

1. Details of Module and its structure

Module Detail	
Subject Name	Sociology
Course Name	Sociology 01 (Class XI, Semester - 1)
Module Name/Title	Social status & role, conflict – Part 4
Module Id	kesy_10204
Pre-requisites	Social stratification and culture
Objectives	After going through this lesson, the learners will be able to understand the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Basic concepts2. Social institutions3. Social stratification4. Social control and social sanctions
Keywords	Social stratification, Status, Role, Role conflict, Stereo typing

2. Development Team

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Society And Social Control

The central task of sociology is to explore the interplay of society and the individual. Society is created by humans. And society is created by group of individuals. Society is a system of interrelationships that connects individuals in a common culture. Cultures, Societies and civilizations are products of human interaction, the sum total of experience of living with others around us. Societies are social constructions, and once created then societies and cultures have the ability or power to act upon individuals and determine their behavior either through simple conformity or through coercion or constrain. "Society" is usually defined as a social group that contains top ranking groups, something which is sometimes called "all-inclusive society" (G. Gurvitch, *The Sociology of law*, New York, 1942).

Let us discuss how some of the sociologists have attempted to define society. For MacIver, society is a web of social relationships. For MacIver, a "social group" is a collection of human beings who enter into distinct social relations with one another. According to Nadel, it is the relatively widest effective groups.

Hiller, defines that society is an inclusive and complex system of social relations but also a population interested in and organised for self-maintenance and renewal. Bennett-Tumin, further defines society as a system, where the largest number of people interact with each other for the solutions of problems vital to their survival and continuity and who share a common culture pattern and institutional framework but also a master-network of social relationships and behaviour. For Sorokin, society is the totality of interacting personalities with their socio-cultural relationships and processes.

Social control is one of the most generally used concepts in sociology. It refers to the various means used by a society to bring its recalcitrant or unruly members back into line. You will recall how sociology has different perspectives and debates about the meaning of concepts. You will also recall how functionalist sociologists understood society as essentially harmonious and conflict theorists saw society as essentially unequal, unjust and exploitative. We also saw how some sociologists focussed more on the individual and society, others on collectivities like classes, races and castes.

For a functionalist perspective social control refers to: (i) the use of force to regulate the behaviour of the individual and groups and also refers to the (ii) enforcing of values and patterns for maintaining order in society. Social control here is directed to restrain deviant

behaviour of individuals or groups on the one hand, and on the other, to mitigate tensions and conflicts among individuals and groups to maintain social order and social cohesion. In this way social control is seen as necessary to stability in society.

Conflict theorists usually would see social control more as a mechanism to impose the social control of dominant social classes on the rest of society. Stability would be seen as the writ of one section over the other. Likewise, law would be seen as the formal writ of the powerful and their interests on society.

Social control refers to the social process, techniques and strategies by which behaviours of individual or a group are regulated. It refers both to the use of force to regulate the behaviour of the individual and groups and also refers to the enforcing of values and patterns for maintaining order in society.

Discussion

The ultimate and, no doubt, the oldest means of social control is physical violence... even in the politely operated societies of modern democracies the ultimate argument is violence. No state can exist without a police force or its equivalent in armed might... In any functioning society violence is used economically and as a last resort, with the mere threat of this ultimate violence sufficing for the day-to-day exercise of social control... Where human beings live or work in compact groups, in which they are personally known and to which they are tied by feelings of personal loyalty (the kind that sociologists call primary groups), very potent and simultaneously very subtle mechanisms of control are constantly brought to bear upon the actual or potent deviant... One aspect of social control that ought to be stressed is the fact that it is frequently based on fraudulent claims... A little boy can exercise considerable control over his peer group by having a big brother who, if need be, can be called upon to beat up any opponents. In the absence of such a brother, however it is possible to invent one. It will then be a question of the public-relations talents of the little boy as to whether he will succeed in translating his invention into actual control (Berger 84-90).

Have you ever seen or heard a young child threaten another with “ I will tell my elder brother.”
Can you think of other examples?

Social control may be informal or formal. When the codified, systematic, and other formal mechanism of control is used, it is known as formal social control. There are agencies and

mechanism of formal social control, for example, law and the state. In a modern society formal mechanisms and agencies of social control are emphasised.

In every society there is another type of social control that is known as informal social control. It is personal, unofficial and uncodified. They include smiles, making faces, body language, frowns, criticism, ridicule, laughter etc. There can be great variations in their use within the same society. In day- to-day life they are quite effective.

