



Introduction to Sociology



Learning Objectives

At the end of this chapter, students will be able to:

- Define sociology
- Describe the scope of sociology
- Understand the importance of sociology in nursing
- Interpret the relationship between sociology and other sciences

KEY TERMS

- **Sociology:** The study of social life, social change, and the social causes and consequences of human behavior.
- **Anthropology:** The study of what makes us human.
- **Psychology:** The scientific study of the mind and behavior.
- **Economics:** A social science concerned with the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services.
- **Political sciences:** Social study concerning the allocation and transfer of power in decision making, the roles and systems of governance including governments and international organizations, political behavior and public policies.

Man is a social animal. Both the nature and the necessity make the man live in a society. Sociology is the youngest of all social sciences. The word “sociology” was coined by Auguste Comte, a French Philosopher in 1839. He is considered as the “Father of Sociology”. The word “sociology” is derived from the Latin word **societus**

which means 'being friendly with others' and the Greek word **logos** which means 'study of', hence, sociology means the study of human relations in a group and their interactions with each other in the society. Various sociological phenomena are studied under the umbrella of sociology. The study of social relations is the main interest of sociology.

DEFINITIONS OF SOCIOLOGY

- "Sociology is the science of society or of social phenomena." —**LF Ward**
- "Sociology is the study of human interaction and interrelation of their conditions and consequences." —**Ginsberg**
- "Sociology is a science of social institutions." —**Emile Durkheim**
- "Sociology is the study of social life." —**Ogburn and Nimkoff**
- "The subject matter of Sociology is the interaction of human minds." —**LT Hobhouse**
- "Sociology is the study of man and his human environment." —**HP Fairchild**
- "Sociology in broad sense may be said to be the study of interactions arising from the association of living beings." —**Gillin and Gillin**
- "Sociology deals with the behavior of man in group." —**Kimball Young**

Based on the above definitions we can conclude that:

- Sociology is a science of society.
- Sociology is a science of social relationships.
- Sociology is a science of social actions.
- Sociology is a science of social life.
- Sociology is a science of human behavior in group.

On a whole, the common idea deduced from the above discussion is that sociology is the branch of science that deals with the scientific study of the human interactions in society.

SCOPE OF SOCIOLOGY

There is not a single opinion about the scope of sociology. The overall objective of sociology is to systematically know about how

individuals and groups create a social relationship and how do they maintain and change it.

Career Opportunities

The career opportunities of sociology are limitless discussed as follows:

- One can expect career at research institutions, law firms, public health, welfare organizations, private business, international agencies, medical firms, educational institutions, advertising firms, survey and polling organizations, journalism and many more.
- Students with a bachelor's degree in sociology often secure employment as social researchers, case workers, paralegals, public relations workers, administrators, community organizers, public policy researchers, and data analysts.
- There are two main schools of thoughts regarding scope of sociology that exists among sociologists. They are as follows:

Formalistic School

The scope of sociology has been discussed and viewed by Albion Small, Alfred Vierkandt, Max Weber and Leopold von Wiese. According to this school of thought, "sociology is pure and independent" and sociology deals with the problems which are not dealt by any other social sciences.

- **Albion Small:** "Sociology does not study all the activities of society. The scope of sociology is the study of the generic (general) forms of social relationships, behaviors, activities, etc."
- **Alfred Vierkandt:** "Sociology is a special branch of knowledge dealing with the ultimate forms of mental or psychic relationships, which unite people in society." He further maintains that "Similarly in dealing with culture, sociology should not concern itself with the actual contents of cultural evolution but it should confine itself to only the discovery of the fundamental forces of change and persistence."
- **Max Weber:** "Sociology aims to interpret and understand social behavior but it does not include all human relations because all of them are not social." According to him, "Sociology is concerned with the analysis and classification of types of social relationships."

- **Leopold von Wiese:** “The scope of sociology is the study of forms of social relationships.”

Synthetic School

According to this group, sociology is a general science. This school of thoughts wants sociology to be a synthesis (mixture) of the social sciences or a general science.

The other group states that the field of social investigation is too wide for any other social science and “Sociology is a special social science” such as Economics, Anthropology, History, and social psychology, etc. This also considers that “Sociology is a general science.”

