

PRACTICE PASSAGE 1: Digital Divide

The rapid expansion of digital technology has transformed modern society. Online platforms now support education, governance, healthcare, and commerce. However, access to digital resources remains unequal across regions and social groups. Many people still lack internet connectivity and digital skills. This gap is commonly referred to as the digital divide.

Economic inequality is a major reason behind the digital divide. Poor households often cannot afford smartphones, computers, or data services. Rural areas also suffer from weak digital infrastructure and unreliable electricity. Limited access prevents individuals from benefiting from online services. As a result, existing social inequalities are reinforced.

The digital divide has serious consequences for development. Students without internet access fall behind in online education. Job opportunities increasingly require digital literacy, excluding many workers. Citizens without digital access face difficulties in availing government services. Thus, digital exclusion limits social and economic mobility.

Bridging the digital divide requires targeted policy intervention. Governments must invest in digital infrastructure and affordable internet access. Training programmes can improve digital literacy among marginalised groups. Public-private partnerships can accelerate technology penetration. Inclusive digital growth is essential for equitable development.

Questions (Answer in about 40 words each)

1. What is meant by the digital divide?
2. Why does economic inequality contribute to the digital divide?
3. How does the digital divide affect education and employment?
4. What challenges do digitally excluded citizens face?
5. How can governments help bridge the digital divide?

PRACTICE PASSAGE 2: Role of Civil Society

Civil society plays a crucial role in strengthening democracy. It includes non-governmental organisations, community groups, and voluntary associations. These groups act as a bridge between the state and citizens. They help articulate public concerns and promote social awareness. A vibrant civil society enhances democratic participation.

One important function of civil society is holding governments accountable. Through advocacy, protests, and public campaigns, civil society organisations highlight policy failures. They demand transparency and ethical governance. This pressure encourages governments to respond to citizen needs. Accountability improves institutional performance.

Civil society also contributes to social development. Many organisations work in areas such as education, health, and environmental protection. They often reach marginalised communities more effectively than the state. Their grassroots presence helps identify local problems. This strengthens inclusive development.

However, civil society faces several challenges. Limited funding, political interference, and regulatory restrictions weaken its functioning. In some cases, misuse of activism reduces public trust. Addressing these challenges is necessary for a healthy democracy. A supportive environment allows civil society to flourish.

Questions (Answer in about 40 words each)

1. What is civil society and why is it important for democracy?
2. How does civil society ensure government accountability?
3. What role does civil society play in social development?
4. Why is civil society often effective at the grassroots level?
5. What challenges limit the functioning of civil society?

PRACTICE PASSAGE 3: Youth and Unemployment

Youth unemployment has emerged as a major socio-economic concern. A large young population can be a demographic dividend for a country. However, when job opportunities are limited, it becomes a challenge. Unemployment leads to frustration and loss of productive potential. Addressing youth unemployment is therefore critical.

One key cause of youth unemployment is the mismatch between education and skills required by the market. Many graduates lack practical and technical skills. Slow economic growth further reduces job creation. Informal employment dominates, offering little security. These factors together worsen the employment crisis.

The consequences of youth unemployment extend beyond the economy. Prolonged joblessness affects mental health and self-confidence. It may also lead to social unrest and crime. A

generation without opportunities weakens social stability. Thus, unemployment has long-term societal costs.

Solutions require coordinated efforts from multiple stakeholders. Education systems must focus on skill development and employability. Governments should promote entrepreneurship and labour-intensive industries. Private sector participation is equally important. Productive employment ensures inclusive and sustainable growth.

Questions (Answer in about 40 words each)

1. Why is youth unemployment a serious concern for society?
2. How does the education-skill mismatch contribute to unemployment?
3. What are the social impacts of prolonged youth unemployment?
4. Why is youth unemployment described as a long-term challenge?
5. What measures can help address youth unemployment?

PASSAGE 4: Women and Workforce Participation

Women's participation in the workforce is essential for inclusive economic growth. A higher female labour force strengthens productivity and household incomes. It also promotes gender equality and social empowerment. However, women's workforce participation in many countries remains low. Addressing this gap is critical for sustainable development.

Several barriers restrict women from entering or continuing in employment. Social norms often assign domestic responsibilities primarily to women. Lack of safe workplaces, childcare facilities, and flexible work options further discourages participation. Educational and skill gaps also limit job opportunities. These factors together reduce women's economic engagement.

Low participation of women in the workforce has broader consequences. Economies lose potential talent and productivity. Financial dependence increases vulnerability among women. Society also misses the benefits of diverse perspectives in decision-making. Thus, gender imbalance in employment affects both growth and equity.

