

Social Institutions

Institution Dictionary meaning

- **Institution = established practice:**
- an established law, custom, or practice

Penguin Dictionary of Sociology

- The term is widely used to describe social practices that are regularly and continuously repeated, are sanctioned and maintained by social norms, and have a major significance in the social structure.
- Like role, the term refers to established patterns of behaviour, but institution is regarded as a higher-order, more general unit that incorporates a plurality of roles.

DEFINITION

- A social institution is an interrelated system of social roles and social norms, organized around the satisfaction of an important social need or social function.
- Social Institutions are organized patterns of beliefs and behaviour that are centered on basic social needs.

ELEMENTS OF SOCIAL INSTITUTION

- A group of people
- United by common interest
- Having material resources
- Having norms
- Fulfill some social need.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

- Social institutions are universal.
- They vary from time to time and across cultures, in terms of complexity, specialization, scope, formality and organization. But their basic nature and purpose are similar everywhere.
- Social institutions are resistant to change; they tend to persist.

Characteristics of Social Institutions

- Each institution performs two types of social function.
- (a) **primary functions, which are also called** manifest, explicit, or direct functions;
- (b) **secondary functions, which are also called indirect, hidden, or latent functions.** Through these functions, social institutions fulfill important needs in the society.

THE FAMILY

- The family is generally regarded as a primary social institution.
- The institution of family is a basic unit in the society, and the multifaceted functions performed by it makes it a much-needed institution in a society.
- It is one of the oldest social institution on the earth. Although families differ widely around the world, they also share certain common concerns in their everyday lives.

EDUCATION

- Educational institution is responsible for the systematic transmission of knowledge, skills and cultural values within a formally organized structure.
- It is one of the most influential institutions in contemporary societies. Every nation in the world is equipped with some form of education system, though those systems vary greatly.

ECONOMY

- Economy is the social institution that ensures maintenance of society through the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services.
- Economy is the social institution that organizes a society's production, distribution and consumption of goods and services.
- The economy system is the complex of interrelated institutions through which the economic activity of man is expressed.

RELIGION

- ***Religion is a social institution composed of a unified system of beliefs, symbols, and rituals— based on some sacred or supernatural realm— that guides human behavior, gives meaning to life, and unites believers into a community. For many people,***
- religious beliefs provide the answers for seemingly unanswerable questions about the meaning of life and death.
- Religion is a system of faith and worship.

POLITICAL INSTITUTION

- Political institution is the distribution system of power and authority which is used to maintain social order.
- **Politics** is the social institution through which power is acquired and exercised by some people and groups.

Characteristics of Social Institutions

- Institutions are the controlling mechanisms:
- Institutions like religion, morality, state, government, law, legislation etc. control the behaviour of men.
- These preserve the social order and give stability to it.

Characteristics of Social Institutions

- **Institutions are interrelated:** Institutions, though diverse, are interrelated and interdependent. These are connected through statuses and roles of the individuals.
- **Relatively permanent:** Many institutions are rigid and enduring. Institutions normally do not undergo sudden or rapid changes. Changes take place slowly and gradually in them.
- Therefore institutions are the great conservers and transmitters of cultural heritage.

Characteristics of Social Institutions

- **Use Symbols to distinguish:** Institutions have cultural symbols. The symbols may be either material or non-material. A country has a flag, an emblem, a national anthem as its symbol. A school may have its own flag, uniform dress etc.
- **Possess material objects:** The institutions being group of people have national resources and material objects. The buildings, furniture, books and other objects are part of social life are a part of institutions.
- Social institutions are patterns of behavior grouped about the central needs of human beings in society.