A CRITIQUE OF FUNCTIONALISM AS A THEORY OF THE CONTEMPORARY
NIGERIAN SOCIAL SYSTEM

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SUMMARY
The paper is a critique of functionalism as a theory of the contemporary Nigerian social systems. Functionalism as one of the sociological theories deals with the study of the social systems in the society. The contributions of its major proponents such as Emile Durkheim, Talcott Parson, Robert K Melton, Radcliff-Brown, George Peter Murdock and Malinowski were critically analysed in line with the Nigeria social systems such as the family, politics, school, hospital etc. Functionalist view on contemporary religious dynamics in Nigeria is critically analysed with a view to seeing how this sub-system is affecting the entire social systems of the Nigerian society. The methodology used is related literature and contributions of some authors such as Danjibo (2010) who studied the Islamic Fundamentalism in Nigeria, Isa (2010) who studied the Militant Islamic group in northern Nigeria and Adibe (2012) who studied Boko Haram as a symptom of crisis in Nigeria. Also the activities of Boko Haram in functional analysis of the religious sub-system in Nigeria were revealed. Views of different authors and books were revealed to see how functionalist theory is used in analysing the social systems in Nigeria. The findings show that functionalism is inadequate in explaining the social conflict that has bedevilled the Nigerian contemporary society today. The presentation therefore, recommends that the historical materialist theory being proffered by late professor Ikenna Nzimiro, Usman and Adelakun provides a better explanation of the contemporary social structure of the Nigerian society and the recent dysfunctional aspect of some systems today.

INTRODUCTION:
Functionalism is one of sociological theories that studies society as a system with different parts working together to unify the whole system (society). It sees contemporary society such as Nigeria as a system with all parts working together to meet the needs of Nigerian society. Every society is made up of sub-systems: economic, political, family, cultural systems, education and religion. Each sub-system functions to maintain a healthy society. Functionalist theory is based on the “organic analogy.” This is the idea, developed by early social philosophers such as August Comte and Emile Durkheim, that society is like the human body. Just as the body is made up of various parts that need to function together and properly for it to be healthy, so is society. Each part needs to be in a state of equilibrium, or balance. Just as the human body has evolved over time, so has society. Durkheim was also
concerned with how social systems are integrated and hold themselves together (Kingsbury and Scanzoni 1993).

A premise of this entire seminar paper is that to understand where Nigeria is heading to with regard to how functionalists see Nigerian contemporary society as being unified by inter-relationships and inter-dependency of the sub-systems mostly religious sub-system, we need to understand the religious dynamics in Nigeria. By all accounts, Nigeria is among the most, if not the most religious country in the world. According to polling data from the World Values Survey research, the Pew Research Centre and other organizations, Nigeria is at the top of the charts in terms of intense religiosity. The introduction of new dynamics in Nigeria religious system in terms of identity formations, and people began to see themselves as Christians and as Muslims and so on have served as a dysfunction in maintaining the societal equilibrium.

Skitka and Wisneski (2003) stated that social systems cannot function without some degree of agreement on the norms and principles that regulate relationships among individuals. Kendall (2012) opined that a functionalist might argue, for instance, that every society will have a religion, because religious institutions have certain functions that contribute to the survival of the social system as a whole, just as the organs of the body have functions that are necessary for the body’s survival. Social systems work to maintain equilibrium.

Macionis (2012) holds that functionalists tend to talk about individual actors as decision-makers, although some critics have suggested that functionalist theorists are, in effect, treating individuals either as puppets, whose decisions are a predictable result of their location in the social structure and of the norms and expectations they have internalized, or sometimes as virtual prisoners of the explicit social control techniques society imposes. Talcott Parsons in his view for society to survive, all systems must fulfill four needs or functional imperatives, what he called the AGIL scheme. Any social system has to fulfill these four basic functions if it is to survive and the major social institutions are the subsystems that do just that: Adaptation, Goal attainment, Integration, Latency and pattern maintenance.

Nwobike (2005) posited that Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa with an estimated population of 180 million people. Nigeria’s population and its cultural diversity make it one of the most attractive countries for foreign investment in Africa. ‘Broken English’ (‘pidgin’ English) is perhaps the most widely spoken language in Nigeria and indeed West Africa. It is a creolization of English language and other local languages. Social systems in Nigeria are heterogenous with different sub-systems which work together to unify the entire systems. Some of the social systems mentioned in this study are the family system, school, politics and health system.

**STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Functionalist theories have very often been criticized as teleological, that is, reversing the usual order of cause and effect by explaining things in terms of what happens afterward, not what went before. Some of the problems found especially in explaining Nigerian social systems using the functionalist perspective are: Melton’s assumption of uniform commitment to materialistic goals ignores the heterogeneous
nature of Nigerian cultural values. Secondly, Durkheim believed that a certain amount of crime and deviance could be seen as positive for society, helping to clarify boundaries of acceptable behaviour and generate change, while in this work it has been shown not to be tenable in the Nigerian society where no form of criminality is an accepted behaviour. Thirdly, Religion plays a functional and positive role in society. It integrates people and provides support and guidance. But in Nigeria religious differences have been a case of clash such as Boko Haram issue and Christianity in political instability in Nigeria today. This is a problem to be investigated by researchers regarding functionalist perspective. This paper therefore aims at analysing functionalism as it relates to Nigerian contemporary society.

OBJECTIVES OF STUDY
General Objective
The general objective of this Seminar paper is to see how functionalist theory is functional in the social systems of the contemporary Nigerian society.

Specific Objectives
- To find out how functionalism as a theory is workable in contemporary Nigerian society.
- To find out the pitfalls in functionalism from the Nigerian perspective.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY
Academic Significance
The academic significance of this seminar paper is embedded in the help it renders to students, researchers and lecturers that have the concern to know and research on issues related to functionalism in analysing contemporary Nigerian social systems. It will be a useful source of reference to students who have interest in researching about critical evaluation of functionalism and social system integration in Nigeria. It will be useful for academic purposes since individuals can have a hand in the work as reference materials during research work.

Practical Significance
It is useful to the general public, government and society at large. It is also useful to Nigerian society with heterogeneous cultural values that Merton assumption of uniform commitment to materialistic goals is not applicable in Nigeria. This seminar paper is significant to Nigerian society by making them to know that religion plays a functional and positive role in society by integrating people and providing support and guidance. However, in Nigeria religious differences have been a case of clash such as Islamic fundamentalists, Ebulliences and Christianity.

METHODOLOGY:
Related literature was used as a method in this presentation. Views of different authors and books were revealed to see how functionalist theory is used in analysing the social systems in Nigeria. Indeed the researcher reviewed the different interpretations of functionalism from the point of view of the proponents and applied
them to the contemporary institutions in Nigeria such as Family, Religion and to social problems especially crime.

FUNCTIONALIST PERSPECTIVES OF NIGERIAN SOCIAL SYSTEMS

Emile Durkheim is generally associated with the work on functionalist theories of sociology. Elwell (2010) has it that much of Durkheim’s work is concerned with functional analysis, with seeking to understand the functions of social systems. He assumes that society has certain functional prerequisites, the most important of which is the need for ‘social order’

Oluwaseun (2012) argued that the federal government of Nigeria seems weak in maintaining law and order in Nigeria and lacks a viable strategy to contain the Islamic sect from carrying out its atrocities. So functional equilibrium of the system has no effect on the sub-system differentials in Nigeria.

Muhammed (2010) has observed that functionalists assumed that societies are integrated totalities. Given this assumption, the problem of integrating various groups in Nigeria becomes a crucial issue of national concern. Usman and Adelakun (1986) see the resolution of problems of national integration in the participation of national groups in allocative decisions.

Danjibo (2010) has it that in Nigeria, the issue of granting of Amnesty to warring groups, federal character in ministerial appointments and other spheres are seen as the major solutions to the problem of disunity in Nigeria. The question that is posed here is, if the warring groups as parts of the sub-systems/groups and other ethnic groups that are secretly planning conflict were given a fair share within the economic sphere would the question of disintegration and wars raging in allocative decisions still arise. Now that Amnesty is being planned to be given to Boko Haram and had already been given to the militants from Niger Delta, while and political appointments are being decentralised, are the problems of national integration now put to rest?, Has the offer of employment and skill trainings outside the country that was given to most Niger Delta people, resolved the problem of unemployment in the areas. Nzimiro (1986) opined that Micro approaches cannot resolve the problems of Nigeria contemporary society until the macro approach is applied.

Durkheim in his functional analysis begins with the question of how a collection of individuals can be integrated to form an ordered society. He sees the answer in consensus, in a ‘collective conscience’ consisting of common beliefs and sentiments. Without this consensus or agreement on fundamental moral issues, social solidarity would be impossible and individuals could not be bound together to form an integrated social unit. Without social obligations backed by moral force, the cooperation and reciprocity which social life requires would be absent.

