

**SOCIAL ORDER: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS IN NIGERIA, NORTH WEST  
SENATORIAL DISTRICT OF AKWA IBOM STATE PERSPECTIVE**

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**ABSTRACT:** *Social order must be a matter for empirical investigation. It is obvious that each of the above stated old philosophical views has its own grain of truth inherent in it, for each comes near to describing what is observed in some societies, or part of societies, of different styles, at different periods of history, in particular situations or circumstances. But to consider each as a “theory” of social order of universal validity, is to put it mildly unrealistic or absurd. To escape from this unrealistic approach which pervades some sociological discussion of social order it is pertinent to remember that social harmony is very often not achieved, and that social order and disorder are very much relative term, it observe that the actual state of relative order to disorder in a particular society or part of society is the outcome of complex forces of dependence and interdependence, of cooperation and conflict, of strength and weakness, of alliance and cleavage between people and groups. This paper therefore, examines the emergence of social order within the context of challenges and prospects in Nigeria in general and North West Senatorial District of Akwa Ibom State in particular. The study adopted qualitative research and documentary method of data collection. It revealed that, social challenges that plague the state and mitigate development, here are top lists as poverty, corruption, inequality, high child mortality rate, poor standard of education, cultism, theft, and arm robbery attacks. It recommended among others, that the government and individuals should be preoccupied with creating jobs for the teeming population of jobs seekers; the legal system should be made to punish corruption and domestic violence accordingly to serve as a deterrent to others.*

**KEYWORDS:** social order; social construct; socialization; functionalism; social sanction.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

It is rightly assumed that the central or salient issue of sociological theory is why there is order in society. Thus, it is necessary to sociology, as to any other discipline seeking to generate reliable and cumulative knowledge, that there be order in its subject matter. This means that only orderly, regular patterns can be discerned in social phenomena. It is only regularities which make possible description and explanation, in social sciences as much as in the natural sciences. Therefore, sociologists are expected to find order and regularity not only in stable societies and smoothly functioning organizations, but in bitter social conflict, in bloody uprisings, and in period of rapid, unplanned and superficially chaotic transformation. Needless to say law and order may breakdown in orderly regular ways. But order in this sense of regularity may be quite imperceptible to participants, and only apparent to sociologists faced with data on many similar situations as

illustrated by Barton, (1969), on communities plagued by natural calamities. However this is not the sense of “order” in which “the problem of order” is said to be central or salient to sociological theory and it is significant that the two meanings be distinctively separated. What we refer, in sociology, by ‘the problem of order’ is akin to the question(s) posed by Thomas Hobbes (1957): why do men cooperate with each other in society? Why is there not a continual ‘war of every one against everyone’, as each individual pursues his own self-interest by whatever? Means, including force, at his disposal? Why is life, in consequence, “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short?” How, in other words, is a degree of harmony achieved? These questions can never be addressed and understood through the old political philosophy of social order arising from the coercing of people into obedience; or general consensus among people in a society; or striking bargains for individual and collective advantage. Contrary to these reasons, the question of understanding “social order” involves unraveling complex forces of dependence and interdependence, cooperation and conflict, strength and weakness, alliance and cleavage, etc. between people, groups or nations. Central to understanding these complex forces is based on our ability to appraise and comprehend the division of labour in societies.

Social order is a fundamental concept in sociology that refers to the way in which the various components of society social structure and institutions, social relations, social interactions and behavior, and cultural features such as, beliefs, norms and values work together to maintain the status quo.

Outside the field of sociology, people often use the term “social order” to refer to a state of stability and consensus that exists in the absence of chaos and upheaval. Sociologists, however, have a more complex understanding of the term. Within the field, it refers to the organization of many interrelated parts of a society. Social order is present when individuals agree to a shared social contract that states that certain rules and laws must be abided and certain standards, values, and norms maintained. Social order can be observed within national societies, geographical regions, institutions and organizations, communities, formal and informal groups, and even at the scale of global society. Within all of these, social order is most often hierarchical in nature Some people hold more power than others in order to enforce the laws, rules, and norms necessary for the preservation of social order. Practices, behaviors, values, and beliefs that are counter to those of the social order are typically framed as deviant or dangerous which are curtailed through the enforcement of laws, rules, norms, and taboo.

