



The Functional Importance of the Makhalla Institution in Shaping Competitive Qualities

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Abstract

This paper explores the functional role of social institutions – particularly the makhalla – in the development of competitive qualities among youth in Uzbekistan. Drawing on classical and contemporary sociological theories, it analyzes how institutions such as the family, education, law, and the state influence youth behavior, values, and capacity for competition in a rapidly changing socio-economic environment. The makhalla, as a culturally embedded and community-based institution, serves as a key intermediary in implementing state policy, promoting spiritual and moral development, and fostering youth engagement. The study emphasizes the importance of a systems-based, structural-functional approach in understanding how institutional frameworks support the integration, socialization, and empowerment of young individuals. The paper also highlights the need for empirical, sociological research to assess the effectiveness of these institutions, especially in the context of global challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Ultimately, the paper concludes that the institutional support system – centered around makhalla and family structures – plays a crucial role in nurturing a generation of socially responsible, skilled, and competitive youth.

Keywords: *Social Institutions; Makhalla, Youth Competitiveness; Family Upbringing; Education; Law; State Policy; Sociological Theory; Structural-Functionalism; Uzbekistan; Socialization; Institutional Development*

Introduction

The concept of a *social institution*, one of the foundational constructs in sociological theory, holds significant practical importance in shaping youth competitiveness due to its structural-functional and institutional characteristics. Social institutions ensure the interconnection of complex processes such as “Youth – Social Environment – Nature – Information – Education – Health (physical, spiritual, psychological) – Knowledge – Development (Maturity) – Society.” Hence, evaluating the effectiveness of these institutions necessitates measurable, diagnostic methods that can determine whether they fulfill their societal functions. Such specificity is essential for governance at various levels, lending the issue both professional and cultural significance [34, 37].

According to A. Giddens, “Social institutions are connections that strengthen social life. They are among the primary mechanisms through which people organize life via interaction, preserving generational continuity” [3, 381].

Various sources [12, 13, 19–27] identify key social institutions, including the state, family, economy, politics, culture, science, education, mass media, public opinion, and law. We will examine a selection of these, focusing on their impact on the development of competitive qualities in youth through a contextual approach.

Methods

This study employs a qualitative and theoretical approach rooted in content analysis and comparative interpretation of existing sociological literature, legal documents, and presidential decrees related to youth development and institutional functions in Uzbekistan. The following materials formed the primary sources:

Sociological theories and classical texts (Comte, Durkheim, Parsons, Giddens)

Empirical findings and theoretical works by local researchers (Kuronov, Bozorov, Kadirov, Negmatova, Ochilova)

Legal and policy documents, including Presidential Decrees No. UP-5938 and PP-4602 (2020)

Functional analysis of institutional practices regarding youth, education, and upbringing

Results

The analysis revealed the following key findings:

The Role of the Makhalla: The makhalla functions as a bridge between the state and community, providing localized support for youth development. It assists in implementing policies related to education, employment, spiritual upbringing, and social integration.

Family as a Foundational Institution: The family environment significantly influences the development of competitive qualities, with upbringing, parental values, and socio-emotional support identified as critical components. Early exposure to entrepreneurship, discipline, and positive role models is crucial.

Education and Upbringing: Educational institutions not only transmit knowledge but also shape the behavioral, moral, and intellectual frameworks necessary for competitiveness. Scholars like Comte, Spencer, and Durkheim emphasized the importance of a socially-integrated education system.

State and Legal Institutions: The state ensures societal stability and coordination, while legal frameworks regulate behavior and enforce norms. Recent legal developments in Uzbekistan focus on enhancing institutional support for youth and reinforcing moral and civic education.

Institutional Synergy: The effectiveness of youth competitiveness increases when institutions function synergistically—makhalla, family, education, law, and the state form an interrelated system that cultivates knowledge, values, and skills.

Discussion

Sociological literature [6, 7, 8, 12, 16] provides various interpretations of the concept of a social institution. Defined broadly, a social institution (*institutum* – Latin for establishment or structure) encompasses a system of formal and informal norms, principles, roles, and statuses that regulate human behavior and uphold the social system. Social institutions serve to satisfy societal needs, regulate behavior, reinforce norms, reproduce impersonal social functions, and foster integration among individuals and society [41, 106].

P. Berger and T. Luckmann, in developing the theory of social constructivism, emphasized the central role of social institutions in shaping and sustaining social reality, stating that society is essentially an “agglomeration of institutions” [15, 92]. Similarly, K.Y. Mikhaleva and N.L. Polyakova highlighted that institutions form structured systems characterized by hierarchical relationships, subsystems, and the ability to interact with and transmit information within their environments [25, 117–131].