In Durkheim’s words, ‘For where interest is the only ruling force each individual finds himself in a state of war with every other’. Ricardo (2013) said that the twin events of the Boko Haram bombings and the Petrol Protest (removal of fuel subsidy) have put the presidency of Goodluck Jonathan on a functional notice: the government needs to address the systemic problems that inhibit progress in Nigeria, which include ending corruption, creating a more inclusive government, alleviating poverty and disease, extending access to education, and creating a transportation and communications
infrastructure that would lead to economic growth. These twin events, one nonviolent and the other violent, may impel the government to react functionally positively. Thus Durkheim argues that, 'society has to be present in the individual'.

Ekelegbe (2005) stated that Nigeria has experienced many kinds of secret, network-based institutions, and a knowledge base about them and their operations has accumulated into disintegration rather than integration as functionalist theorists posit. Among these institutions are spy networks, gang rings such as Oduduwa Peoples' Congress (OPC), Egbesu, the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), Arewa Peoples' Congress (APC), the Bakassi Boys, Igbo Youth Congress (IYC), Igbo Peoples' Congress (IPC), Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF), Niger Delta Resistant Movement (NDRM), Movement for the Survival of the Ijaw Nationality of the Niger Delta (MOSIEND), the Nigerian or Yobe Taliban, Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) and extremist social and religious movement institutions.

**Functionalists view of crime/deviance as functional in Nigeria**

Durkheim rejected the common view of crime as abnormal. On the contrary, he concluded, crime is "normal" for the most basic of reasons: A society could not exist without it. Cinnamon & Meier, (2008) opined that Durkheim believed that a certain amount of crime, deviance and conflict could be seen as functional for society, helping to clarify boundaries of acceptable behaviour and generate change. They offer a structural causal explanation of crime & deviance. The causes are said to lie within the social structure of society and subcultures. This functionalist view is questionable to contemporary Nigerian society. Undoubtedly, the danger that the conflicting groups and their associated ethnic and religious conflicts posed to Nigeria was well captured by Kaplan (1994:21), who warned against the deepening balkanization of Nigeria. He put it then, the country is becoming increasingly ungovernable. ...Ethnic and regional splits are deepening, Muslim fundamentalism and evangelical Christian militancy are on the rise; and northern Muslim anxiety over southern [Christian] control of the economy is intense . . . the will to keep Nigeria together is now very weak.

Lukes, (1992) holds that conflict is functional for society. It contributes to social order. Durkheim holds that Deviance affirms cultural values and norms. As moral creatures, people must prefer some attitudes and behaviours to others. There can be no good without evil and no justice without crime.

Beginning from the 2011 until 2013 year, therefore, the Boko Haram problem in Nigeria had to be quelled through the use of force in order to allow the presidency of Dr. Goodluck Jonathan to stand on his ground for immediate peace. Functionalists assume that non-conformity is a pathological stage or an aberration that must be corrected in order to maintain the equilibrium. Given this assumption the maintenance of law and order becomes a crucial factor to be pursued in Nigerian contemporary society. Thus, in making the foregoing assumption, the functionalist have failed to recognise the division of the Nigerian society alone lines of the haves and the have not's – a situation which has often led to uprisings here and there with the level of poverty that we are seeing today in Nigerian contemporary society.
Deviance is needed to define and support morality. Responding to deviance brings people together. People typically react to serious deviance with shared outrage. In doing so, Durkheim explained, they reaffirm the moral ties that bind them. For example, after the January 2013 shooting rampage and Bombing by Boko Haram sect in Kano and Yobe State of Nigeria, that killed several people and wounded many, with house and properties burnt, people across the affected states were joined by a common desire to control this type of apparently senseless violence. However, it is still on the increase today. In Nigeria, one will ask, to what extent has deviance and conflict being functional to social order? The answer is not far-fetched. There is no social order brought about by deviance and conflict. In relation to crime and deviance and conflict, therefore, Durkheim was initially faced with a methodological problem that stemmed from the way which he attempted to theorise the general nature of the social world.

Crime has an integrating function, in that public alarm and outrage at criminal acts serve to draw the law-abiding closer together. This, according to Durkheim, serves to increase levels of social solidarity the communal feelings that people have for one another, the sense of belonging to a coherent social group, society and so forth. In this way, the bonds between people were seen to be continually reinforced by criminal behaviour.

