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# **SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH METHODS-I**

## **B.S.O.C.-112**

### **B.A. Sociology (Hons.) - 5th Semester**

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# QUESTION PAPER

June – 2023

(Solved)

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*Time: 3 Hours ]*

*[ Maximum Marks : 100*

*Note: Attempt any five questions. All questions carry equal marks.*

**Q. 1. Discuss the nature and scope of quantitative research.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-1, Page No. 5, 'Nature of Quantitative Research' and 'Some Pre-occupations of Quantitative Research'.

**Q. 2. In what way does empirical research influence sociological theory? Explain.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-2, Page No. 21, 'The Bearing of Empirical Research on Sociological Theory'.

**Q. 3. Discuss the significance of reflexivity in social science research.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-4, Page No. 49, Q. No. 1.

**Q. 4. According to Radcliffe Brown, how do social anthropologists differ from ethnologists in the use of historical method?**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-5, Page No. 66, Q. No. 8.

**Q. 5. Examine the standpoint theory.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-8, Page No. 115, Q. No. 15.

**Q. 6. What is experimental research? Explain.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-9, Page No. 131, Q. No. 2.

**Q. 7. What is qualitative research? Discuss the importance of visual method and documents in qualitative research.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-10, Page No. 134, 'Introduction' and Page No. 137, 'Using Visual Methods and Documents'.

**Q. 8. What is comparative method? Discuss Murdock's use of comparative method in the study of cultures.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-6, Page No. 77, Q.No. 1 and Murdock's Comparative Method and Use of Statistics'.

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# QUESTION PAPER

December – 2022

(Solved)

## SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH METHODS-I

**B.S.O.C.-112**

**Time: 3 Hours ]**

**[ Maximum Marks : 100**

**Note: Attempt any five questions. All questions carry equal marks.**

**Q. 1. Explain the relationship between theory and research.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-2, Page No. 19, 'Relationship between Theory and Research'.

**Q. 2. What is reflexivity? Explain with reference to the viewpoint of Bourdieu.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-4, Page No. 49, Q. No. 1, and Page No. 52, Q.No. 4.

**Q. 3. Explain the ethnological method of research with reference to Graebner.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-5, Page No. 65, Q. No. 6.

**Q. 4. Outline the debates on comparative method.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-6, Page No. 76, 'Debates on the Comparative Method'.

**Q. 5. What is ethnomethodological approach to research?**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-7, Page No. 90, 'What is Ethnomethodology'.

**Q. 6. Critically examine the feminist empirical approach in research.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-8, Page No. 106, 'Feminist Empirical Approach'.

**Q. 7. Outline the characteristics of quantitative research.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-9, Page No. 121, 'Characteristics of Quantitative Research'.

**Q. 8. What impact do ICTs have on social research? Explain.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-11, Page No. 154, Q. No. 1.

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# Sample Preview of The Chapter

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# SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH METHODS-I

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## Research in Social Sciences

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Every person is a researcher in some way, trying to understand, forecast, and provide meaning to their social environment. The themes covered by this masterpiece of societal investigation and theory are countless. Some of us may be worried about the upcoming election, while others may be worried about societal issues like drug abuse and violence, unemployment, and farmer suicides across the nation. Some people may also be worried about their own personal lives, while others may be worried about the effects of climate change. The micro and macro concerns that are occurring in our village and those that are occurring on a global scale may both worry us individually and collectively.

Humans respond appropriately to ideas rather than being mere recipients of them. Because of this aspect of human nature, the constantly shifting social reality raises many issues for the human race in terms of understanding, interpreting, and forecasting it. Social science study has a distinct niche because of the dynamic nature of both people and social reality. Research plays a crucial role in this situation in both comprehending the truth and the factors causing changes as well as attempting to thwart them. Therefore, social research is a methodical attempt to learn new things. By confirming or refuting the existing forms of information, social research aids in the addition of new knowledge.

The act of re-examining society with the intention of better comprehending or explaining why or how individuals behave is referred to as social science research.

