

SOC205

ELEMENTS OF SOCIAL WORK



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- **Course code: SOC 205**
- **Course title: Elements of Social Work**
- **Course credit load: 2**

SERIES 1: Foundations of Social Pathology and Social Work

Series Outline

- **Part 1: Concept of Social Pathology**
 - 1.1 Definition and Scope of Social Pathology
 - 1.2 Historical Development of Social Pathology
 - 1.3 Importance of Studying Social Pathology
- **Part 2: Major Social Problems and Pathologies**
 - 2.1 Poverty and Economic Deprivation
 - 2.2 Delinquency and Crime
 - 2.3 Family Discord and Social Disorganisation
 - 2.4 Industrial, Racial, and Nationality Conflicts
 - 2.5 Mental Disorders as Social Pathologies
- **Part 3: Foundations of Social Work Practice**
 - 3.1 Definition and Scope of Social Work
 - 3.2 Theories of Social Work Relevant to Practice
 - 3.3 Relationship between Social Pathology and Social Work
- **Part 4: Organisation and Functions of Social Work Agencies**
 - 4.1 Public Social Work Agencies
 - 4.2 Private Social Work Agencies
 - 4.3 Social Security Systems and Their Role

Introduction

Societies everywhere face challenges that affect the wellbeing of individuals and communities. Issues such as poverty, crime, family discord, and mental disorders are not just personal troubles, they are social problems that require collective understanding and intervention. This Series



introduces you to the foundations of social pathology and social work, helping you to see how these problems emerge, why they matter, and how social work provides structured responses to them. By engaging with this Series, you will begin to appreciate the significance of social work in addressing the realities of contemporary Nigerian society.

The aim of this Series is to equip you with a clear understanding of the concept of social pathology, the major social problems it encompasses, and the theoretical and organisational foundations of social work practice. It intends to build your capacity to analyse social issues and to connect them with practical approaches used in social work agencies.

We shall commence this Series by examining the concept of social pathology, including its definition, scope, and historical development. Next, we will explore major social problems such as poverty, delinquency, crime, family discord, industrial conflicts, racial tensions, nationality conflicts, and mental disorders. Following that, we will move on to the foundations of social work practice, considering its scope, relevant theories, and its relationship with social pathology. Finally, we will wrap up by studying the organisation and functions of social work agencies, both public and private, including the role of social security systems. This sequential flow will provide you with a comprehensive foundation for understanding social pathology and the practice of social work.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- **SLO 1.1** define the concept and scope of **social pathology**, including its historical development and relevance to social work,
- **SLO 1.2** explain major social problems such as poverty, delinquency, crime, family discord, industrial conflicts, racial tensions, nationality conflicts, and mental disorders,
- **SLO 1.3** analyse the foundations of **social work practice**, including its scope and key theories relevant to addressing social pathologies,
- **SLO 1.4** evaluate the organisation and functions of public and private social work agencies, including the role of social security systems

1.1 Concept of Social Pathology

1.1.1 Definition and scope of social pathology

The term **social pathology** refers to the study of harmful or abnormal conditions within society that disrupt the wellbeing of individuals and communities. It focuses on identifying social problems such as poverty, crime, and family discord, and examining their causes and consequences. The scope of social pathology extends to understanding how these issues affect social order and stability, and how they can be addressed through organised interventions.

Fill in the blank: Social pathology is the study of harmful or _____ conditions within society.



Box 1.199: Social Pathology & Social Work Practice

OER

Understanding Dysfunctions & Interventions in Sociology



Overall Impact: This diagram highlights the conceptual link between social pathology, social problems, and social work practice in addressing and resolving these issues, highlighting the field's focus on applying knowledge to tackle complex social challenges.

OER Diagram

Created: Saturday, February 7, 2026 at 5:40:38 PM WAT

Diagram showing the relationship between social pathology, social problems, and social work practice. Caption: Figure 2.1 Relationship between social pathology and social work

1.1.2 Historical development of social pathology

The concept of social pathology has evolved over time. Early thinkers viewed social problems as moral failings of individuals, but later perspectives recognised them as structural issues rooted in society. For example, poverty was once seen as laziness, but modern approaches highlight economic inequality and systemic barriers. This historical development shows how social pathology shifted from blaming individuals to analysing broader social causes.

Fill in the blank: Early thinkers often saw poverty as a result of _____ rather than structural inequality.



Box 1.200: Early vs Modern Modern Views of Social Pathology

Evolution of Theoretical Perspectives in Sociology

1. Early Views (1st-Early 20th Century) • Rooted in biological/medical models • Society as organism; deviance as "disease" • Focus on individual moral failing, biological inferiority • Theorists: Spencer, Lombroso, early Durkheim	2. Modern Views (Mid-20th-Present) • Shift to social/environmental factors • Social problems as system dysfunction • Focus on inequality, social structure, • Focus on inequality, social structures, power, power • Theorists: Merton, Cooley, Feminist Theorists
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Overall Impact: This box traces the conceptual shift in understanding social pathology from individualistic, biological explanations to system, sociological perspectives, reflecting broader changes of social theory and research

OER Text Box

Created: Saturday, February 7, 2026 at 5:42:13 PM WAT

Box 2.1 Historical perspectives on social pathology

1.1.3 Importance of studying social pathology

Studying social pathology is important because it helps us to recognise the root causes of social problems and to design effective solutions. It also provides a framework for social workers to intervene in ways that promote social justice and wellbeing. By analysing social pathologies, learners can develop critical thinking skills and apply theories of social work to real-life situations.

Fill in the blank: Studying social pathology provides a framework for _____ to intervene in social problems.





Image of a social worker engaging with a community group. Caption: Plate 2.1 Social worker addressing community issues

Pilot questions 1.1

1. Define social pathology and explain its scope.
2. Identify one early view and one modern view of social pathology.
3. Why is studying social pathology important for social workers?
4. Fill in the blank: Social pathology is the study of harmful or _____ conditions within society.



5. Explain how the historical development of social pathology shifted perspectives on poverty.

1.2 Major Social Problems and Pathologies

1.2.1 Poverty and economic deprivation

Poverty is a condition in which individuals or groups lack the resources necessary to meet basic needs such as food, shelter, and healthcare. It is not only an economic issue but also a social pathology because it affects the stability and wellbeing of society. Economic deprivation often leads to exclusion from opportunities and can perpetuate cycles of disadvantage.

Fill in the blank: Poverty is considered a social pathology because it affects the _____ and wellbeing of society.



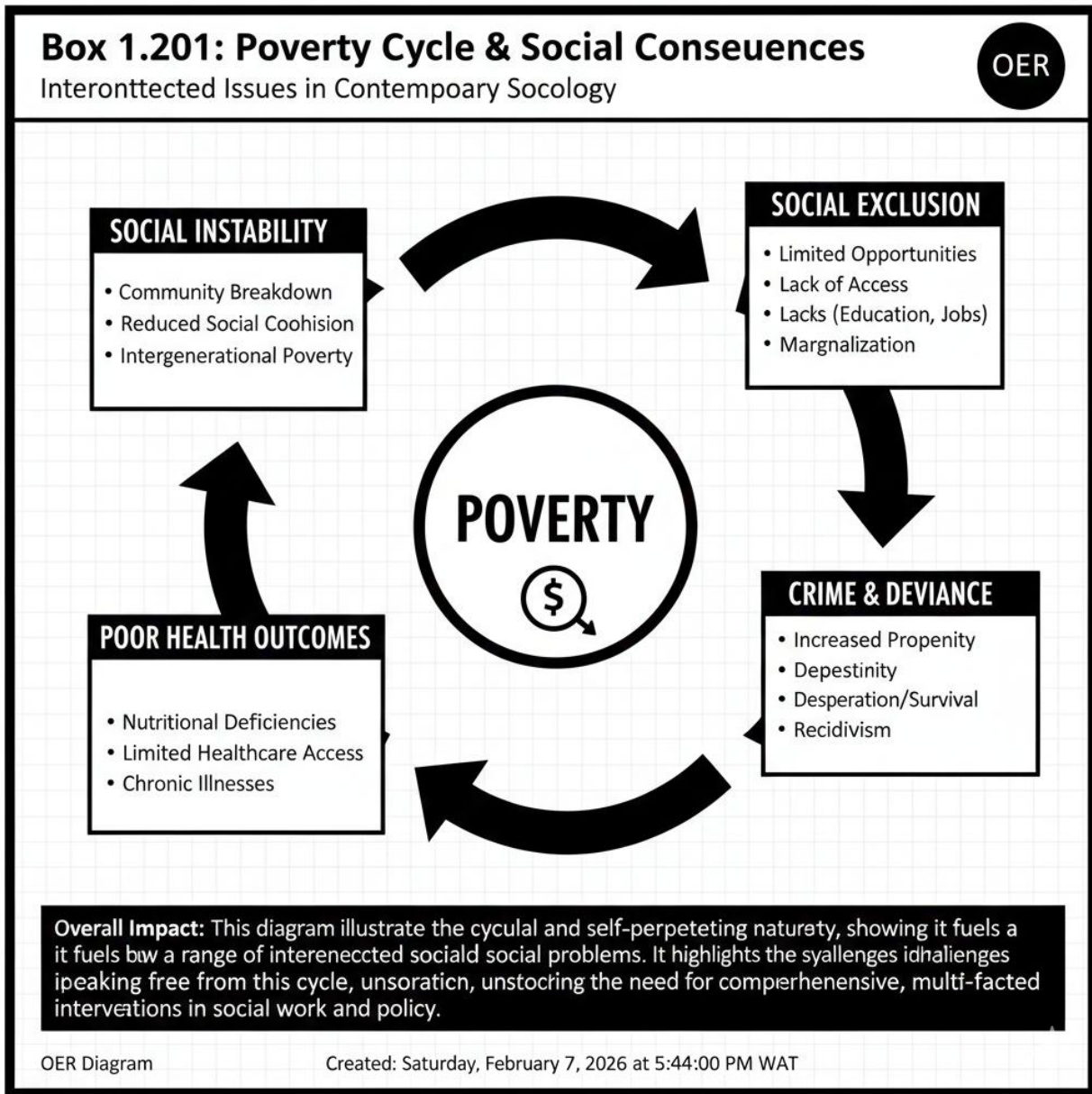


Diagram showing the cycle of poverty and its social effects. Caption: Figure 2.2 Cycle of poverty and social consequences

1.2.2 Delinquency and crime

Delinquency refers to minor offences committed by young people, while **crime** involves violations of the law by individuals of any age. Both are social pathologies because they disrupt social order and create insecurity. Delinquency often arises from poor family structures, peer influence, or lack of education, while crime may be linked to poverty, unemployment, or systemic inequality.

Fill in the blank: Delinquency often arises from poor family structures, peer influence, or lack of _____.





Community Discussion on Youth Delinquency Prevention

Created: Saturday, February 7, 2026 at 5:44:49 PM WAT

Image of a community sensitisation programme against youth delinquency. Caption: Plate 2.2
Community sensitisation against youth delinquency

1.2.3 Family discord and social disorganisation

Family discord refers to conflict and breakdown within family units, while **social disorganisation** describes the weakening of social institutions and norms. These conditions contribute to instability and can lead to delinquency, crime, and other social problems. When families fail to provide support and guidance, individuals may struggle to integrate into society.

Fill in the blank: Family discord contributes to instability and can lead to _____ and other social problems.



Box 1.202: Family Discord & Social Disorganization

The Societal Ripples of Family Instability

1. Effects on Individuals & Families

- Emotional Distress (e.g., anxiety, depression, nervousness)
- Behavioral Problems (e.g., aggression, withdrawal)
- Academic Underachievement
- Reduced Social Skills
- Financial Strain

2. Broader Social Consequences

- Increased Juvenile Delinquency
- Higher Rates of
- Higher Rates of Crime
- Community Instability
- Strain on Social Services
- Intergenerational Cycles of Dysfunction

Overall Impact:

This box outlines the far-reaching effects of family discord, illustrating how micro-level family issues can have macro-level social disorganization. It emphasizes the need for supportive interventions to foster family well-being and community stability.

OER Text Box

Created: Saturday, February 7, 2026 at 5:45:35 PM WAT

Box 2.2 Effects of family discord

1.2.4 Industrial, racial, and nationality conflicts

Industrial conflict occurs when workers and employers disagree over wages, conditions, or rights. **Racial conflict** arises from discrimination and prejudice between groups, while **nationality conflict** involves tensions between ethnic or national groups. These conflicts are social pathologies because they undermine unity and can escalate into violence.

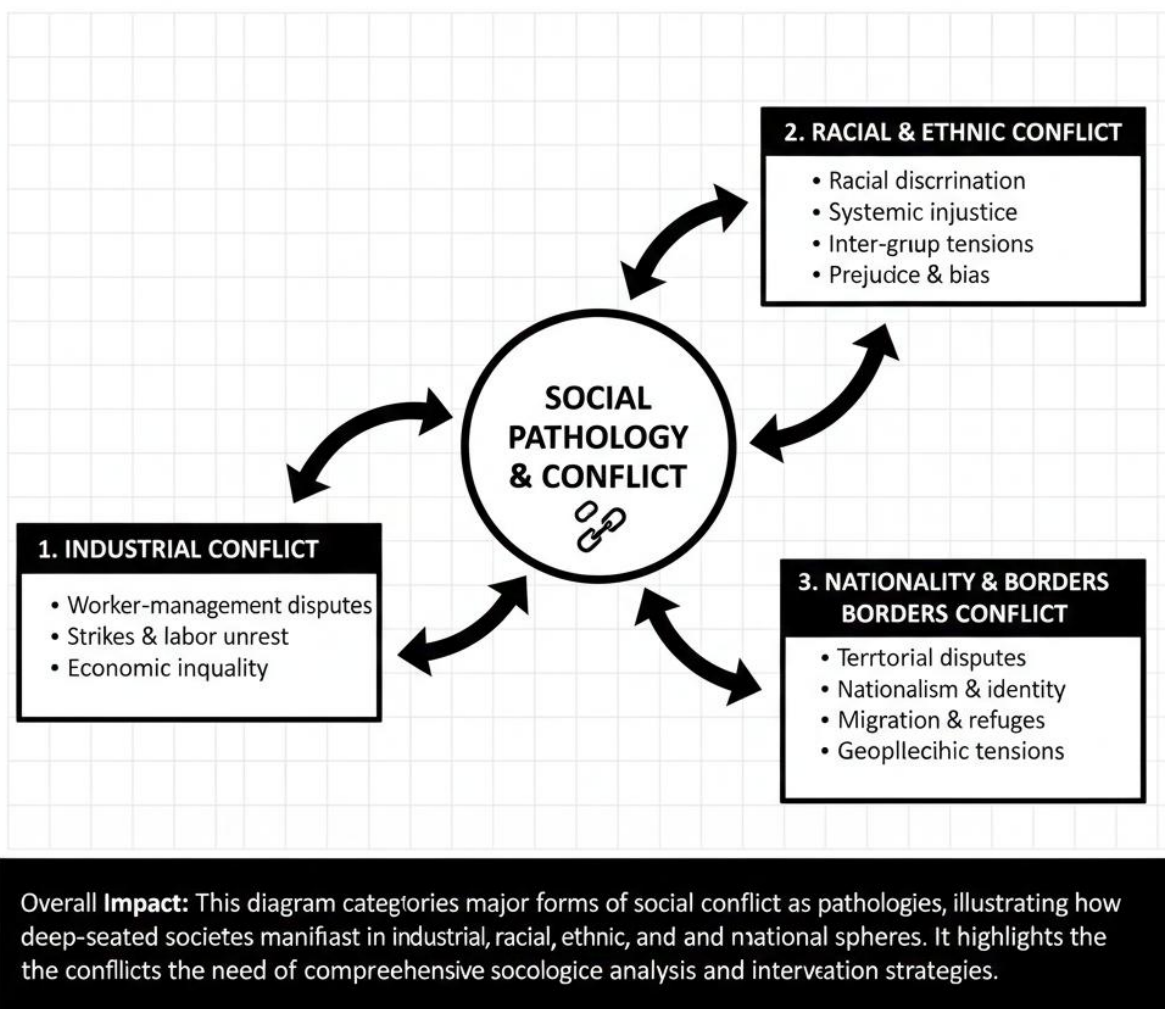
Fill in the blank: Industrial conflict occurs when workers and employers disagree over wages, conditions, or _____.



Box 1.203: Types of Social Pathology & Conflict

Categorizing Societal Dysfunctions in Contemporary Sociology

OER



OER Diagram

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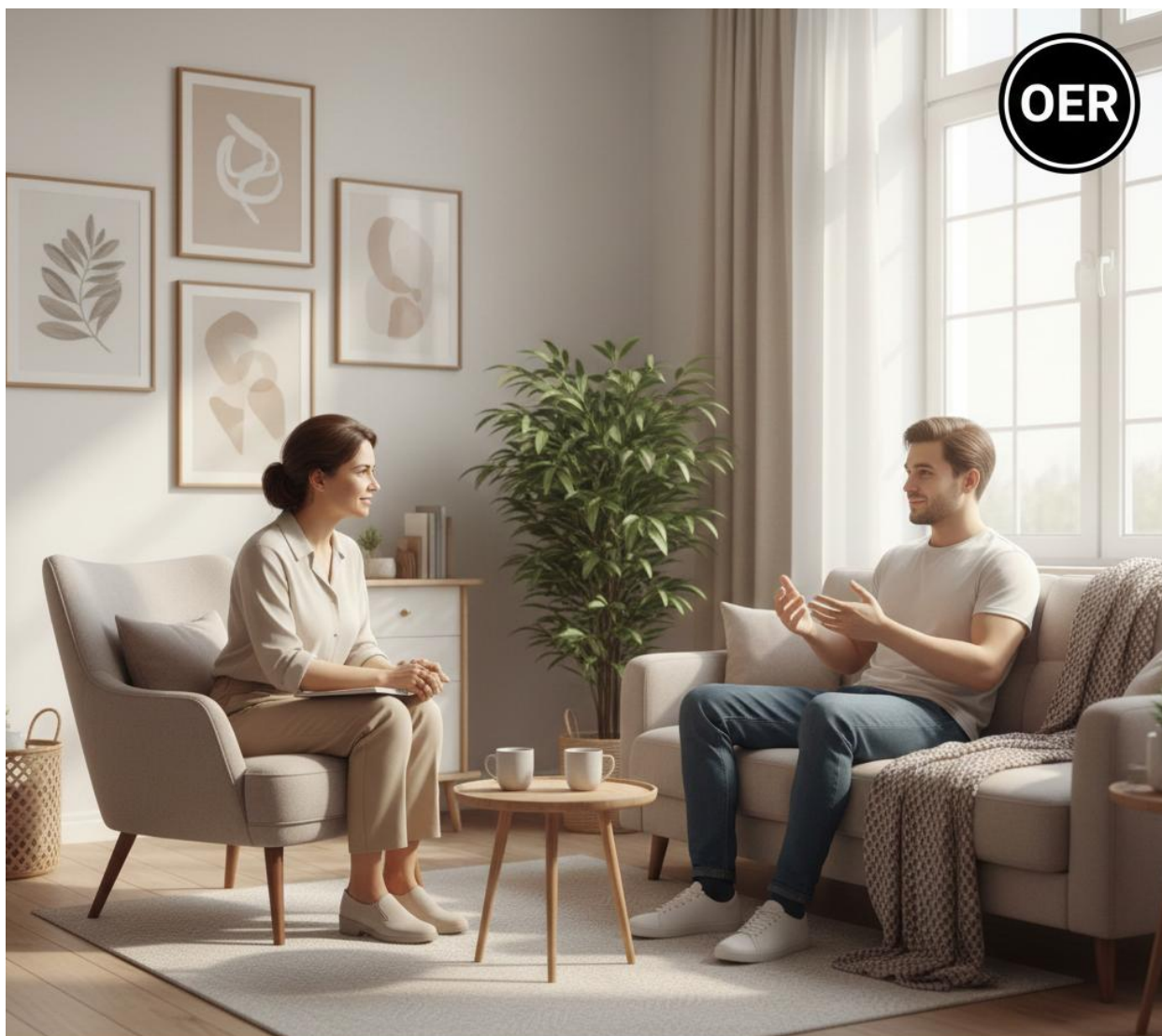
Diagram showing types of social conflict: industrial, racial, and nationality. Caption: Figure 2.3 Types of social conflict

1.2.5 Mental disorders as social pathologies

Mental disorders are conditions that affect thinking, mood, and behaviour. They are considered social pathologies because they impact not only individuals but also families and communities. Stigma and lack of access to treatment often worsen the situation, leading to exclusion and reduced productivity.