Criminal behaviour was seen by Durkheim to be the way which legal boundaries were tested. He argued that because laws were necessarily social statics (they are slow to change once adopted), there was the possibility that changes in people's behaviour over time would fail to be reflected by appropriate changes in the law - unless some mechanism existed to provide the impetus whereby change could be accommodated.

**Functionalists view of religion in Nigeria**

Durkheim's functionalism is set in the framework of the analysis of the functions of religion. Kaiser (2005) commenting on Durkheim's views notes that social order requires that individuals experience society within them, realize their dependence upon it and recognize their obligations which are fundamentally social. Social obligations are represented in sacred terms and so transformed into religious duties. Elster, (1982) has it that religion awakens in the individual an appreciation of his reliance on society. By recognizing his dependence on supernatural power, the individual recognizes his dependence on society. To the functionalist, individuals have little or no control over their own actions. (Haralambos 2007)

Functionalism has it that religion integrates the social group since those who share religious beliefs 'feel they are united to one another by the simple fact that they have a common faith'. It ensures that society is 'present within the individual'. Thus in Nigeria, diversities of religious belief systems exist but the system (Nigeria) is not unified by religious belief. Heterogeneity in religion can be a dysfunction to the functionality of the entire system. Islamisation of Nigeria through compulsion or subjective influence through the activities of Boko Haram makes religion a non-unifying sub-system in Nigeria. Thus functionalist view on this is questionable.
Over the last years the Islamic fundamentalists have created widespread insecurity across northern Nigeria, increased tensions between various ethnic communities and religious group, interrupted development activities, frightened off investors, and generated concerns among Nigeria’s northern neighbours. Paris, (2000) stated that the cause (function) of Christian religion existence in Nigeria, and the reasons for its retention over the years, require a different form of explanation. Durkheim argues that ‘if the usefulness of a social system is not the cause of its existence, it is generally necessary that it be useful in order that it might maintain itself. Social systems therefore continue in existence because they contribute in some way to the maintenance of society, because they serve 'some social end'.

ROBERT K MERTON’S THEORY: MANIFEST AND LATENT FUNCTIONS AND DYSFUNCTION

Merton’s important contributions to functionalism were his distinction between manifest and latent functions. Cole, and Safiya (2003) hold that Merton has shown that every part of our society has a function, some more obvious than others. In his 1948 essay *Manifest and Latent Functions*, Merton highlights the difference between manifest and latent functions. Elwell (2010) in his paper on Robert K. Merton; A Structural-Functional Approach: said that manifest functions are objective consequences for some person, subgroup, or socio-cultural system which contribute to its adjustment and were so intended. Latent functions are consequences which contribute to adjustment but were not so intended. He defines a manifest function as any element of social structure whose consequences are recognized and intended by the people within the society. In contrast, latent functions are consequences that are largely unrecognized and unintended. While functions are intended (manifest) or unintended (latent), and have a positive effect on society, dysfunctions are unintended or unrecognized (latent) and have a negative effect on society.

Merton points out a weakness in functional analysis that has persisted to this day, when he observed that functional analysis is at once the most promising and possibly the least codified of contemporary approaches to problems of sociological interpretation.

FUNCTIONAL INDISPENSIBILITY

The next postulate of functionalism is functional indispensability. Merton (1968) counters this by stating that “just as the same item may have multiple functions, so may the same function be diversely fulfilled by alternative systems”. This is particularly relevant to the study of social systems in Nigeria, where there are new systems such as modern family/school trend in socialisation competing with older and more traditional forms to fulfil some of the same functions in Nigeria. Merton claims functional analysis has the following virtues:

- The concepts of manifest and latent function provide us with a means of probing those features of social behaviour which are more theoretically valuable.
- A functional approach to social action brings a more sophisticated awareness to the moral issues involved in a situation.
Robert K Merton's functionalist view of crime in society

(Manifest and Latent function of crime in Nigeria)

Warr and Ellison (2000) argued that the functionalist ideas of Merton, proved to show that crime in society has a function, some intended and some unintended. The function of crime could be numerous aspects of society. Okeshola (2008) states that functionalists like Merton recognise the functions of crime. Crimes provide employment for people such as: lawyers, police, prison officials, Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) officials, Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) officials, National Agency for the Prohibition of Traffic in Persons (NAPTIP) officials, National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) officials etc. So we can say crime is functional in Nigerian society. But the issue is, whether it is a manifest function or latent function.