This definition emphasizes the always-rooted in-research rediscovery process. Hence, 'research' might be understood as 'research that has been revived' or 're-examination.'

"The methodical process of discovering the new facts or validating the old facts, their sequences, interrelationships, causal explanations, and the natural laws which govern them", according to P.V. Young, is what social research is. "A manipulation of things, concepts, or symbols for the purpose of generalizing to extend proper and verifying information, whether that knowledge aids in the creation of a theory or in the practice of an art" is how Stephenson describes social research. Another definition of social research includes defining and redefining problems, formulating hypotheses or offering solutions, gathering, organizing, and evaluating data, making deductions, and drawing conclusions. Finally, the conclusions are carefully tested to see if they agree with the hypotheses that were formulated.

Learning something new about the social world is a goal of social research. So, a researcher needs to think logically, adhere to norms, and repeatedly do steps. He or she employs imagination and creativity while methodically fusing theories or concepts with facts.

### **CHAPTER AT A GLANCE**

#### **ALTERNATIVES TO SOCIAL RESEARCH**

The majority of what we currently know was discovered using methods other than social research. Our knowledge is mostly based on what our parents and other people have told us. You might also possess



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information derived from your own experiences. A person can gain knowledge/information via using common sense as well. These alternatives are not structured, organized, or systematic processes, whereas social research is. Throughout our daily lives, we come with alternatives such as common sense, media myths, and personal experiences.

**Common Sense**

Common sense is a major source of inspiration for sociology because it touches on everyday life for laypeople. Hence, there is a propensity to substitute one for the other. Common sense knowledge is specific and localized, but sociological knowledge is typically general, if not universal. Since common sense does not challenge its own origins and presuppositions, it is not only regionalized but also unreflective. Also, sociology aids in demonstrating how erratic common sense is. Sociology aids in our understanding of societies, and this understanding may be deepened and expanded by making systematic comparisons between other societies, whereas common sense is unable to do so. This is made feasible by the fact that sociology uses its methods and tools for a methodical analysis of the subject, whereas common sense relies on preconception, which sociology rejects. Common sense creates idealized social structures with ease, which is utopian, but sociology is anti-utopian in that it is preoccupied with the gap between ideal and actual human civilizations. In its approach, sociology is also anti-fatalistic. It rejects the idea that the specific restrictions common sense takes for granted are timeless or unchangeable.

People's ordinary understanding of their daily lives and activities is referred to as common sense knowledge. Various social theories have diverse stances on common sense. The idea is crucial to Alfred Schutz's phenomenological sociology, where it refers to categorized and structured collections of knowledge that underpin actions and are, by nature, unquestionable. Common sense or tacit knowledge, which allows people to rely on unspoken rules of conduct and creates a sense of organization and coherence, is a continual achievement for ethnomethodologists.

Although there is a less rigorous study of common-sense knowledge for symbolic interactionists and other interpretive sociologists, the main goal of sociology is considered as explicating and developing people's ideas of the social world.

**Personal Experiences**

On the basis of one's own experiences, many things in this world are taken to be true, and this is regarded as a reliable source of knowledge. Personal experience-based knowledge, however, has the potential to mislead us. What is believed to be true might be the result of a bias in judgement that causes mistakes. Such inaccuracies are avoided by research, but sadly, such erroneous personal experiences are frequently taken as the gospel. Hence, four different sorts of errors may result from personal experiences. Overgeneralization, selective observation, premature closure, and halo effect are among these mistakes. When you believe some evidence to be true and then presume that it applies to many other circumstances, you are overgeneralizing. Sometimes, this could go much beyond than what is justifiable in light of the data or actual evidence at hand.

**Premature Closure**

It functions alongside and strengthens the first two mistakes. Premature closure happens when the researcher assumes he has all the knowledge and is no longer need to listen, look for more details, or ask questions. It denotes the conclusion of the investigation or the making of a judgement before obtaining the volume or quality of evidence necessary by scientific standards.

