



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Sociology

MAJOR SOCIAL PROBLEMS IN INDIA: AN OVERVIEW

KEY WORDS: Population, Health, Environment, Society.

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ABSTRACT

India a nation of vast diversity and rapidly developing Nation faces a range of persistent social problems that hinder its overall progress despite economic growth and modernization towards including issues such as poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, gender inequality, caste discrimination, child labor and corruption remain deeply rooted in society. Additionally challenges like a population explosion, inadequate healthcare and environmental degradation exacerbate social inequalities and strain public resources. These problems are interlinked and often perpetuate cycles of deprivation and marginalization particularly among vulnerable groups. This paper explores the causes, impacts and potential strategies to overcome the major social problems in India. Aiming to contribute to a more just and equitable society.

INTRODUCTION:

India is one of the developing nations of the modern world. It became an independent country more than half a century ago. During this period the country has been engaged in efforts to attain development and growth in various areas such as building infrastructure, production of food grains, science and technology and spread of education. Life expectancy has increased and many diseases have been controlled. However, there are many areas in which Indian society is experiencing a variety of problems. Some of these problems have their roots in our colonial past while others are related to demographic changes, socio political conditions and cultural processes.

The word problem in the Dictionary is "a situation that is unsatisfactory and causes difficulties to people". A social problem is an unwanted situation in society that arose out of deviations from the accepted social values and norms. These deviations occur when social control in society weakens. The majorities of the people of the society treats them as intolerable and think that group action is required for constructive reform. Some social problems might be considered problems at a specific time, and the same problems might not be considered at some other time, given the social norms and values. Thus social norms and values and social problems are not constant and change with time and space.

Characteristics of Major Problems in India:

Deep rooted Social Stratification: Issues such as castes and gender discrimination are deeply entrenched in social norms and cultural attitudes, affecting education, employment and safety, particularly for scheduled castes, scheduled Tribes and women.

Systemic Corruption and Bureaucratic Hurdles:

Corruption is endemic across both public and private sectors leading to a low trust environment, reduced efficiency and inefficient delivery of public services.

Population Pressure on Infrastructure: with a population exceeding 1.4 billion. The sheer volume of people places immense pressure on land, water, housing and public utilities leading to overcrowded cities resources scarcity.

Widespread Jobless Growth: Despite economic growth, job creation has not kept pace with the growing labour force, resulting in high unemployment, particularly among educated youth and in the formal sector.

Interconnectedness (Cyclical Nature): Major Problems are interrelated for instance. Poverty causes low access to education, which in turn leads to unemployment perpetuating a cycle of poverty.

Regional and Rural - Urban Disparities: Development is not uniform, with significant gaps in income, education and healthcare between urban developed states and backward rural regions.

Environmental Degradation and Pollution: Rapid industrialization and urbanization combined with poor waste management have resulted in critical levels of air and water pollution, particularly in metropolitan cities.

Weak Implementation of Laws: While legal safeguards exist (e.g. against child labour or for women safety) their implementation is often poor due to Lack of resources, political interference, or systematic inefficiency .

Digital Divide: Despite rapid digitalization, a significant gap in access to technology remains between urban and rural areas affecting education and economic opportunities.

Educational Mismatch: The education system is often criticized for being too theoretical leading to a severe skill gap where graduates are not job ready for industry requirements.

Major Problems in India:

A. Casteism: The Unique feature of Hinduism in India is the caste system. People belonging to Hinduism were divided into different castes and were again divided into sub-castes. Some of these castes are given a higher status depending on their caste occupations. Casteism is the cause of conflicts between castes. Casteism means the hatred of one caste by another caste or or the attempts of members of a caste to obtain personal benefits at the expense of the interests of members of other castes for supremacy.

B. Gender Inequalities:

Gender Inequality is the unequal treatment, perception, or access to rights and opportunities based on gender predominantly disadvantaged women and girls. Rooted in social norms and power structures. It manifests in education gaps, wage gaps, economic disparities, gender-based violence limited educational access, violence, hindering development and economic stability underrepresentation in leadership. India ranked 108th out of 193 countries on the 2022 Gender Inequality Index. Inequality fuels global poverty and limits societal development.

Key Aspects of Gender Inequality:

Economic Disparities: Women often receive unequal pay for equal work and are less likely to hold leadership positions in business and politics.

Education and Healthcare: Girls frequently have fewer opportunities for education particularly in low- income areas.

Women face a higher rate of poverty and hunger often due to lack of economic power.

Violence and Against Women: Nearly one in three women (736 million) globally has been subjected to physical or sexual violence. Often rooted in power imbalances.

