

CSS Sociology: key concepts

This document covers the core concepts of Sociology as an optional subject in Pakistan's Central Superior Services (CSS) competitive examination: the scope of the discipline and its relationship with other social sciences; society, culture, norms and values; socialisation and its agents; social stratification; the three classical theoretical perspectives; the major social institutions; social change and social control; and the sociological analysis of poverty, urbanisation and population growth in Pakistan. Research methods and techniques, and related concepts such as community and association or primary and secondary groups, are covered separately and are not treated as part of this glossary. Section numbers are not quoted, as these vary between syllabus revisions; the topics follow the order in which they are usually taught.

1. Nature and scope of sociology

Sociology is the systematic study of society, social relationships and the institutions and processes through which human beings organise their collective life. The term was coined in 1838 by the French thinker Auguste Comte, who is conventionally regarded as the founder of the discipline and an early advocate of applying scientific method to the study of society, an approach known as positivism. Sociology examines patterns of behaviour that recur across individuals rather than the unique biography of any one person; its central working assumption is that human action is shaped by the social context in which it occurs.

Definition to learn: Sociology is the scientific study of society, social institutions and social relationships, concerned with identifying regular patterns in human group behaviour and explaining them in terms of social structure, culture and process.

The scope of sociology is broad: it studies social structure (the stable arrangement of institutions and statuses), social processes (co-operation, conflict, competition), social institutions (family, religion, education, economy, polity) and social change. Because so many aspects of life are social, sociology overlaps with, yet remains distinct from, the other social sciences.

Discipline	Main focus	How it differs from sociology
Political science	The state, government, power and authority	Concentrates on formal institutions of power; sociology treats power as one social relationship among many, including outside the state
Economics	Production, distribution and consumption of scarce resources	Assumes a narrower, largely rational actor; sociology studies economic behaviour as embedded in norms, values and group life
Psychology	The individual mind, behaviour and mental processes	Unit of analysis is the individual; sociology's unit of analysis is the group, institution or society
Social anthropology	Culture and social organisation, historically of small-scale societies	Traditionally used ethnographic fieldwork in single communities; sociology traditionally studied large-scale, industrial societies, though methods now overlap



History	Particular past events, arranged chronologically	Focuses on the unique and the sequence of events; sociology seeks generalisable patterns and causal explanations that hold across cases
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Because human life is studied from several angles at once, sociology is often described as a "generalising" social science: it borrows evidence from economics, political science, history and anthropology while asking its own distinctive question — how does social structure shape behaviour?

2. Society, culture, norms and values

A **society** is a relatively self-sufficient and enduring group of people who occupy a defined territory, share a common culture, and are bound together by networks of social relationships and mutual interdependence. Societies are held together not by physical proximity alone but by shared culture and by institutions that co-ordinate behaviour.

Culture refers to everything that is learned, shared and transmitted across generations within a society: its beliefs, knowledge, values, norms, language, customs, and the material objects its members produce and use. The British anthropologist Edward Burnett Tylor, writing in 1871, was among the first to offer a systematic definition of culture as a complex, learned whole encompassing a society's beliefs, morals, laws, customs and other capabilities. Two components of culture are usually distinguished: *material culture* (tools, dress, architecture, technology) and *non-material culture* (ideas, beliefs, norms, values, language).

Norms are the specific rules and shared expectations that guide how members of a group ought to behave in a given situation.

Values are the broader, shared ideas within a culture about what is good, right, desirable or worth pursuing; norms are typically derived from values.

The American sociologist William Graham Sumner, in his 1906 work *Folkways*, distinguished two types of norm. **Folkways** are customary, everyday norms whose violation causes mild disapproval but no formal punishment (for example, queuing, greetings, dress codes). **Mores** are norms regarded as morally significant, whose violation is met with strong disapproval and often formal sanction (for example, norms against theft or perjury). A society's most serious mores, when formally codified and backed by the state, become **laws**.

Culture is not uniform within a large society: a **subculture** is a group that shares the wider culture but also holds distinct norms and values of its own (an occupational or regional group, for instance), while **ethnocentrism** is the tendency to judge another culture by the standards of one's own, often leading to the assumption that one's own way of life is superior. **Cultural relativism**, by contrast, is the view that a culture's beliefs and practices should be understood and judged on their own terms rather than by the standards of another culture.

