A. What are the meaning of social comparison theory

1.Social Comparison Theory is a psychological theory

2. It focuses on how individuals evaluate their own abilities, opinions, and emotions in relation to those of others

3. Main idea: People have a natural tendency to assess themselves by comparing themselves to others in order to gain a better understanding of their own attributes and abilities.

4. Several key components:

- Upward Comparison:

+ happens when people compare themselves to those they see as more successful or talented, which can inspire self-improvement and goal-setting

+ cause feelings of inadequacy and reduced self-esteem if the perceived gap is significant

- Downward comparison:

+ involves individuals comparing themselves to those they see as less fortunate or inferior

+ can elevate self-esteem by creating a sense of relative superiority

+ often serves as a coping mechanism in situations where individuals feel threatened or insecure,

+ allowing them to feel better about themselves by emphasizing their own strengths and advantages.

- Lateral (or Horizontal) Comparison:

+ when individuals compare themselves to peers or those of similar status or ability

+ help them gauge their position within a group or community

+ shaping their self-concept and social identity

- Social Context

+ greatly influences the effects of social comparison

+ relevance of the comparison, the similarity of those being compared, and an individual's self-concept all contribute to how social comparison influences self-esteem and motivation.

- Festinger's Original Proposition:

+ explain how people use it to alleviate cognitive dissonance.

+ when individuals compare themselves socially and perceive a gap, they may be motivated to modify their beliefs, attitudes, or behaviors in order to reduce the discomfort of cognitive dissonance.

B. How can social comparison affect a person? Give examples to illustrate your point.

Social comparison, the act of evaluating oneself in relation to others, can affect a person in several ways:

1. **Self-Esteem:** It can boost self-esteem when someone feels superior and lower it when they feel inferior.  
   *Example*: High grades can boost a student's self-esteem, while comparing looks to unrealistic standards can lower it.
2. **Motivation:** Seeing others' success can motivate individuals to set and pursue their own goals.  
   *Example*: Watching elite athletes can inspire aspiring athletes to work harder.
3. **Stress/Anxiety:** Constant comparison can lead to stress and anxiety, particularly when it results in feelings of inadequacy.  
   *Example*: Comparing one's career to colleagues' may cause stress.
4. **Envy/Jealousy:** It can trigger envy and jealousy when someone perceives others as having more.  
   *Example*: Social media vacation photos can spark envy.
5. **Social Identity:** It can strengthen social group identity when people see themselves as similar to others in their group.  
   *Example*: Sharing political beliefs can foster a sense of belonging.
6. **Adaptive Behavior:** It can lead to adaptive behavior as people adjust actions based on what they observe.  
   *Example*: Working harder in a fitness class when others do the same can improve fitness outcomes.
7. **Depression:** Excessive negative social comparison can contribute to depression as individuals constantly focus on perceived shortcomings.  
   *Example*: Constantly comparing relationships or achievements to others can lead to depression.

C. What are situational factors that can affect social comparison?

Social comparison researchers are actively exploring situational factors that can likewise influence degrees of social comparison:

1. Number : As the number of comparison targets (i.e., the number of people with whom you can compare) increases, social comparison tends to decrease

2. Local : People are more influenced by social comparison when the comparison is more localized rather than being broad and general

3. Social Category Lines: Social comparison can also happen between groups. This is especially the case when groups come from different social categories versus the same social category.