### **Social Order Follows a Social Contract**

The question of how social order is achieved and maintained is the question that gave birth to the field of sociology, in his book *Leviathan*, English philosopher Thomas Hobbes laid the groundwork for the exploration of this question within the social sciences. Hobbes recognized that without some form of social contract, there could be no society, and chaos and disorder would reign. According to Robbes, modern states were created in order to provide social order. People agree to empower the state to enforce the rule of law, and in exchange, they give up some individual power (Hobbes, 1957). This is the essence of the social contract that lies at the oundation of Hobbes’s theory of social order. As sociology became an established field of study, early thinkers became keenly interested in the question of social order. Founding fathers like Karl Marx and Emile Durkheim

focused their attention on the significant transitions that occurred before and during their lifetimes, including industrialization, urbanization, and the waning of religion as a significant force in social life. These two theorists, though, had polar opposite views on how social order is achieved and maintained, and to what ends.

### **Durkheim's Cultural Theory of Social Order**

Through his study of the role of religion in primitive and traditional societies, French sociologist Emile Durkheim came to believe that social order arose out the shared beliefs, values, norms and practices of a given group of people. His view locates the origins of social order in the practices and interactions of daily life as well as those associated with rituals and important events. In other words, it is a theory of social order that puts culture at the forefront. Durkheim theorized that it was through the culture shared by a group, community, or society that a sense of social connection - what he called solidarity - emerged between and among people and that worked to bind them together into a collective. Durkheim referred to a group's shared collection of beliefs, values, attitudes, and knowledge as the "collective conscience." In primitive and traditional societies Durkheim observed that sharing these things was enough to create a "mechanical solidarity" that bound the group together. In the larger, more diverse and urbanized societies of modern times, Durkheim observed that it was the recognition of the need to rely on each other to fulfill different roles and functions that bound society together. He called this "organic solidarity" (Ekpenyong, 2014).

Durkheim also observed that social institutions such as the state, media, education, and law enforcement - play formative roles in fostering a collective conscience in both traditional and modern societies. According to Durkheim, it is through our interactions with these institutions and with the people around us that we participate in the maintenance of rules and norms and behavior that enable the smooth functioning of society. In other words, we work together to maintain social order. Durkheim's view became the foundation for the functionalist perspective, which views society as the sum of interlocking and interdependent parts that evolve together to maintain social order (Ekong, 2010).

### **Marx's Critical Theory of Social Order**

German philosopher Karl Marx took a different view of social order. Focusing on the transition from pre-capitalist to capitalist economies and their effects on society, he developed a theory of social order centered on the economic structure of society and the social relations involved in the production of goods. Marx believed that these aspects of society were responsible for producing the social order, while others - including social institutions and the state - were responsible for maintaining it. He referred to these two different components of society as the base and the superstructure (Weber, 1963).

In his writings on capitalism, Marx argued that the superstructure grows out of the base and reflects the interests of the ruling class that controls it. The superstructure justifies how the base operates, and in doing so, justifies the power of the ruling class. Together, the base and the superstructure create and maintain social order. From his observations of history and politics, Marx concluded that the shift to a capitalist industrial economy throughout Europe created a class of workers who were

exploited by company owners and their financiers. The result was a hierarchical class-based society in which a small minority held power over the majority, whose labor they used for their own financial gain. Marx believed that social institutions did the work of spreading the values and beliefs of the ruling class in order to maintain a social order that would serve their interests and protect their power. Marx's critical view of social order is the basis of the conflict theory perspective in sociology, which views social order as a precarious state shaped by ongoing conflicts between groups that are competing for access to resources and power (Giddens, 1986).

