

Importance of Sociology

As compared to other sciences; sociology is a new and younger science. Still sociology has been viewed as the science of society and mother of all social science. But sociologists differ among themselves regarding the importance and values of sociology. One set of critics trivialize Sociology as a discipline having little connectedness with social reality. On the contrary, others argue in favor of its importance as a scientific enterprise rooted in the study of social reality.

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However, importance of sociology may be known from the following.

1. A scientific study of society is only possible through sociological analysis.
2. Study of sociology also helps in understanding and analyzing various social problems.
3. Sociological insights help in effective planning, formulation of social policy and good governance.
4. A branch of sociology called criminology helps in a proper understanding of crime and criminality in society.
5. Study of sociology also helps in the comparative understanding of groups, culture and societies.
6. Sociology as a discipline offers a plethora of themes and issues concerning social reality like tribal studies, social exclusion and inclusion, gender studies, Diaspora, urban studies, social movements etc. for academic discourse and research investigations.

Nature of Sociology

Sociology as a Science:

There exists a great controversy about the exact nature of Sociology.

The root question is, whether sociology is a science? Sociologists get divided among themselves into two opposite groups. For one group of sociologists, sociology is a science because it adopts and applies the methods of natural sciences for social investigation. Founding fathers of sociology Auguste Comte, Emile Durkheim and others subscribe to this view. On the contrary, the other camp holds a different viewpoint that sociology is not a science. German scholar Max Weber does not entirely accept the mechanistic viewpoint of science as advocated by Comte.

However, sociology is a behavioral science which tries to explore and explain social reality as objectively as possible.

MEANING OF SCIENCE: Science is a body of systematic knowledge. Science is based on reason and evidences. A science is “a branch of knowledge or study dealing with a body of facts or truths systematically arranged and showing the operation of general laws.” Science collects facts and links them together in their casual sequence to draw valid inferences. Science adopts scientific method. Scientific knowledge is acquired through observation, experimentation, generalization etc. Science has the following characteristics such as objectivity, observation, accurate prediction, experimentation, accurate measurement, generalization and cause-effect relationships.

Sociology is a Science:

According to Comte and Durkheim, “Sociology is a science because it adopts and applies the scientific method. Sociology does make use of scientific methods in the study of its subject matter. Hence Sociology is a science. It is a science because of the following reasons.

(1) Sociology uses observation as a tool:

Sociologist studies social world as a social observer. The whole world is the laboratory of sociology. The sociologist applies fieldwork method in the understanding and interpretation of the human world.

(2) Objectivity is possible in Sociology:

Like natural sciences, Sociology engages itself in objective analysis. Sociological insights are based on facts emerging from field investigation.

(3) Sociology describes cause-effect relationship:

Like natural sciences, sociology also traces the cause and finds answers to it. While studying family or population growth, sociology traces the relationship between family disorganization and divorce and population growth and poverty. Family disorganization is the cause of divorce and population growth is the cause of poverty. Thus, sociology describes cause-effect relationship in social disorganization and population explosion. Hence sociology is a science.

(4) Sociology makes accurate measurement:

Sociology, like natural sciences also accurately measures social phenomena or relationships. By using statistical method, sociometric scale, scales of measurement sociology effectively and accurately measures social relationships. Hence Sociology is a science.

(5) Prediction is possible:

Like natural sciences, sociology does frame laws and attempts to predict more accurately. On the basis of cause-effect relationship, sociology can accurately predict about future. If there will be dowry in society then it will lead to suicide, poverty. Cuvier opines that this predictive value of sociology is improved day by day. As Sociology matures day by day, it predicts more accurately.

(6) Generalization is possible:

The notion that generalization drawn by social sciences is not universal is proved wrong. Like natural sciences, sociology draws generalizations based fieldwork which is universally applicable.

SOCIOLOGY IS NOT A SCIENCE:

There are some scholars like Max-Weber who deny the status of science to Sociology. He said Sociology can't be an objective Science. However, those who deny the status of science to Sociology they put forth following arguments:

(1) Lack of Objectively:

Sociology cannot be called a science because it cannot maintain complete objectivity with social phenomena. Sociologist has his own prejudice and bias hence he cannot observe his subject with complete detachment. Complete objectivity in the study of human behavior is impossible. Sociology deals with social relationships which cannot be studied like physical objects. Hence, objectivity is not possible in Sociology.

(2) Lack of Experimentation:

Sociology is not a science because it can't make experimentation. Sociology deals with human relationships which cannot be put to laboratory test. We can't see or weigh human relationship because it is abstract in nature. We can't do experiment with abstract things.

(3) Lack of Prediction:

Like natural sciences, Sociology can't accurately make prediction. Natural Sciences make prediction on the basis of certain data. But Sociology deals with social relationships and human behavior which are so uncertain and peculiar that we can't make any accurate predication about it. We can't predict what will be one's behavior at a certain point of time nor can we predict about the trends or speed of social change. Hence sociology is not a science.

(4) Lack of accurate measurement:

Sociology can't make accurate measurement like natural sciences. There are definite standards of measurement like kilogram or meter by which it is possible to measure things. But in Sociology we have no such measuring instruments. Besides sociology deals with social relationships which are qualitative in nature and which can't be measured accurately in any yardstick. Hence Sociology is not a science.

(5) Lack of Generalization:

Sociology can't make generalizations like natural sciences which is universally applicable. Sociology deals with human behavior and no two individual are alike. Hence the conclusions drawn by Sociology can't be uniform or universally applicable. Social Phenomena is so complex and

complicated and is governed by so many factors that it is really difficult to draw a conclusion which will be universally applicable.