Fill in the blank: Mental disorders are considered social pathologies because they impact individuals, families, and _____.





Mental Health Counselling for Well-being

Created: Saturday, February 7, 2026 at 5:47:20 PM WAT

Image of a counselling session addressing mental health. Caption: Plate 2.3 Counselling session for mental health support

Pilot questions 1.2

1. Define poverty and explain why it is considered a social pathology.
2. Distinguish between delinquency and crime, giving one cause of each.
3. Explain how family discord contributes to social disorganisation.
4. Identify one example of industrial conflict and one example of racial conflict.
5. Fill in the blank: Mental disorders are considered social pathologies because they impact individuals, families, and _____.



1.3 Foundations of Social Work Practice

1.3.1 Definition and scope of social work

Social work is a professional field dedicated to promoting social change, problem-solving in human relationships, and the empowerment of individuals and communities. It involves applying knowledge, skills, and values to help people overcome challenges and improve their quality of life. The scope of social work includes direct practice with individuals, families, and groups, as well as broader engagement with communities and institutions to address social problems.

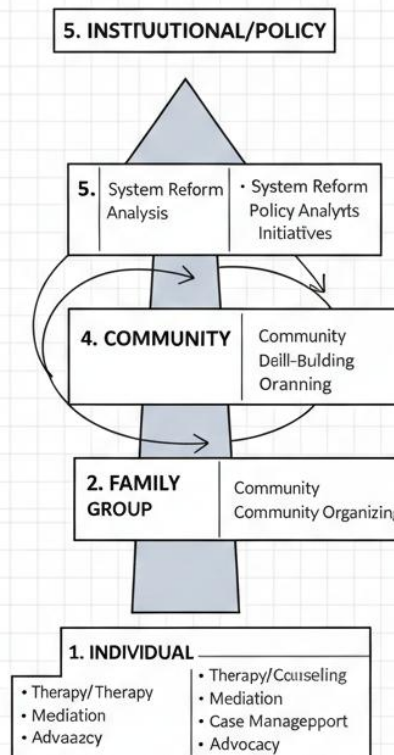
Fill in the blank: Social work is a professional field dedicated to promoting _____ change and problem-solving in human relationships.



Box 1.204: Scope of Social Work Practice

Multi-Level Interventions in Contemporary Sociology

OER



Overall Impact: This diagram illustrates the broad and interencecte of social work, demonsating how practiners interpateneline at various levels – from helping ind fidiules – from helping and families to groups, communities, and shaping instithunal policieg – to address social issues and promote rnd re uatico and pperloe the-welleing. It highlight sysenic and holistic and the profession.

OER Diagram

Created: Saturday, February 7, 2026 at 5:48:05 PM WAT

Diagram showing the scope of social work: individual, family, group, community, and institutional levels. Caption: Figure 2.4 Scope of social work practice

1.3.2 Theories of social work relevant to practice

Theories of social work provide frameworks that guide practitioners in understanding social problems and designing interventions. Examples include **systems theory**, which views individuals as part of interconnected systems, and **psychosocial theory**, which emphasises the interaction between psychological and social factors. These theories help social workers to analyse situations holistically and to select appropriate strategies for intervention.

Fill in the blank: Systems theory views individuals as part of interconnected _____.



Box 1.205: Key Theories of Social Work Practice

Foundational Perspectives for Contemporary Sociology

OER

1. Psychodynamic Approaches

- Focus: Unconscious mind, early experiences.
Practice: Insight-oriented therapy, explore past traumas

• Systems Theory

• Cognitive-Behavioral Theory:

Focus: Thoughts, feelings, behaviors.
Systems Theory.

• Ecological Systems Theory:

Practice: CBT, mindfulness, skill-building

- Focus: Person-in-environment, multiple dynamics, contexts. Family therapy, network interventions
- Practice: Holistic assessment, community-based support

2. Key Concepts & Practice Principles

• Empowerment

Clients' capacity, self-determination

• Strength-Based Perspective

Utilize client assets for change

• Social Justice

Advocacy, address inequality

• Trauma-Informed Care:

Safety, trustworthiness, collaboration

Overall Impact:

This box summarizes core social work theories, highlighting their diverse approaches to understanding human behavior and social environments. It emphasizes the guiding principles of these frameworks in practice, guiding interventions that promote client-wellbeing, social justice, and systemic change.

OER Text Box

Created: Saturday, February 7, 2026 at 5:48:40 PM WAT

Box 2.3 Selected theories of social work

1.3.3 Relationship between social pathology and social work

Social pathology and social work are closely linked. While social pathology identifies and analyses harmful social conditions, social work provides practical responses to them. For instance, recognising poverty as a social pathology leads to social work interventions such as community development programmes and social security systems. This relationship ensures that theory and practice complement each other in addressing social problems.

Fill in the blank: Social pathology identifies harmful social conditions, while social work provides _____ responses to them.





Image of a social worker facilitating a poverty alleviation programme. Caption: Plate 2.4 Social work intervention addressing poverty

Pilot questions 1.3

1. Define social work and explain its scope.
2. Identify one theory of social work and explain its relevance to practice.
3. Fill in the blank: Systems theory views individuals as part of interconnected _____.
4. Explain the relationship between social pathology and social work.
5. Give one example of how social work responds to social pathology in practice.



1.4 Organisation and Functions of Social Work Agencies

1.4.1 Public social work agencies

Public social work agencies are government-established institutions that provide welfare services to citizens. Their functions include offering social assistance, protecting vulnerable groups, and implementing policies that promote social justice. Examples include ministries of social welfare, child protection services, and public health agencies. These agencies are funded by the state and are accountable to the public.

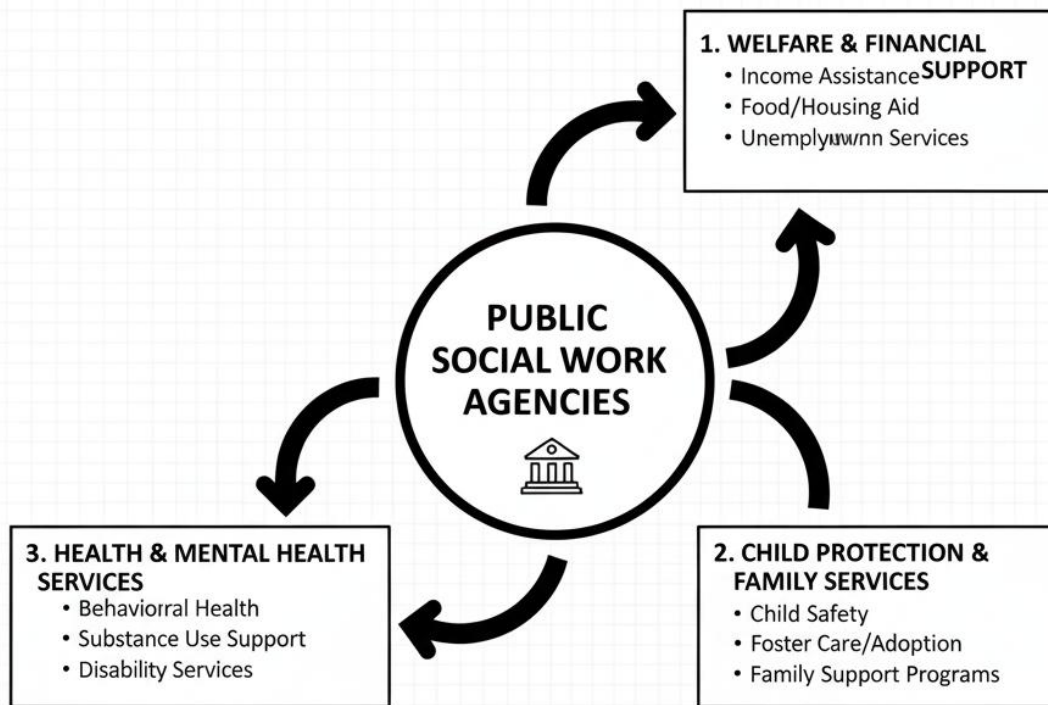
Fill in the blank: Public social work agencies are funded by the _____ and are accountable to the public.



Box 1.206: Public Social Work Agencies

Connecting Essential Services in Contemporary Sociology

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Overall Impact: This diagram illustrates the pivotal role of public social work agencies as central hubs to connect individuals to a range of critical welfare, family and health services. It highlights the integrated, the pronounced multi-wellness approach and addressing social needs within communities.

OER Diagram

Created: Saturday, February 7, 2026 at 5:50:08 PM WAT

Diagram showing the structure of public social work agencies and their functions. Caption: Figure 2.5 Structure and functions of public social work agencies

1.4.2 Private social work agencies

Private social work agencies are non-governmental organisations (NGOs), faith-based groups, or community-based organisations that provide social services. They often focus on specific issues such as poverty alleviation, education, or health care. Unlike public agencies, they rely on donations, grants, or membership contributions. Private agencies play a complementary role by filling gaps left by government services.

Fill in the blank: Private social work agencies often rely on donations, grants, or _____ contributions.





NGO Social Services in Action

Created: Saturday, February 7, 2026 at 5:51:05 PM WAT

Image of a non-governmental organisation distributing aid to families. Caption: Plate 2.5 NGO providing social services to vulnerable families

1.4.3 Social security systems and their role

Social security systems are organised programmes designed to provide financial and social protection to individuals against risks such as unemployment, illness, disability, and old age. They are essential in reducing poverty and promoting social stability. In Nigeria, social security systems are still developing, but they remain crucial for safeguarding vulnerable populations.

Fill in the blank: Social security systems provide protection against risks such as unemployment, illness, disability, and _____.



Box 1.207: Functions of Social Security Systems

Pillars of Economic Well-being & Social Equity in Contemporary Sociology

OER

1. Core Functions

Income Replacement/Support

- Pensions (Retirement, Disability)
- Unemployment Benefits
- Sickness/Maternity Leave

Poverty Reduction

- Safety net for vulnerable groups

2. Broader Societal Impact

Economic Stability

- Boosts consumer demand
- Acts as automatic stabilizer
- Reduces inequality
- Access to healthcare/education

Risk Management

- Protects against life's uncertainties

Overall Impact: This box summarizes the multifaceted roles of social security systems, highlighting their critical function in providing protection, fostering social cohesion, and promoting stability throughout the lifespan. They represent a collective societal effort to mitigate a basic standard of living for all citizens.

OER Text Box

Created: Saturday, February 7, 2026 at 5:52:00 PM WAT

Box 2.4 Functions of social security systems

Pilot questions 1.4

1. Define public social work agencies and explain their functions.
2. Fill in the blank: Public social work agencies are funded by the _____ and are accountable to the public.
3. Distinguish between public and private social work agencies, giving one example of each.
4. Explain the role of social security systems in promoting social stability.



5. Fill in the blank: Social security systems provide protection against risks such as unemployment, illness, disability, and _____.

Series Summary

This Series has introduced you to the foundations of social pathology and social work, highlighting their importance in understanding and addressing harmful conditions within society. The purpose was to provide you with a clear framework for identifying social problems, analysing their causes, and linking them to practical social work interventions.

We began by defining social pathology, exploring its scope and historical development, and then examined major social problems such as poverty, delinquency, crime, family discord, industrial conflicts, racial tensions, nationality conflicts, and mental disorders. Following that, we considered the foundations of social work practice, including its scope, relevant theories, and its relationship with social pathology. Finally, we studied the organisation and functions of public and private social work agencies, as well as the role of social security systems. By completing this Series, you should now be able to define social pathology and explain its scope (SLO 2.1), analyse major social problems (SLO 2.2), apply theories of social work to practice (SLO 2.3), and evaluate the organisation and functions of social work agencies (SLO 2.4).

Glossary of Terms

Crime: A violation of the law by individuals of any age, considered a social pathology because it disrupts social order and creates insecurity.

Delinquency: Minor offences committed by young people, often linked to poor family structures, peer influence, or lack of education.

Family discord: Conflict and breakdown within family units, which can lead to instability, delinquency, and weakening of social norms.

Industrial conflict: Disagreements between workers and employers over wages, conditions, or rights, which can undermine workplace harmony and social stability.

Mental disorders: Conditions that affect thinking, mood, and behaviour, considered social pathologies because they impact individuals, families, and communities.

Nationality conflict: Tensions between ethnic or national groups that can escalate into violence and weaken social unity.

Poverty: A condition where individuals or groups lack the resources to meet basic needs such as food, shelter, and healthcare, leading to exclusion and disadvantage.

Public social work agencies: Government-established institutions that provide welfare services, protect vulnerable groups, and implement social policies.

Private social work agencies: Non-governmental organisations, faith-based groups, or community-based organisations that provide social services, often relying on donations or grants.



Racial conflict: Discrimination and prejudice between racial groups, which can lead to tension and social instability.

Social pathology: The study of harmful or abnormal conditions within society that disrupt wellbeing and stability, such as poverty, crime, and family discord.

Social security systems: Organised programmes that provide financial and social protection against risks such as unemployment, illness, disability, and old age.

Social work: A professional field dedicated to promoting social change, problem-solving in human relationships, and empowering individuals and communities.

Social disorganisation: The weakening of social institutions and norms, often resulting from family breakdown or community instability.

Systems theory: A social work theory that views individuals as part of interconnected systems, helping practitioners analyse situations holistically.

Psychosocial theory: A social work theory that emphasises the interaction between psychological and social factors in shaping behaviour and wellbeing.

Conflict theory: A social work theory that focuses on power and inequality in society, highlighting how these dynamics contribute to social problems.

Concept Check Questions [Series 1]

Objective Questions

1. Social pathology is the study of harmful or abnormal conditions within _____. (Linked to SLO 2.1)
2. Which of the following is considered a social pathology? a) Gardening b) Poverty c) Painting d) Tourism (Linked to SLO 2.2)
3. Systems theory in social work views individuals as part of interconnected _____. (Linked to SLO 2.3)
4. Public social work agencies are funded by the _____. (Linked to SLO 2.4)
5. Which of the following is NOT a function of social security systems? a) Providing pensions for the elderly b) Offering health insurance c) Supporting individuals with disabilities d) Promoting tourism (Linked to SLO 2.4)

Short-Answer Questions

1. Define social pathology and explain its scope. (Linked to SLO 2.1)
2. Distinguish between delinquency and crime, giving one cause of each. (Linked to SLO 2.2)
3. Explain how family discord contributes to social disorganisation. (Linked to SLO 2.2)



4. Identify one theory of social work and explain its relevance to practice. (Linked to SLO 2.3)
5. Differentiate between public and private social work agencies. (Linked to SLO 2.4)

Long-Answer Questions

1. Analyse the historical development of social pathology, highlighting the shift from individual blame to structural causes. (Linked to SLO 2.1)
2. Evaluate the relationship between social pathology and social work, using examples to illustrate how theory informs practice. (Linked to SLO 2.3)
3. Discuss the role of social security systems in promoting social stability, with reference to their functions in Nigeria. (Linked to SLO 2.4)

Answers to Concept Check Questions [Series 1]

Objective Questions

1. Society
2. b) Poverty
3. Systems
4. The state
5. d) Promoting tourism

Short-Answer Questions

1. Social pathology is the study of harmful or abnormal conditions within society. Its scope includes identifying social problems such as poverty, crime, and family discord, and examining their causes and consequences.
2. Delinquency refers to minor offences committed by young people, often caused by poor family structures or peer influence. Crime involves violations of the law by individuals of any age, often linked to poverty or unemployment.
3. Family discord weakens communication and support within families, leading to instability, delinquency, and weakening of social norms, which contributes to social disorganisation.
4. Systems theory is a social work theory that views individuals as part of interconnected systems. It is relevant because it helps practitioners analyse situations holistically and design interventions that consider family, community, and institutional influences.
5. Public social work agencies are government-funded institutions that provide welfare services and protect vulnerable groups. Private social work agencies are NGOs or community-based organisations that rely on donations or grants to provide services.

Long-Answer Questions



1. **Basic response:** Historically, social pathology was viewed as the result of individual moral failings, such as laziness or irresponsibility. Over time, perspectives shifted to recognise structural causes, such as economic inequality and systemic barriers. **Value-added response:** Outstanding learners may connect this shift to broader sociological theories, such as functionalism and conflict theory, and explain how these perspectives influenced modern social work practices.
2. **Basic response:** Social pathology identifies harmful social conditions, while social work provides practical responses. For example, recognising poverty as a social pathology leads to interventions such as community development programmes. **Value-added response:** Outstanding learners may illustrate this relationship with case studies, showing how theories like psychosocial or conflict theory guide interventions in areas such as youth delinquency or racial conflict.
3. **Basic response:** Social security systems provide financial and social protection against risks such as unemployment, illness, disability, and old age. They reduce poverty and promote stability by safeguarding vulnerable populations. **Value-added response:** Outstanding learners may evaluate the limitations of social security systems in Nigeria, discuss challenges such as inadequate funding or coverage, and propose strategies for strengthening these systems to enhance social stability.

Answers to Pilot Questions [Series 1]

Part 1.1

1. Social pathology is the study of harmful or abnormal conditions within society, focusing on their causes and consequences.
2. Early views saw social problems as moral failings of individuals, while modern perspectives recognise structural and systemic causes.
3. Studying social pathology is important because it helps identify root causes of social problems and provides frameworks for social workers to intervene effectively.

Part 1.2

1. Poverty is a condition where individuals or groups lack resources to meet basic needs, and it is considered a social pathology because it affects social stability and wellbeing.
2. Delinquency refers to minor offences committed by young people, often caused by poor family structures or peer influence. Crime involves violations of the law by individuals of any age, often linked to poverty or unemployment.
3. Family discord weakens communication and support within families, leading to instability, delinquency, and weakening of social norms.
4. Industrial conflict occurs when workers and employers disagree over wages, conditions, or rights. Racial conflict arises from discrimination and prejudice between groups.



5. Mental disorders are considered social pathologies because they impact individuals, families, and communities.

Part 1.3

1. Social work is a professional field dedicated to promoting social change, problem-solving in human relationships, and empowering individuals and communities. Its scope includes practice at individual, family, group, community, and institutional levels.
2. Systems theory views individuals as part of interconnected systems, helping practitioners analyse situations holistically and design appropriate interventions.
3. Systems theory views individuals as part of interconnected systems.
4. Social pathology identifies harmful social conditions, while social work provides practical responses to them.
5. An example is poverty: social work responds through community development programmes and social security systems.

Part 1.4

1. Public social work agencies are government-established institutions that provide welfare services, protect vulnerable groups, and implement social policies.
2. Public social work agencies are funded by the state and are accountable to the public.
3. Public agencies are government-funded and provide broad welfare services, while private agencies are NGOs or community-based organisations that rely on donations or grants to address specific issues.
4. Social security systems reduce poverty and promote social stability by providing financial and social protection against risks such as unemployment, illness, disability, and old age.
5. Social security systems provide protection against risks such as unemployment, illness, disability, and old age.

References and Attributions [Series 1]

Course Content References

- SOC 205: Elements of Social Work (Course Document provided).
- Definitions and explanations of social pathology, social problems, and social work practice were derived directly from the course outline and instructional content prepared for this Series.