Improving women's workforce participation requires multi-level interventions. Governments must ensure workplace safety, equal pay, and supportive labour policies. Investment in education and skill development is essential. Social attitudes must evolve to share domestic responsibilities. Empowering women economically benefits the entire society.

Questions (Answer in about 40 words each)

1. Why is women's workforce participation important for development?
2. What social and structural barriers limit women's employment?
3. How does low female workforce participation affect the economy?
4. Why does women's economic dependence increase vulnerability?
5. What measures can improve women's participation in the workforce?

PASSAGE 5: Importance of Public Health Systems

Public health systems are the backbone of a nation's well-being. They provide preventive, curative, and promotive healthcare services. Strong public health infrastructure ensures access to healthcare for all sections of society. It is especially vital for vulnerable and low-income populations. Effective public health systems enhance national resilience.

Weak public health systems expose societies to multiple risks. Inadequate hospitals, shortage of medical staff, and poor sanitation increase disease burden. Health emergencies become difficult to manage. Inequalities in healthcare access widen during crises. This undermines social stability and economic productivity.

Investment in public health yields long-term benefits. Preventive care reduces healthcare costs and improves quality of life. A healthy population is more productive and economically active. Public health spending also strengthens preparedness for pandemics and disasters. Thus, health investment is not an expense but an asset.

Strengthening public health systems requires comprehensive reforms. Governments must increase funding and improve infrastructure. Training healthcare workers and using technology can improve service delivery. Community participation enhances outreach and trust. Universal and equitable healthcare is the ultimate goal.

Questions (Answer in about 40 words each)

1. Why are public health systems crucial for a nation?
2. What risks arise from weak public health infrastructure?
3. How does investment in public health benefit the economy?
4. Why is preventive healthcare important?
5. What steps are needed to strengthen public health systems?

PASSAGE 6: Media and Democracy

Media plays a vital role in a democratic society. It informs citizens about government policies and public issues. An informed population can participate meaningfully in democratic processes. Media also acts as a watchdog by questioning those in power. Thus, free media strengthens democracy.

Responsible media promotes transparency and accountability. Investigative journalism exposes corruption and misuse of authority. Public debates encouraged by media help shape informed opinions. This enables citizens to hold leaders accountable. Media therefore bridges the gap between the state and the people.

However, media also faces significant challenges. Sensationalism, misinformation, and political bias undermine credibility. The spread of fake news can polarise society. Commercial pressures may affect journalistic ethics. These challenges weaken democratic discourse.

Strengthening media's democratic role requires ethical standards and regulation. Media literacy among citizens is equally important. Independent journalism must be protected from undue influence. Technology should be used responsibly to counter misinformation. A credible media ecosystem supports democratic stability.

Questions (Answer in about 40 words each)

1. Why is media important for democracy?
2. How does media ensure accountability in governance?
3. What challenges reduce media credibility?
4. How does misinformation affect democracy?

5. What measures can strengthen the role of media in democracy?

SOLUTIONS

Practice Passage 1: Digital Divide

1. What is meant by the digital divide?

The digital divide refers to the gap between people who have access to digital technology and those who do not. It arises due to unequal availability of internet connectivity, devices, and digital skills across regions and social groups.

2. Why does economic inequality contribute to the digital divide?

Economic inequality contributes to the digital divide because poor households cannot afford smartphones, computers, or internet services. Rural areas also lack infrastructure, preventing people from accessing and benefiting from digital platforms.

3. How does the digital divide affect education and employment?

The digital divide affects education by limiting access to online learning for students without internet. It also restricts employment opportunities, as many jobs require digital literacy, thereby excluding digitally disadvantaged individuals.

4. What challenges do digitally excluded citizens face?

Digitally excluded citizens face difficulties in accessing government services, education, and employment opportunities. This exclusion limits their social and economic mobility and reinforces existing inequalities within society.

5. How can governments help bridge the digital divide?

Governments can bridge the digital divide by investing in digital infrastructure, providing affordable internet access, and offering digital literacy training. Public-private partnerships can further support inclusive and equitable digital growth.

Practice Passage 2: Role of Civil Society

1. What is civil society and why is it important for democracy?

Civil society includes NGOs, community groups, and voluntary organisations that connect citizens with the state. It is important for democracy because it promotes participation, represents public concerns, and strengthens democratic engagement.

2. How does civil society ensure government accountability?

Civil society ensures accountability by using advocacy, public campaigns, and protests to highlight policy failures. These actions pressure governments to act transparently and ethically, improving responsiveness to citizens' needs.

3. What role does civil society play in social development?

Civil society contributes to social development by working in areas like education, health, and environmental protection. It often reaches marginalised communities effectively and helps identify grassroots problems for inclusive development.