3. Socialisation and its agents

Socialisation is the lifelong process through which individuals learn, internalise and are shaped by the norms, values, beliefs and roles of the society and groups into which they are born. It is through socialisation that a biological organism becomes a functioning social being, and it is the principal mechanism by which culture is transmitted from one generation to the next.

Definition to learn: Socialisation is the process by which individuals learn and internalise the culture of their society, acquiring the knowledge, skills, values and roles necessary to participate in social life.

Sociologists commonly distinguish **primary socialisation**, which occurs mainly in early childhood within the family and lays down a person's basic language, values and sense of self, from **secondary socialisation**, which continues through later childhood, adolescence and adulthood via institutions such as school, peer groups, the media and the workplace. Socialisation that prepares an individual for a role they have not yet entered — for example, learning the expectations of a profession before taking it up — is sometimes termed **anticipatory socialisation**.

Agent	Stage	Main contribution to socialisation
Family	Primary, from infancy	First and most intensive agent; transmits language, basic values, gender expectations and initial sense of identity
Education	Secondary, from early school years	Transmits formal knowledge and skills (manifest function) and also norms of discipline, punctuality and competition (latent function, sometimes called the "hidden curriculum")
Peer group	Secondary, mainly adolescence	Composed of status-equals; teaches co-operation and negotiation among equals and is a major source of values that may diverge from those of the family
Mass media	Secondary, throughout life	Transmits information, norms and role models on a large scale; increasingly influential with the growth of broadcast and digital media

Failure of socialisation, or exposure to inconsistent norms from different agents, is one factor sociologists associate with deviant behaviour, though it is only one among several explanations offered in the discipline.

4. Social stratification: class, caste and status

Social stratification is the hierarchical arrangement of individuals and groups in a society into layers possessing unequal amounts of wealth, power and prestige. This document focuses on three widely tested bases of stratification: class, caste and status.

Class is a stratum defined chiefly by economic position — income, wealth, ownership of property and occupation. Class boundaries in industrial societies are, in principle, open: movement between classes (social mobility) is possible on the basis of individual achievement.

Caste is a stratum into which a person is born and which they cannot normally leave during their lifetime; caste is therefore an *ascribed*, hereditary and endogamous form of stratification historically associated with South Asia, where it has traditionally regulated occupation and marriage.

Status, in Max Weber's usage, refers to the social honour or prestige accorded to a person or group, which may be independent of their economic class — for example, a person of modest income may hold high status through profession, lineage or piety.

Ralph Linton, in 1936, distinguished two ways a status can be acquired. An **ascribed status** is assigned to an individual at birth or involuntarily later in life, regardless of ability (sex, caste, kinship

position). An **achieved status** is obtained through an individual's own effort, choice or competition (occupation, educational qualification, marital status). Every individual occupies many statuses at once (a "status set"), and the status around which most of their social identity is organised is termed their **master status**. The behaviour expected of someone occupying a given status is termed a **role**; an individual's status set is accompanied by a corresponding role set.

Social mobility is movement, by an individual or group, between positions in the stratification system. *Vertical mobility* is movement up or down the hierarchy; *horizontal mobility* is movement between positions of similar rank; *intergenerational mobility* compares a person's position with that of their parents, while *intragenerational mobility* compares their position at different points in their own life.

5. Major theoretical perspectives

Sociology has developed several broad theoretical perspectives, or paradigms, through which society can be analysed. The CSS syllabus centres on three classical perspectives, associated respectively with Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx and George Herbert Mead; Max Weber's distinctive approach is usually studied alongside them.

Perspective	Founding figure	Level of analysis	View of society	Key concepts
Functionalism	Emile Durkheim (1858–1917)	Macro (whole society)	Society is a system of interrelated parts, each performing a function that contributes to overall stability, much as organs contribute to a living body	Social solidarity (mechanical and organic), collective conscience, anomie, social fact
Conflict theory	Karl Marx (1818–1883)	Macro (whole society)	Society is divided into classes with opposed economic interests; order rests on the domination of one class over another, and social change is driven by class struggle	Means of production, bourgeoisie and proletariat, base and superstructure, ideology, historical materialism
Social action / Weberian perspective	Max Weber (1864–1920)	Links individual meaning to social structure	Society must be understood through the subjective meaning individuals attach to their action (verstehen), while large-scale rationalisation and bureaucracy shape modern life	Verstehen, social action, rationalisation, bureaucracy, three-dimensional stratification (class, status, party)
Symbolic interactionism	George Herbert Mead (1863–1931)	Micro (everyday interaction)	Society is built up and continually recreated through face-to-face interaction, in which individuals interpret and respond to shared symbols	Symbol, the self, "I" and "me", role-taking, significant others