Danbazau (2002) stipulates that crime dictates changes, but in some cases it indirectly prepares the way towards these changes. For example, if there is an increase in armed robbery in Garki II, Abuja, there is the possibility that the Police Commissioner will deploy more policemen to Garki II, with more patrol vehicles, communication gadgets and weapons, to clampdown on the armed robbers. You can also see it this way. The introduction of (NAPTIP) as an agency is due to the high rate of human trafficking from Nigeria to other countries for mostly prostitution and it was in response to the need to protect the integrity and image of Nigeria that the agency came into being, so it’s function is manifest not latent as the case may be in our society.

It also defines boundaries of what is confirmative behaviour for the rest of society to follow. A manifest function would be to establish a status quo, of what is right or wrong. On the other hand, a latent function of crime would be the institutionalization of minorities into state or federal authority. Therefore, according to functionalist such as Merton, crime has a function in our society. James, (2000) holds that sociological approach to crime will enable us to understand the economics, gender, education, race, religion, family life and all other social phenomena that are directly involved in crime.

According to Herpertz, and Sass (2000) deviant behaviour represents a social problem. Merton spent a considerable amount of his time trying to understand why individuals commit crime. In his 1957 book Social Theory and Social Structure, Merton writes about his theory of two classes of deviant behaviour: Nonconforming behaviour and aberrant behaviour. Nonconforming behaviour is that which challenges the legitimacy of social norms. In contrast, aberrant behaviour acknowledges the legitimacy of the norms he violates. They find it practical and expressive of his state of mind to violate those norms. The non-conformer aims to change the norms, while the aberrant tries to escape the sanctioning force of the existing norms. Merton recognizes that culturally held values have a strong effect on individual behaviour. A culture that values individual initiative and innovation, following rules and established procedures, will be populated by such individuals.
### Modes of adaptation

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Modes of adaptation</th>
<th>Cultural goals</th>
<th>Inst. Means</th>
<th>Example of Individuals/Deviants</th>
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<tr>
<td>Conformity</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>Civil Servants</td>
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<tr>
<td>Innovation</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Drug Dealers + 419</td>
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<td>Ritualism</td>
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<td>+</td>
<td>Born Again Christians</td>
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<td>Retreatism</td>
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<td>Outcast and Vagabonds</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rebellion</td>
<td>- +</td>
<td>- +</td>
<td>Political revolutionist</td>
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**Fig 1** Merton’s Strain Theory of Deviance

**Source:** Anthony Giddens (2006) Sociology; 5th edition,
Explanations to the strain theory

**Adaptation 1 = Conformity** is the most widely diffused and most common adaptation. When individuals are socialised to the goals of society, and play by the rules it results in conformity to the societal goals and means. The conformist is the one whose experience in society leads to the acceptance of culturally prescribed goals and socially legitimate means for reaching those goals.

**Adaptation II = Innovation** involves the attempt to achieve culturally approved goals, however, using unconventional means. Example of innovators is drug dealers. This category of individuals accepts the cultural goals of their society, and yet rejects the cultural means of achieving those goals. Deviance then occurs when innovators choose illegitimate means to achieve the culturally approved goals.

**Adaptation III = Ritualism** involves people abandoning cultural goals, while conforming to cultural norms and means. Ritualism is common among people of modest social standing, who have little opportunity to gain socially constructed goals, yet fear risking what they have through innovation. These people are considered deviant in giving up their goal of success, yet still being viewed as good citizens because of their adherence to rules.

**Adaptation IV = Retreatism** involves individuals who reject both the goals and means of society. Examples: psychoneurotic, psychotics, outcast, vagrants, vagabonds, tramps, chronic drunkards, and drug addicts. The deviance of retreatists is their unconventional way of life, and their assumed lack of desire.

**Adaptation V = Rebellion** rejects both the cultural goals and cultural means. Rebels, however, advocate radical alternatives to the existing social order, proposing new, disapproved values, and norms. Example: political revolutionist, or promoters of unconventional religious group. This approach is seen as deviant because of its favour of counterculture and withdrawal from the established society.
RADCLIFFE - BROWN FUNCTIONAL PERSPECTIVES
Radcliffe-Brown (1952) states that the function of a particular social usage is the contribution it makes to the total social life as the functioning of the total social system. Such a view implies that a social system (the total social structure of a society together with the totality of social usages) in which that structure appears and on which it depends for its continued existence, has a certain kind of unity, which we may speak of as a functional unity. We may define it as a condition in which all parts of the social system work together with a sufficient degree of harmony or internal consistency, i.e., without producing persistent conflicts which can neither be resolved nor regulated.

