

ISS Code of Ethics

Introduction

Over the last two hundred years of its existence, sociology has promoted diverse approaches, methodologies, and methods of study.

As a subject of study, sociology has been variously defined. It has been understood as a social science that studies the social lives of human beings, groups/communities, and societies; or it has been thought of as a study of humans, their cultures and their institutions. Alternatively, it has been viewed as a study of relationships of domination–subordination within particular societies; the attention here being focused on structures, systems, and processes. It has also been perceived as a study of everyday life, from short contacts between anonymous individuals to the study of the national and global social processes.

As a consequence, sociological studies have encompassed not only the micro, but also the meso and the macro social realities. Some sociological traditions have embraced interdisciplinarity coalescing with anthropology, economics, geography, history, political science, and psychology to study the ‘social’ and others have emphasised the uniquely ‘social’ without integrating it with the issues explored in other social sciences.

The academic discipline of sociology in India is about hundred years old. It has included diversity of approaches, from social philosophy, to ethnography to textual studies and surveys in order to study institutions, processes, and everyday cultures. What unites these approaches is a commitment to analyse the present — the contemporary and the modern — in its various dimensions and to do so with academic protocols that have evolved with various approaches within the global and the Indian realms. Sociologists thus emphasise the careful gathering and analysis of evidence about social life to develop and enrich our understanding of cultures, relationships, social processes, institutions, and their underlying structures.

This long tradition has allowed sociologists to believe that it offers a distinctive way of seeing and understanding the social world in which we live, and intervene and that which shapes our lives. Sociological analysis prepares us all to comprehend and assess how we can live a life of wellbeing in a changing complex society and which is also rewarding personally, socially, and professionally. If sociology studies the ‘social’, it also presents ways to live socially. Obviously, the practitioners of sociology need a Code of Ethics to live by and practice their discipline and the Indian Sociological Society, the all-India professional association of sociologists, is the most appropriate body to formulate this Code.

Preamble

This Code of Ethics embodies a set of guidelines. These guidelines are aspirational goals and are intended to orient sociologists to comprehend the principles and standards regarding their professional responsibilities as teachers, researchers, and practitioners. Adherence to these guidelines will not only enhance the credibility and authenticity of the discipline of

sociology in India, but also help its practitioners in discharging their responsibility towards themselves, their colleagues and the larger society. Internalising these guidelines gives members of the Indian Sociological Society an identity and helps them in reflecting on their behaviour towards groups and individuals whom they study, work, and knowledge about whom, they wish to protect. The Code embodies a set of procedures on issues that they encounter in the profession, particularly in India.

General principles

1. To be a sociologist is to acknowledge the necessity of using academic protocols and scientific practices in doing research. Each approach/perspective will have its scientific practices and it is imperative to follow these in all circumstances.
2. Sociological thinking implies a commitment to honesty, truthfulness, originality, transparency, meticulousness, methodological rigour, objectivity, openness to different perspectives, professionalism, scientific criticism, introspection and reflection. These values should be part of the work ethic in teaching and research and should embody relationships with students, colleagues, and the larger society.
3. Sociologists must respect the communities and societies in which they live and work. Sociology is about group work and sociologists must ensure that they do not discriminate on grounds of age, sex, sexual preference, disability, ethnicity, language, caste, religion, and political affiliation. They must respect dignity and rights of all people.
4. Sociologists intervene to advance public good by advancing academic and scientific practices that promote sociological thinking. Sociological thinking contributes to public good and by making their knowledge public, sociologists contribute to the making of public good.
5. Sociologists must be aware of the fact that their assumptions may have an impact upon society. Hence, it is their duty to keep an unbiased attitude as far as possible and to acknowledge the tentative and relative character of the results of their research. No sociological assumption should be presented as indisputable truth.
6. Sociologists must adhere to the highest scientific standards in all activities that they do as sociologists—within the classroom, as supervisors, as examiners, as policy makers and practitioners— and ensure that they refrain from making statements that could misinform or mislead students, colleagues and their readers.
7. Sociologists must also promote academic and scientific practices within the academia and in society at large and ensure that they transmit the knowledge of these professional standards to the next generation when they teach, supervise, examine and review theses, articles, and books.
8. As supervisors guiding doctoral research, sociologists must adhere to self-restraint and act as an enabler to her/his student, bringing out the best in her/him as a researcher.
9. In their teaching and research, sociologists must respect and acknowledge the intellectual copyright of students, researchers, and practitioners whose data they use. They must acknowledge even the smallest amount of work and must not promote plagiarism either directly or indirectly.
10. Information and data collected by sociologists must be considered a public good and need to be shared with respondents and other professionals for comments and academic criticism.

11. Teachers, researchers, and practitioners must not claim expertise in fields where they do not have knowledge, especially when contributing to policy and public interventions.
12. Commitment and sanctity of the discipline must be kept as the goal of the profession, especially in the context of financial and/or personal benefits. Professional integrity must never be compromised by the sociologist in lieu of either funding or fees or other kinds of financial and/or personal gains.

Research Ethics

1. Research starts when young scholars wishing to become sociologists initiate dissertations and thesis work. The credibility of a discipline depends entirely upon the quality of doctoral, post-doctoral, and independent and sponsored research, a large amount of which is eventually published. Sociologists must train themselves in the ways to do research as defined by various approaches/perspectives and methodologies.
2. Researchers in sociology must be trained to use utmost self-discipline and professionalism while choosing a research problem; deciding about the methodology and theoretical formulations, with the sole aim to produce original work, with self-checks on plagiarism.
3. Researchers must ensure that the report/study is self-explanatory, exhibiting complete transparency in terms of methods and tools used source/s of data, locale of study, etc. in order to have credibility.
4. Understanding social responsibility is a must for a sociologist. It is very important to be completely honest and truthful to the subjects while obtaining primary data. Adherence to research ethics must be the top priority and informed consent must be procured from respondents before obtaining data.
5. Acknowledging earlier research in the given area and giving due recognition to colleagues who have worked or are working in one's area enriches research, enhancing its authenticity. Therefore, every sociologist must acknowledge the contributions of his/her colleagues.
6. Every sociologist must ensure that the publication, either book, monograph, working paper, or article authored by her/him is original, adequately edited, adheres to an accomplished referencing style.
7. Researches in sociology often depend on funding, private or public. Sponsors may be interested in a specific outcome of research. Sociologists should not accept research grants or contracts which specify conditions inconsistent with their scientific judgment. Researchers have to be careful that their results be not manipulated or taken out of context by sponsors