

Social relations



Social interaction or social relation is defined as a working relationship between two, three or more individuals or social groups that forms the basis for a social structure (Clarke 2010). The nature of these social relationships forms the mantra of social studies for social scientists like Robert Nisbet (1970) who successfully came up with the patterns of social interaction otherwise referred to as “molecular cement”. Nisbet is strongly convinced that the patterns of social interactions he established are the basic foundations that link individual members of a group right from the lowest level to the highest possible level.

Exchange: this is the most fundamental form of social interaction that is based on the widely cherished “norm of reciprocity”. The principle of exchange relates to the elements of rewards and cost considering that individuals, organizations, groups and nations interact at any given level give out whatever they have in exchange for that which they do not have but need.

Cooperation: This particular pattern of interaction is noticeable when two or more persons are working together to achieve a common goal. Their input and efforts need to be organized and coordinated at this level of interaction. Cooperation could be contractual, directed, traditional or spontaneous depending on the situation at hand.

Competition: Two or more individuals or groups aiming at the same goal often motivated to achieve it before the other. According to Nisbet, competition could be constructive or destructive depending on how it is applied from one scenario to another.

Conflict: Conflict usually results from competition in cases where there are no rules to regulate the extent to which it goes. However, the conflict could either promote a dire need for social changes or flare up the prevailing discord. In times of conflict, cooperation and compromise play a greater role towards attaining stability of the social structure.

Coercion: Individuals or groups with authority and social powers tend to use punishment or threat, deprivation or violence in an attempt to control the actions of their subordinates.

Research Related Issues

There are so many ethical issues that can arise when conducting a research. One of the most predominant ethical issues is protecting confidential or highly personal information that has been revealed by an individual in the course of research. Social researchers are under an obligation to ensure that any personal information about an individual respondent himself/herself is not made public but discrete strictly for the purposes of research.

Furthermore, individual data should be kept where they cannot be readily accessed by the unauthorized individuals.

Additionally, dignity and respect for the volunteers and respondents must be observed throughout the research period. The potential volunteers should be properly educated on the research proceeding, possible dangers and advantage of engaging in research studies before they decide to take part or not on their own. Therefore there should be no form of coercion by the researcher on any unwilling individual to take part in research. All potential volunteers must be left to participate on their own volition.