Durkheim distinguished *mechanical solidarity*, typical of small, traditional societies with little division of labour, where cohesion rests on shared beliefs and similarity between members, from *organic solidarity*, typical of large, industrial societies with an extensive division of labour, where cohesion rests on the interdependence created by specialisation. Durkheim first introduced **anomie** in *The Division of Labour in Society* (1893), applying it to the "anomic division of labour", and developed the concept further in his 1897 study *Suicide*, where it denotes a state of normlessness that arises when social norms are weakened or in conflict, leaving individuals without clear guidance for behaviour.

Marx argued that the economic "base" of a society — its forces and relations of production — shapes its political, legal and cultural "superstructure". In capitalist society, he identified two principal classes: the **bourgeoisie**, who own the means of production, and the **proletariat**, who sell their labour for wages. Ideas that present the interests of the dominant class as natural or universal, obscuring class inequality, Marx termed **ideology**.

Mead, in lectures published posthumously in 1934 as *Mind, Self and Society*, argued that the self develops through interaction: a child learns to see itself from the standpoint of others by "taking the role of the other", first of particular individuals (significant others) and later of the community's expectations as a whole (the generalised other). Mead distinguished the spontaneous, acting "I" from the socialised, self-reflective "me".

These perspectives are often compared on how they treat inequality: functionalists (following the American sociologists Kingsley Davis and Wilbert Moore, 1945) have argued that stratification performs a function by motivating the most able individuals to fill society's most demanding positions; conflict theorists reply that stratification instead reflects and reproduces the power of a dominant class; symbolic interactionists focus instead on how status differences are enacted and experienced in everyday interaction.

6. Social institutions

A **social institution** is a relatively stable, organised pattern of beliefs, norms and roles that has developed around a basic and recurring need of a society. This document covers four core institutions: family, marriage, religion and education.

Family

The American anthropologist George Peter Murdock, in a comparative study of 250 societies published in 1949, argued that the family everywhere performs four universal functions: regulation of sexual behaviour, reproduction, economic co-operation among members, and socialisation of children. Two structural types are usually distinguished: the **nuclear family**, consisting of parents and their dependent children, and the **extended** or **joint family**, which additionally includes other relatives (grandparents, uncles, aunts and their children) typically sharing residence, income or both — a form historically widespread in South Asia, including Pakistan, though increasingly giving way to nuclear households in urban areas.

Marriage

Marriage is a socially and, in most societies, legally recognised union that grants rights and obligations to partners and, typically, legitimacy to their offspring. Sociologists classify marriage by number of partners: **monogamy** (one spouse at a time), **polygyny** (one husband, multiple wives) and **polyandry** (one wife, multiple husbands, historically rare). Rules governing whom one may marry include **endogamy**, which requires marriage within a specified group (such as caste, kin, or biradari), and **exogamy**, which requires marriage outside a specified group (commonly, one's immediate kin, to avoid incest).

Religion

Durkheim, in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912), defined religion functionally as a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things — things set apart and forbidden — that unite its adherents into a single moral community. From this functionalist standpoint, religion's main contributions to society are promoting social solidarity, reinforcing shared values and providing a source of psychological comfort in the face of uncertainty and loss. Marx, by contrast, viewed religion critically as part of the ideological superstructure, famously describing it as "the opium of the people" because, in his analysis, it consoled the exploited and thereby helped to legitimise an unequal social order rather than challenge it.

Education

Sociologists distinguish the **manifest functions** of education — the transmission of knowledge, literacy and occupational skills — from its **latent functions**, the unintended or less visible outcomes such as socialising pupils into punctuality, discipline, competition and deference to authority, sometimes called the "hidden curriculum". American sociologists Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, in *Schooling in Capitalist America* (1976), advanced a conflict-theory account arguing that schooling reproduces the class structure by fitting pupils from different backgrounds for correspondingly different positions in the workforce.

