

Q5 What are social stratifications? What are the different factors responsible for stratification in a society? Discuss with reference to Pakistan? (2021)

### Introduction:

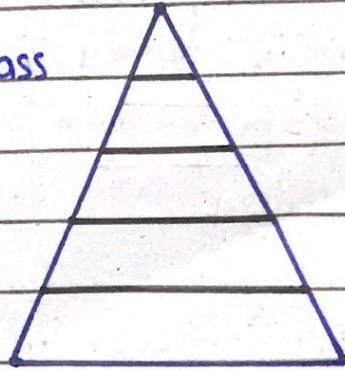
Social stratification refers to a society's categorization of its people into rankings based on factors like wealth, income, education, family background, and power.

Geologists also use the word stratification to describe the distinct vertical layers found in rock. Typically, society's layers, made of people, represent the uneven distribution of society's resources. Society views the people with more resources as the top layer of the social structure of stratification. Other groups of people with fewer and fewer resources, represent the lower layer. An individual's place within this stratification is called **socio-economic status (SES)**.

Social stratification is the idea that people are divided into different hierarchies

where some are deemed more important and have more power than others.

- Social class
- Gender
- Ethnicity
- Age



More power

Least Power

- Social Stratification chart

## Social Stratification:

Social Stratification refers to the hierarchical arrangements of individuals or groups within a society based on various factors such as wealth, power, social status, and access to resources. As

per "The Communist Manifesto" by Karl Marx

social stratification is based on the concept of class struggle and the division of

society into distinct economic classes. In Marx's theory of social stratification

society is divided into two classes

Bourgeoisie (capitalist class) and Proletariat (working class).

The **bourgeoisie** are the owners of the means of production, such as factories, land, and machinery. They control and accumulate wealth through the exploitation of labor. Marx argued that the bourgeoisie use their economic power to dominate and control the means of production, leading to the accumulation of capital and the concentration of wealth. The **Proletariat** refers to the working class who do not own the means of production and must sell their labor to the bourgeoisie in exchange for wages. Marx believed that the proletariat's labor power is exploited by the bourgeoisie, who extract surplus value from their work. This surplus value is the source of profits for the capitalist class. Marx's theory of social stratification rooted in historical materialism, the evolution of society is driven by the dynamics of economic production and class conflict. On the contrary **Emile Durkheim** argued in his book "**The Division of Labor in Society**" that some level of social inequality is necessary for the proper functioning of Society. He discussed two main types

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of solidarity that underpin social cohesion  
**Mechanical Solidarity and Organic Solidarity**

### **Mechanical Solidarity:**

This type of solidarity is characteristic of traditional, simpler societies where individuals share similar values, norms and lifestyles.

In such societies, people perform similar tasks and have a strong sense of collective consciousness. Social stratification in mechanical solidarity societies is relatively limited, as people's roles are relatively similar and the division of labor is minimal.

### **Organic Solidarity:**

Organic solidarity emerges in more complex industrial societies characterized by a higher degree of specialization and interdependence.

Durkheim argued that in these societies, people became more specialized in their roles and this specialization creates a greater division of labor. As a result, individuals are more dependent on one another to fulfill their specific roles. Social stratification

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in organic solidarity societies is more pronounced, as individuals have different skills, roles and responsibilities.

Durkheim believed that some degree of social inequality is necessary in organic solidarity societies to ensure that individuals with different talents and skills perform the tasks that contribute to the functioning of the whole society. He saw this form of social stratification as a natural outcome of the increasing complexity of modern societies. Durkheim's perspective on social stratification is rooted in the idea that different individuals and groups contribute to society in various ways, and their roles are essential for maintaining social order and stability. But as per **Karl Marx's** inherent contradictions within capitalism such as unequal distribution of wealth and the exploitation of labor, would lead to a point of crisis. This crisis would ultimately result in the overthrow of the bourgeoisie by proletariat in a revolution.

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## Factors : Social Stratification

### Karl Marx : Economic Factors

Karl Marx emphasized economic factors as a primary driver of Society/ Social stratification. The ownership of the means of production determines one's position in society. **For instance:** in modern capitalist societies billionaires like Jeff Bezos or Elon Musk, who own major corporations and accumulate immense wealth, belong to the upper echelons of society. In contrast, low wage workers in jobs with little job security may find themselves in a lower stratum.

### Social Status and Prestige : Max Weber

Max Weber highlighted the significance of social status and prestige alongside economic factors. An individual's occupation, education, and life style contribute to their social status. Consider the distinction between a highly respected medical doctor and a

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blue collar worker while both contribute to society, the doctor's profession is often associated with higher social prestige due to the years of education and specialized knowledge required.

## Pierre Bourdieu: Cultural Capital

Pierre Bourdieu introduced the concept of cultural capital which includes cultural knowledge, education and social connections.

This can lead to social stratification as those with more <sup>cultural</sup> capital have advantages in various aspects of life. **For instance:** individuals who have received a prestigious education at elite institutions may have better opportunities for high paying jobs and social networking, furthering their social status.

## Race and Ethnicity: Critical Race Theory

Critical race theorists point out that race and ethnicity are important factors in social stratification. **For instance** in the United States systemic racism has led to disparities in wealth, education and opportunities for

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people of color, particularly African American and native Americans. These groups often face barriers that contribute to their lower socio-economic status ~ Michelle Alexander "The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the age of colorblindness."

## Pakistan: Social Stratification

### Economic Disparities:

(State of Human Rights report by Human rights commission of Pakistan)

Pakistan faces significant economic inequality with a concentration of wealth in the hands of a few while a large portion of the population lives in poverty. As per World

Inequality Database "Pakistan Income distribution"

Economic inequality, with a small number of elites owing a disproportionate share of wealth and resources. The poverty <sup>rate</sup> remains high, and access to quality education and healthcare is uneven.

The "richest 1%" in Pakistan holds a substantial portion of the country's wealth, leading to economic disparities. Global wealth report 11. Pakistani own 30% of the country's wealth



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## Gender Inequality:

(Pakistan Gender Equality Diagnostic,  
World Bank) report

Pakistan grapples with significant gender disparities including limited access to education, employment and political participation for women. Many women are confined to traditional roles, limiting their social mobility. The gender pay gap and unequal inheritance laws contribute to economic and social stratification. As per **ASER survey** girls enrollment rates decrease in rural areas: keep decreasing as they progress through higher grades.

## Education Inequality:

(Pakistan's Education Crisis: The Real Story"  
by Human Rights Watch)

Education disparities exist between urban and rural areas in Pakistan, with rural regions having lower access to quality education. Girls often face barriers to attending schools. This contributes to a cycle of limited opportunities for those with limited education. **UNESCO report** highlights lower literacy rates in rural areas of Pakistan compared to urban areas.

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## Political Patronage:

(Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency report)

political connections and patronage networks often play a role in determining access to resources and opportunities, leading to stratification based on political affiliation

## Conclusion:

Social stratification remains a defining feature of societies worldwide, encompassing a complex interplay of factors that shape the distribution of resources, opportunities, and privileges among individuals and groups. By understanding the complexities that underlie inequality, societies, including Pakistan, can work towards fostering inclusivity and social mobility.