- **David Émile Durkheim:** Sociology can be divided into three major divisions:
 - **Social morphology** that is concerned with geographical or territorial basis of the life such as its volume and density, local distribution and the life.
 - **Social physiology** that is divided into a number of branches such as sociology of religion, morals, laws, economic life, language, etc. These activities are related to the various social groups.
 - **General sociology** is concerned to discover the general characters of these social facts.
- **Sorokin:** “The subject matter of sociology is the study of relationship between different aspects of social phenomenon such as the study of understanding the relationship between the various social and nonsocial aspects.”
- **JB McKee:** “Social action, social structure, social process and social institutions are included in the scope of sociology.”

SPECIAL BRANCHES OF SOCIOLOGY

There are some special branches of sociology that are listed as follows:

- Medical sociology
- Social psychiatry
- Industrial sociology
- Political sociology
- Military sociology
- Economic sociology

RELATIONSHIP OF SOCIOLOGY WITH OTHER SOCIAL SCIENCES

Different social sciences deal with different aspects of man's social life such as history, anthropology, social psychology, economics, political sciences, etc., so these social sciences are closely inter-related. Sociology is neither a new science nor the mother of other social sciences but it runs parallel to mother sciences as discussed below.

Sociology and History

History is basically concerned with what happened in the past at a particular moment, and historian also wants to know how does it affected the future, though he/she is not interested to know future and present but how things evolved is definitely a matter of concern. History acts as a base of the present and as a predictor of the future.

Sociology is the science of the society and is interested in knowing how the society evolved and how the practices and cultures came into existence, and how does the various beliefs and practices affected the health of an individual, family and community.

Sociology and Political Science

These two are very closely related. Sociology has roots in politics. Sociology is a science of society but political science is the science of state and government.

- Sociology deals with all kinds of the societies both organized and unorganized, whereas political science deals only with the politically organized societies.
- Sociology has a wider scope than political science. Sociology studies man as a "social animal" whereas in political science man is considered as a political animal.
- Sociology is a general social science but political science is a special social science.
- The approach of sociology is sociological whereas the approach of political science is political.
- Sociology is comparatively younger science than political science.

Sociology and Anthropology

The sociology and anthropology are connected to each other. Anthropology is also defined as “the science of man and his works and behavior.” It deals with men in groups not individuals. There are two types of anthropology:

- **Organic or physical anthropology:** It deals with the evolution of the man, his bodily characteristics and heredity.
- **Sociocultural anthropology:** It is often called cultural anthropology and it studies man as a social animal. Hobel says that “Sociology and anthropology are in their broadest sense one and the same. Origin of the family, beginning of the marriage, private property, etc. can be understood better in the light of anthropological knowledge. The conclusions drawn by the sociologists have helped anthropologists in their studies.”
 - Sociologists study both small and large societies.
 - Anthropologists generally concentrate on small societies.

Sociology and Psychology

Sociology and psychology are interrelated sciences. Psychology is the study of human behavior. Some psychologists dispute the relationships between sociology and psychology.

- According to Durkheim, “Sociology deals with the social facts not with the psychological facts.”
- Ginsberg’s sociological explanations can be confirmed by relating them to the psychological laws as an explanation.
- According to Krech and Gutchfield, “Social psychology is the science of behavior of an individual in the society.” Social psychology depends on sociology to understand properly human nature and behavior. At the same time, it has been widely recognized that for understanding the changes in social structure, psychological factors play important role. Both sciences have common topics. Social psychology also helps to face the social problems.
- Psychology is a behavioral science that generally deals with individuals. Social psychology serves as a link between sociology and psychology. Sociology studies the society and social groups. Social psychology studies the behavior of an individual.

Sociology analyzes social processes but social psychology analyzes mental processes. Sociology takes interest in the social forms and structures where behavior of man takes place. Psychology and social psychology refers to the behavior and individuals directly. Sociology studies the groups themselves whereas psychology studies the individual. The social psychology deals with the behavior of an individual in a group.

Sociology and Economics

The relationship between these two are so close that sometimes one is considered as a branch of the other. Economics deals with the economic activities of man. Economics studies man as a wealth getter and wealth disposer. Sociology and economics are mutually helpful. Economical changes have been explained by some economists as an aspect of the social change. Many economists like Karl Marx and Veblen said that social phenomenon is determined by the economic factors.

Sociology studies all types of social relations whereas economics deals with only those social issues which are economic in character. The scope of sociology is wider than the scope of economics. Sociology is one of the recently originated fields but economics has reached advanced degree of maturity.

IMPORTANCE AND SCOPE OF SOCIOLOGY FOR NURSES

The importance of sociology is shown in Figure 1.