7. Social change and social control

Social change is any significant alteration, over time, in a society's social structure, culture or patterns of behaviour. Sociologists identify several sources of change, including technological innovation, demographic shifts, diffusion of ideas and practices between societies, and conflict between groups. Herbert Spencer, writing a generation before Durkheim, proposed an **evolutionary theory** of change, viewing societies as moving from simple to increasingly complex and differentiated forms, broadly analogous to biological evolution. A much earlier **cyclical theory** was advanced by the fourteenth-century North African scholar Ibn Khaldun in his *Muqaddimah* (1377), who explained the rise and decline of dynasties through the concept of *asabiyyah* — group solidarity — which he argued is strongest among tribal or frontier groups and tends to weaken once a dynasty settles into urban comfort, making it vulnerable to a fresh, more cohesive rival. Marx's **conflict theory** of change, discussed above, locates the engine of change in struggle between classes over the means of production.

Definition to learn: Social control refers to the methods and mechanisms, both formal and informal, through which a society induces its members to conform to its norms and values.

Formal social control is exercised through explicit, codified rules enforced by designated authorities, such as laws enforced by police and courts, or workplace regulations enforced by management.

Informal social control operates through everyday interaction — approval, ridicule, gossip, ostracism — exercised by family, peers and community, and is generally more continuous and, in close-knit communities, often more effective than formal control. Both operate through **sanctions**: *positive sanctions* reward conforming behaviour (praise, promotion), while *negative sanctions* punish deviation (fines, imprisonment, social disapproval).

8. Social problems in Pakistan: a sociological reading

The CSS syllabus asks candidates to examine selected social problems using sociological concepts rather than as items of current-affairs commentary. Three examples are considered here: poverty, urbanisation and population growth.

Poverty

Sociologists distinguish **absolute poverty**, an inability to meet basic subsistence needs such as food, shelter and clothing, from **relative poverty**, a standard of living markedly below the general standard prevailing in a given society, even where basic subsistence needs are met. The functionalist sociologists Kingsley Davis and Wilbert Moore (1945) implied that stratification, and with it a degree of inequality, is functionally necessary to allocate people to unequally rewarded but unequally demanding positions; conflict theorists, following Marx, instead treat persistent poverty as the predictable outcome of an economic system that concentrates ownership of productive resources in a minority, so that inequality is reproduced rather than merely allocated efficiently. Both explanations are taught here as competing, named interpretations rather than as settled fact.

Urbanisation

Urbanisation is the process by which an increasing proportion of a population comes to live in towns and cities, typically accompanied by rural-to-urban migration. Migration is commonly analysed through **push factors**, conditions that drive people out of rural areas (scarcity of land, low agricultural incomes, limited services), and **pull factors**, conditions that attract them to cities (employment opportunities, education, healthcare). Rapid, unplanned urbanisation in Pakistan's major cities has been accompanied by the growth of informal settlements, commonly known locally as *katchi abadis*, which lack secure tenure and, often, full access to municipal services. Durkheim's concept of anomie is frequently applied to rapid urban growth, since migrants moving from tightly integrated rural communities into loosely integrated urban settings may temporarily lose clear normative guidance before new urban networks and norms are established.

Population growth

Demographic transition theory describes a society's typical passage through stages as it modernises: a first stage of high birth and death rates (population roughly stable), a second stage in which death rates fall while birth rates remain high (rapid population growth), a third stage in which birth rates also begin to fall (growth slows), and a fourth stage of low birth and death rates (population again roughly stable). Pakistan is generally placed in the earlier-to-middle stages of this transition, with death rates having fallen faster than birth rates, producing continued population growth. This model is often contrasted with the much earlier view of the English clergyman-economist Thomas Malthus (1798), who argued that population, if unchecked, tends to grow faster than the food supply, a claim critics such as the economist Ester Boserup challenged, arguing that population pressure can itself drive agricultural intensification and so increase food supply; demographic transition theorists point in addition to the empirical fall in birth rates that accompanies economic development as a further

qualification of Malthus's argument.