### **Putting Both Theories to Work**

While some sociologists align themselves with either Durkheim's or Marx's view of social order, most recognize that both theories have merit. A nuanced understanding of social order must acknowledge that it is the product of multiple and sometimes contradictory processes. Social order is a necessary feature of any society and it is deeply important for building a sense of belonging and connection with others. At the same time, social order is also responsible for producing and maintaining oppression. A true understanding of how social order is constructed must take all of these contradictory aspects into account.

### **Challenges of Social Order**

Social order is a core theoretical issue in the social sciences. The problem arises because human beings are both individual and social. If we were each living alone on a private planet, we could do whatever we wanted and would never have to worry about anyone else. Or, if each of us were attached to one group mind, we would have no individual impulses and urges. But we are both. Every individual inhabits a separate physical body and thus each has his or her own experiences, information, feelings, and ambitions. Yet we are not completely independent. Stories of people living in isolation - neglected children, prisoners in solitary confinement - tell us that we need social contact to be physically and emotionally healthy and simply to stay alive. For social order to arise and be maintained, two separate problems must be overcome. People must be able to coordinate their actions and they must cooperate to attain common goals.

Coordination requires that people develop stable expectations about others' behaviour. When driving, for example, it is helpful to know whether others are likely to approach you on the right or the left side of the road. If you and I agree to a date Friday at 8:00 p.m., we presume that we are referring to the same time zone and calendar and that we will each be at the same place at the specified time. If you and I agree to a phone call Monday at 12:00 and you're in Abuja and I'm in Akwa Ibom, coordination is more difficult. If you call at noon London time but I'm expecting a call at noon Abuja time, then I will likely miss you. I will be asleep. We can have stable expectations and still not much social order, however. Contemporary Ika, Etim Ekpo, Oruk Anam and Ukanafun L.G.A. of Akwa Ibom State, for instance, is a society visited by frequent violence, highly unequal relations between the genders and age grades, and a meager standard of living. Yet the indigenes also exhibit high predictability. Because most indigenes expect to be living under these conditions, they act according to their expectations and therefore are able to carry on. But life is hard. It is predictable but not what we would call orderly. Something else is required for social order to be maintained. If people are to live together, they must not only be able to coordinate their activities

.it also to interact productively - to do things that help rather than hurt others. Thus highly ordered societies have a remarkable capacity to sustain cooperation (Ekong, 2017).

Cooperation entails people working together for the same end. Talent aside, a basketball team with high average assists and rebounds will be more successful than one in which players concentrate their efforts on individual scoring. People who care most about their own personal statistics and making the pros are unlikely to be good team players. As a result, the team will be less successful than it could be. The challenge is that behaving cooperatively may impose costs on the individual. Everyone thinks it's a good idea to spend money on education, but nobody wants to pay more property taxes. We appreciate National Public Radio, but many of us change stations when it's fund-raising time. In many situations, then, the interests of the individual and the group are at odds. Sometimes individuals fail to contribute to the group - they don't volunteer at the local school, don't donate money to National Public Radio, and don't give to people when help is needed. They hope that others will work to improve the community but would prefer to enjoy the benefits without having to make too much effort themselves. At other times, people may do things that impose harm on the group - take others' property, pollute, or cheat. They do what they want regardless of the effects of their actions on others. If order is to be maintained, these tendencies must be overcome. The question is: How can societies promote high levels of coordination and cooperation? The answer depends, in part, on assumptions about human nature. As you will see, social theorists make very different assumptions about individual motivation. If we assume that people are largely altruistic - inclined to work for the same end - then the principal obstacle to social order is coordination. In the example above, people want to have that trans-Atlantic phone call but may be confused about the time difference between London and Abuja. In American politics, if we assume that politicians want the best for the United States, but that Republicans and Democrats differ in their views of the appropriate role of government in the economy, then legislative gridlock is a likely outcome. If we assume that people are largely self-interested, then cooperation is problematic as well. Republicans and Democrats may not only have different views of the issues, but they may also care about their own re-election. If so, then they are not likely to make hard decisions that are unpopular with their constituents (Onyin and Nniche, 2002).

