

Is Sociology a Branch of Science

Sociology as a Science:

- There exists a great controversy about the exact nature of Sociology. The question whether sociology is a science or not
- two opposite views are available about the nature of Sociology.
- For one group of Sociologists Sociology is a science because Sociology adopts and applies the scientific method. Founding fathers of Sociology Auguste Comte, Emile Durkheim and others subscribe to this view.
- Others hold different view and opine Sociology is not a science. German Sociologist Max-weber does not accept sociology as a Science.

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, generalisation etc.
- Science has the following characteristics such as objectivity, observation, accurate prediction, experimentation, accurate measurement, generalisation and cause-effect relationships.

- **Sociology is a Science:**
- According to Auguste 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 adopts scientific method:**
 - Sociology studies social events by adopting scientific method. Though it cannot do experiment with men in a laboratory still man’s social behaviour is subject to scientific investigation like natural phenomenon.
 - It employs scientific methods as scales of Sociometry schedule, case study, interview and questionnaire which is used to quantitatively measure social phenomenon.

(2) Sociology makes accurate observation:

- Observation is possible in the field of sociology even if it does not possess a laboratory.
- Accurate observation is also possible outside the laboratory.
- The whole social world is the laboratory of sociology.
- ‘Newton did not invent their laws inside a laboratory. Sociology makes observation of tribal marriage at the time of occurrence.
- Even if Sociology does not possess a laboratory still it makes accurate observation. Hence Sociology is a science.

(3) Objectivity is possible in Sociology:

- Like natural sciences Sociology also makes objective study.
- The statement that dowry is a social evil is an objective statement which is based on facts collected by sociologists.
- Further Survey and revivification proves this. Sociology can also make objective study of social phenomena.
- New techniques and methods are also introduced to make social phenomena more objective. Hence Sociology is a science.

(4) Sociology describes cause-effect relationship:

- While studying family or population growth Sociology has traced the relationship between family disorganisation and divorce and population growth and poverty.
- Family disorganisation is the cause of divorce and population growth is the cause of poverty. Thus sociology describes cause-effect relationship in social disorganisation and population explosion. Hence sociology is a science.

- **(5) Sociology makes accurate measurement:**
- Sociology, like natural sciences also accurately measures social phenomena or relationships.
- By using statistical method, socio-metric scale, scales of measurement sociology effectively and accurately measures social relationships. Hence Sociology is a science.

- **(6) Sociology makes accurate Prediction:**
- 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 this predictive value of Sociology is improved day by day. As Sociology matures day by day it predicts more accurately.

- **(7) Sociology makes generalization:**
- The notion that generalization drawn by social sciences are not universal proved wrong.
- Like natural sciences Sociology became able to draw generalization which is universally applicable.
- The concept of incest taboo-prohibited sex relationship among blood relatives is a universal truth.

Sociology is Not A Science:

- There are some others 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 objectivity:**
- 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 behaviour is impossible Sociology deals with social relationships which cannot 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 behaviour which are so uncertain and peculiar that we can't make any accurate prediction about it. We can't predict what will be one's behaviour at a certain point of time nor we can 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 k.g. 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 is qualitative in nature which can't be measured. Hence Sociology is not a science.

- **(5) Lack of Generalisation:**
- Sociology can't make generalisations like natural sciences which is universally applicable. Sociology deals with human behaviour 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.

- **(6) Terminological Inefficiency:**
- Sociology suffers from terminological inefficiency. Sociology has not yet become able to develop an adequate set of scientific terms. Many terms used in Sociology are vague and carry different meanings to different persons. For example, the terms caste and class have not yet acquired clear meanings. Hence Sociology is not a science.