Among the core social institutions, the **family** plays a particularly vital role in shaping youth competitiveness. M. Kuronov and O. Bozorov note that the family is the foundation of early education and value formation, directly impacting the nation’s future through youth development [27, 32–33]. Within systems such as “Youth – Family,” “Youth – Upbringing,” and “Youth – Society,” the family environment strongly influences the development of competitive traits.

T. Parsons, viewing the family as a subsystem of the social structure, underscores its integral roles—educational, mobilizing, adaptive, recreational, reproductive, and psychotherapeutic—in youth development [29, 731–732]. Accordingly, state policies in Uzbekistan, such as Presidential Decrees UP-5938 and PP-4602 (February 18, 2020), have elevated the *makhalla* (neighborhood-based community organization) and family institutions as key to national development [36, 37].

These policies aim to promote ideas such as “Healthy Family – Healthy Society,” provide targeted assistance to families in difficulty, raise physically and spiritually healthy youth, ensure youth employment, and protect young people from ideological threats. They also foster cooperation between citizens’ self-governing bodies (*makhallas*) and state/non-state organizations, which institutionalizes efforts to build youth competitiveness.

The family acts as a crucial agent of socialization, introducing youth to cultural processes and influencing their aspirations and attitudes. Empirical studies, such as those by G.O. Ochilova, show that positive familial relationships and entrepreneurial exposure contribute to strong attitudes towards entrepreneurship among youth [28, 16]. Similarly, Sh.Sh. Negmatova emphasizes that cultivating a competitive culture in a market economy requires more than economic awareness—it demands cultural and educational development [26, 15–16]. Given that only 15% of a person’s development is attributed to heredity, with 40% dependent on environment and 45% on upbringing, the family’s role is undeniably crucial [23].

Family upbringing involves consistent ideological and spiritual influence on youth by parents, shaping their worldview, political and moral orientation, and personal behavior. However, families are undergoing transformation alongside broader societal change. As T. Parsons stated, the family helps preserve normative cultural traditions and contributes to the sociocultural evolution of society [30, 555].

Education and upbringing are equally vital as social institutions. O. Comte emphasized education’s universality and public character, advocating for broad general education followed by specialization [22, 71]. G. Spencer saw education as both knowledge acquisition and skill development necessary for societal participation [33, 10–12]. E. Durkheim emphasized education as a vehicle for intentional socialization, molding individuals into functional societal members [20, 251].

Education provides youth with the knowledge and tools needed for innovation, diagnostics, and strategic responses to risks. D. Bell argued that entry into the “information age” redefines societal organization around knowledge and communication technologies [14].

The institutional value of *knowledge and information* is timeless. As Yusuf Khass Hajib wrote:

“Where there is intellect, there is greatness;

Whoever possesses knowledge attains eminence.” [42, 11]

E.O. Kadirov emphasized that academic lyceums, vocational schools, and technical colleges equip youth with logical thinking and specialization skills necessary for competitiveness [21, 16]. M.N. Melikova also noted youth's inherent mobility and innovative tendencies, viewing the present and past through a future-oriented lens [24, 14].

Contemporary challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, exposed the need for quality education and highlighted gaps in online learning. International research addressed issues such as psychological impacts on students, classification of youth expectations, and sociological responses to COVID-19's influence on youth competitiveness [1]. However, such systematic studies remain scarce in Uzbekistan.

Upbringing, as an institution, teaches youth the normative principles for applying knowledge in practice. According to Sheikh Muhammad Sodik, upbringing means transforming and maturing a person's intellectual and moral capacities [39, 355]. Abu Nasr al-Farabi defined it as learning through experience and labor, contributing to nation-building through practical skill development [38, 284].

The State and Political Institutions also significantly contribute to youth competitiveness. The state ensures societal stability, economic regulation, legal protection, and the coordination of other institutions. As meta-institutions, they regulate and manage various societal domains via law and policy [9].

The Legal Institution regulates social behavior, defines rights and responsibilities, and enforces norms through the legal system. It ensures order and accountability, particularly among youth, reinforcing discipline and lawful behavior [7].

Conclusion

- Social institutions—including family, education, law, and the state—play a fundamental role in shaping competitive qualities in youth. They guide behavior through norms, values, and structured interactions.
- These institutions help integrate youth into political, ideological, and socio-economic systems, enhancing their professional and social competitiveness.
- Institutions define and mediate complex processes such as "Youth – Environment – Norm – Education – Health – Knowledge – Competition = Development," and thus are crucial for societal progress.
- The *makhalla* institution, with its deeply rooted cultural and communal significance, provides a localized framework that reinforces these values and supports the holistic development of young people.

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