Societies vary in their levels of coordination and cooperation and, therefore, in their levels of social order. The highest known levels of social order on the planet are found among the social insects - ants, wasps, and bees. Ants manage to coordinate their activities to obtain food, deal with garbage, and dispose of their dead (Johnson, 2001). They also behave in self-sacrificing ways. The worker caste - females subservient to the needs of their mother - are content to surrender their own reproduction in order to raise sisters and brothers. Not only do worker ants give up the prospect of having their own offspring, but they also risk their lives on behalf of the colony. Just leaving the nest to search for food is to choose danger over safety. Some ant species have been observed to suffer a death rate of 6 percent per hour when they hunt for food. Virtual suicide is the fate of workers of *Cataglyphis bicolor*, a scavenger of dead insects and other arthropods in the North African desert (Holldobler and Wilson, 1994). Ant societies appear to be super organisms that can attain vast geographic and numerical scope: one European super colony of an Argentine species of ants extends for at least six thousand kilometers and consists of millions of nests comprising billions of workers (Giraud, Pedersen, and Keller, 2002). Human societies are less ordered than those of the

social insects. Yet even here there is wide variation. Sometimes human groups can attain relatively high levels of social order even under difficult circumstances. This was amply demonstrated in New York City after the destruction of the World Trade Center in 2001. The city did not fall into chaos. Instead, New Yorkers listened to the news for information and instructions and went to work. In the midst of scenes of devastation unprecedented in American history, volunteers flooded the Ground Zero site in lower Manhattan offering their help, restaurants gave away food to rescuers and victims, and celebrities raised funds for the victims in telethons. Societies may not always be so resilient, however. Thomas Hobbes provides a famous description of social disorder in *Leviathan*, written in 1651 in the midst of the gory English Civil War: There is no place for Industry; because the fruit thereof is uncertain: and consequently no Culture of the Earth; no Navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by Sea; no commodious Building; no Instruments of moving, and removing such things as require much force; no Knowledge of the face of the Earth; no account of Time; no Arts; no Letters; no Society; and which is worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death; And the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short (Hobbes, 1957).

The degree of disorder that we observe at home and around the world is not as extreme as that depicted in Hobbes's colorful prose. Edward Banfield,(1958), for example, describes a southern Italian village, Montegrano, circa 1950, in which there is relatively little social order. Although the village has inadequate schools, bad medical facilities, and poor roads - conditions that harm everyone - the residents do not cooperate politically to pressure the various government agencies that conceivably might remedy these problems. Underlying this inability to cooperate is an utter lack of public- spiritedness. Indeed, the very idea of public- spiritedness is so incomprehensible in Montegrano that Banfield has to explain the meaning of the concept to a local teacher. Not only is public- spiritedness unknown in this village, but there is a pervasive desire to keep others from getting ahead.

Societies with high levels of social order are able to cope with challenges like those faced in Montegrano. They are better able to provide education, control crime, reduce war, limit terrorism, improve public health, address global warming, and so forth. They may also limit freedom. More order is not necessarily better. As appealing as it is to have low crime rates, very high levels of social order may impose great costs on individuals. None of us would be likely to choose to live in an ant- like community. Thus in this book we make no claims about the level of order that is desirable. Rather, we focus on explanations of how social order is actually achieved. Under what conditions are people able both to coordinate their activities and to cooperate? Through what mechanisms is social order achieved? Theories of social order explain how order is produced and maintained and why some groups, towns, and societies have more order than others. These theories do so by focusing on one or both of the problems - coordination and cooperation - described previously. In the next section we describe what theory is and identify its components. We then turn to the five most important theoretical solutions that have been proposed for the problem of social order - individuals, hierarchies, markets, groups, and networks. Each solution seeks to explain social order. The solutions differ depending on the conditions that are identified as causing social order and on the mechanisms by which this order is produced.