Social and Legal Constraints: Many societies still have legal, social and cultural barriers that strict women's rights and autonomy.

Causes and Consequences:

Cultural Practices: Son Preferences, dowry, and strict traditional roles.

Impact: Lower literacy rates, poor health outcomes (high rates of anemia and malnutrition) and limited independence.

Economic Impact: Gender Inequality hinders growth, parity could potentially boost India's GDP by up to 27 percent. Progress and Challenges

Improvements: The Sex ratio has improved to 1020 females per 1000 males in some metrics. and 77.8% of legal frameworks promote gender equality.

Challenges: Despite improvements in rankings (moving up to 108th from 122nd in 2025 Global General Gap Report indicates India still lags behind many of its peers.

C. Corruption : The major problem that India has been facing is corruption. India is 91st among 182 countries in the Corruption Perception Index 2024 with a score of 39 on a scale of 0-100(0- most corrupt, 100- corruption free) It has become one of the biggest problems that have been impeding the progress of India Corruption can be described simply as “an act of bribery” it is described as a violation of the law or the use of public power for personal gain; in a way that causes deviations from the norms of society. Corruption exists in many forms in society. The main ones include

Bribery: Action in favor of the person who gives cash or goods or money offered as a gift as a motivation to obtain illegal or dishonesty.

Nepotism: Undue favor from the holder of patronage to relatives.

Misappropriation: using the money of others for once.

Patronage: Wrong support/ encouragement given by the patronage and thereby misuse of power.

Favoritism: Unduly prioritizing one over the other.

Causes of Corruption: Several factors have been suggested to be causing corruption. The emergence of a political elite that believes in interest based rather than nationally - based programs and policies. Due to structural problems in effective governance such as lack of vigilance, accountability etc. Due to a change in the value system and morality of the people who govern.

Impact of Corruption

- Corruption has led to the deterioration of morality and the destruction of personal nature
- It increased in efficiency, nepotism and lethargy in all spheres of Administration and created discipline.
- It has slowed down the economic growth of the country
- it has increased the amount of black money in the country.
- It has led to adulteration of eateries, spurious, medicines and a shortage of many consumer goods.

D. Environmental Pollution: Environmental pollution is the

contamination of physical and biological components of the Earth's systems (air, water and soil) to the point where normal environmental processes are adversely affected. It is primarily caused by human activities like Industrialization, fossil fuels combustion, and poor waste management. Severely impacting global ecosystems and human health.

Usage of plastic: The earth is polluted in many ways. The first row of them is plastic, these plastic bags which man invented for convenience or discarded after being used and scattered everywhere. These reach the earth's crust and take many years to integrate into the earth. As a result, plastic waste prevents the water from sleeping into the ground. This is reducing the availability of groundwater.

Agricultural Practices: New methods have been adopted through the Green revolution in Indian agriculture to meet the needs of the growing Indian population, and more have been produced in a short period. As a result the problem of food scarcity has been reduced, but chemical fertilizers and pesticides that are indiscriminately used to increase productivity in agriculture have led to land pollution over time.

Deforestation: Forests are being cut down indiscriminately per agricultural, industrial and residential purposes. As a result the balance in the environment is disturbed by heavy rains, droughts, unseasonal rains, landslides, atmospheric heat, greenhouse effect, and so on.

Industries: Industrialization is essential in developing the country's economy. However this industrialisation is causing several environmental problems such as excessive use of natural resources, groundwater pollution caused by various industrial effluents, and air pollution.

Vehicle usage: a result of the economic reforms introduced in India after the 1990s peoples income increased significantly. As a result the number of vehicles increased as everyone purchased personal vehicles, be it two- wheelers or four wheelers which causes air and sound pollution.

Population growth and urbanization: India which is the first largest country in the world in terms of population. The existing resources should be used as natural resources do not increase with the increasing population as your result various kinds of pressure on the environment can arise and cause environmental pollution.

Modern technology: modern technology is far more destructive than ever before. They make the most of the natural resources and aim to improve the physical standards of human beings. Modern technology has made the use of various vehicles, industries, refrigerators, air conditioners etc. accessible to all.

E. Communalism: Communalism is an ideology where religious, ethic, or cultural identity takes precedence over border national or civic unity. The conflict between people belonging to one religious community practicing against another can be called communalism. Communalism is an ideology that believes that society is organised based on religion.

If we try to understand the underlying causes behind the rise of communism and communal rights. I will find the following reason.

1. Economic backwardness of particular Communities.
2. Uneven distribution and sharing of power and Opportunities.
3. Rise of communal parties and organizations.

4.The moves of political parties to win Elections.

5.Separatism between certain groups of people.