4. Why is civil society often effective at the grassroots level?

Civil society is effective at the grassroots level because of its close engagement with local communities. Its presence helps understand local issues better than centralized institutions, enabling targeted and inclusive interventions.

5. What challenges limit the functioning of civil society?

Civil society faces challenges such as limited funding, political interference, regulatory restrictions, and misuse of activism. These issues weaken public trust and reduce the effectiveness of civil society organisations.

Practice Passage 3: Youth and Unemployment

1. Why is youth unemployment a serious concern for society?

Youth unemployment is a serious concern because it leads to frustration, loss of productive potential, and underutilisation of a young population. Instead of becoming a demographic dividend, unemployment turns youth into a socio-economic burden.

2. How does the education-skill mismatch contribute to unemployment?

The education-skill mismatch contributes to unemployment because many graduates lack practical and technical skills required by the job market. This gap reduces employability despite educational qualifications.

3. What are the social impacts of prolonged youth unemployment?

Prolonged youth unemployment affects mental health and self-confidence. It may also increase social unrest and crime, weakening social stability and creating long-term challenges for society.

4. Why is youth unemployment described as a long-term challenge?

Youth unemployment is a long-term challenge because it affects an entire generation's productivity and social stability. Persistent joblessness creates lasting economic and social consequences for the nation.

5. What measures can help address youth unemployment?

Youth unemployment can be addressed by improving skill-based education, promoting entrepreneurship, encouraging labour-intensive industries, and increasing private sector participation to generate productive employment.

PASSAGE 4: Women and Workforce Participation**1. Why is women's workforce participation important for development?**

Women's workforce participation is important because it increases productivity, strengthens household incomes, and promotes gender equality. It contributes to inclusive economic growth and social empowerment, making development more sustainable and balanced.

2. What social and structural barriers limit women's employment?

Social norms assigning domestic work to women, lack of workplace safety, absence of childcare facilities, limited flexible work options, and educational or skill gaps restrict women's participation in employment.

3. How does low female workforce participation affect the economy?

Low participation of women reduces economic productivity and leads to loss of potential talent. It also limits diverse perspectives in decision-making, negatively affecting overall economic growth and social equity.

4. Why does women's economic dependence increase vulnerability?

Economic dependence makes women financially insecure and limits their decision-making power. It increases vulnerability to social and economic risks, reducing their ability to respond independently to challenges.

5. What measures can improve women's participation in the workforce?

Governments should ensure workplace safety, equal pay, and supportive labour policies. Investment in education and skill development, along with changes in social attitudes and shared domestic responsibilities, can improve women's workforce participation.

PASSAGE 5: Importance of Public Health Systems

1. Why are public health systems crucial for a nation?

Public health systems ensure access to preventive and curative healthcare for all sections of society. They protect vulnerable populations, improve national well-being, and enhance resilience against health emergencies.

2. What risks arise from weak public health infrastructure?

Weak infrastructure leads to higher disease burden, poor sanitation, shortage of medical staff, and difficulty in managing health crises. It also widens healthcare inequalities and reduces economic productivity.

3. How does investment in public health benefit the economy?

Investment in public health improves population health and productivity. Preventive care reduces long-term healthcare costs and strengthens preparedness for pandemics, supporting sustained economic growth.

4. Why is preventive healthcare important?

Preventive healthcare reduces the occurrence of diseases, lowers treatment costs, and improves quality of life. It helps avoid health crises and reduces pressure on healthcare systems.

5. What steps are needed to strengthen public health systems?

Governments must increase funding, improve infrastructure, train healthcare workers, use technology effectively, and promote community participation to ensure universal and equitable healthcare access.

PASSAGE 6: Media and Democracy

1. Why is media important for democracy?

Media is important because it informs citizens about public issues and government actions. An informed population can participate meaningfully in democratic processes and hold leaders accountable.

2. How does media ensure accountability in governance?

Media ensures accountability through investigative journalism, public debates, and exposing corruption or misuse of power. This pressures authorities to act transparently and responsibly.

3. What challenges reduce media credibility?

Sensationalism, misinformation, political bias, fake news, and commercial pressures reduce media credibility. These factors weaken journalistic ethics and public trust in media institutions.

4. How does misinformation affect democracy?

Misinformation polarises society, misleads citizens, and weakens informed decision-making. It disrupts democratic discourse and reduces trust in democratic institutions.

5. What measures can strengthen the role of media in democracy?

Ethical standards, independent journalism, media literacy, responsible use of technology, and protection from undue influence can strengthen media's role in supporting democracy.