Key terms

Term	Definition
Sociology	The scientific study of society, social institutions and social relationships
Society	An enduring, territorially based group of people bound together by shared culture and interdependence
Culture	The learned, shared beliefs, values, norms, knowledge and material objects of a group
Norm	A shared rule specifying expected behaviour in a given situation
Value	A shared idea about what is good, right or desirable
Folkway	A customary norm whose breach brings only mild disapproval
More (mores)	A norm carrying strong moral significance, whose breach brings serious sanction
Socialisation	The lifelong process of learning and internalising a society's culture
Primary socialisation	Early-childhood socialisation, occurring mainly within the family
Secondary socialisation	Socialisation continuing through school, peers, media and work
Status	A recognised social position occupied by an individual
Ascribed status	A status assigned at birth or involuntarily, independent of ability
Achieved status	A status attained through an individual's own effort or choice
Role	The behaviour expected of someone occupying a given status
Social stratification	The hierarchical ranking of individuals or groups by wealth, power and prestige
Class	A stratum based principally on economic position, with open boundaries in principle
Caste	A hereditary, endogamous, closed stratum fixed at birth
Social mobility	Movement of individuals or groups between positions in a stratification system
Functionalism	The perspective viewing society as an interrelated system whose parts sustain stability
Conflict theory	The perspective viewing society as structured by struggle between groups with opposed interests
Symbolic interactionism	The perspective viewing society as produced through everyday interaction and shared symbols
Anomie	A state of weakened or conflicting social norms, leaving individuals without clear guidance
Social institution	A stable, organised pattern of norms and roles built around a recurring social need
Endogamy	A rule requiring marriage within a specified group

Exogamy	A rule requiring marriage outside a specified group
Social change	Significant alteration over time in a society's structure or culture
Social control	Formal and informal mechanisms that induce conformity to norms
Sanction	A reward or punishment used to enforce conformity to a norm
Urbanisation	The growing concentration of population in towns and cities
Demographic transition	The staged shift from high to low birth and death rates as a society modernises

CSS-style questions with model answer outlines

These are original practice questions in the typical style of the CSS Sociology paper. Question 2 is worked as a complete model answer of CSS length, to give a concrete example of how an outline should be expanded into full prose under examination conditions; the remaining questions are outlines indicating the structure and content points a full answer should cover, and should be developed with further explanation and examples.

Q1. Discuss the nature and scope of sociology. How does it relate to other social sciences? [20]

Outline: (i) Introduction — define sociology, name Comte as founder and originator of the term. (ii) Scope — social structure, social processes, institutions, change. (iii) Relationship with political science, economics, psychology, anthropology and history, drawing out one clear point of difference with each. (iv) Conclusion — sociology as a generalising science that integrates insight from, without duplicating, the other social sciences.

Q2. Critically examine the functionalist perspective on society, with reference to the work of Emile Durkheim. [20]

Functionalism is one of the classical macro-level perspectives in sociology. It views society as a system of interrelated parts — institutions such as the family, education, religion and the economy — each performing a function that contributes to the stability and continuity of the whole, much as organs contribute to the survival of a living body. Emile Durkheim, writing in France in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, is the founding figure most closely associated with this perspective, and his work provides the clearest starting point for examining both its strengths and its limits.

Durkheim's central concern was to explain what holds societies together, a problem he termed social solidarity. In small, traditional societies with little division of labour, he argued, cohesion rests on *mechanical solidarity*: members are bound together by resemblance, sharing similar beliefs, values and ways of life, so that the collective conscience — the set of beliefs and sentiments common to members of a society — is strong and uniform. In large, industrial societies, by contrast, an extensive division of labour makes individuals different from one another in occupation and outlook, yet paradoxically more interdependent, since each now relies on the specialised contribution of others. Durkheim termed this second basis of cohesion *organic solidarity*, drawing the analogy with the way specialised organs depend on one another within a single living organism.

Durkheim used this framework to analyse the strains of rapid industrialisation. He introduced the concept of anomie in *The Division of Labour in Society* (1893) to describe a state of normlessness that can arise when the division of labour develops faster than the moral regulation needed to govern it, leaving individuals without clear guidance for behaviour; he developed the idea further in *Suicide* (1897), where anomic suicide is one of several types he identifies as resulting from a breakdown of social regulation. This body of work illustrates the functionalist method at its best: it treats even an apparently individual, psychological act such as suicide as patterned by social forces, and it explains social phenomena in terms of the needs of the wider social system — here, the need for adequate moral regulation to accompany structural change.