• Course code: SOC 205



- **Course title: Elements of Social Work**
- **Course credit load: 2**

SERIES 2: Contemporary Social Problems in Nigeria

Series Outline

- **Part 2.1 Poverty and Economic Challenges**
 - 2.1.1 Nature and dimensions of poverty in Nigeria
 - 2.1.2 Causes of poverty and economic deprivation
 - 2.1.3 Social consequences of poverty
- **Part 2.2 Crime, Delinquency, and Social Disorder**
 - 2.2.1 Forms of crime and delinquency in Nigeria
 - 2.2.2 Causes and contributing factors
 - 2.2.3 Impacts on communities and national development
- **Part 2.3 Family Discord and Social Conflicts**
 - 2.3.1 Family breakdown and its effects
 - 2.3.2 Industrial conflicts and labour issues
 - 2.3.3 Racial and nationality conflicts in Nigeria
- **Part 2.4 Mental Health and Social Pathologies**
 - 2.4.1 Common mental health challenges in Nigeria
 - 2.4.2 Social stigma and barriers to treatment
 - 2.4.3 Role of social work in addressing mental disorders

Introduction

Nigeria, like many societies, faces a range of pressing social problems that affect individuals, families, and communities. Issues such as poverty, crime, family discord, industrial disputes, racial tensions, and mental health challenges are not abstract concerns, they are realities that shape everyday life and influence national development. This Series is designed to help you critically examine these contemporary social problems, understand their causes, and appreciate their impact on society. By engaging with this material, you will be better prepared to connect theoretical knowledge with practical social work responses.

The aim of this Series is to equip you with the ability to analyse major social problems in Nigeria, evaluate their social consequences, and relate them to the practice of social work. It intends to strengthen your capacity to identify patterns of social pathology and to consider how social work can contribute to solutions.



We shall commence this Series by exploring poverty and economic challenges, focusing on their nature, causes, and consequences. Next, we will move on to crime, delinquency, and social disorder, examining their forms, causes, and impacts on communities. Following that, we will consider family discord and social conflicts, including industrial disputes, racial tensions, and nationality conflicts. Finally, we will wrap up by studying mental health and social pathologies, looking at common challenges, the stigma surrounding them, and the role of social work in addressing mental disorders. This sequential flow will provide you with a comprehensive understanding of contemporary social problems in Nigeria and their relevance to social work practice.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- **SLO 2.1** define the nature and dimensions of poverty in Nigeria,
- **SLO 2.2** analyse the causes and social consequences of poverty and economic deprivation,
- **SLO 2.3** explain the forms of crime and delinquency prevalent in Nigeria,
- **SLO 2.4** evaluate the impacts of crime and social disorder on communities and national development,
- **SLO 2.5** describe the effects of family breakdown and discord on social stability,
- **SLO 2.6** examine the causes and implications of industrial, racial, and nationality conflicts in Nigeria,
- **SLO 2.7** identify common mental health challenges in Nigeria and discuss the barriers to treatment,
- **SLO 2.8** assess the role of social work in addressing mental disorders and reducing stigma.

2.1 Poverty and Economic Challenges

2.1.1 Nature and dimensions of poverty in Nigeria

Poverty refers to a condition in which individuals or groups lack the resources necessary to meet basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing, and healthcare. In Nigeria, poverty manifests in both **absolute poverty** (inability to meet basic survival needs) and **relative poverty** (living below the average standard of living in society). The dimensions of poverty include economic deprivation, lack of access to education, poor healthcare, and social exclusion.

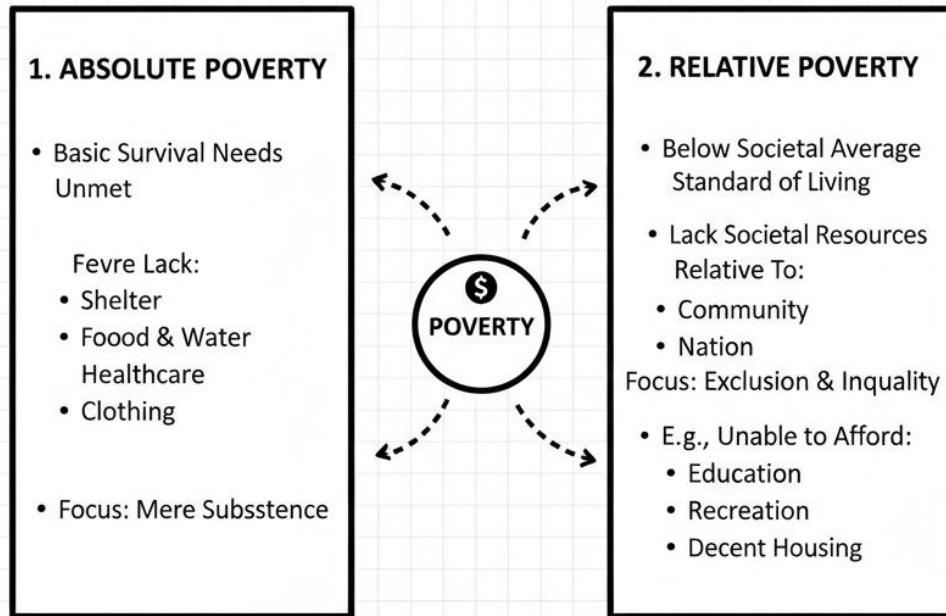
Fill in the blank: Poverty in Nigeria can be described in two dimensions, namely absolute poverty and _____ poverty.



Box 1.208: Absolute vs Relative Poverty

Understanding Measures of Economic Deprivation in Contemporary Sociology

OER



Overall Impact: This diagram contrasts absolute and relative poverty, showing how a deprivation can be a failure to meet basic survival needs and an exclusion from a society's typical living standards. It highlights the multifaceted nature of poverty and its measurement.

OER Diagram

Created: Saturday, February 7, 2026 at 5:53:42 PM WAT

Diagram showing absolute vs relative poverty with examples. Caption: Figure 2.1 Dimensions of poverty in Nigeria

2.1.2 Causes of poverty and economic deprivation

The causes of poverty in Nigeria are multifaceted. They include **unemployment**, which limits income opportunities; **corruption**, which diverts resources away from development; **poor governance**, which results in inadequate social policies; and **economic inequality**, which concentrates wealth in the hands of a few. Other factors such as rapid population growth, low agricultural productivity, and inadequate infrastructure also contribute to widespread deprivation.

Fill in the blank: One major cause of poverty in Nigeria is _____, which limits income opportunities.



Box 1.209: Major Causes of Poverty in Nigeria

Systemic & Structural Factors in Contemporary Sociology

OER

1. Economic & Structural Factors

- High Unemployment Rates
- Low Domestic Economy
- Low Wages & Informal Economy
- Inflation
- Lack of Economic Diversity (Oil Dependence)

2. Governance & Social Factors

- Corruption & Poor Governance
- Inadequate & Poor Governance & Healthcare
- Conflict & Insecurity & Healthcare
- Conflict & Insecurity (esp. North-East)
- Weak Infrastructure & Service Delivery

Overall Impact: This box summarizes the causes of poverty in Nigeria, highlighting structural factors, governance issues, and social challenges that contribute to poverty. It addresses the need for systemic changes and sustainable development to improve the lives of citizens.

OER Text Box

Created: Saturday, February 7, 2026 at 5:54:21 PM WAT

Box 2.1 Causes of poverty in Nigeria

2.1.3 Social consequences of poverty

Poverty has far-reaching consequences for individuals and society. It leads to poor health outcomes, malnutrition, and increased vulnerability to diseases. It also contributes to low educational attainment, crime, and social unrest. At the national level, poverty hinders economic growth and undermines social stability. Social workers play a crucial role in addressing these consequences by designing interventions that promote empowerment, education, and access to resources.

Fill in the blank: Poverty contributes to low educational attainment, crime, and _____ unrest.





Image of children in a rural Nigerian community with limited access to education. Caption: Plate 2.1 Children affected by poverty in rural Nigeria

Pilot questions 2.1

1. Define poverty and explain its dimensions in Nigeria.
2. Identify three major causes of poverty in Nigeria.
3. Fill in the blank: Poverty in Nigeria can be described in two dimensions, namely absolute poverty and _____ poverty.
4. Explain how poverty contributes to social unrest.



5. Give one example of how social workers can intervene to reduce the consequences of poverty.

2.2 Crime, Delinquency, and Social Disorder

2.2.1 Forms of crime and delinquency in Nigeria

Crime refers to violations of the law by individuals of any age, while **delinquency** describes minor offences committed by young people. In Nigeria, common forms of crime include armed robbery, kidnapping, cybercrime, and corruption. Delinquency often manifests as truancy, petty theft, and substance abuse among youths. Both crime and delinquency are considered social pathologies because they disrupt social order and create insecurity.

Fill in the blank: Delinquency refers to minor offences committed by _____ people.



Box 1.210: Crime and Delinquency in Nigeria

Categorizing Maladaptive Behaviors in Contemporary Sociology



Overall Impact: This diagram illustrates the diverse spectrum of unlawful behaviors in Nigeria, distinguishing between adult criminal activities and juvenile delinquency. It highlights the complex sociocultural contexts and the need for tailored prevention and intervention strategies.

OER Diagram

Created: Saturday, February 7, 2026 at 5:57:00 PM WAT

Diagram categorising crime (armed robbery, kidnapping, cybercrime, corruption) and delinquency (truancy, petty theft, substance abuse). Caption: Figure 2.2 Forms of crime and delinquency in Nigeria

2.2.2 Causes and contributing factors

The causes of crime and delinquency in Nigeria are diverse. **Poverty** and **unemployment** push individuals into illegal activities. **Family breakdown** and poor parental supervision often lead young people into delinquency. **Peer influence** and exposure to negative role models also play a role. Additionally, weak law enforcement and corruption within the justice system contribute to the persistence of crime.

Fill in the blank: One major contributing factor to delinquency is poor _____ supervision.



Box 1.211: Causes of Crime and Delinquency in Nigeria

Root Factors & Contributing Issues

OER

1. Socio-Economic Factors

- Poverty & Unemployment
- Inequality & Relative Deprivation
- Lack Education & Opportunities
- Rapid Urbanization & Social Disorganization

2. Governance & Systemic Issues

- Corruption & Weak Rule of Law
- Corruption Law Enforcement
- Ineffective Law Enforcement
- Judicial System Failures
- Lack Rehabilitation Programs

Overall Impact:

This box provides a comprehensive overview of the complex, interconnected causes and delinquency in Nigeria, highlighting how a combination of deep-rooted socio-economic disparities and systemic failures perpetuate instability, necessitating multi-faceted and holistic strategic strategies to lasting peace and development.

OER Text Box

Created: Saturday, February 7, 2026 at 5:58:00 PM WAT

Box 2.2 Causes of crime and delinquency in Nigeria

2.2.3 Impacts on communities and national development

Crime and delinquency have serious impacts on communities and the nation. They create fear and insecurity, discourage investment, and weaken social trust. Communities affected by high crime rates often experience reduced economic activity and declining quality of life. At the national level, crime undermines development by diverting resources to security measures and discouraging foreign investment. Social workers contribute by designing programmes that rehabilitate offenders and prevent delinquency through education and community engagement.

Fill in the blank: Crime undermines national development by discouraging _____ investment.





Image of a community sensitisation programme against crime and delinquency. Caption: Plate 2.2 Community sensitisation against crime and delinquency

Pilot questions 2.2

1. Distinguish between crime and delinquency, giving one example of each.
2. Identify three major causes of crime and delinquency in Nigeria.
3. Fill in the blank: Delinquency refers to minor offences committed by _____ people.
4. Explain how crime impacts national development.
5. Give one example of how social workers can intervene to reduce crime or delinquency.



2.3 Family Discord and Social Conflicts

2.3.1 Family breakdown and its effects

Family discord refers to conflict, instability, or breakdown within family units. In Nigeria, this often arises from issues such as domestic violence, financial stress, poor communication, and divorce. The effects of family breakdown are far-reaching, leading to emotional distress, delinquency among children, and weakening of social norms. When families fail to provide support and guidance, individuals may struggle to integrate into society, increasing the risk of social disorganisation.

Fill in the blank: Family discord often leads to emotional distress and weakening of _____ norms.





Family Counselling & Support in Nigeria

Created: Saturday, February 7, 2026 at 5:58:30 PM WAT

Image of a family counselling session in Nigeria. Caption: Plate 2.3 Family counselling session addressing discord

2.3.2 Industrial conflicts and labour issues

Industrial conflict occurs when workers and employers disagree over wages, working conditions, or rights. In Nigeria, strikes and protests by labour unions are common examples. These conflicts disrupt productivity, strain employer-employee relationships, and can destabilise the economy. Social workers and mediators often play a role in resolving disputes by promoting dialogue and fair negotiation.

Fill in the blank: Industrial conflict occurs when workers and employers disagree over wages, working conditions, or _____.



Box 1.212: Common Causes of Industrial Conflict in Nigeria Systemic Issues & Labor Relations Challenges

OER

1. Economic & Welfare Issues

- Low Wages & Poor Renumeration
- Delayed/Unpaid Salaries
- Poor Working Conditions
- Lack of Benefits & Allowances
- Inflation & Cost of Living
- Inflation & Cost of Living Increases

2. Governance & Labor Relations

- Union Disputes & Recognition
- Breach Employment Contracts
- Lack of Fair Treatment
- Health & Safety Concerns
- Government Policies & Regulations

Overall Impact: This box outlines the multifaceted root causes of industrial Nigeria, highlighting how economic disparities, poor governance, and labor relations contribute to an instability in the workplace. It underscores the effective dialogue, fair policies, and improve welfare to foster and stable workforce a productive industrial environment.

OER Text Box Created: Saturday, February 7, 2026 at 5:59:28 PM WAT

Box 2.3 Common causes of industrial conflict in Nigeria

2.3.3 Racial and nationality conflicts in Nigeria

Racial conflict arises from discrimination and prejudice between groups, while **nationality conflict** involves tensions between ethnic or national groups. In Nigeria, nationality conflicts are particularly significant due to ethnic diversity and competition over resources. These conflicts can escalate into violence, weaken national unity, and hinder development. Addressing them requires promoting tolerance, dialogue, and equitable distribution of resources.

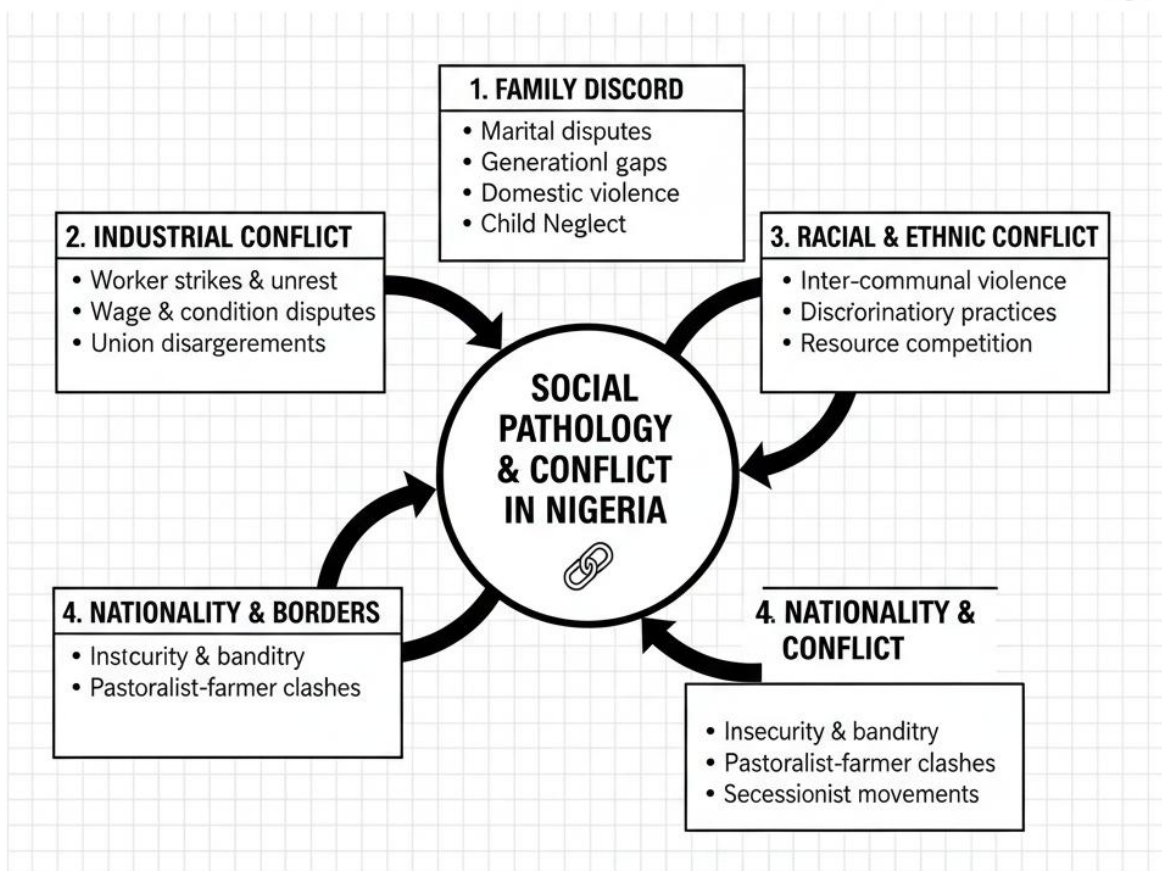
Fill in the blank: Nationality conflicts in Nigeria often arise due to ethnic diversity and competition over _____.



Box 1.213: Types of Social Conflict in Nigeria

Categorizing Societal Pathologies & Instability

OER



Overall Impact:

This diagram categorizes major forms of social conflict in Nighrogies, highlighting how deep-seated societal issues manifest across family, ethnic and spheres. It underscores the nature of these issues as critical and the need for comprehensive social, economic and governance interventions to foster lasting peace and stability.

OER Diagram

Created: Saturday, February 7, 2026 at 6:00:16 PM WAT

Diagram showing types of social conflict: family discord, industrial conflict, racial conflict, and nationality conflict. Caption: Figure 2.3 Types of social conflict in Nigeria

Pilot questions 2.3

1. Define family discord and explain its effects on social stability.
2. Fill in the blank: Family discord often leads to emotional distress and weakening of _____ norms.
3. Identify two common causes of industrial conflict in Nigeria.
4. Explain how nationality conflicts affect national unity.



5. Fill in the blank: Nationality conflicts in Nigeria often arise due to ethnic diversity and competition over _____.

2.4 Mental Health and Social Pathologies

2.4.1 Common mental health challenges in Nigeria

Mental health challenges refer to conditions that affect thinking, mood, and behaviour. In Nigeria, common examples include depression, anxiety disorders, substance abuse, and schizophrenia. These conditions are often under-recognised due to limited awareness and inadequate mental health infrastructure. The burden of mental illness is significant, as it affects productivity, family stability, and community wellbeing.