- Sociology is used by a nurse for the scientific study of society.
- Sociology is used to study the role of the institutions in the individual development.
- Sociology is inseparable for understanding and it is utilized for making plans for society and according to the needs of society.
- Sociology is used in framing and analyzing the various solutions of social problems.
- Sociology helps to draw nurse's attention to the human dignity and toward the basic human needs.
- Sociology has changed outlook with regard to the problems in society like crime, etc.

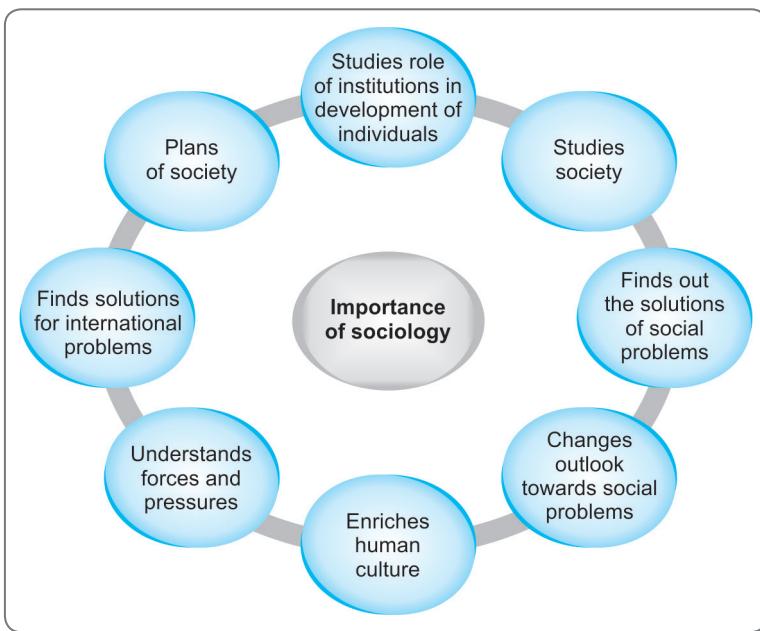


Fig. 1: Important uses of sociology for a nurse

- Sociology has made significant contribution to enrich human culture and values. This developmental change further provides a way to understand existing problems in society.
- A nurse takes the help of sociology in the process of solving the global problems prevalent in different societies.
- The academic nature of sociology allows nurses to develop intellectual and critical thinking skills.
- Nurses must have an understanding of their client base if they are to deliver the best service. Sociology helps in this.
- Sociology is also included in the curriculum of nursing because health is integral social component. Most of the illness has social causes and social effects also. Sociology gives basic knowledge to deal with patient and to understand their habits, norms, culture and values, etc. It is important for a nurse to understand the importance of changing environment or surrounding.

- Sociology also helps the nurse to provide the need-based, individualistic care as listed in the nursing code of ethics also.

Hence, the knowledge of sociology helps nurse to avoid prejudices and discrimination. A nurse should understand the importance of social position, status and social responsibilities in health field by studying sociology. He/she has to work in accordance with rules and norms of society. The nurse should understand the necessity of changing environment to hasten the patient recovery. Social correlation of illness includes various demographic factors, which can be understood by the nurse with the knowledge of sociology. It helps the nurse to approach the patient at various domains such as:

- **Emotional domain:** The nurse should understand the patient's emotions as it helps in building a better interpersonal relationship and also helps to build the trust on a nurse. It helps the patient to vent out and participate in plan of care, which further alleviates the emotional burden and anxiety of patient.
- **Cultural domain:** It is difficult for the patient to adjust with hospital environment because of limitation of cultural environment.
For example: A Muslim patient has to practice the **Namaz** which makes it difficult for him to practice in hospital. The nurse here can help the patient to practice the religious practices in the prayer room, etc.
- **Intellectual domain:** It is difficult for the patient to understand the nurse's and the doctor's point of view but the knowledge of sociology helps the nurse to understand the social background of patient and make him/her better understand the facts. The nurse can also modify the cultural practices to the therapeutic behavior, which further helps in the health attainment of individual and society.



ASSESS YOURSELF

Long Answer Type Questions

1. How is sociology useful for nurses?
2. Describe the sociology in relation to other sciences.

Short Answer Questions

1. Define sociology.
2. Describe the scope of sociology.

Multiple Choice Questions

6. is an impersonal way of control.

- a. Informal
- b. Formal
- c. Kinship
- d. Family

7. is the family that extends beyond the nuclear family.

- a. Extended family
- b. Joint family
- c. Nuclear family
- d. Neo local family

Answers to MCQs

1. b 2. c 3. c 4. c 5. d 6. b 7. a

Notes