### **Perspective of Social Order**

The society we live in consists of a large variety of personalities and identities. Social order is defined as the conservation, maintenance and enforcement of the “normal” ways of relating and behaving in a society. Therefore, the belief that social order derives solely from consensus and shared values stated by the functionalist are not sophisticated enough to explain the sustenance of social order. There are much more aspects that correlate and help sustain social order. The basic social cement of constructing and maintaining social order is based on the three important aspects: socialization, social sanctions and the self-interest in every individual. Socialization is often argued to be the main determinant of human behaviour. Therefore, by socialization, we are taught what is right and wrong in our society. The best example is shown in feral children. We are of the same species, yet without socialization, they turn out primal and animal-like. Therefore it is proved that we internalize the values and norms to everyday life behavior which results in social conformity and then, social order. This aspect was explained by Functionalism stating social order is a web of shared norms and values regulated in everyday life (Ekpenyong, 2014).

Social sanctions are defined as rewards and punishments for every individual’s behavior and social actions that is judged by society based on the shared norms and values. Social sanctions can be categorized as informal or formal. An example of an informal social sanction would be isolation or teasing from peers for a social action that is out of the boundaries of shared norms. On the other hand, formal social sanctions are enforced through formal settings and institutions like the legal system and the government. Hence, social sanctions are what help regulate human behavior by what society reacts to a social action. This factor was related and clarified by Marxism. The self-interest in every individual also plays an important role on the reason why people follow and conform to the rules and norms of society. It is in their own best interest to follow and conform because humans and our ancestors are proven to be mammals that live in packs. If an individual is isolated from the society, it would mean great difficulties for the person to go about his life because we live in an integrated society where one cannot just survive by oneself. Furthermore, it is wiser to conform and live in a peaceful society rather than a chaotic one. As a result, people follow the rules and help maintain social order because it is making everything easier on them. This is the neglected aspect that both stands of the argument failed to explain. The functionalists claim that society is a large integration of functional institutions. They believe that every part contributes to the infrastructure that constrains humans’ behavior and choices. The arguments presented by functionalism are flawed because it doesn’t touch on the conflict that happens often in society. The theory has strong assumptions that the society lives in a constant state of consensus. Emile Durkheim, a French sociologist stated that the society is a being on its own. It is a basis where all the values and norms of individuals are socialized and passed on. He claimed that although humans are “homo-duplex”, the good side always dominantly controls the selfish side because the values of society are internalized and believed by the individual. Therefore, the claim that social order derives from consensus still carries partial truth (Durkheim, 1961 in Ekpenyong, 2014).

Social order could also be explained by the functional prerequisites of a society that was presented by Talcott Parsons, an American sociologist. He believed that in order for a society to survive and proliferate it had to fulfill some requirements which are goal-attainment, adaptation, integration and latency of shared norms and values. The goal-attainment meant a mutual drive among all

individuals in a society. It is necessary for the individuals to work together and share basic views. Adaptation, the second functional prerequisite signifies adaptation of the society to the natural world and its changes. If a society is unable to adapt, the natural world would practice a classic “survival of the fittest” and eliminate it. The third functional prerequisite is integration. It is proven that integration maintains the order in society because everyone will be in consensus and it helps individuals internalize the society’s values and shared norms. Lastly, latency of shared norms and values also plays an important part in the survival of a society. It regulates the practice of norms in humans and helps reinforce social boundaries. Looking at how a society survives also proves that social order is sustained from consensus. The contradicting view that social order is derived from practice of power and economical oppression are supported by Marxism. According to Karl Marx, social order is based on the perpetuation of false-class consciousness and the ruling class ideology. The economic base is used to control and limit the working class and their life choices. The superstructure of society such as schools and the legal system are manipulated by capitalists to reinforce the rules and regulations of the ruling class, hence, creating social order. The false-class consciousness is imposed on the working class by repressive state apparatuses and ideological state apparatuses which are collaborated into different parts of society. Ideological state apparatuses indoctrinate the ideas of being the perfect “proletariat” into the working class and hence, creating false-class consciousness. This creates social order because the proletariats are obeying to the rules of the bourgeoisies. Examples of the ideology state apparatuses are the system of schools and media. Repressive State Apparatuses are institutions which demand social order and use force or sanctions to sustain it. Examples of repressive state apparatuses are the legal system and the armies of a country. When the conflict of interest is exposed, social order controlled by the ruling class would shatter and then coercion would occur (Marx and Engels, 1968).