GEORGE PETER MURDOCK FUNCTIONALIST VIEW OF FAMILY SOCIAL SYSTEM
White, Marshall, and Wood, (2002) hold that functionalism is basically a theory of social survival. Its key idea is that families perform the critical functions of procreation and socialising of children so that they will fit into the overall society. That is, it functions best.

Family Functions
Historical analysis demonstrates that, across time, the family has provided many important functions for society. In modern times many of these functions—religion, health-care, protection, education, and entertainment—have been taken over by other institutions. Today we have churches, the medical establishment, the police, public and private schools, movies, and other entities to meet these needs. As these kinds of changes occur, the family adapts and focuses on what it does best (Ingoldsby and Smith 1995).

Murdock (1949) concluded that there were four essential functions that the family provides for all societies. They are sexual, reproduction, socialization and economic.

Family Universality
Murdock’s (1949) research work holds that functionalists have wanted to determine if the family exists everywhere as a social institution. If it does, then it can be said that the family may be necessary for the survival of human society.

TALCOTT PARSONS FUNCTIONALIST PERSPECTIVE
Talcott Parsons was heavily influenced by Emile Durkheim. Parsons conceptualized different systems of action and society as one such system. In his view, in order to survive, all systems must fulfil four needs or functional imperatives, what he called the AGIL scheme. Any social system has to fulfil these four basic functions if it is to survive and the major social institutions are the subsystems that do just that: Adaptation: the system must adjust to its environment or adjust the environment to its needs. This is the function of the economy. For instance, currently, Nigerian economy is heavily based on oil. At some point, Nigerian economy will have to shift to alternative sources of Agriculture, that is, to adapt to new environmental conditions.
Goal attainment: any system has to have general objectives for the system as a whole. This is the function of the political system: to set collective objectives and to mobilize the actors and resources to fulfil those. For instance, to win the “War on Terrorism (Boko Haram) in Nigeria” is a collective goal of the Nigerian society. To this end, financial, technological and military resources are mobilized as well as the social actors with relevant statuses (such as military personnel or counter-terrorist experts from foreign bodies). The fight against terrorism which functionally started on May, 2013 when the military said to have killed 40 of the terrorist group and arrested some. When it is been achieved, then we say the system has attained the goal.

Integration: any system is composed of different parts that are interrelated and have to be able to function in coordination. This is the function of what Parsons calls the societal community. All the body of the social systems serve to coordinate the actions of individuals and groups in an orderly fashion.

Latency and pattern maintenance: latency refers to the rewards that the system offers to keep members motivated. For instance, for structural-functionalist theorists, social inequality is necessary to motivate the most talented individuals to reach for the top of the social system. Pattern maintenance refers to the values that support such a system of rewards and motivations. For instance, the Nigerian society values success, and specifically, economic success. Such values are transmitted to children through what Parsons called the fiduciary system, that is, schools and family. Insofar as a social system is able to fulfil these four functional imperatives through its institutional structure, the system will be considered functional and balanced.

CRITQUES OF FUNCTIONALISM THEORY:

Critisims of emile durkhiem thoery
Dysfunction of functionalism
1. It is a threat to social order – life is difficult and unpredictable
2. Causes confusions about the norms and values of society.
3. Deviance undermines trust
4. Diverts valuable resources

According to Bauman, & Skitka, (2009) critics of functionalism have often argued that it pictures the individual as having little or no control over his own actions. Rather than constructing their own social world, members of society appear to be directed by the system. For example, they are organized into families and systems of stratification because society requires these social arrangements in order to survive. Many have questioned the logic of treating society as if it were something separate from its members, as if it shaped their actions rather than being constructed by them.