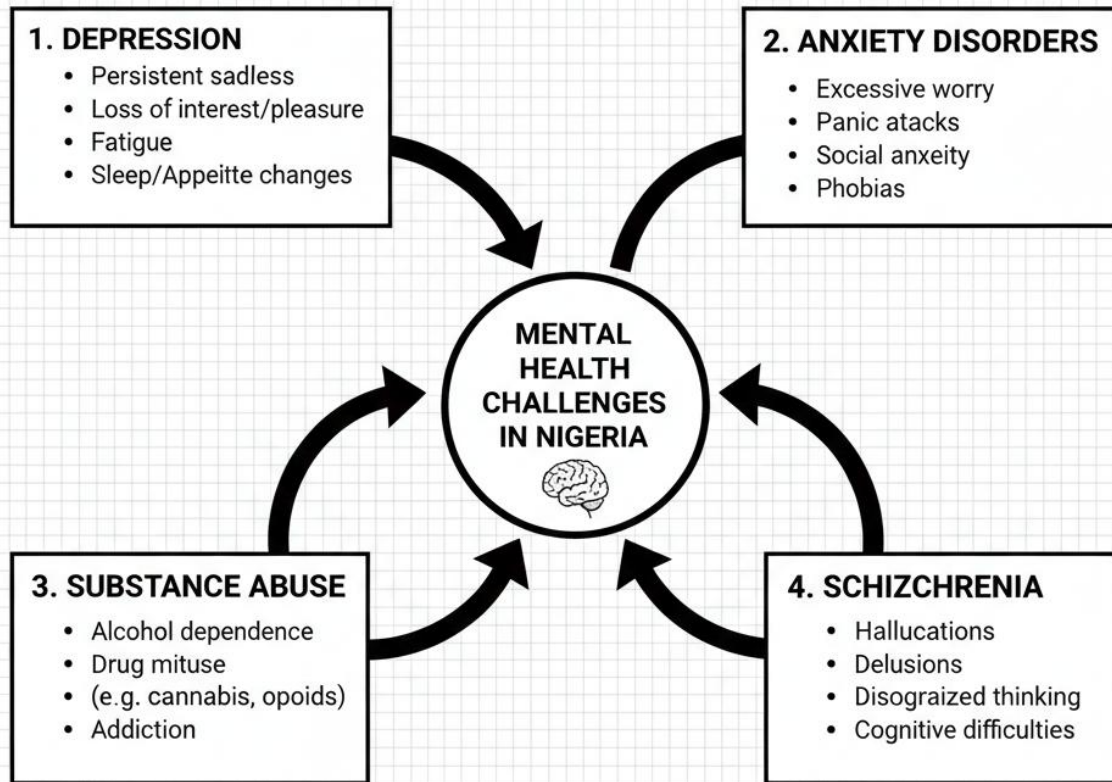
Fill in the blank: Common mental health challenges in Nigeria include depression, anxiety disorders, substance abuse, and _____.



Box 1.214: Common Mental Health Challenges in Nigeria

Prevalant Conditions in Contemporary Socology

OER



Overall Impact: This diagram highlights key mental health challenges prevalent in Nigeria, emphasizing the need for increased awareness, mental healthcare access and support systems to address these critical societal health issues.

OER Diagram

Created: Saturday, February 7, 2026 at 6:01:00 PM WAT

Diagram showing common mental health challenges in Nigeria. Caption: Figure 2.4 Common mental health challenges in Nigeria

2.4.2 Social stigma and barriers to treatment

Stigma refers to negative attitudes and discrimination directed at individuals with mental health conditions. In Nigeria, stigma often prevents people from seeking help, as mental illness is sometimes associated with weakness, curses, or spiritual causes. Barriers to treatment include inadequate mental health facilities, shortage of trained professionals, and high treatment costs. These factors combine to worsen the impact of mental disorders on individuals and communities.

Fill in the blank: One major barrier to mental health treatment in Nigeria is the shortage of trained _____.



Box 1.215: Barriers to Mental Health Treatment in Nigeria

OER

Systemic & Socio-Cultural Obstacles to Care

1. Systemic & Structural Barriers

- Lack Funding & Resources
- Shortage of Mental Health Professionals (Psychiatrists, Therapists)
- Limited Access in Rural Areas
- Poor Infrastructure & Facilities
- Lack Integrated Care

2. Socio-Cultural & Economic Barriers

- Stigma & Discrimination
- Low Mental Health Literacy
- Religious/Traditional Beliefs Over Science
- High Cost of Treatment (Out-Pocket)
- Poverty & Unemployment

Overall Impact:

This box summarizes the multifaceted barriers to mental health treatment in Nigeria, highlighting how systemic inequalities and deep-rooted socio-cultural factors limit access to care. It emphasizes the need for increased investment, public awareness, and policy reform to address these challenges and improve mental well-being across the population.

OER Text Box

Created: Saturday, February 7, 2026 at 6:01:40 PM WAT

Box 2.4 Barriers to mental health treatment in Nigeria

2.4.3 Role of social work in addressing mental disorders

Social workers play a vital role in addressing mental health challenges. They provide counselling, advocacy, and community education to reduce stigma. They also help individuals access treatment and support services, while working with families to strengthen coping mechanisms. At the policy level, social workers advocate for improved mental health infrastructure and inclusion of mental health in national development plans.

Fill in the blank: Social workers help reduce stigma by providing counselling, advocacy, and community _____.





Mental Health Awareness in Rural Nigeria

Created: Saturday, February 7, 2026 at 6:02:25 PM WAT

Image of a social worker conducting a mental health awareness session in a Nigerian community. Caption: Plate 2.4 Social worker conducting mental health awareness session

Pilot questions 2.4

1. Identify four common mental health challenges in Nigeria.
2. Fill in the blank: Common mental health challenges in Nigeria include depression, anxiety disorders, substance abuse, and _____.
3. Explain how stigma affects access to mental health treatment in Nigeria.
4. Identify two barriers to mental health treatment in Nigeria.



5. Fill in the blank: Social workers help reduce stigma by providing counselling, advocacy, and community _____.

Series Summary

This Series has focused on contemporary social problems in Nigeria, highlighting their causes, consequences, and relevance to social work practice. Its purpose was to help you critically examine pressing issues that affect individuals, families, and communities, while equipping you with the analytical skills needed to connect theory with practical interventions.

We began by exploring poverty and economic challenges, looking at their dimensions, causes, and social consequences. Then we examined crime, delinquency, and social disorder, considering their forms, contributing factors, and impacts on communities and national development. Following that, we studied family discord and social conflicts, including industrial disputes, racial tensions, and nationality conflicts. Finally, we addressed mental health and social pathologies, focusing on common challenges, stigma, barriers to treatment, and the role of social work. By completing this Series, you should now be able to define poverty and analyse its consequences (SLOs 2.1–2.2), explain forms of crime and evaluate their impacts (SLOs 2.3–2.4), describe family discord and examine social conflicts (SLOs 2.5–2.6), and assess mental health challenges while identifying the role of social work in addressing them (SLOs 2.7–2.8).

Glossary of Terms

Absolute poverty: A condition where individuals cannot meet basic survival needs such as food, shelter, and clothing.

Corruption: Dishonest or fraudulent conduct by those in power, often involving diversion of public resources for personal gain.

Crime: A violation of the law by individuals of any age, considered a social pathology because it disrupts social order and creates insecurity.

Delinquency: Minor offences committed by young people, often linked to poor family structures, peer influence, or lack of supervision.

Economic inequality: Unequal distribution of wealth and resources within society, often leading to poverty and social unrest.

Family discord: Conflict and breakdown within family units, which can cause instability, delinquency, and weakening of social norms.

Industrial conflict: Disagreements between workers and employers over wages, working conditions, or rights, often resulting in strikes or protests.

Mental health challenges: Conditions that affect thinking, mood, and behaviour, such as depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and schizophrenia.



Nationality conflict: Tensions between ethnic or national groups, often arising from competition over resources and weakening national unity.

Poverty: A condition where individuals or groups lack the resources to meet basic needs, leading to exclusion and disadvantage.

Relative poverty: Living below the average standard of living in society, even if basic survival needs are met.

Racial conflict: Discrimination and prejudice between racial groups, which can lead to tension and social instability.

Social disorder: Breakdown of social order caused by crime, delinquency, or other disruptive behaviours within communities.

Social stigma: Negative attitudes and discrimination directed at individuals with certain conditions, such as mental illness, which discourage them from seeking help.

Unemployment: The state of being without work, which limits income opportunities and contributes to poverty and crime.

Concept Check Questions [Series 2]

Objective Questions

1. Poverty in Nigeria can be described in two dimensions, namely absolute poverty and _____ poverty. (Linked to SLO 2.1)
2. Which of the following is NOT a cause of poverty in Nigeria? a) Unemployment b) Corruption c) High literacy rates d) Poor governance (Linked to SLO 2.2)
3. Delinquency refers to minor offences committed by _____ people. (Linked to SLO 2.3)
4. Crime undermines national development by discouraging _____ investment. (Linked to SLO 2.4)
5. Industrial conflict occurs when workers and employers disagree over wages, working conditions, or _____. (Linked to SLO 2.6)

Short-Answer Questions

1. Define poverty and explain its dimensions in Nigeria. (Linked to SLO 2.1)
2. Identify three major causes of poverty in Nigeria. (Linked to SLO 2.2)
3. Distinguish between crime and delinquency, giving one example of each. (Linked to SLO 2.3)
4. Explain how crime impacts national development. (Linked to SLO 2.4)
5. Describe the effects of family discord on social stability. (Linked to SLO 2.5)
6. Identify two barriers to mental health treatment in Nigeria. (Linked to SLO 2.7)



Long-Answer Questions

1. Analyse the social consequences of poverty in Nigeria, highlighting its impact on education, health, and social stability. (Linked to SLO 2.2)
2. Evaluate the relationship between crime, delinquency, and social disorder, using examples to illustrate their effects on communities. (Linked to SLO 2.4)
3. Discuss the role of social work in addressing mental health challenges in Nigeria, with reference to stigma and barriers to treatment. (Linked to SLO 2.8)

Answers to Concept Check Questions [Series 2]

Objective Questions

1. Relative poverty
2. c) High literacy rates
3. Young
4. Foreign investment
5. Rights

Short-Answer Questions

1. Poverty is a condition where individuals or groups lack resources to meet basic needs. In Nigeria, it is expressed as absolute poverty (inability to meet survival needs) and relative poverty (living below the societal average).
2. Major causes include unemployment, corruption, and poor governance.
3. Crime is a violation of the law by individuals of any age, e.g., armed robbery. Delinquency refers to minor offences committed by young people, e.g., truancy.
4. Crime discourages investment, diverts resources to security, and weakens social trust, thereby undermining national development.
5. Family discord leads to emotional distress, delinquency among children, and weakening of social norms, which destabilises society.
6. Barriers include stigma and discrimination, shortage of trained professionals, and inadequate facilities.

Long-Answer Questions

1. **Basic response:** Poverty leads to poor health outcomes, malnutrition, and vulnerability to disease. It also contributes to low educational attainment, crime, and social unrest, weakening social stability. **Value-added response:** Outstanding learners may connect poverty to structural issues such as economic inequality and poor governance, and propose strategies like social security systems, community development, and targeted social work interventions.



2. **Basic response:** Crime and delinquency disrupt social order, create insecurity, and reduce community trust. They discourage investment and weaken national development. **Value-added response:** Outstanding learners may illustrate with examples such as cybercrime or youth substance abuse, and discuss how weak law enforcement and corruption exacerbate these problems. They may also propose preventive measures like education and rehabilitation programmes.
3. **Basic response:** Social workers address mental health challenges by providing counselling, advocacy, and community education to reduce stigma. They also help individuals access treatment and support services. **Value-added response:** Outstanding learners may evaluate systemic barriers such as inadequate infrastructure and high treatment costs, and suggest policy-level interventions like integrating mental health into national health plans and expanding training for professionals.

Answers to Pilot Questions [Series 2]

Part 2.1

1. Poverty is a condition where individuals or groups lack the resources to meet basic needs such as food, shelter, and healthcare. Its dimensions in Nigeria include absolute poverty and relative poverty.
2. Major causes of poverty in Nigeria include unemployment, corruption, and poor governance.
3. Relative poverty.
4. Poverty contributes to social unrest by creating frustration, exclusion, and inequality that can lead to protests and instability.
5. Social workers can intervene by promoting empowerment programmes, improving access to education, and supporting community development initiatives.

Part 2.2

1. Crime is a violation of the law by individuals of any age, for example armed robbery. Delinquency refers to minor offences committed by young people, for example truancy.
2. Causes include poverty and unemployment, family breakdown, and peer influence.
3. Young people.
4. Crime impacts national development by discouraging investment, diverting resources to security, and weakening social trust.
5. Social workers can intervene by rehabilitating offenders, educating communities, and engaging in preventive programmes for youths.

Part 2.3



1. Family discord is conflict or breakdown within family units. Its effects include emotional distress, delinquency among children, and weakening of social norms.
2. Social norms.
3. Common causes of industrial conflict in Nigeria include wage disputes and poor working conditions.
4. Nationality conflicts weaken national unity by creating divisions, escalating violence, and undermining cooperation among ethnic groups.
5. Resources.

Part 2.4

1. Common mental health challenges in Nigeria include depression, anxiety disorders, substance abuse, and schizophrenia.
2. Schizophrenia.
3. Stigma discourages people from seeking help, as mental illness is often associated with weakness, curses, or spiritual causes.
4. Barriers include inadequate facilities and shortage of trained professionals.
5. Education.

References and Attributions [Series 2]

Course Content References

- SOC 205: Elements of Social Work (Course Document provided).
- Instructional content on poverty, crime, family discord, social conflicts, and mental health challenges was derived directly from the Series outline and prepared course materials.

- **Course code: SOC 205**
- **Course title: Elements of Social Work**
- **Course credit load: 2**

SERIES 3: Causes and Solutions to Social Pathologies



Suggested Outline

- **Part 3.1 Causes of Social Pathologies**
 - 3.1.1 Structural causes (poverty, inequality, unemployment)
 - 3.1.2 Cultural causes (norms, values, traditions)
 - 3.1.3 Institutional causes (weak governance, corruption, poor justice systems)
 - 3.1.4 Individual causes (personal behaviour, psychological factors)
- **Part 3.2 Consequences of Social Pathologies**
 - 3.2.1 Effects on individuals (health, education, wellbeing)
 - 3.2.2 Effects on families (instability, discord, weakened support systems)
 - 3.2.3 Effects on communities and national development (crime, insecurity, reduced productivity)
- **Part 3.3 Solutions and Interventions**
 - 3.3.1 Preventive measures (education, awareness, empowerment)
 - 3.3.2 Corrective measures (rehabilitation, counselling, legal reforms)
 - 3.3.3 Role of social work practice (advocacy, community development, policy influence)
- **Part 3.4 Case Studies and Best Practices**
 - 3.4.1 Nigerian examples of interventions against social pathologies
 - 3.4.2 International approaches and lessons for Nigeria
 - 3.4.3 Evaluation of effectiveness and sustainability of solutions

Introduction

In the last Series, we explored contemporary social problems in Nigeria, examining issues such as poverty, crime, family discord, and mental health challenges. While identifying these problems is important, it is equally vital to understand their underlying causes and to consider practical solutions. This Series will guide you through the roots of social pathologies and highlight strategies for addressing them, making the content highly relevant to both your academic study and future professional practice in social work.

The aim of this Series is to enable you to analyse the causes of social pathologies, evaluate their consequences, and apply knowledge of solutions and interventions that can reduce their impact. It seeks to strengthen your ability to connect theoretical perspectives with practical approaches to problem-solving.

We shall commence this Series by examining the causes of social pathologies, including structural, cultural, institutional, and individual factors. Next, we will move on to the consequences of these pathologies, considering their effects on individuals, families, communities, and national development. Following that, we will explore solutions and interventions, focusing on preventive and corrective measures as well as the role of social work practice. Finally, we will wrap up by reviewing case studies and best practices, drawing lessons from Nigerian and international experiences to evaluate the effectiveness and sustainability of solutions.



Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- **SLO 3.1** define the structural, cultural, institutional, and individual causes of social pathologies,
- **SLO 3.2** analyse the consequences of social pathologies on individuals, families, communities, and national development,
- **SLO 3.3** evaluate preventive and corrective measures that address social pathologies,
- **SLO 3.4** apply knowledge of social work practice in designing interventions for social pathologies, and
- **SLO 3.5** assess case studies and best practices, comparing Nigerian and international approaches to solutions.

3.1 Causes of Social Pathologies

3.1.1 Structural causes

Structural causes are those rooted in the organisation of society and its economic systems. In Nigeria, poverty, unemployment, and inequality are major structural drivers of social pathologies. When large sections of the population lack access to resources, opportunities, and basic services, frustration and exclusion often lead to crime, delinquency, and social unrest. Poor infrastructure and rapid population growth also intensify these challenges, creating conditions where social problems thrive.

Fill in the blank: One major structural cause of social pathologies in Nigeria is widespread _____.



STRUCTURAL CAUSES OF SOCIAL PATHOLOGIES IN NIGERIA: A SYSTEMS MAP

Source: OER Commons, adapted from sociological studies

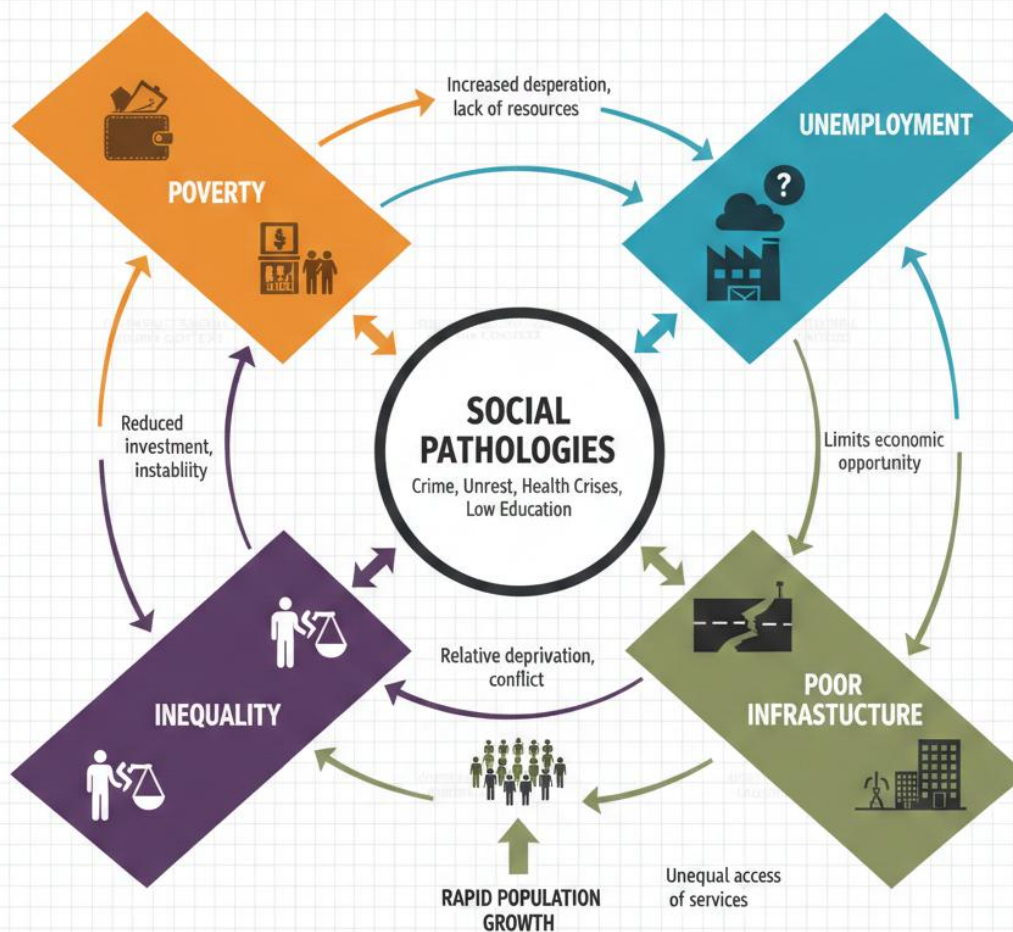


Diagram showing structural causes of social pathologies (poverty, unemployment, inequality, poor infrastructure, population growth). Caption: Figure 3.1 Structural causes of social pathologies

3.1.2 Cultural causes

Cultural causes refer to norms, values, and traditions that may encourage or sustain harmful behaviours. In Nigeria, cultural practices such as gender discrimination, preference for male children, and tolerance of corruption can contribute to social pathologies. Peer influence and societal acceptance of certain behaviours, like substance abuse, also play a role. While culture can be a source of strength, it can also perpetuate inequality and hinder social progress when negative practices dominate.



Fill in the blank: Cultural causes of social pathologies often arise from harmful _____ and traditions.

CULTURAL CAUSES OF SOCIAL PATHOLOGIES IN NIGERIA

Source: OER Commons, adapted from sociological studies

- **Weak Social Cohesion:** Erosion of traditional community bonds, leading to cultural corrupt practices, normalized and reduced collective order and survival, undermining institutions.
- **Ethnic & Religious Division:** Strong in-group biases that fuel conflict, racism, discrimination, and gender-based violence
- **Paternalistic Norms**
- **Fatalism & Superstition**
- **Poor Education & Values:** Lack of civic education, and unemployment that perpetuates poverty.

