

**3. Upward mobility**

It is when a person moves from a lower position in society to a higher one. It can also include people occupying higher positions in the same societal group. However, upward mobility, while seen as a good thing, can also come at a cost for individuals.

When a person moves upwards, they need to leave behind familiar surroundings such as family and places. They may also need to change their way of thinking and behaviour. The individual will need to adapt to the new environment as a result of their upward movement and adopt different behaviours in the new society.

**4. Downward mobility**

Downward mobility takes place when a person moves from a higher position in society to a lower one. It can occur when someone is caught performing a wrongful act that can result in the loss of the position they currently hold.

Downward mobility can be extremely stressful for people who face a rapid decline in their social status; they may find it hard to adapt to the new environment as it is not similar to the standard of living they are used to. Downward mobility is an example of the extent to which a society values equal opportunity and structure.

**5. Inter-generational mobility**

Inter-generational mobility happens when the social position changes from one generation to another. The change can be upward or downward. For example, a father worked in a factory while his son received an education that allowed him to become a lawyer or a doctor.

Such societal change also causes the generation to adopt a new way of living and thinking. Inter-generational mobility is affected by the differences in the parents’ and their offspring’s upbringing, changes in population, and changes in occupation.

**6. Intra-generational mobility**

The intra-generational change in societal position occurs during the lifespan of a single generation. It can also refer to a change in position between siblings. One way is when a person climbs up the corporate ladder in their career. For example, an individual starts their career as a clerk and through their life moves on to a senior position such as a director. One sibling may also achieve a higher position in society than their brother or sister.

**Systems of Social Mobility**

**1. Open and Closed Systems of Social Mobility**

According to the Sociology Guide (n.d), a closed system of social mobility is that where norms prohibit mobility. The traditional caste system in India is one example of a closed system. A closed system emphasises the associative character of the hierarchy. It justifies the inequality in the distribution of the means of production, status symbols, power, and position and discourages any attempt to change them. Attempts to bring about changes in such a system or to promote mobility may be permanently suppressed. Individuals are assigned their place in the social structure on the basis of ascriptive criteria like age, race, and gender. Considerations of functional suitability or ideological notions of equality of opportunity are irrelevant in determining the positions of individuals into different statuses. However, no system in reality is perfectly closed. Even in the most rigid systems of stratification limited degree of mobility exists (Ololube, 2012).

In the open system, norms prescribe and encourage mobility. There are independent principles of ranking like status, class and power. In an open system individuals are assigned to different positions in the social structure on the basis of their merit or achievement. Open system mobility is generally characterised by occupational diversity, a flexible hierarchy, differentiated social structure and the rapidity of change. In such systems, the hold of ascription-based corporate groups like caste, kinship or extended family declines. The dominant values in such a system emphasise equality, freedom of the individual and change and innovation (Ololube, 2011).

**Factors Affecting Social Mobility**

There are some factors that can affect social mobility in any given society according to Ololube (2012, p. 90). They include:

1. **Hard work**: Hard work can be the key to success. Processes of social mobility depend on it. Those who do not concentrate on hard work in some cases do not move up on the social ladder.

2. **Inherited wealth:** Inherited wealth can also influence social mobility in society. Children, wards, and relatives who inherit money, landed properties and other properties tend to climb the social ladder.

3. **Level of education**: Education is seen as the mover and shaker in the social mobility process. People ascend or descend the class system based on their levels of education. It is presumed that the higher one’s level of education the greater one’s chances of moving up the social ladder and the education of parents according to (Tomul & Polat, 2013) has impact on children’s school achievement.

4. **Luck**: It is presumed that the movement up and down the social ladder depends to some extent on luck. However, movement based on favouritism, nepotism, political or religious affiliation, race, and ethnicity may all be mistaken as movements based on luck (Ololube, 2011, 2012).

5. **Marriage**: Marriage is a determinant of social mobility. A man or woman from a very poor background who weds a wealthy person may move up the social ladder verse-versa.

6. **Societal values and norms**: Nigerians are materialistic; get-rich-quick mentalities are now the norm and society seems to value this outlook very much. Those who resent hard work seek to get rich as quickly as possible to enable them move up the social ladder.

**Causes of Social Mobility**

The under listed are some of the causes of social mobility:

1. **Desire for higher education**: People, especially youths, engage in the process of social mobility for the purposes of higher education. They move to urban areas or travel abroad to obtain new and additional qualifications and this move or seeking can affect social mobility.

2. **Desire for better living standards**: The desire for better living standards can trigger the process of social mobility. People struggle to realise this desire and in the process often migrate from rural to urban areas or travel abroad for greener pastures. This is a common phenomenon in Nigeria.

3. **Development of new communications and media:** The development of mass and media communication are responsible for social mobility. People now find it much easier to identify and travel to countries which champion social mobility.

4. **Geographical environment**: In this situation people migrate to areas where the geographical conditions are conducive to their advancement - where the geographical conditions are considered to be good. For example, in extreme winter people may migrate to plain cities.

5. **Conducive political and economic situations:** In cases where there are conducive and suitable political and economic conditions, people take active part in the process of social mobility. The position and status of individuals continues to change with the progress of the country. This is more evident in developed countries like the United Kingdom, United State of America, France, and Switzerland.

**Positive Effects of Social Mobility**

The under listed are some of the positive effects of social mobility:

1. **Improvement in living standards**: Social mobility brings about improvements in the living standards of people. People change their professions or move from rural to urban areas, which ultimately improve their living standards.

2. **Improvement in national unity**: Social mobility causes people to move to other parts of the country. In doing so they interact with new cultures, which increase social interaction with different communities. On a large scale, such interaction increases national unity and solidarity.

3. **Greater affinities for personal freedom**: Due to social mobility, level of education increases, which invariably results in an increase in affinities for personal freedom.

4. **Obsolete customs**: When people interact with new cultures they learn new customs, tradition, and norms. People may adopt certain positive traditions that replace negative or obsolete norms.

**Negative Effects of Social Mobility**

The under listed are some of the negative effects of social mobility:

1. **Ethnic and cultural problems**: Social mobility can have a negative impact on the demography of a territory. It can create a state of collision between the interests of different groups, which, in turn, can create problems of social disorder. The constant standoff between Muslims and Christians in Nigeria is one example.

2. **Increases in crime**: Social mobility can increase the crime rate. Because of social mobility a taste for lavish lifestyles has been encouraged in people as they forgo hard work for get-rich-quick schemes. In addition, in the absence of the head of the family, children can become delinquent which also leads to increased crime.

3. **Unemployment**: Social mobility can increase unemployment. In every society, some professions are highly valued. Consequently, people move to those professions in great numbers. As a result of this, they disregard or devalue other older professions which people may no longer want to fill.

4. **Unequal division of population**: Social mobility can bring about the unequal distribution of population in industrial areas and cities.

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