Durkheim rejects this criticism. He argues that society has a reality of its own over and above the individuals who comprise it. Darlington, (2001) holds that members of society are constrained by 'social facts', by 'ways of acting, thinking, and feeling, external to the individual, and endowed with a power of coercion, by reason of which they control him'. Elster, (1982) opined that beliefs and moral codes are passed on from one generation to the next and shared by the individuals who make up a society.
From this point of view it is not the consciousness of the individual which directs his behaviour but common beliefs and sentiments which transcend the individual

**Critical evaluation of Merton's theory**

Rather than view deviant behaviour as the product of abnormal personalities, Merton is concerned with the extent to which it is the result of the social structure. In his approach to this problem Merton strips social structure down to two elemental conditions that hold for any society. They are: Manifest function and Latent function. Herislin (2010) opined that the distinction between latent function and manifest function helps the functionalist sociologists to make their presence felt as critical analysts. Once you are aware of the notion of latent function, you would not be easily tempted to regard everything that does not have an immediate, manifest function as simply ‘irrational’. Instead, you would ask a deeper question! Why is it that what appears ‘irrational’ continues to exist? Only then, perhaps, you would begin to see the hidden or latent meaning of the so-called irrational act or belief. Ferrante (2005) holds that only in the Manifest and Latent Functions is the discussion of consequences combined with broader postulates of functionalism. Kufoniyi, and Akinyede (2004) holds that the necessity of distinguishing between subjective dispositions (motives, purposes) and objective consequences (functions, dysfunctions) of action is emphasised, leading to the distinction between manifest and latent functions.

One of the major criticisms of functionalism is that it is conservative and basically teleological in orientation. Carey (2005) states that “these issues raise that long standing-charge about which functionalists are most touchy that their methodology is conservative and defensive of the status quo”. The basic reason for this charge is the tendency of some researchers in functionalism to centre on the positive, integrative functions. Merton answers this charge by implying that, as a method, functionalism is inherently neither conservative nor radical and “may involve no intrinsic ideological commitment; although, like other forms of sociological analysis, it can be infused with any one of a wide range of ideological values”. Merton diffuses the argument of functionalism as conservative teleology by insisting that systems can be functional for one group and dysfunctional for others. He also points out that functions produce both intended and unintended consequences.

In fact, though Merton identifies method as the weakest link in functionalism, he does little to strengthen it. He says little about how functions are to be tested empirically. The practice of hypothesising without empirical testing has weakened functionalism as a research orientation. This is, indeed, the problem of functionalism. Establishing functions by definition rather than by evidence appears to be counter-productive for a research strategy.

- His assumption of uniform commitment to materialistic goals ignores the pluralistic and heterogeneous nature of Nigerian cultural values.
- The theory appears to dwell on lower-class criminality, thus failing to consider law breaking among the elite such as our Senators, House of Assembly Members who embezzle money and go free of the punishment.
Taylor, (1982:65) expresses this point: “Crime stands accused of predicting too little bourgeois criminality and too much proletarian criminality.”

**Criticism of functionalist view of family as a social system**

A number of problems have contributed to the general decline in the acceptance and use functionalism. The main ones are listed below. See Kingsbury and Scanzoni (1993) and Winton (1995) for a more detailed description.

- Murdock’s picture of the family is rather like the multifaceted, indispensable Boy Scout knife. The family is seen as a multi-functional institution which is indispensable to society. Its ‘many-sided utility’ accounts for its universality and its inevitability. In his enthusiasm for the family, however, Murdock did not seriously consider whether its functions could be performed by other social institutions and he does not examine alternatives to the family. As Dizard and Gadlin (1990:20) note in his criticism, Murdock does not state ‘to what extent these basic functions are inevitably linked with the institution of the nuclear family’.

- In addition, Murdock’s description of the family is almost too good to be true. As Macionis (2012) states, ‘Murdock’s nuclear family is a remarkably harmonious institution. Husband and wife have an integrated division of labour and have a good time in bed.’

  As political views and cultural values in Nigeria are dynamically changing, support of the functionalist theory has waned.

- The theory is criticized for confusing “function” with “cause.”

  Even though it may be possible to demonstrate that families perform certain functions that are necessary to society, it does not necessarily serve as a causal explanation for why families exist. The theory does not do a good job of explaining the historical process of how family types come to exist in a given society. This is in line with Nigerian contemporary society which all the deviant, terrorist, militant, and Boko haram, are all from one family or the other.

  Sam-Duru, (2012) opined that functionalism focuses on a macro analysis of large social systems and assumes that maintaining a steady state is important. According to him, Nigeria is already disintegrating.

  Some theorists have made the mistake of assuming that just because something is functional, it deserves to be maintained. In Nigeria, that terrorism, militancy, and deviance are functional does not mean that they deserve to be maintained.

  Functionalist theories have very often been criticized as **teleological**, that is, reversing the usual order of cause and effect by explaining things in terms of what happens afterward, not what went before.