Box 3.1 Examples of cultural causes of social pathologies

3.1.3 Institutional causes

Institutional causes are linked to weaknesses in governance, justice systems, and public institutions. In Nigeria, corruption, poor policy implementation, and weak law enforcement are key institutional drivers of social pathologies. When institutions fail to deliver justice, provide security, or ensure equitable distribution of resources, individuals may lose trust in the system and resort to harmful behaviours.



Fill in the blank: Institutional causes of social pathologies often include corruption and weak _____ enforcement.



Image of a protest against corruption in Nigeria. Caption: Plate 3.1 Citizens protesting against corruption in Nigeria

3.1.4 Individual causes

Individual causes are personal behaviours and psychological factors that contribute to social pathologies. Examples include substance abuse, poor decision-making, and lack of self-control. Mental health challenges such as depression and anxiety can also lead individuals into harmful behaviours if left unaddressed. While structural and institutional factors often shape individual choices, personal responsibility and resilience remain important in preventing social problems.



Fill in the blank: Individual causes of social pathologies may include substance abuse and poor _____-making.

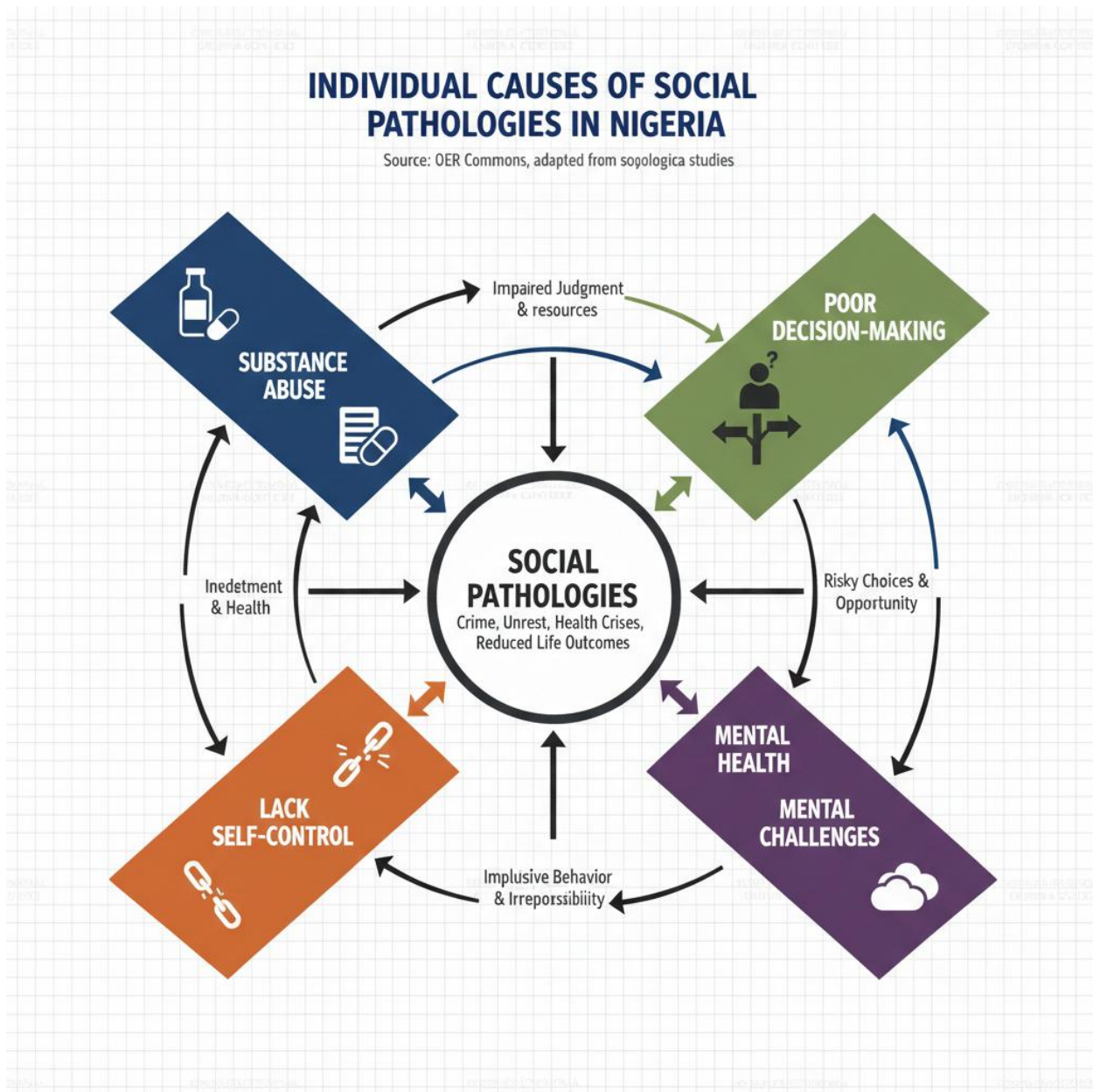


Diagram showing individual causes of social pathologies (substance abuse, poor decision-making, lack of self-control, mental health challenges). Caption: Figure 3.2 Individual causes of social pathologies

Pilot questions 3.1

1. Define structural causes of social pathologies and give two examples.
2. Fill in the blank: One major structural cause of social pathologies in Nigeria is widespread _____.



3. Identify three cultural causes of social pathologies in Nigeria.
4. Explain how weak institutions contribute to social pathologies.
5. Fill in the blank: Individual causes of social pathologies may include substance abuse and poor _____-making.

3.2 Consequences of Social Pathologies

3.2.1 Effects on individuals

Social pathologies are harmful behaviours or conditions that disrupt normal social functioning. At the individual level, they often result in poor health, reduced educational attainment, and psychological distress. For example, substance abuse can damage physical health, while crime and delinquency may limit opportunities for personal growth. Individuals affected by these conditions may also experience stigma and exclusion, which further hinders their ability to thrive.

Fill in the blank: One consequence of social pathologies at the individual level is reduced _____ attainment.



EFFECTS OF SOCIAL PATHOLOGIES ON INDIVIDUALS IN NIGERIA

Source: OER Commons, adapted from sociological studies

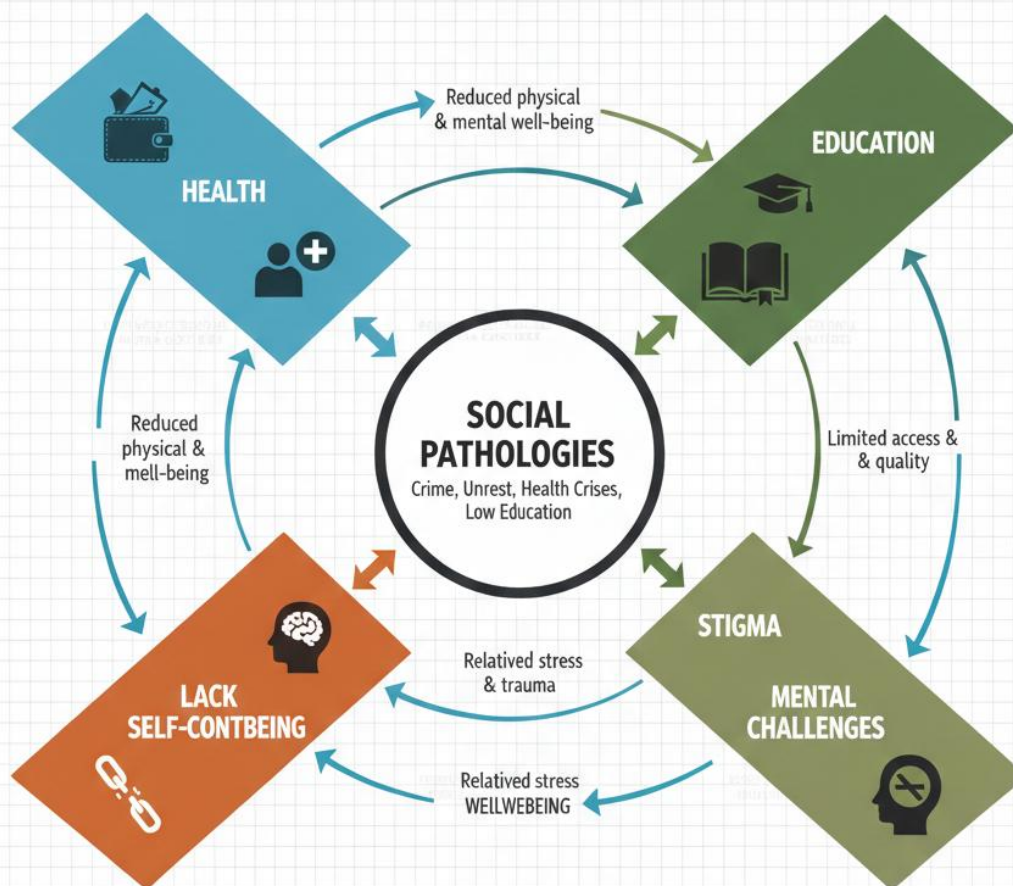


Diagram showing effects of social pathologies on individuals (health, education, psychological wellbeing, stigma). Caption: Figure 3.3 Effects of social pathologies on individuals

3.2.2 Effects on families

Families are often the first to feel the impact of social pathologies. **Family instability** arises when members are affected by crime, unemployment, or mental health challenges. Discord within families can lead to weakened support systems, poor communication, and increased conflict. Children in such families may be more vulnerable to delinquency, truancy, and substance abuse. The breakdown of family structures undermines the ability of families to provide guidance and stability.



Fill in the blank: Family instability caused by social pathologies often leads to weakened _____ systems.

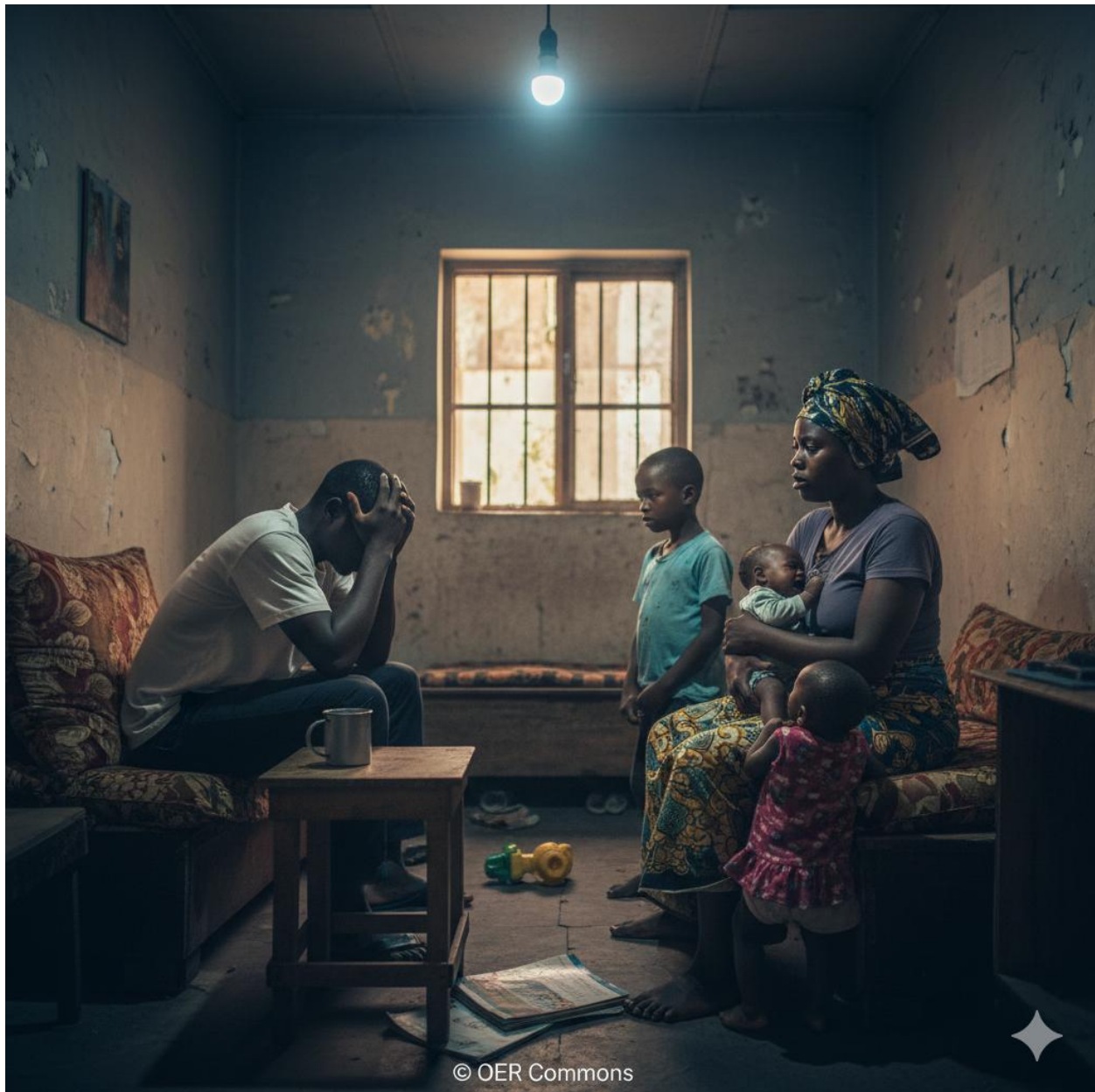


Image of a Nigerian family experiencing conflict and instability. Caption: Plate 3.2 Family instability as a consequence of social pathologies

3.2.3 Effects on communities and national development

At the community and national levels, social pathologies contribute to insecurity, reduced productivity, and weakened social trust. Communities affected by high crime rates often experience fear and declining economic activity. National development suffers when resources are diverted to address insecurity rather than growth. Social pathologies also discourage foreign



investment and weaken the country's international reputation. Addressing these consequences requires coordinated efforts across government, civil society, and social work practice.

Fill in the blank: Social pathologies discourage foreign _____ and weaken national development.

CONSEQUENCES OF SOCIAL PATHOLOGIES ON COMMUNITIES AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

Source: OER Commons, adapted from socioeconomic studies

- **Erosion of Social Cohesion:**
- Loss of trust, fragmentation of communities, increased, increased conflict
- **Economic Instability:** Reduced, investment, capital flight, widespread poverty
- **Political Instability & Weak Governance?**
- Public distrust, civil unrest, corruption, challenges to democratic institutions
- **Public Health Crises:** Outdated systems, spread of contagious diseases, increased life expectancy on incidence of infectious diseases, brain diseases, berin, reduced national innovation capacity
- **Environmental Degradation**
- **Human Capital Flight**
- Unsustainable resource use, pollution, Environmental Degradation regulation

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Box 3.2 Consequences of social pathologies on communities and national development

Pilot questions 3.2

1. Identify two effects of social pathologies on individuals.



2. Fill in the blank: One consequence of social pathologies at the individual level is reduced _____ attainment.
3. Explain how family instability affects children.
4. Fill in the blank: Family instability caused by social pathologies often leads to weakened _____ systems.
5. Describe two ways social pathologies affect national development.
6. Fill in the blank: Social pathologies discourage foreign _____ and weaken national development.

3.3 Solutions and Interventions

3.3.1 Preventive measures

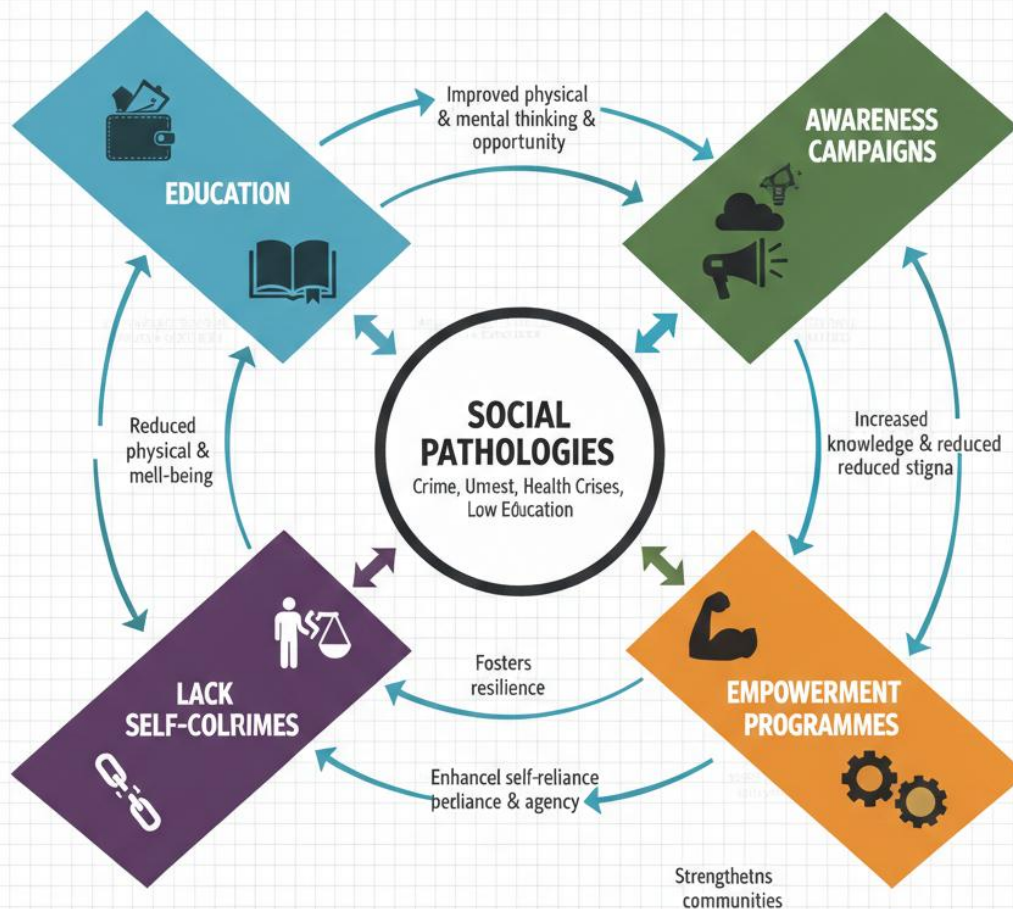
Preventive measures are strategies designed to stop social pathologies before they occur. In Nigeria, these include education, awareness campaigns, and empowerment programmes. For example, providing quality education equips individuals with knowledge and skills that reduce vulnerability to crime and delinquency. Awareness campaigns about the dangers of substance abuse or corruption help communities resist harmful behaviours. Empowerment initiatives, such as vocational training and microfinance, give people opportunities to improve their livelihoods and avoid destructive paths.

Fill in the blank: Preventive measures such as education and awareness campaigns aim to stop social pathologies before they _____.



PREVENTIVE MEASURES AGAINST SOCIAL PATHOLOGIES IN NIGERIA

Source: OER Commons, adapted from sociological studies



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Diagram showing preventive measures against social pathologies (education, awareness campaigns, empowerment programmes). Caption: Figure 3.4 Preventive measures against social pathologies

3.3.2 Corrective measures

Corrective measures are interventions applied after social pathologies have already occurred. These include rehabilitation programmes for offenders, counselling for individuals and families, and legal reforms to strengthen justice systems. Rehabilitation helps reintegrate offenders into society, while counselling addresses emotional and psychological needs. Legal reforms ensure accountability and reduce corruption, thereby discouraging harmful behaviours. Corrective measures are essential for reducing the long-term impact of social pathologies.



Fill in the blank: Corrective measures such as rehabilitation and counselling are applied after social pathologies have already _____.

CORRECTIVE MEASURES AGAINST SOCIAL PATHOLOGIES IN NIGERIA

Source: OER Commons, adapted from socoolgicas studies

- **Legal & Judicial Reform:** anti-agencies, speeding up court processes, ensuring rule of law, protecting human rights.
- **Economic Diversification & Job Creation:** protecting human rights.
- Investing in non-oil sectors (agriculture, tech), vocational training, small businesses, substance abuse treatment, infrastructure-based development.
- **Social Welfare & Rehabilitation:**
- Upgrading public infrastructure, increasing access to quality education and healthcare, urban planning, housing projects.
- **Security Service Delivery:**
- Police accountability, community policing initiatives, addressing insurgency with non-military solutions.