However, in some cases informal methods of social control may not be adequate in enforcing conformity or obedience. There are various agencies of informal social control e.g. family, religion, kinship, etc. Have you heard about honour killing? Read the newspaper report which is given below and identify the different agencies of social control involved.

A sanction is a mode of reward or punishment that reinforces socially expected forms of behaviour. Social control can be positive or negative. Members of societies can be rewarded for good and expected behaviour. On the other hand, negative sanctions are also used to enforce rules and to restrain deviance.

Deviance refers to modes of action, which do not conform to the norms or values held by most of the members of a group or society. What is regarded as 'deviant' is as widely variable as the norms and values that distinguish different cultures and subcultures. Likewise ideas of deviance are challenged and change from one period to another. For example, a woman choosing to become an astronaut may be considered deviant at one time, and be applauded at another time even in the same society. You are already familiar with how sociology is different from common sense. The specific terms and concepts discussed in this chapter will help you further to move towards a sociological understanding of society.

Activity 11

Can you think of examples drawn from your life how this 'unofficial' social control operates? Have you in class or in your peer group noticed how a child who behaves a bit differently from the rest is treated? Have you witnessed incidents where children are bullied by their peer group to be more like the other children?

Man kills sister for marrying from outside the caste

... The elder brother of a 19-year-old girl here carried out an apparent 'honour killing' by allegedly beheading her while she was asleep at a hospital ... police said on Monday.

The girl... was undergoing treatment at ... Hospital for stab wounds after her brother... attacked her on December 16 for marrying outside the caste, they said. She and her lover eloped on December 10 and returned to their houses here on December 16 after getting married, which was opposed by her parents, they said.

The Panchayat also tried to pressurise the couple but they refused to be swayed.

Status and Role

The two concepts 'status' and 'role' are often seen as twin concepts. A status is simply a position in society or in a group. Every society and every group has many such positions and every individual occupies many such positions.

Status thus refers to the social position with defined rights and duties assigned to these positions. To illustrate, mother occupies a status, which has many norms of conduct as well as certain responsibilities and prerogatives.

Status is generally defined as the position or rank, placement of a person in a group, or of a group in relation to other groups. It is hierarchical in nature. In modern societies sociologists prefer to use the term *position* instead of *status*. Role is the expected behavior from an individual who holds a particular status or position. Each individual holds a number of positions or statuses and is expected to fill expected roles appropriate to them. Even within a single position or status, an individual is confronted with a related set of roles and this is known as a role set.

A role is the dynamic, operational or the behavioural aspect of status. Role is manifest in an individual's actions. Status is occupied, whereas roles are played. We may also say that a status is an institutionalised role. It is a role that has become regular, formal and standard of a particular position in the society at large or in any of the specific associations of society. Every individual in a modern industrial, urban complex society occupies many different kinds of positions or status in his/her life. Imagine the number of status you have you are a student to your teacher, a customer to your grocer, child to your parent, friend to your neighbor, a passenger to the bus driver, a brother or sister to your sibling and a patient to the doctor. The complex the society greater are number of status an individual holds, and the smaller or simpler the society, the fewer are the status that an individual has. In a modern society an individual as we saw occupies multiple status which is sociologically termed as status set. Individuals

acquire different status in different spheres of life and also at various stages of life. A son becomes a father, a grandfather, and then great grandfather and so on. This is called a status sequence as it refers to the status, which is attained in succession or sequence as one grows old and during various stages of life.

The terms like-social position, status, and role-are logically related to one another. Central to all these concepts is the concept of status- 'a status', is commonly defined as a set of rights and duties granted or imposed by a norm. Many authors define "status" as a position or the function of a position in a social group or system or life. However, social position can be distinguished from status. This difference is clearly defined by Linton, who opposes to a status the status of an individual defined as the sum total of the statuses he occupies.

For MacIver, social position is something the mere possession of which assures a degree or respect, prestige and influence; this definition limits social position to the framework of class structure. Homans, prefers the term 'rank' for status. According to some scholars, social position is tantamount to the socially organized expectations regarding behavior in an organised whole. According to other set of scholars, it is "the function of a person occupying the position to carry out the rights and duties associated with it." This definition is very close to that of "status" in the same work.

An ascribed status is a social position, which a person occupies because of birth, or gets even without choice or wish i.e. involuntarily. The most common bases for ascribed status are age, caste, race, and kinship. Simple and traditional societies are marked by ascribed status in social, economic and political spheres.