**Critical Evaluation of Tacott Parsons Functional Perspective**

- Criticisms arose in critical attack of Structural Functionalism’s static and abstract focus on maintenance of social order, social stability/regulation and the structures within society and its lack of acknowledging social change and conflict.
In other words it was criticized of its conservatism to sustain status quo. According to critics, one of their significant arguments against Parson's structural functionalism was its inability to approach historical situations effectively.

The criticism was that its explanation was often speculative in the early stages and idealisational in the later phases of its elucidation of the evolution of society, from a primitive to a modern society. (Butler 2006)

It was speculative in the sense it was theoretically imaginative, incomplete and that its conclusions were not based on solid facts that can be proven.

**CRITIQUES BASED ON NIGERIAN SOCIETY ANALYSIS**

Functionalists also assume that every social phenomenon has manifest and latent functions. This assumption, although useful, may as well be misleading. For example, when studying the functions of the civilian regimes today in Nigeria which do we consider as manifest and which as latent; the pronouncement by the civilian regime through the president in the person of Dr. Goodluck Jonathan that they come to salvage the nation or the fact that they are but a committee/political party for managing the affairs of the bourgeoisie or that they have taken over power to enrich themselves or the party they belong (PDP)? However, the functionalists' application of this concept in social analysis of contemporary Nigerian society is useful in that it admonishes us not to make conclusions from the official pronouncement of the president at PDP face value, but to understand and critically interpret the actions underlying such pronouncements. That is to say, pronouncements by the Civilian President should not be accepted on the basis of what president and the party members say but should be subjected to critical analysis to discover the hidden agenda – the latent function. To effectively do that one needs to proceed beyond functional analysis to historical materialist evaluation. This is the debunking aspect of sociological analysis that transcends structural functional analysis.

In Nigeria today, the functionalist perspective that individuals have little or no control over their own actions lacks empirical relevance. In Nigeria, man decides and can change the course of history. Evidence is seen from what the former militant leader – Asari Dokubor was alleged to have said that there will be no peace in Nigeria if President Goodluck Jonathan does not return to power by the year 2015.

From the foregoing analysis it becomes clear that functionalism as a dominant sociological theory of analysis has been unable to concretely analyse the contemporary Nigerian social situations in all the social systems operatives in Nigeria. Thus, with this failure of functionalism to adequately perform its normal scientific activity, a crisis has engulfed the sociological science – and an alternative model has been developed by Nzimiro (1986), Usman and Adelakun (1998). It is suggested in this seminar paper that alternative sociological paradigm known as historical materialist analysis has a lot to offer in the analysis of contemporary Nigerian social system and should be given every encouragement to flourish. The basic assumptions of this theoretical orientation, like every other Marxist literature, hinges on the class
character of the state together with its linkage to the international capitalist system and its attending socio-structural problems.

**SUMMARY**
Functionalism, as a sociological theory has enjoyed a good deal of popularity. There has been a large amount of literature written about functionalism. This seminar paper has been able to evaluate critically the surface of the literature written about functional theory in sociology. While there is no shortage of theory, the same cannot be said for empirical research. While theorists, such as Merton and others have called for empirical research of functionalism, it appeared that a few researchers have taken up the challenge.

Functionalism is far from a codified organised research strategy. There appears to be several different orientations: especially in the search for latent functions and dysfunctions, and the attempt to look at social system as a necessary, biological process of equilibrium. The mixing of terminology, one term meaning different things and one item being attached different terms, is one of the problems that exist within functionalism and it is a problem that has also led to the uncertain relationship between the ways different functionalists view social systems mostly in the contemporary Nigerian social system.

**CONCLUSION**
Functionalism as a sociological theory has a political mission in its appearance in Nigeria, and still maintains that outlook. Sociologist such as Tseayo (1975) had also contributed to the application of functional analysis in explaining the problems of National integration in Nigeria. Functionalism as a sociological theory continues to appear in conference papers on national issues as seen in the works of sofola and Tamuno (1986). It is then concluded in this work that functionalism is not functional in Nigerian social systems.

**RECOMMENDATION**
It is our recommendation in this paper that this alternative sociological model/paradigm known as historical materialist analysis has a lot to offer in the analysis of the contemporary Nigerian social systems and should be given encouragement to flourish. The basic assumptions of this theoretical orientation, like every other Marxist literature, hinges on the class character of the state together with its linkage to international capitalist system and it’s attending socio-structural problems.

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