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Box 3.3 Examples of corrective measures against social pathologies

3.3.3 Role of social work practice

Social work practice plays a central role in addressing social pathologies. Social workers provide advocacy, counselling, and community development services. They design interventions that empower individuals, strengthen families, and build resilient communities. At the policy level, social workers influence decision-making by promoting laws and programmes that reduce



inequality and protect vulnerable groups. Their holistic approach ensures that both preventive and corrective measures are effectively implemented.

Fill in the blank: Social workers influence decision-making by promoting laws and programmes that reduce _____.



Image of a Nigerian social worker leading a community development workshop. Caption: Plate 3.3 Social worker leading a community development workshop

Pilot questions 3.3

1. Define preventive measures and give two examples.



2. Fill in the blank: Preventive measures such as education and awareness campaigns aim to stop social pathologies before they _____.
3. Identify three corrective measures used to address social pathologies.
4. Fill in the blank: Corrective measures such as rehabilitation and counselling are applied after social pathologies have already _____.
5. Explain the role of social work practice in addressing social pathologies.
6. Fill in the blank: Social workers influence decision-making by promoting laws and programmes that reduce _____.

3.4 Case Studies and Best Practices

3.4.1 Nigerian examples of interventions against social pathologies

Nigeria has implemented several interventions to address **social pathologies**, ranging from government-led initiatives to community-based programmes. For example, youth empowerment schemes such as vocational training and entrepreneurship support have helped reduce unemployment and crime. Anti-corruption campaigns and reforms in the justice system aim to strengthen institutions and restore public trust. Community sensitisation programmes also play a vital role in discouraging substance abuse and promoting family stability.

Fill in the blank: One Nigerian intervention against social pathologies is youth _____ schemes that provide vocational training and entrepreneurship support.





Image of Nigerian youths participating in a vocational training programme. Caption: Plate 3.4
Nigerian youths engaged in vocational training as an intervention against social pathologies

3.4.2 International approaches and lessons for Nigeria

Globally, countries have adopted innovative approaches to tackle social pathologies. For instance, community policing in some nations has reduced crime by building trust between citizens and law enforcement. Rehabilitation centres for substance abuse have proven effective in reintegrating individuals into society. Education campaigns in schools and communities have helped reduce stigma around mental health. Nigeria can learn from these approaches by adapting them to local contexts and ensuring sustainability.



Fill in the blank: One international approach to tackling social pathologies is community _____, which builds trust between citizens and law enforcement.

INTERNATIONAL APPROACHES TO TACKLING SOCIAL PATHOLOGIES

Source: OER Commons, adapted from sociological studies

- **Multiateral Aid & Development Programmes:**
 - UN agencies (UNDP, UNICEF, WHO), World Bank development banks.
 - Funding for poverty reduction, healthcare, & education, & infrastructure, & infrastructure.
- **Good Governance & Anti-Corruption Initiatives:**
 - Support for legal & judicial reform, transparency, & accountability. & monitoring bodies (e.g., UNCAC).
- **Human Rights & Social Justice Advocacy**
 - Promoting equality, protecting vulnerable groups, & for policy change.
- **Global Health Initiatives**
 - Gavi, Global Fund, & Gavi, & international health organizations.
 - UNESCO, prevention, pandemics response, & strengthening health systems.
 - Promoting intercultural understanding, skills development, & civic education.
- **Conflict Resolution & Peacebuilding**
 - UN Peacekeeping, mediation efforts, post-conflict reconstruction.
 - Addressing root causes of conflict & fostering social cohesion.

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Box 3.4 International approaches to tackling social pathologies

3.4.3 Evaluation of effectiveness and sustainability of solutions

Evaluating interventions is essential to determine their **effectiveness** and **sustainability**. Effective solutions are those that achieve their intended outcomes, such as reducing crime or improving mental health. Sustainable solutions are those that can be maintained over time without excessive reliance on external support. In Nigeria, challenges such as limited funding,



corruption, and weak institutional capacity often hinder sustainability. Social workers play a key role in monitoring and evaluating programmes to ensure they remain impactful and relevant.

Fill in the blank: Sustainable solutions to social pathologies are those that can be maintained over _____ without excessive reliance on external support.

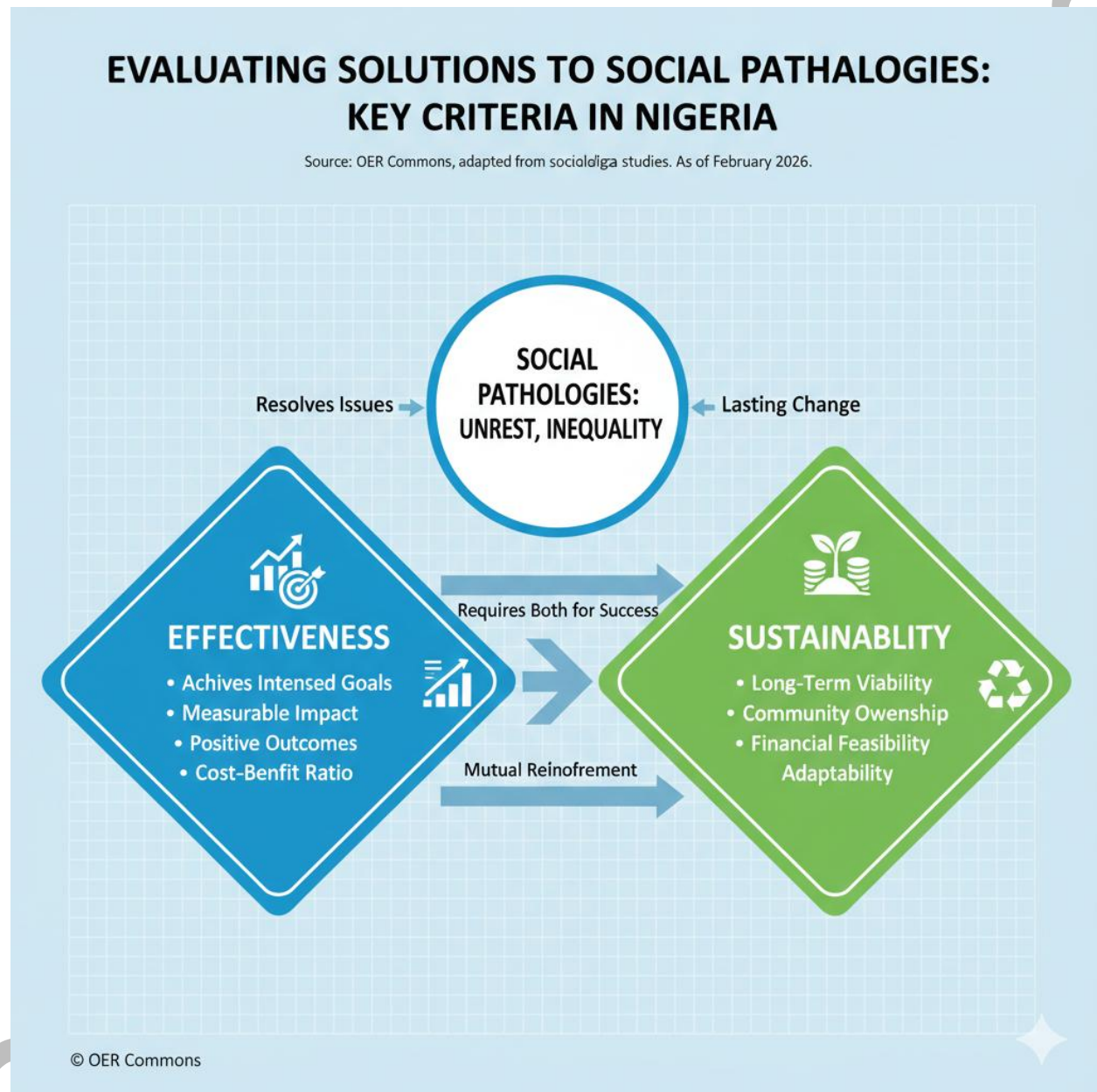


Diagram showing criteria for evaluating solutions: effectiveness (achieving intended outcomes) and sustainability (long-term viability). Caption: Figure 3.5 Criteria for evaluating solutions to social pathologies

Pilot questions 3.4

1. Give one example of a Nigerian intervention against social pathologies.



2. Fill in the blank: One Nigerian intervention against social pathologies is youth _____ schemes that provide vocational training and entrepreneurship support.
3. Identify two international approaches to tackling social pathologies.
4. Fill in the blank: One international approach to tackling social pathologies is community _____, which builds trust between citizens and law enforcement.
5. Explain the difference between effectiveness and sustainability in evaluating solutions.
6. Fill in the blank: Sustainable solutions to social pathologies are those that can be maintained over _____ without excessive reliance on external support.

Series Summary

This Series has examined the causes and solutions to social pathologies, helping you to understand not only why these problems arise but also how they can be addressed effectively. Its purpose was to provide you with a balanced view of structural, cultural, institutional, and individual factors that contribute to social problems, while also highlighting practical interventions that promote healthier communities and stronger national development.

We began by analysing the causes of social pathologies, then moved on to their consequences for individuals, families, and society at large. Following that, we explored solutions and interventions, focusing on preventive and corrective measures as well as the vital role of social work practice. Finally, we considered case studies and best practices, drawing lessons from Nigerian and international experiences. By completing this Series, you should now be able to define and analyse the causes of social pathologies (SLO 3.1), evaluate their consequences (SLO 3.2), assess preventive and corrective measures (SLO 3.3), apply social work knowledge in designing interventions (SLO 3.4), and critically review case studies to compare approaches and sustainability (SLO 3.5).

Glossary of Terms

Advocacy: Supportive action taken by social workers or groups to influence policies, laws, or practices in favour of vulnerable individuals and communities.

Community policing: An approach to law enforcement where police work closely with communities to build trust and prevent crime.

Corrective measures: Interventions applied after social pathologies have occurred, such as rehabilitation, counselling, and legal reforms.

Cultural causes: Norms, values, and traditions that encourage or sustain harmful behaviours, for example gender discrimination or tolerance of corruption.

Empowerment programmes: Initiatives that provide individuals with skills, resources, or opportunities to improve their livelihoods and avoid harmful behaviours.

Effectiveness: The extent to which a solution achieves its intended outcomes, such as reducing crime or improving health.



Family instability: Breakdown of family structures caused by social pathologies, leading to weakened support systems and increased conflict.

Individual causes: Personal behaviours or psychological factors, such as substance abuse or poor decision-making, that contribute to social pathologies.

Institutional causes: Weaknesses in governance, justice systems, or public institutions that contribute to social pathologies, such as corruption or poor policy implementation.

Preventive measures: Strategies designed to stop social pathologies before they occur, including education, awareness campaigns, and empowerment initiatives.

Social pathologies: Harmful behaviours or conditions that disrupt normal social functioning, such as crime, substance abuse, or family discord.

Social work practice: Professional activities carried out by social workers, including counselling, advocacy, and community development, aimed at addressing social problems.

Structural causes: Economic and societal factors such as poverty, unemployment, inequality, and poor infrastructure that drive social pathologies.

Sustainability: The ability of a solution to remain effective over time without excessive reliance on external support.

Vocational training: Practical education programmes that equip individuals with job-related skills to improve employment opportunities and reduce vulnerability to social problems.

Concept Check Questions [Series 3]

Objective Questions

1. One major structural cause of social pathologies in Nigeria is widespread _____. (Linked to SLO 3.1)
2. Cultural causes of social pathologies often arise from harmful _____ and traditions. (Linked to SLO 3.1)
3. Institutional causes of social pathologies often include corruption and weak _____ enforcement. (Linked to SLO 3.1)
4. Social pathologies discourage foreign _____ and weaken national development. (Linked to SLO 3.2)
5. Preventive measures such as education and awareness campaigns aim to stop social pathologies before they _____. (Linked to SLO 3.3)

Short-Answer Questions

1. Define structural causes of social pathologies and give two examples. (Linked to SLO 3.1)
2. Identify three cultural causes of social pathologies in Nigeria. (Linked to SLO 3.1)
3. Explain how family instability affects children. (Linked to SLO 3.2)



4. Identify three corrective measures used to address social pathologies. (Linked to SLO 3.3)
5. Describe the role of social work practice in addressing social pathologies. (Linked to SLO 3.4)
6. Give one example of a Nigerian intervention against social pathologies. (Linked to SLO 3.5)

Long-Answer Questions

1. Analyse the consequences of social pathologies on individuals, families, and communities. (Linked to SLO 3.2)
2. Evaluate preventive and corrective measures for addressing social pathologies, highlighting their strengths and limitations. (Linked to SLO 3.3)
3. Discuss the role of social work practice in designing interventions for social pathologies, with reference to advocacy and community development. (Linked to SLO 3.4)
4. Assess Nigerian and international case studies of interventions against social pathologies, comparing their effectiveness and sustainability. (Linked to SLO 3.5)

Answers to Concept Check Questions [Series 3]

Objective Questions

1. Poverty
2. Norms
3. Law
4. Investment
5. Occur

Short-Answer Questions

1. Structural causes are economic and societal factors that drive social pathologies. Examples include poverty and unemployment.
2. Cultural causes include gender discrimination, preference for male children, and tolerance of corruption.
3. Family instability leads to weakened support systems, poor communication, and increased vulnerability of children to delinquency and substance abuse.
4. Corrective measures include rehabilitation programmes, counselling services, and legal reforms.
5. Social work practice involves advocacy, counselling, and community development to empower individuals and strengthen families.
6. One Nigerian intervention is youth empowerment schemes that provide vocational training and entrepreneurship support.



Long-Answer Questions

1. **Basic response:** Social pathologies affect individuals through poor health and reduced education, families through instability and discord, and communities through insecurity and reduced productivity. **Value-added response:** Outstanding learners may connect these consequences to broader national development issues, such as discouraged foreign investment and weakened social trust, and propose integrated solutions involving government, civil society, and social workers.
2. **Basic response:** Preventive measures such as education and awareness campaigns stop problems before they occur, while corrective measures like rehabilitation and counselling address issues after they arise. **Value-added response:** Outstanding learners may evaluate strengths (e.g., empowerment builds resilience, rehabilitation reintegrates offenders) and limitations (e.g., funding challenges, weak institutional support), suggesting ways to improve sustainability.
3. **Basic response:** Social workers design interventions through advocacy, counselling, and community development, helping individuals and families cope with social pathologies. **Value-added response:** Outstanding learners may highlight how social workers influence policy, promote laws that reduce inequality, and build partnerships with communities to ensure long-term impact.
4. **Basic response:** Nigerian case studies include youth empowerment programmes and anti-corruption campaigns, while international approaches include community policing and rehabilitation centres. **Value-added response:** Outstanding learners may compare effectiveness and sustainability, noting that Nigerian interventions often face funding and institutional challenges, while international models emphasise trust-building and long-term reintegration.

Answers to Pilot Questions [Series 3]

Part 3.1

1. Structural causes of social pathologies are economic and societal factors such as poverty and unemployment.
2. Poverty.
3. Gender discrimination, preference for male children, and tolerance of corruption.
4. Weak institutions contribute to social pathologies by failing to deliver justice, provide security, or ensure equitable distribution of resources.
5. Decision-making.

Part 3.2

1. Poor health and reduced educational attainment.
2. Education.
3. Family instability exposes children to delinquency, truancy, and substance abuse.



4. Support.
5. Social pathologies reduce productivity and divert resources to security.
6. Investment.

Part 3.3

1. Preventive measures are strategies designed to stop social pathologies before they occur. Examples include education and awareness campaigns.
2. Occur.
3. Rehabilitation programmes, counselling services, and legal reforms.
4. Occurred.
5. Social work practice provides advocacy, counselling, and community development to empower individuals and strengthen families.
6. Inequality.

Part 3.4

1. Youth empowerment schemes that provide vocational training and entrepreneurship support.
2. Empowerment.
3. Community policing and rehabilitation centres for substance abuse.
4. Policing.
5. Effectiveness means achieving intended outcomes, while sustainability means maintaining solutions over time without excessive reliance on external support.
6. Time.

References and Attributions [Series 3]

Course Content References

- SOC 205: Elements of Social Work (Course Document provided).
- Instructional content on causes, consequences, solutions, and case studies of social pathologies was derived directly from the Series outline and prepared course materials.

• **Course code: SOC 205**

• **Course title: Elements of Social Work**



- **Course credit load: 2**

SERIES 4: Theories of Social Work in Practice

Suggested Outline

- **Part 4.1 Introduction to Social Work Theories**
 - 4.1.1 Definition of theory in social work
 - 4.1.2 Importance of theories in guiding practice
 - 4.1.3 Relationship between theory and social work methods
- **Part 4.2 Major Theories in Social Work**
 - 4.2.1 Psychodynamic theory
 - 4.2.2 Behavioural and cognitive-behavioural theories
 - 4.2.3 Systems theory
 - 4.2.4 Humanistic and person-centred approaches
- **Part 4.3 Application of Theories in Practice**
 - 4.3.1 Casework and counselling
 - 4.3.2 Group work and community practice
 - 4.3.3 Policy advocacy and institutional interventions
- **Part 4.4 Evaluation and Integration of Theories**
 - 4.4.1 Strengths and limitations of different theories
 - 4.4.2 Integrating multiple theories in practice
 - 4.4.3 Relevance of theories to Nigerian social work context

Introduction

In the last Series, we examined the causes and solutions to social pathologies, focusing on how social problems emerge and the interventions that can address them. To deepen our understanding of social work practice, it is important to now explore the theoretical foundations that guide professional decision-making. Theories provide frameworks that help social workers interpret human behaviour, design interventions, and evaluate outcomes. This Series will therefore highlight the relevance of social work theories to practice and show how they shape the profession both locally and globally.

The aim of this Series is to introduce you to major theories of social work and to demonstrate how these theories can be applied in practice. It seeks to equip you with the ability to evaluate, integrate, and adapt theoretical perspectives to real-life social work situations.

We shall commence this Series by introducing the concept of theory in social work, its definition, importance, and relationship to practice. Next, we will move on to major theories such as psychodynamic, behavioural, cognitive-behavioural, systems, and humanistic approaches. Following that, we will explore how these theories are applied in practice, including casework,



counselling, group work, and policy advocacy. Finally, we will wrap up by evaluating the strengths and limitations of different theories, considering how they can be integrated, and reflecting on their relevance to the Nigerian social work context.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- **SLO 4.1** define the concept of theory in social work and explain its importance in guiding practice,
- **SLO 4.2** describe major theories in social work, including psychodynamic, behavioural, cognitive-behavioural, systems, and humanistic approaches,
- **SLO 4.3** apply selected theories to practical contexts such as casework, counselling, group work, and community practice,
- **SLO 4.4** analyse the strengths and limitations of different social work theories, and
- **SLO 4.5** evaluate the relevance of social work theories to the Nigerian context and demonstrate how multiple theories can be integrated in practice.

4.1 Introduction to Social Work Theories

4.1.1 Definition of theory in social work

A **theory** in social work is a structured explanation that helps professionals understand human behaviour, social systems, and the interaction between individuals and their environments. Theories provide a framework for interpreting situations and guide social workers in making informed decisions. Without theory, practice would rely only on intuition, which may not always lead to effective outcomes.

Fill in the blank: A theory in social work is a structured _____ that helps professionals understand human behaviour and social systems.

Diagram showing the role of theory in social work (understanding behaviour, guiding decisions, interpreting situations). Caption: Figure 4.1 Role of theory in social work

4.1.2 Importance of theories in guiding practice

Theories are important because they provide **predictive value**, helping social workers anticipate outcomes of interventions. They also offer **consistency**, ensuring that practice is not random but based on tested principles. Furthermore, theories enhance **professional credibility**, as they demonstrate that social work is grounded in knowledge rather than guesswork. By applying theories, social workers can design interventions that are both effective and ethical.