An achieved status on the other hand refers to a social position that a person occupies voluntarily by his competence, personal ability, talent, achievements, virtues and the choices he makes. The most common bases for achieved status are educational qualifications, income, skill set, and professional expertise. Modern societies are characterised by achievements or achievement oriented societies. The members are accorded prestige or given status on the basis of their achievements. Often you are told by elders that "you have to prove yourself". In traditional societies an individuals status was defined and ascribed at birth. Caste is an ascribed status. However, as discussed above, even in modern achievement-based societies, ascribed status matters.

Status and prestige are interconnected terms. Every status is accorded certain rights and values. Values are attached to the social position, rather than to the person who occupies it or to his/her performance or to his/her actions. The kind of value attached to the status or to the office is called prestige. People can rank status in terms of their high or low prestige. The prestige of a doctor may be high in comparison to a shopkeeper, even if the doctor may earn less. It is important to keep in mind that ideas of what occupation is considered prestigious varies across societies and across periods.

Activity 8

What kinds of jobs are considered prestigious in your society? Compare these with your friends. Discuss the similarities and differences. Try and understand the causes for the same.

People perform their roles according to social expectations, i.e. role taking and role playing. A child learns to behave in accordance with how her behaviour will be seen and judged by others. Roles and statuses are of two aspects: some status and roles are *ascribed* to individuals according to age, sex, class, race, and some are inherited characteristics. In contrast to ascribed statuses, there are statuses and roles which are *achieved* through personal choice or effort. For instance: meritocracy is a form of quasi ascription, in this case a status is open to achievement, however inherited characteristics give some individuals greater advantage in the competition and process of achievement of goals. When an individual's several statuses are inconsistent with one another - it is called status inconsistency.

Role conflicts arise when an individual confronts conflicting duties within a single role or conflicting demands imposed by different roles.

Role conflict is the incompatibility among roles corresponding to one or more status. It occurs when contrary expectations arise from two or more roles. A common example is that of the middle class working woman who has to juggle her role as mother and wife at home and that of a professional at work. The situation of role conflict can be managed by rationalisation, and management of various roles without seeing them in conflict with one another. But this is difficult to attain. It can also be done by compartmentalisation, which enables an individual to operate within a single role at time. Failing to fulfill a role is quite common, in rapidly changing society.

Activity 9

Find out how a domestic worker or a construction labourer faces role conflict.

It is a common place assumption that men do not face role conflict. Sociology being both an empirical and comparative discipline suggests otherwise.

Khasi matriliney generates intense role conflict for men. They are torn between their responsibilities to their natal house on the one hand and to their wife and children on the other. They feel deprived of sufficient authority to command their children's loyalty and lack the freedom to pass on after death, even their self-acquired property to their children...

The strain affects Khasi women, in a way more intensely. A woman can never be fully assured that her husband does not find his sister's house more congenial place than her own house (Nongbri 2003:190).

Role stereotyping is a process of reinforcing some specific role for some member of the society. For example men and women are often socialised in stereotypical roles, as breadwinner and homemaker respectively. Social roles and status are often wrongly seen as fixed and unchanging. It is felt that individuals learn the expectations that surround social positions in their particular culture and perform these roles largely as they have been defined. Through socialisation, individuals internalise social roles and learn how to carry them out. This view, however, is mistaken. It suggests that individuals simply take on roles, rather than creating or negotiating them. In fact, socialisation is a process in which humans can exercise agency; they are not simply passive subjects waiting to be instructed or programmed. Individuals come to understand and assume social roles through an ongoing process of social interaction.

Roles and status are not given and fixed. People make efforts to fight against discrimination roles and status for example those based on caste or race or gender. At the same time there are sections in society who oppose such changes. Likewise individual violation of roles are often punished. Society thus functions not just with roles and status but also with social control.

Activity 10

Collect newspaper reports where dominant sections of society seek to impose control and punish those whom they consider to have transgressed or violated socially prescribed roles.

To sum up, in this chapter we discussed about what is society, forms of stratification, status and roles, social control, and social sanctions. By now you have understood that society is group of individuals who are related to one another. The individuals and groups have a typical type of relationship with one another. One way of seeing the social organization is that there exists a hierarchy or differentiation among the groups. This is called as social stratification. Depending upon an individuals position in the social hierarchy there are differences in their status and roles. Different ways of categorizing people or different forms of stratification overlap with one another. That is why there are instances of caste and class nexus. Societies operate on the basis of certain rules and regulation. These rules prescribe desirable behavior and expected outcomes. The norms that govern our behavior tend to control our behavior. Any deviation from rules invites social sanction and punishment. You should be able to see these patterns in society and try to understand social organizations, their structure and functioning on the basis of the concepts that you have learnt.