The functionalist perspective has clear strengths. It offers a coherent account of social order and integration, explaining why societies generally hold together despite their internal differentiation, and it draws attention to the real interdependence created by a complex division of labour, which conflict-based accounts can understate. Its emphasis on shared values and collective institutions also provides a natural framework for studying religion, education and family life as contributors to social stability, and Durkheim's own studies, particularly of religion and suicide, remain foundational reference points in the discipline.

The perspective has, however, been subject to sustained criticism. Conflict theorists, following Marx, argue that functionalism understates inequality and power: by asking what function an institution performs for "society" as a whole, it tends to treat existing arrangements as necessary or beneficial, without asking whose interests they principally serve or how far they are imposed by a dominant group rather than agreed upon. Critics have also pointed to a tendency toward teleological reasoning — explaining the existence of a social arrangement by the effects it produces — which can make functionalist explanations difficult to test. A further limitation is that functionalism, with its emphasis on equilibrium and integration, is less well equipped to explain rapid, discontinuous or revolutionary change than perspectives, such as Marx's, that place conflict at the centre of their analysis.

On balance, the functionalist perspective, and Durkheim's contribution to it in particular, retains real value for analysing social order, integration and the strains associated with structural change, but it needs to be read alongside conflict and interactionist perspectives if inequality, power and the fine grain of everyday social life are to be adequately explained. A rounded answer in the CSS examination should therefore present functionalism as one indispensable perspective among several, rather than as a complete account of society in its own right.

Q3. Compare and contrast the conflict and symbolic interactionist perspectives on society. [20]

Outline: (i) Introduction — one macro, one micro perspective. (ii) Conflict theory: Marx, class struggle, base and superstructure, ideology. (iii) Symbolic interactionism: Mead, the self, role-taking, symbols, micro-level interaction. (iv) Points of similarity — both reject a purely individualist or purely static, consensus-based view of society, and both attend to how power and inequality shape social relationships, whether between classes or between individuals in everyday interaction. (v) Points of contrast — level of analysis, view of order (imposed by a dominant class versus negotiated in interaction), unit of analysis (class versus individual interaction). (vi) Conclusion — the two perspectives can be complementary, addressing different levels of social life.

Q4. Explain the process of socialisation. Discuss the role of family and media as agents of socialisation. [20]

Outline: (i) Define socialisation; distinguish primary and secondary socialisation. (ii) Family — role in primary socialisation, transmission of language, values, gender roles. (iii) Media — role in secondary, lifelong socialisation, scale and reach, growth of digital media. (iv) Compare their relative influence at different life stages. (v) Conclusion — no single agent works in isolation; socialisation is cumulative and sometimes contradictory across agents.

Q5. Distinguish between class, caste and status as bases of social stratification. [20]

Outline: (i) Define stratification generally. (ii) Class — economic basis, open boundaries, achieved. (iii) Caste — hereditary, endogamous, ascribed, closed; note South Asian context. (iv) Status — Weber's concept of social honour, can be independent of class. (v) Note how the three can combine in a single society. (vi) Conclusion — stratification is multidimensional, not reducible to a single basis.

Q6. Examine the functions of the family and marriage as social institutions in Pakistani society. [20]

Outline: (i) Define family and marriage. (ii) Murdock's four universal functions of the family. (iii) Nuclear versus joint family structures and their prevalence. (iv) Marriage — forms (monogamy, polygyny), rules (endogamy/exogamy, arranged marriage as a socially organised institution), and functions (legitimising offspring, economic partnership). (v) Conclusion — note ongoing change, such as growing nuclear-family prevalence in urban areas, as an example of the social change discussed in section 7.

Q7. What is meant by social control? Discuss the formal and informal mechanisms of social control in a modern society. [20]

Outline: (i) Define social control. (ii) Formal mechanisms — law, police, courts, workplace rules; give examples of positive and negative sanctions. (iii) Informal mechanisms — family, peer group, community approval/disapproval, religion. (iv) Compare effectiveness and scope of each in modern, more anonymous societies versus small, close-knit communities. (v) Conclusion — the two operate together, not as alternatives.