Fill in the blank: Theories provide predictive value, consistency, and professional _____ in social work practice.



Box 4.1 Importance of theories in social work practice

4.1.3 Relationship between theory and social work methods

Social work methods are the practical approaches used to address social problems, such as casework, group work, and community practice. Theories underpin these methods by explaining why certain approaches are effective in specific contexts. For example, systems theory helps social workers understand how family dynamics influence individual behaviour, while behavioural theory explains how reinforcement can change actions. Thus, theory and method are interconnected, with theory guiding the choice and application of methods.

Fill in the blank: Social work methods such as casework and group work are guided by _____ that explain why certain approaches are effective.

Image of a social worker applying theory-based methods in a counselling session. Caption: Plate 4.1 Social worker applying theory-based methods in counselling

Pilot questions 4.1

1. Define theory in social work and explain its purpose.
2. Fill in the blank: A theory in social work is a structured _____ that helps professionals understand human behaviour and social systems.
3. List three reasons why theories are important in guiding social work practice.
4. Fill in the blank: Theories provide predictive value, consistency, and professional _____ in social work practice.
5. Explain the relationship between theory and social work methods.
6. Fill in the blank: Social work methods such as casework and group work are guided by _____ that explain why certain approaches are effective.

4.2 Major Theories in Social Work

4.2.1 Psychodynamic theory

Psychodynamic theory is rooted in the work of Sigmund Freud and focuses on unconscious processes, childhood experiences, and emotional development. In social work, this theory helps practitioners understand how past experiences influence present behaviour. For example, unresolved childhood trauma may manifest as anxiety or aggression in adulthood. Social workers use psychodynamic approaches to explore these hidden influences and provide counselling that addresses deep-seated issues.

Fill in the blank: Psychodynamic theory focuses on unconscious processes and _____ experiences.



Diagram showing key elements of psychodynamic theory (unconscious processes, childhood experiences, emotional development). Caption: Figure 4.2 Key elements of psychodynamic theory

4.2.2 Behavioural and cognitive-behavioural theories

Behavioural theory emphasises observable behaviour and the role of reinforcement in shaping actions. **Cognitive-behavioural theory (CBT)** combines behavioural principles with the idea that thoughts influence feelings and behaviours. In social work practice, these theories are applied in interventions such as behaviour modification and CBT counselling. For instance, a social worker may help a client replace negative thought patterns with positive ones, leading to healthier behaviours.

Fill in the blank: Cognitive-behavioural theory combines behavioural principles with the idea that _____ influence feelings and behaviours.

Box 4.2 Applications of behavioural and cognitive-behavioural theories in social work

4.2.3 Systems theory

Systems theory views individuals as part of interconnected systems such as families, communities, and institutions. It emphasises that problems cannot be understood in isolation but must be seen in relation to wider social structures. For example, a child's behaviour may be influenced not only by personal factors but also by family dynamics, school environment, and community conditions. Social workers use systems theory to design holistic interventions that address multiple levels of influence.

Fill in the blank: Systems theory emphasises that problems must be understood in relation to wider _____ structures.

Diagram showing systems theory in social work (individual, family, community, institutions). Caption: Figure 4.3 Systems theory in social work

4.2.4 Humanistic and person-centred approaches

Humanistic theory emphasises personal growth, self-determination, and the inherent worth of individuals. **Person-centred approaches**, developed by Carl Rogers, highlight empathy, unconditional positive regard, and the importance of creating a supportive environment for clients. In social work, these approaches encourage practitioners to focus on strengths rather than deficits, empowering clients to make positive changes in their lives.

Fill in the blank: Person-centred approaches highlight empathy and unconditional _____ regard.

Image of a social worker providing person-centred counselling with empathy and support.

Caption: Plate 4.2 Social worker applying person-centred approaches in counselling

Pilot questions 4.2



1. Define psychodynamic theory and explain its relevance to social work.
2. Fill in the blank: Psychodynamic theory focuses on unconscious processes and _____ experiences.
3. Explain how cognitive-behavioural theory is applied in social work practice.
4. Fill in the blank: Cognitive-behavioural theory combines behavioural principles with the idea that _____ influence feelings and behaviours.
5. Describe the main idea of systems theory in social work.
6. Fill in the blank: Systems theory emphasises that problems must be understood in relation to wider _____ structures.
7. Identify two features of person-centred approaches.
8. Fill in the blank: Person-centred approaches highlight empathy and unconditional _____ regard.

4.3 Application of Theories in Practice

4.3.1 Casework and counselling

Casework refers to the one-on-one method of social work where practitioners assist individuals in solving personal problems. Theories provide the foundation for casework by guiding how social workers assess needs and design interventions. For example, psychodynamic theory may be used to explore a client's past experiences, while cognitive-behavioural theory can help restructure negative thought patterns. **Counselling** in social work also relies on theory to provide structured support, ensuring that interventions are not random but purposeful.

Fill in the blank: Casework refers to the one-on-one method of social work where practitioners assist individuals in solving _____ problems.

Image of a social worker conducting a counselling session with a client. Caption: Plate 4.3 Social worker applying theory-based counselling in casework

4.3.2 Group work and community practice

Group work involves bringing individuals together to share experiences, learn from one another, and build collective solutions. Theories such as systems theory and humanistic approaches guide group dynamics, helping social workers understand how individuals interact within groups. **Community practice** extends this approach to larger populations, focusing on empowerment, advocacy, and social change. For example, systems theory helps explain how community structures influence behaviour, while humanistic theory emphasises respect and empathy in collective action.

Fill in the blank: Group work in social work involves bringing individuals together to share experiences and build collective _____.



Diagram showing applications of theories in group work and community practice (systems theory, humanistic approaches, empowerment, advocacy). Caption: Figure 4.4 Theories applied in group work and community practice

4.3.3 Policy advocacy and institutional interventions

Policy advocacy is the process of influencing laws, policies, and institutional practices to promote social justice. Theories guide advocacy by explaining social structures and identifying areas where change is needed. For instance, systems theory highlights how institutions affect individuals, while behavioural theory can inform campaigns that encourage positive social behaviours. **Institutional interventions** involve working within organisations to improve service delivery, reduce inequality, and strengthen governance. Social workers apply theories to ensure that these interventions are evidence-based and sustainable.

Fill in the blank: Policy advocacy in social work is the process of influencing laws, policies, and institutional practices to promote social _____.

Box 4.3 Applications of theories in policy advocacy and institutional interventions

Pilot questions 4.3

1. Define casework and explain how theories guide counselling in social work.
2. Fill in the blank: Casework refers to the one-on-one method of social work where practitioners assist individuals in solving _____ problems.
3. Explain how systems theory and humanistic approaches are applied in group work and community practice.
4. Fill in the blank: Group work in social work involves bringing individuals together to share experiences and build collective _____.
5. Describe the role of theories in policy advocacy and institutional interventions.
6. Fill in the blank: Policy advocacy in social work is the process of influencing laws, policies, and institutional practices to promote social _____.

4.4 Evaluation and Integration of Theories

4.4.1 Strengths and limitations of different theories

Each social work theory has its **strengths** and **limitations**, which influence how and when it should be applied. For example, psychodynamic theory provides deep insights into unconscious processes but may be less practical for urgent interventions. Behavioural and cognitive-behavioural theories are effective for observable behaviour change but may overlook broader social contexts. Systems theory offers a holistic view of individuals within their environments but can be complex to implement. Humanistic approaches empower clients and emphasise dignity, yet they may lack structured techniques for severe behavioural issues.



Fill in the blank: Systems theory offers a holistic view of individuals within their _____ but can be complex to implement.

Box 4.4 Strengths and limitations of selected social work theories

4.4.2 Integrating multiple theories in practice

In real-world practice, social workers often **integrate multiple theories** to address complex problems. For instance, a caseworker may use systems theory to understand family dynamics while applying cognitive-behavioural techniques to help an individual change harmful thought patterns. Integration allows practitioners to adapt to diverse situations and provide more comprehensive support. The key is to select theories that complement each other and apply them flexibly according to the client's needs.

Fill in the blank: In practice, social workers often integrate multiple _____ to address complex problems.

Diagram showing integration of theories in practice (psychodynamic + CBT + systems + humanistic). Caption: Figure 4.5 Integration of multiple theories in social work practice

4.4.3 Relevance of theories to Nigerian social work context

Theories must be adapted to the **Nigerian context**, where cultural values, institutional structures, and socio-economic realities shape practice. For example, systems theory is particularly relevant in Nigeria due to the strong influence of family and community networks. Humanistic approaches resonate with cultural emphasis on respect and dignity. However, challenges such as limited resources and weak institutions may hinder the full application of certain theories. Social workers in Nigeria must therefore critically evaluate theories, adapting them to local realities while maintaining professional standards.

Fill in the blank: In Nigeria, systems theory is particularly relevant due to the strong influence of _____ and community networks.

Image of Nigerian social workers engaging with a community group to apply theory-informed practice. Caption: Plate 4.4 Nigerian social workers applying theories in community practice

Pilot questions 4.4

1. Identify one strength and one limitation of psychodynamic theory.
2. Fill in the blank: Systems theory offers a holistic view of individuals within their _____ but can be complex to implement.
3. Explain why integrating multiple theories is important in social work practice.
4. Fill in the blank: In practice, social workers often integrate multiple _____ to address complex problems.
5. Discuss the relevance of social work theories to the Nigerian context.



6. Fill in the blank: In Nigeria, systems theory is particularly relevant due to the strong influence of _____ and community networks.

Series Summary

This Series has focused on the theories that underpin social work practice, highlighting their importance in guiding professional decisions and interventions. Its purpose was to show how theories provide frameworks for understanding human behaviour, social systems, and the interaction between individuals and their environments, thereby strengthening the credibility and effectiveness of social work.

We began by defining theory in social work and explaining its role in practice, then examined major theories such as psychodynamic, behavioural, cognitive-behavioural, systems, and humanistic approaches. Following that, we explored how these theories are applied in casework, counselling, group work, community practice, and policy advocacy. Finally, we evaluated the strengths and limitations of different theories, considered how they can be integrated, and reflected on their relevance to the Nigerian context. By completing this Series, you should now be able to define and describe social work theories (SLO 4.1, SLO 4.2), apply them in practical contexts (SLO 4.3), analyse their strengths and limitations (SLO 4.4), and evaluate their relevance and integration in practice (SLO 4.5).

Glossary of Terms

Behavioural theory: A theory that focuses on observable behaviour and explains how reinforcement can shape or change actions.

Casework: A one-on-one method of social work where practitioners assist individuals in solving personal problems through counselling and support.

Cognitive-behavioural theory (CBT): A theory that combines behavioural principles with the idea that thoughts influence feelings and behaviours, often used to help clients replace negative thought patterns with positive ones.

Community practice: A social work method that involves working with larger groups or communities to promote empowerment, advocacy, and social change.

Counselling: A structured process in social work where practitioners provide guidance and support to individuals, often using theories to shape interventions.

Humanistic theory: A theory that emphasises personal growth, self-determination, and the inherent worth of individuals.

Integration of theories: The practice of combining different social work theories to address complex problems and provide comprehensive support.

Person-centred approach: A counselling method developed by Carl Rogers that highlights empathy, unconditional positive regard, and creating a supportive environment for clients.



Policy advocacy: The process of influencing laws, policies, and institutional practices to promote social justice and improve conditions for vulnerable groups.

Psychodynamic theory: A theory rooted in the work of Sigmund Freud that focuses on unconscious processes, childhood experiences, and emotional development.

Social work methods: Practical approaches used in social work, such as casework, group work, and community practice, which are guided by theories.

Strengths and limitations of theories: The advantages and disadvantages of different social work theories, which determine how and when they should be applied.

Systems theory: A theory that views individuals as part of interconnected systems such as families, communities, and institutions, emphasising that problems must be understood in relation to wider social structures.

Theory (in social work): A structured explanation that helps professionals understand human behaviour, social systems, and the interaction between individuals and their environments.

Concept Check Questions [Series 4]

Objective Questions

1. A theory in social work is a structured _____ that helps professionals understand human behaviour and social systems. (Linked to SLO 4.1)
2. Psychodynamic theory focuses on unconscious processes and _____ experiences. (Linked to SLO 4.2)
3. Cognitive-behavioural theory combines behavioural principles with the idea that _____ influence feelings and behaviours. (Linked to SLO 4.2)
4. Systems theory emphasises that problems must be understood in relation to wider _____ structures. (Linked to SLO 4.2)
5. Person-centred approaches highlight empathy and unconditional _____ regard. (Linked to SLO 4.2)
6. Casework refers to the one-on-one method of social work where practitioners assist individuals in solving _____ problems. (Linked to SLO 4.3)
7. Policy advocacy in social work is the process of influencing laws, policies, and institutional practices to promote social _____. (Linked to SLO 4.3)
8. In Nigeria, systems theory is particularly relevant due to the strong influence of _____ and community networks. (Linked to SLO 4.5)

Short-Answer Questions

1. Define theory in social work and explain its purpose. (Linked to SLO 4.1)
2. List three reasons why theories are important in guiding social work practice. (Linked to SLO 4.1)



3. Describe the main idea of psychodynamic theory and its relevance to social work. (Linked to SLO 4.2)
4. Explain how cognitive-behavioural theory is applied in social work practice. (Linked to SLO 4.2)
5. Describe the role of systems theory in understanding social problems. (Linked to SLO 4.2)
6. Identify two features of person-centred approaches. (Linked to SLO 4.2)
7. Explain how theories guide casework and counselling in social work. (Linked to SLO 4.3)
8. Describe how group work and community practice benefit from systems and humanistic theories. (Linked to SLO 4.3)
9. Identify one strength and one limitation of psychodynamic theory. (Linked to SLO 4.4)
10. Explain why integrating multiple theories is important in social work practice. (Linked to SLO 4.4)

Long-Answer Questions

1. Analyse the strengths and limitations of behavioural, systems, and humanistic theories in social work practice. (Linked to SLO 4.4)
2. Evaluate how theories are applied in casework, group work, and policy advocacy, highlighting their practical relevance. (Linked to SLO 4.3)
3. Discuss the relevance of social work theories to the Nigerian context, giving examples of how they can be adapted to local realities. (Linked to SLO 4.5)

Answers to Concept Check Questions [Series 4]

Objective Questions

1. Explanation
2. Childhood
3. Thoughts
4. Social
5. Positive
6. Personal
7. Justice
8. Family

Short-Answer Questions



1. A theory in social work is a structured explanation that helps professionals understand human behaviour, social systems, and interactions. Its purpose is to guide practice and decision-making.
2. Predictive value, consistency in practice, and professional credibility.
3. Psychodynamic theory focuses on unconscious processes and childhood experiences, helping social workers understand how past trauma influences present behaviour.
4. Cognitive-behavioural theory is applied through counselling that restructures negative thought patterns and promotes positive behaviours.
5. Systems theory explains that individuals are part of interconnected systems, so problems must be understood in relation to wider social structures.
6. Empathy and unconditional positive regard.
7. Theories guide casework and counselling by providing frameworks for assessment, intervention, and structured support.
8. Group work benefits from systems theory by explaining group dynamics, while humanistic approaches promote empathy and respect in collective action.
9. Strength: Provides deep insights into unconscious processes. Limitation: Less practical for urgent interventions.
10. Integrating multiple theories allows social workers to address complex problems holistically and adapt to diverse client needs.

Long-Answer Questions

1. **Basic response:** Behavioural theory is strong in shaping observable behaviour but may ignore broader contexts. Systems theory provides a holistic view but is complex to apply. Humanistic theory empowers clients but may lack structured techniques for severe issues. **Value-added response:** Outstanding learners may compare these theories in practice, showing how behavioural methods can be combined with systems analysis and humanistic principles to create balanced interventions.
2. **Basic response:** Theories guide casework by structuring counselling, group work by explaining dynamics, and policy advocacy by highlighting institutional influences. **Value-added response:** Outstanding learners may evaluate practical relevance, such as how CBT supports individual counselling, systems theory strengthens community practice, and humanistic approaches enhance advocacy for dignity and respect.
3. **Basic response:** Theories are relevant to Nigeria because they can be adapted to cultural values, family structures, and socio-economic realities. Systems theory is particularly useful due to strong family and community networks. **Value-added response:** Outstanding learners may discuss challenges such as limited resources and weak institutions, suggesting ways to adapt theories through community-based approaches and culturally sensitive interventions.



Part 4.1

1. A theory in social work is a structured explanation that helps professionals understand human behaviour, social systems, and interactions. Its purpose is to guide practice and decision-making.
2. Explanation
3. Predictive value, consistency in practice, and professional credibility.
4. Credibility
5. Social work methods are guided by theories that explain why certain approaches are effective.
6. Theories

Part 4.2

1. Psychodynamic theory focuses on unconscious processes and childhood experiences, helping social workers understand how past trauma influences present behaviour.
2. Childhood
3. Cognitive-behavioural theory is applied through counselling that restructures negative thought patterns and promotes positive behaviours.
4. Thoughts
5. Systems theory explains that individuals are part of interconnected systems, so problems must be understood in relation to wider social structures.
6. Social
7. Empathy and unconditional positive regard.
8. Positive

Part 4.3

1. Casework is the one-on-one method of social work where theories guide counselling and structured interventions.
2. Personal
3. Systems theory explains group dynamics, while humanistic approaches promote empathy and respect in collective action.
4. Solutions
5. Theories guide advocacy by explaining social structures and identifying areas where change is needed.
6. Justice



Part 4.4

1. Psychodynamic theory provides deep insights into unconscious processes but is less practical for urgent interventions.
2. Environments
3. Integrating multiple theories allows social workers to address complex problems holistically and adapt to diverse client needs.
4. Theories
5. Theories are relevant to Nigeria because they can be adapted to cultural values, family structures, and socio-economic realities.
6. Family

References and Attributions [Series 4]

Course Content References

- SOC 205: Elements of Social Work (Course Document provided).
- Instructional content on theories of social work and their applications was derived directly from the Series outline and prepared course materials.

- **Course code: SOC 205**
- **Course title: Elements of Social Work**
- **Course credit load: 2**

SERIES 5: Organisation and Functions of Social Work Agencies

Suggested Outline

- **Part 5.1 Introduction to Social Work Agencies**
 - 5.1.1 Definition and purpose of social work agencies
 - 5.1.2 Types of social work agencies (governmental, non-governmental, community-based, faith-based)
 - 5.1.3 Importance of agencies in delivering social services



- **Part 5.2 Organisational Structure of Social Work Agencies**
 - 5.2.1 Governance and leadership roles
 - 5.2.2 Staffing and professional roles (social workers, counsellors, administrators)
 - 5.2.3 Funding sources and resource management
- **Part 5.3 Core Functions of Social Work Agencies**
 - 5.3.1 Service delivery (casework, group work, community development)
 - 5.3.2 Advocacy and policy influence
 - 5.3.3 Capacity building and training
 - 5.3.4 Monitoring and evaluation of programmes
- **Part 5.4 Challenges and Prospects of Social Work Agencies in Nigeria**
 - 5.4.1 Common challenges (funding, staffing, institutional weaknesses)
 - 5.4.2 Strategies for overcoming challenges
 - 5.4.3 Future prospects and opportunities for strengthening agencies

Introduction

In every society, social work agencies play a vital role in supporting individuals, families, and communities by providing essential services and promoting social justice. These agencies act as the organised structures through which social workers deliver interventions, coordinate programmes, and influence policies. Understanding how these agencies are organised and the functions they perform is crucial for appreciating the practical side of social work and its impact on national development.

The aim of this Series is to introduce you to the organisation and functions of social work agencies, equipping you with knowledge of their structures, roles, and challenges, while also highlighting their relevance to the Nigerian context.

