

## Concept of Function in Sociology

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### Concept of Function

In sociology, the term 'function' refers to the contribution that any social activity, institution, or process makes to the maintenance and stability of the social system. It explains why a particular custom, practice, or institution exists and how it helps society operate smoothly. The idea is closely linked with Functionalism, a perspective developed by Émile Durkheim and later elaborated by Bronislaw Malinowski and Talcott Parsons.

### Definitions

- Émile Durkheim – Function is the contribution of a social fact to the maintenance of social order.
- Bronislaw Malinowski – Function of a social institution is the satisfaction of basic needs of individuals through social practices.
- Talcott Parsons – Functions are those processes which contribute to the maintenance of the system's equilibrium (through AGIL framework: Adaptation, Goal Attainment, Integration, Latency).

### Characteristics of Function

- Contribution to System – Every function supports the survival and stability of the larger social structure.
- Interdependence – Different institutions (family, economy, religion, education) are interlinked, and their functions complement one another.
- Universality – All cultures and societies have functional aspects to meet basic needs.
- Integration – Functions help integrate individuals into society by creating shared norms and values.
- Adaptability – Functions may change over time to meet new challenges or needs of society.
- Manifest & Latent Functions (Robert K. Merton): Manifest Functions → intended and recognized outcomes; Latent Functions → unintended and hidden outcomes.
- Positive & Negative Functions – Some functions stabilize society (positive), while others may create disruption (dysfunctions).