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Status and Role Part 1: Social Structure: Introduction, Definition and Types

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Introduction

- In every society, there are many social relations like marriage, parenthood friendship, et cetera.
- In order to understand the social relations, the sociologists use two components called status and role.

What is the Status?

Status in a layman terms can be a social position or the socially defined location or place which the individual occupies in a system of interaction or the society therefore every individual has status

Definition

- R. Linton (1936) defined status simply as a position in a social system, such as child or parent.
- Status refers to what a person is, whereas the closely linked notion of role refers to the behaviours expected of people in a status.

Status and Interaction

- Status helps in interaction with one another in the given situation. For example we know how to interact with our parents because we know the status that they occupy in the family. helps in smooth and predictable interaction
- But in case of strangers, until we don't know their status smooth interaction can't be smooth. Therefore, knowing status helps in patterned interaction.

Types

Status are of two types: (R. Linton)

- Ascribed: position in which one is born into. Eg caste status
- Achieved: merit based/acquired e. g. occupational status

When Can They Both be Present?

In case of a priest who gets the status due to hierarchy (ascribed) and knowledge (achieved) both.

Multiple Status

Can one individual hold multiple statuses?

- Yes, for example a young woman can be a sister, mother, wife, daughter, etc.
- Note: Our key status remains our occupation, in case of modern societies.



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What is a Role?

- The behavioral and dynamic aspect of status is known as role.
- A role is the set of norms, values, behaviors, and personality characteristics attached to a status.
- Role includes rights and duties.
- There can be no status without a role attached to it E. g. A woman has the status of a mother and duties attached to that status.

- So, role and status are two sides of the same coin. Role includes actual behaviours of an individual occupying a status as well as the set of expectations regarding the behaviours.
- E. g. Our parents expect us to behave in a respectful way to them. And in turn, children also expect from parents.



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Conclusion

- If the expectations are not met relationships are affected.
- When expectations are met society functions fully and there is a balance and there is uniformity of behaviours
- Therefore, we can say that role is one of the basic units of analysis of social order in human societies.

MCQs

1. Which among the following is not true regarding role?

1. Role is a set of expectation
2. One role cannot be defined without referring to another
3. Role is not a set of expectations
4. There cannot be a parent without child

Ans. C

2. A person is a schoolteacher, he is Vice Principal, member of a local club and President of the village panchayat. All these positions together constitute his:

1. Status
2. Status set
3. Multiple statuses
4. Status sequence

Ans. C

3. According to whom, role is the dynamic aspect of status, where 'status' refers to the position and 'role to its performance' ?

1. Weber
2. P. L. Kendall
3. R. Linton
4. Merton

Ans. C

#Sociological Concepts

#Social Structure

#status set

#UGC-NET

 Manishika

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