F. Suicide: suicide is one of the major problems facing India right now what is suicide? Who commit suicide and why they commit to say or some questions yes yourself in learning about suicide.

Financial Causes: usually when debit or more than the income and the chances of king of those debits are diminished they do so out of helplessness or commit Suicide. This suicide is usually found in farmers and various debt ridden families. Sometimes the head of the household commit suicide or kills his entire family and commits suicide.

Psychological Causes: Some situations have a significant psychological impact on some people. Some get out of that state of mind, and other commit suicide because they cannot get out of it. Examples are that they feel their dignity has been lost due to the inter-caste marriage of a son or daughter, some parents commit honour killings, whereas some commit suicide.

Health Causes: some health issues are also causing suicide tendencies in people. Some people and commit suicide because they are unable to bare the illness. Recently many people have committed suicide during and after the coronavirus out break due to health issues and psychological problems.

G. Poverty And Economic Disparities: India has achieved remarkable success in reducing extreme poverty, with Multi-Dimensional poverty dropping significantly. However the economy continues to grapple with stark income and wealth inequality.

The Decline of the Extreme Poverty:

1 Multi-Dimensional Progress: according to Niti Aayog multidimensional poverty has plummeted to single digits with the hundreds of millions of people moving out of deprivation over the last decade.

Consumption Expenditure: large scale surveys indicate the absolute poverty the inability to meet basic survival needs has declined sharply across various states and social groups through vulnerable community like scheduled Tribes still lag behind.

The Raising Wealth And Income Gap:

1 wealth concentration: despite poverty reduction economic gains have disproportionately skewed towards the top the wealthiest one percent of the Indian population holds over 40% of the total National wealth while the bottom 50% holds just a fractional share.

Income disparities: The world inequality report highlights India as one of the most unequal countries where the top 10% of the population claims a massive majority of the total national income.

Structural Causes of Inequality

Informal employment: a vast majority of the Indian workforce remind engaged in the informal sector characterized by job security, low wages and a lack of social security.

Unequal opportunities: disparity in access to quality education, skill development and formal financial services limit upward economic mobility for rural and marginalised communities.

Healthcare costs: high out of pocket medical expenses remind a primary driver of poverty pushing 10 million Indians below the poverty line every year.

Gender Disparities: female labour force participation remains low and significant gender pay gaps versus across the formal and informal sector.

Policy Measures and the Path Forward: To bridge these gaps targeted government policies and systematic reforms are essential.

Enhanced social spending: increasing public investment in Healthcare and education to build robust human capital and improve work force productivity.

Promoting Inclusive Growth: Incentivising labour, Intensive industrialisation and rural entrepreneurship to generate mass employment and reduce reliance on agriculture.

Safety Nets: strengthening targeted welfare programs, food security, initiative and direct benefit transfers to protect the most vulnerable demographics.

H. Substance Abuse, Mental Health Issues and Rehabilitation: Substance abuse and mental health issues are serious concerns in India, affecting million of people across different age groups and socio economic backgrounds

Substance Abuse: alcohol and drug addiction specially among youth have become pervasive issues.

Mental health issues: mental health conditions such as depression anxiety, schizophrenia, and bipolar disorder are prevalent but often under diagnosed and untreated due to societal stigma.

Stigma: Both substance abuse and mental health issues are heavily stigmatized in India which prevents individuals from seeking help making recovery difficult.

Solutions:

Awareness and Education: launching awareness campaigns about the danger of substance abuse and the importance of Mental Health can reduce stigma and encourage early intervention.

Improved Mental Healthcare: Strengthening the mental Healthcare system by increasing access to therapy, counseling and medication can improve the quality of life for individuals with mental health disorder. The mental health care Act(2017) is a step toward making mental health care more accessible.

Rehabilitation Programs: establishing more rehabilitation centers and offering community based programs can help individuals recover from addiction and reintegrate into society.

Legislative Measures: Strengthening laws related to the sale and consumption of drugs and alcohol such as the

Narcotic drugs and psychotropic Substances Act can help substance abuse.

CONCLUSION:

India has made significant progress in economic growth, technology, education and infrastructure yet several social problems continue to affect the country's development.

The social problems facing India are deeply interlinked with its economic, cultural and political landscape. Addressing casteism, crime, corruption, poverty, environmental degradation and mental health issues requires a comprehensive and integrated approach involving robust policy reforms, public awareness and active participation from civil society.

The strength of India lies in diversity democratic institutions and a youthful population by promoting equality, inclusiveness, and social responsibility. India can overcome these challenges and achieve balanced sustainable development. The collective efforts of all stakeholders can help build a society that ensures dignity, opportunity and a better quality of life for every citizen.

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