Another theory that explains social order in the context of conflict and oppression is Feminism. This theory believes that social order is a picture painted by the dominant class, men. Men oppress to keep themselves in power and the women in a lower and submissive class in society. Feminists claim that society and most institutions in it, such as family, are merely constructed by men to reinforce the image of social power. Women are expected to take on the role of the caregiver and nurturer in a family. It has become the ultimate assumption that sustains social order because the expected aren’t questioned anymore. This concludes that feminism views social order as an image created by men to assure and exploit women. But other than the two theories that speak on coercion and restraint of choices, the interpretive view takes a different stand and declares that social order is derived from the people within society itself. It could be explained by the social action theory by Max Weber. The social action theory explains that people attach meanings to their social action. Verstehen, which is German for understand, is one of the key points of the social action theory. It means that you have to understand the meaning behind the action to get to the core of a social action. This helps explain social order because it believes that social actors are free to interpret the meaning of following the rules and conforming to society which usually means that it is in their best-interest to do so. Other than Max Weber’s social action theory, ethnomethodology can be used to explain social order. It looks at how people make sense of the world, constructing social order by themselves. Harold Garfinkle refuses to see individuals in society as cultural dopes’ but claims that they have their own thoughts and ways. They actively take part in making sense of everything in their lives. Individuals firstly document everything using the documentary method. Then, their



brains seek out the tendency of a happening with everyday scenes from their memories which is called the underlying pattern. Then, it becomes part of their social reality. Hence, ethno methodology is the ultimate interpretive theory that explains social order because it looks deep into how individuals make sense.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, though the theories above touched on important aspects of how social order is maintained, yet, it is still irrelevant to go with either side of the argument. There are much more facts that correlate and help sustain social order. The basic social cement of constructing and maintaining social order is based on the three important aspects: socialization, which is a stand provided by functionalism, social sanctions, which is strongly supported by Marxism and feminism and the self-interest in every individual, methodology spoke on. Hence, it is a balance of a number of aspects the maintains social order and that the functionalists' view that social order is based on consensus and shared values are only partially valid.

## Recommendations

From the study, social order is refers to a particular set or system of linked structures, institutions, relations, customs, values and practices, which conserve, maintain and enforce certain patterns of relating and behaving. Therefore, it is recommended that:

1. The government and individuals should be preoccupied with creating jobs for the teeming population of job seekers. The availability of jobs would reduce the rate of poverty in the state. When and where teenagers and youth ready for work or those in working ages would decrease the number of youth in crime would also reduce.
2. The security situation in the state presently has improved but more can be done. Strategies should be made by the security forces to combat and eradicate threat to lives and property such as terrorism and insurgency in those affected L.G.Areas.
3. Akwa Ibomites needs to be regularly sensitized on the need to treat one another with equity and fairness.
4. The educational sector needs to be revamped to meet international standard. Quality of teachers and the style and method used in Akwa Ibom State can be improved upon.
5. The legal system should be made to punish corruption and domestic violence accordingly to serve as a deterrent to others. As this reduction or abstinence from social challenges or problems will increase the level of peace and attract investors into the state.

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