We shall commence this Series by examining the definition, purpose, and types of social work agencies. Next, we will move on to explore their organisational structures, including governance, staffing, and funding arrangements. Following that, we will consider the core functions of these agencies, such as service delivery, advocacy, training, and programme evaluation. Finally, we will wrap up by discussing the challenges faced by social work agencies in Nigeria and the prospects for strengthening their effectiveness in the future.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- **SLO 5.1** define social work agencies and explain their purpose in delivering social services,
- **SLO 5.2** distinguish between different types of social work agencies such as governmental, non-governmental, community-based, and faith-based organisations,



- **SLO 5.3** describe the organisational structures of social work agencies, including governance, staffing, and funding arrangements,
- **SLO 5.4** explain the core functions of social work agencies in service delivery, advocacy, training, and programme evaluation,
- **SLO 5.5** analyse the challenges faced by social work agencies in Nigeria, and
- **SLO 5.6** evaluate strategies and prospects for strengthening the effectiveness of social work agencies in the Nigerian context.

5.1 Introduction to Social Work Agencies

5.1.1 Definition and purpose of social work agencies

A **social work agency** is an organised body that provides professional services aimed at improving the well-being of individuals, families, and communities. These agencies serve as the institutional framework through which social workers deliver interventions, coordinate programmes, and promote social justice. Their purpose is not only to provide direct assistance but also to advocate for systemic change, ensuring that vulnerable populations have access to resources and opportunities.

Fill in the blank: A social work agency is an organised body that provides professional services aimed at improving the _____ of individuals, families, and communities.

Diagram showing the definition and purpose of social work agencies (service delivery, advocacy, systemic change). Caption: Figure 5.1 Definition and purpose of social work agencies

5.1.2 Types of social work agencies

Social work agencies can be classified into several types. **Governmental agencies** are established by the state to provide welfare services, such as ministries of social development. **Non-governmental organisations (NGOs)** are independent bodies that often focus on specific issues like child protection or health. **Community-based organisations (CBOs)** operate at grassroots level, mobilising local resources to address community needs. **Faith-based organisations** are linked to religious institutions and provide services inspired by moral or spiritual values. Each type plays a unique role in meeting social needs.

Fill in the blank: Community-based organisations operate at the _____ level, mobilising local resources to address community needs.

Box 5.1 Types of social work agencies

5.1.3 Importance of agencies in delivering social services

Social work agencies are important because they provide **structure** for service delivery, ensuring that interventions are organised and sustainable. They also promote **accountability**, as agencies must adhere to professional standards and policies. Furthermore, agencies enhance **collaboration**, bringing together professionals, communities, and governments to address social



problems collectively. In Nigeria, agencies are particularly vital in bridging gaps where government resources are limited, ensuring that vulnerable groups receive support.

Fill in the blank: Social work agencies promote accountability because they must adhere to professional _____ and policies.

Image of a Nigerian social work agency delivering services to a community. Caption: Plate 5.1
Social work agency delivering services in Nigeria

Pilot questions 5.1

1. Define a social work agency and explain its purpose.
2. Fill in the blank: A social work agency is an organised body that provides professional services aimed at improving the _____ of individuals, families, and communities.
3. List the four main types of social work agencies.
4. Fill in the blank: Community-based organisations operate at the _____ level, mobilising local resources to address community needs.
5. Explain why social work agencies are important in delivering social services.
6. Fill in the blank: Social work agencies promote accountability because they must adhere to professional _____ and policies.

5.2 Organisational Structure of Social Work Agencies

5.2.1 Governance and leadership roles

Governance in social work agencies refers to the systems and processes through which decisions are made, accountability is ensured, and strategic direction is provided. Leadership roles include boards of directors, executive directors, and programme managers who oversee operations and ensure that the agency's mission is fulfilled. Effective governance promotes transparency, accountability, and sustainability.

Fill in the blank: Governance in social work agencies refers to the systems and processes through which _____ are made and accountability is ensured.

Diagram showing governance structure in social work agencies (board of directors, executive director, programme managers). Caption: Figure 5.2 Governance and leadership roles in social work agencies

5.2.2 Staffing and professional roles

Staffing refers to the allocation of personnel within an agency to carry out its functions. Professional roles include social workers, counsellors, administrators, and support staff. Each role contributes uniquely to service delivery. For example, social workers provide direct interventions, counsellors offer specialised support, administrators manage resources, and



support staff ensure smooth operations. A well-structured staffing system ensures that services are delivered efficiently and effectively.

Fill in the blank: Professional roles in social work agencies include social workers, counsellors, administrators, and _____ staff.

Box 5.2 Professional roles in social work agencies

5.2.3 Funding sources and resource management

Funding sources for social work agencies can include government allocations, donor contributions, community fundraising, and service fees. Effective **resource management** ensures that funds are used responsibly to achieve the agency's objectives. Agencies must balance financial sustainability with accountability, often requiring transparent reporting and audits. In Nigeria, many agencies rely heavily on donor support, which can create challenges when funding priorities shift.

Fill in the blank: Funding sources for social work agencies can include government allocations, donor contributions, community fundraising, and service _____.

Image of a social work agency conducting a fundraising event. Caption: Plate 5.2 Fundraising as a source of support for social work agencies

Pilot questions 5.2

1. Explain the meaning of governance in social work agencies.
2. Fill in the blank: Governance in social work agencies refers to the systems and processes through which _____ are made and accountability is ensured.
3. Identify four professional roles in social work agencies.
4. Fill in the blank: Professional roles in social work agencies include social workers, counsellors, administrators, and _____ staff.
5. List three common funding sources for social work agencies.
6. Fill in the blank: Funding sources for social work agencies can include government allocations, donor contributions, community fundraising, and service _____.

5.3 Core Functions of Social Work Agencies

5.3.1 Service delivery

Service delivery refers to the direct provision of social work interventions to individuals, families, and communities. This includes casework, counselling, group work, and community development programmes. Agencies ensure that services are accessible, equitable, and tailored to the needs of vulnerable populations. Effective service delivery requires trained professionals, adequate resources, and clear organisational procedures.



Fill in the blank: Service delivery in social work agencies refers to the direct provision of _____ to individuals, families, and communities.

Image of social workers delivering services to a local community. Caption: Plate 5.3 Service delivery by social work agencies

5.3.2 Advocacy and policy influence

Advocacy involves speaking up for individuals or groups who may not have the power to represent themselves. Social work agencies engage in advocacy to influence policies, laws, and institutional practices that affect vulnerable populations. **Policy influence** refers to the ability of agencies to shape government or organisational decisions through research, lobbying, and public campaigns. These functions ensure that social justice principles are embedded in wider social systems.

Fill in the blank: Advocacy in social work agencies involves speaking up for individuals or groups who may not have the _____ to represent themselves.

Box 5.3 Advocacy and policy influence functions of social work agencies

5.3.3 Capacity building and training

Capacity building refers to strengthening the skills, knowledge, and abilities of individuals and organisations to improve service delivery. Social work agencies often provide **training** for staff, volunteers, and community members to enhance their effectiveness. This may include workshops, seminars, and professional development programmes. Capacity building ensures that agencies remain responsive to emerging social issues and maintain high standards of practice.

Fill in the blank: Capacity building in social work agencies refers to strengthening the skills, knowledge, and _____ of individuals and organisations.

Diagram showing capacity building activities (training staff, workshops, professional development, community education). Caption: Figure 5.3 Capacity building and training in social work agencies

5.3.4 Monitoring and evaluation of programmes

Monitoring refers to the continuous assessment of programme activities to ensure they are being implemented as planned. **Evaluation** involves measuring the outcomes and impact of programmes to determine their effectiveness. Together, monitoring and evaluation help agencies improve accountability, learn from experiences, and make evidence-based decisions. In Nigeria, monitoring and evaluation are particularly important for donor-funded projects, where transparency and measurable results are required.

Fill in the blank: Monitoring refers to the continuous assessment of programme activities, while evaluation measures the _____ and impact of programmes.



Image of social workers conducting programme evaluation with community members. Caption: Plate 5.4 Monitoring and evaluation of social work programmes

Pilot questions 5.3

1. Define service delivery in social work agencies.
2. Fill in the blank: Service delivery in social work agencies refers to the direct provision of _____ to individuals, families, and communities.
3. Explain the meaning of advocacy and policy influence in social work agencies.
4. Fill in the blank: Advocacy in social work agencies involves speaking up for individuals or groups who may not have the _____ to represent themselves.
5. Describe capacity building and training functions of social work agencies.
6. Fill in the blank: Capacity building in social work agencies refers to strengthening the skills, knowledge, and _____ of individuals and organisations.
7. Explain the importance of monitoring and evaluation in social work agencies.
8. Fill in the blank: Monitoring refers to the continuous assessment of programme activities, while evaluation measures the _____ and impact of programmes.

5.4 Challenges and Prospects of Social Work Agencies in Nigeria

5.4.1 Common challenges

Social work agencies in Nigeria face several **challenges** that affect their effectiveness. These include inadequate funding, which limits their ability to provide consistent services, and shortage of trained personnel, which reduces the quality of interventions. Institutional weaknesses such as poor coordination and lack of clear policies also hinder their operations. Additionally, cultural barriers and limited public awareness of social work reduce community support for agencies.

Fill in the blank: One major challenge faced by social work agencies in Nigeria is inadequate _____, which limits their ability to provide consistent services.

Box 5.4 Common challenges of social work agencies in Nigeria

5.4.2 Strategies for overcoming challenges

To address these challenges, agencies adopt various **strategies**. These include diversifying funding sources through partnerships, grants, and community fundraising. Capacity building initiatives such as training programmes help strengthen staff skills. Improved coordination between government and non-governmental agencies enhances service delivery. Public awareness campaigns also play a role in reducing stigma and increasing community support. By implementing these strategies, agencies can improve their resilience and sustainability.



Fill in the blank: One strategy for overcoming challenges in social work agencies is diversifying _____ sources through partnerships, grants, and community fundraising.

Diagram showing strategies for overcoming challenges (funding diversification, capacity building, coordination, public awareness). Caption: Figure 5.5 Strategies for overcoming challenges in social work agencies

5.4.3 Future prospects and opportunities for strengthening agencies

Despite these challenges, social work agencies in Nigeria have promising **prospects**. Opportunities include increased recognition of social work as a profession, growing international support, and the potential for stronger collaboration with government institutions. Advances in technology also provide new ways to deliver services and monitor programmes. With continued advocacy and professional development, agencies can expand their reach and improve their impact on communities.

Fill in the blank: Advances in _____ provide new ways for social work agencies to deliver services and monitor programmes.

Image of Nigerian social workers using technology to support service delivery. Caption: Plate 5.5 Future prospects for social work agencies in Nigeria

Pilot questions 5.4

1. Identify three common challenges faced by social work agencies in Nigeria.
2. Fill in the blank: One major challenge faced by social work agencies in Nigeria is inadequate _____, which limits their ability to provide consistent services.
3. Explain two strategies that agencies can use to overcome challenges.
4. Fill in the blank: One strategy for overcoming challenges in social work agencies is diversifying _____ sources through partnerships, grants, and community fundraising.
5. Discuss two future prospects for social work agencies in Nigeria.
6. Fill in the blank: Advances in _____ provide new ways for social work agencies to deliver services and monitor programmes.

Series Summary

This Series has explored the organisation and functions of social work agencies, highlighting their importance as the structures through which professional services are delivered to individuals, families, and communities. Its purpose was to show how agencies provide the framework for service delivery, advocacy, and policy influence, while also addressing challenges and opportunities within the Nigerian context.



We began by defining social work agencies and examining their purpose and types, then moved on to study their organisational structures, including governance, staffing, and funding. Following that, we considered their core functions such as service delivery, advocacy, capacity building, and programme evaluation. Finally, we discussed the challenges faced by agencies in Nigeria and the prospects for strengthening them. By completing this Series, you should now be able to define and distinguish types of agencies (SLO 5.1, SLO 5.2), describe their organisational structures (SLO 5.3), explain their functions (SLO 5.4), analyse challenges (SLO 5.5), and evaluate strategies and future prospects for enhancing their effectiveness (SLO 5.6).

Glossary of Terms

Accountability: The responsibility of social work agencies to follow professional standards and policies, ensuring transparency in their operations.

Advocacy: The act of speaking up for individuals or groups who may not have the power to represent themselves, often to influence policies or promote social justice.

Capacity building: Strengthening the skills, knowledge, and abilities of individuals or organisations to improve service delivery and effectiveness.

Community-based organisation (CBO): A grassroots agency that mobilises local resources to address community needs and provide support at the local level.

Counselling: A structured process within social work agencies where trained professionals provide guidance and support to individuals or groups.

Faith-based organisation: An agency linked to a religious institution that provides services inspired by moral or spiritual values.

Funding sources: The financial means through which social work agencies operate, including government allocations, donor contributions, community fundraising, and service fees.

Governance: The systems and processes through which decisions are made, accountability is ensured, and strategic direction is provided in social work agencies.

Governmental agency: A state-established organisation responsible for delivering welfare services and implementing social policies.

Monitoring: The continuous assessment of programme activities to ensure they are being implemented as planned.

Non-governmental organisation (NGO): An independent body, often focused on specific issues such as child protection or health, that provides social services outside government control.

Policy influence: The ability of social work agencies to shape government or organisational decisions through research, lobbying, and public campaigns.

Resource management: The process of using financial and material resources responsibly to achieve the objectives of a social work agency.



Service delivery: The direct provision of social work interventions such as casework, group work, counselling, and community development programmes.

Social work agency: An organised body that provides professional services aimed at improving the well-being of individuals, families, and communities.

Support staff: Personnel in social work agencies who assist with operational tasks to ensure smooth functioning of services.

Training: Programmes organised by social work agencies to improve the skills and knowledge of staff, volunteers, or community members.

Transparency: The practice of openly sharing information about decisions, finances, and operations to build trust and credibility.

Evaluation: The process of measuring the outcomes and impact of programmes to determine their effectiveness.

Concept Check Questions [Series 5]

Objective Questions

1. A social work agency is an organised body that provides professional services aimed at improving the _____ of individuals, families, and communities. (Linked to SLO 5.1)
2. Governmental agencies are established by the _____ to provide welfare services. (Linked to SLO 5.2)
3. Community-based organisations operate at the _____ level, mobilising local resources to address community needs. (Linked to SLO 5.2)
4. Governance in social work agencies refers to the systems and processes through which _____ are made and accountability is ensured. (Linked to SLO 5.3)
5. Professional roles in social work agencies include social workers, counsellors, administrators, and _____ staff. (Linked to SLO 5.3)
6. Advocacy in social work agencies involves speaking up for individuals or groups who may not have the _____ to represent themselves. (Linked to SLO 5.4)
7. Monitoring refers to the continuous assessment of programme activities, while evaluation measures the _____ and impact of programmes. (Linked to SLO 5.4)
8. One major challenge faced by social work agencies in Nigeria is inadequate _____, which limits their ability to provide consistent services. (Linked to SLO 5.5)

Short-Answer Questions

1. Define a social work agency and explain its purpose. (Linked to SLO 5.1)
2. List the four main types of social work agencies. (Linked to SLO 5.2)



3. Describe the organisational structure of social work agencies, including governance, staffing, and funding. (Linked to SLO 5.3)
4. Identify two functions of social work agencies in service delivery. (Linked to SLO 5.4)
5. Explain the importance of advocacy and policy influence in social work agencies. (Linked to SLO 5.4)
6. Describe the role of capacity building and training in strengthening social work agencies. (Linked to SLO 5.4)
7. Identify one strength and one limitation of monitoring and evaluation in social work agencies. (Linked to SLO 5.4)
8. Explain two common challenges faced by social work agencies in Nigeria. (Linked to SLO 5.5)
9. Suggest one strategy for overcoming challenges in social work agencies. (Linked to SLO 5.6)
10. Describe one future prospect for social work agencies in Nigeria. (Linked to SLO 5.6)

Long-Answer Questions

1. Analyse the organisational structures of social work agencies, highlighting how governance, staffing, and funding contribute to their effectiveness. (Linked to SLO 5.3)
2. Evaluate the core functions of social work agencies, including service delivery, advocacy, capacity building, and programme evaluation. (Linked to SLO 5.4)
3. Discuss the challenges faced by social work agencies in Nigeria and propose strategies for overcoming them. (Linked to SLO 5.5, SLO 5.6)
4. Assess the future prospects of social work agencies in Nigeria, considering opportunities for growth and professional recognition. (Linked to SLO 5.6)

Answers to Concept Check Questions [Series 5]

Objective Questions

1. Well-being
2. State
3. Grassroots
4. Decisions
5. Support
6. Power
7. Outcomes
8. Funding

Short-Answer Questions



1. A social work agency is an organised body that provides professional services aimed at improving the well-being of individuals, families, and communities. Its purpose is to deliver interventions and promote social justice.
2. Governmental agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), community-based organisations (CBOs), and faith-based organisations.
3. Governance provides strategic direction, staffing ensures service delivery through professional roles, and funding supports sustainability.
4. Casework and community development.
5. Advocacy ensures vulnerable groups are represented, while policy influence helps shape laws and institutional practices.
6. Capacity building strengthens staff skills and knowledge, while training improves organisational effectiveness.
7. Strength: Provides accountability. Limitation: Can be resource-intensive.
8. Inadequate funding and shortage of trained personnel.
9. Diversifying funding sources.
10. Increased recognition of social work as a profession.

Long-Answer Questions

1. **Basic response:** Governance ensures accountability, staffing provides skilled personnel, and funding sustains operations. Together, they form the backbone of agency effectiveness. **Value-added response:** Outstanding learners may highlight how weak governance or unstable funding undermines service delivery, and propose reforms such as stronger boards, diversified funding, and professional training.
2. **Basic response:** Service delivery provides direct interventions, advocacy promotes social justice, capacity building strengthens staff, and monitoring ensures accountability. **Value-added response:** Outstanding learners may evaluate how these functions interact, for example, advocacy influencing policy to improve service delivery, or capacity building enhancing monitoring systems.
3. **Basic response:** Challenges include inadequate funding, shortage of trained personnel, and institutional weaknesses. Strategies include diversifying funding, capacity building, and public awareness campaigns. **Value-added response:** Outstanding learners may propose innovative strategies such as leveraging technology, building stronger partnerships, and adapting culturally sensitive approaches.
4. **Basic response:** Prospects include increased recognition of social work, international support, and technological advances. **Value-added response:** Outstanding learners may assess how these prospects can be harnessed, for example, by integrating digital tools into service delivery or strengthening collaboration with government institutions.



Part 5.1

1. A social work agency is an organised body that provides professional services aimed at improving the well-being of individuals, families, and communities. Its purpose is to deliver interventions and promote social justice.
2. Well-being
3. Governmental agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), community-based organisations (CBOs), and faith-based organisations.
4. Grassroots
5. Social work agencies are important because they provide structure for service delivery, promote accountability, and enhance collaboration among professionals, communities, and governments.
6. Standards

Part 5.2

1. Governance in social work agencies means the systems and processes through which decisions are made, accountability is ensured, and strategic direction is provided.
2. Decisions
3. Social workers, counsellors, administrators, and support staff.
4. Support
5. Government allocations, donor contributions, and community fundraising.
6. Fees

Part 5.3

1. Service delivery is the direct provision of social work interventions such as casework, counselling, group work, and community development programmes.
2. Interventions
3. Advocacy means speaking up for vulnerable groups, while policy influence refers to shaping laws and institutional practices through lobbying, campaigns, and research.
4. Power
5. Capacity building strengthens skills, knowledge, and abilities, while training improves staff and community effectiveness.
6. Abilities
7. Strength: Provides accountability. Limitation: Can be resource-intensive.
8. Monitoring refers to continuous assessment of programme activities, while evaluation measures the outcomes and impact of programmes.



9. Outcomes

Part 5.4

1. Inadequate funding, shortage of trained personnel, and institutional weaknesses.
2. Funding
3. Diversifying funding sources and capacity building through training programmes.
4. Funding
5. Increased recognition of social work as a profession and advances in technology.
6. Technology

References and Attributions [Series 5]

Course Content References

- SOC 205: Elements of Social Work (Course Document provided).
- Instructional content on organisation and functions of social work agencies was derived directly from the Series outline and prepared course materials.