Q8. Critically analyse poverty, urbanisation and population growth in Pakistan from a sociological perspective. [20]

Outline: (i) Introduction — frame all three as interrelated social problems to be analysed with sociological concepts, not merely described. (ii) Poverty — absolute versus relative poverty; functionalist versus conflict explanations. (iii) Urbanisation — push and pull factors, katchi abadis, Durkheim's anomie applied to rapid migration. (iv) Population growth — demographic transition

theory, Pakistan's position within it, brief contrast with Malthus and his critics. (v) Conclusion — the three problems interact (for example, rural poverty as a push factor for urban migration, itself linked to population pressure), so sociological analysis treats them as connected rather than isolated issues.

Q9. "Sociology is best understood as a set of competing perspectives rather than a single body of agreed theory." Critically discuss this statement with reference to the perspectives covered in this document. [20]

Outline: (i) Introduction — sociology contains genuinely different perspectives, operating at different levels of analysis and asking different questions. (ii) The three classical perspectives — functionalism (Durkheim), conflict theory (Marx) and symbolic interactionism (Mead) — summarised in terms of level of analysis (macro/macro/micro) and view of order (consensus, domination, negotiated interaction respectively); note Weber's social action approach as a further perspective that bridges individual meaning and social structure. (iii) Argument that this plurality is a strength — each perspective illuminates aspects of social life the others leave in shadow, rather than evidence that the discipline lacks rigour. (iv) Counter-consideration — some sociologists, including Weber himself, have sought a degree of synthesis linking individual meaning to structural conditions, so the perspectives are not wholly incompatible. (v) Conclusion — a reasoned judgement that competing perspectives reflect the complexity of social life rather than a weakness of the discipline.

Quick check

1. Define sociology.
2. Explain what is meant by a "norm", and give one example of a folkway and one of a more.
3. Distinguish between primary and secondary socialisation.
4. Identify the four agents of socialisation discussed in this document.
5. Distinguish between ascribed status and achieved status, with one example of each.
6. Explain Durkheim's concept of anomie.
7. Distinguish between mechanical solidarity and organic solidarity.
8. Compare the functionalist and conflict explanations of social stratification.
9. Discuss the sociological view of religion, referring to both Durkheim and Marx.
10. Critically examine the causes of rapid urbanisation in Pakistan.
11. Evaluate the usefulness of demographic transition theory for explaining population growth in Pakistan.

Answers

1. Sociology is the scientific study of society, social institutions and social relationships, concerned with identifying and explaining regular patterns in human group behaviour.
2. A norm is a shared rule specifying expected behaviour in a given situation. Folkway example: queuing in an orderly line. More example: the prohibition on theft.

3. Primary socialisation occurs in early childhood, mainly within the family, and instils basic language and values; secondary socialisation continues through later life via school, peers, media and work.
4. Family, education, peer group and mass media.
5. Ascribed status is assigned at birth or involuntarily and is independent of ability (e.g. being born into a particular caste); achieved status is gained through effort or choice (e.g. becoming a civil servant).
6. Anomie is a state of weakened or conflicting social norms that leaves individuals without clear normative guidance; Durkheim first introduced the concept in 1893, in *The Division of Labour in Society*, and developed it further in his 1897 study of suicide.
7. Mechanical solidarity is cohesion based on similarity between members, typical of small traditional societies with little division of labour; organic solidarity is cohesion based on interdependence arising from specialisation, typical of large industrial societies.
8. Functionalists (Davis and Moore) argue stratification is functionally necessary to motivate able individuals into demanding positions; conflict theorists (following Marx) argue it instead reflects and reproduces the power of a dominant class over resources.
9. Durkheim viewed religion functionally, as a system of shared beliefs and practices that promotes social solidarity and reinforces shared values; Marx viewed it critically, as part of an ideological superstructure that consoles the exploited and so helps legitimise inequality — the two are presented here as contrasting, named interpretations.
10. Push factors such as scarce rural land and low agricultural incomes, combined with pull factors such as urban employment, education and healthcare, have driven rural-to-urban migration; rapid, often unplanned growth has produced informal settlements (katchi abadis) with limited services.
11. Demographic transition theory usefully describes Pakistan's continued population growth as death rates have fallen faster than birth rates, placing it in an earlier-to-middle transition stage; its main limitation is that it describes a general pattern rather than explaining precisely when or why birth rates fall in any one country.