**Halo Effect**

According to the halo effect, we tend to extrapolate from things that we perceive to be extremely positive or prestigious. It means that rather than evaluating everyone fairly and impartially, we let the past reputation of the person, location, or object to influence our judgement.

**SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION IN SOCIAL RESEARCH**

The sociological imagination is the sociological vision, a style of viewing the world that is able to make links between significant social issues and what appear to be the seemingly personal troubles of the individual. In order to view our daily activities in a fresh light using the sociological imagination, we must first 'think ourselves away' from them. Sociological imagination promotes a humanist sociology that links social, personal, and historical aspects of our existence while criticizing both grand theory and detached empiricism. Take the straightforward action of consuming a cup of coffee. From a sociological perspective, what could we find to say about such a seemingly uninteresting act of behaviour? Enormously large. We may start by

pointing out that coffee is more than just a beverage. It serves a symbolic purpose in our regular social interactions.

By using a social imagination, we can realize that many occurrences that seem to affect just one person actually represent more significant issues. For example, going through a divorce can be a highly challenging process for the person going through it, which Mills refers to as 'personal distress'. Yet, divorce is also a major 'public issue' in many societies around the globe. More over one-third of marriages in Britain terminate in divorce within the first ten years.

#### **DURKHEIM AND HIS PRESCRIPTION FOR SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH**

Research in the social sciences is distinct from that in the natural sciences. Durkheim recommended using two fundamental methods to construct sociological proofs. The initial step entailed looking at the causal connections between various social processes. The method of concurrent variation was the second procedure. But, the issue remained how to investigate this cause and effect connection. According to Durkheim, it is possible to compare phenomena when both are present at the same time to determine whether the variations they exhibit in these conditions imply that one phenomenon depends upon the other. The experimental technique is used when the phenomenon can be induced artificially at the observer's command.

According to Durkheim, sociological explanation relies solely on linking a phenomenon to its underlying cause or its underlying cause to its consequence. According to Durkheim, the comparative approach was the only one appropriate for sociology because social phenomena are independent of the researcher and had a tendency to elude the experimenter. In this way, he disapproved of Comte's historical approach. Durkheim further attempted to create sociological proofs and opposed John Stuart Mill's claim that sociology is not suited for even indirect experimentation. He specifically disputed Mill's theory that the same effect might result from different causes. Thus, we must adhere to the following proposition: "A given effect has always a single matching cause" if we want to apply the comparison technique to present the sociological argument.

Now the sociologist might compare the histories of different societies to determine whether the same phenomenon changes over time in response to the same circumstances. Nevertheless, because this method

only applies to events that have developed since the respective civilizations' inception, it ignores the pre-made, hereditary components of a society's social structure.

The genetic approach was the third technique. By demonstrating how each component element of the phenomenon was successively added to the other, it reveals them in their dissociated state, and through the use of the broad field of comparison, it is possible to determine the fundamental conditions on which the formation and association of these elements depend. This yields both an analysis and synthesis of the facts under study. So, until one tracks a social fact's full development across all species, one cannot explain a social fact of any complexity. The sociologist contrasts the status of a social fact during the fall of one society with its state during the early stages of its successor in an effort to determine the path of social evolution, as advised by Durkheim. According to Durkheim, "it will sufficient to evaluate the societies compared at the same time of their evolution" in order to make a fair comparison.

#### **QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH**

The qualitative and the quantitative research are the two main categories that can be used to categories social science studies.

##### **Qualitative Research**

In order to be effective, qualitative social science research relies heavily on participant observation and involvement in the study area. The engagement with the subjects is conducted in their own language, and this method of conducting research has a lot to do with anthropology. Researchers like Franz Boas and Evans-Pritchard have made significant contributions to the growth of this tradition of doing research. Under Robert E. Park's direction, this method of conducting research became more popular in the field of sociology. He urged his pupils to pay close attention to the city's diversity, heterogeneity, and complexity.

Naturalistic, participative, and ethnographic approaches are used in qualitative research. The most crucial form of data collecting used in qualitative research is participant observation, which requires the researcher to interact with the subjects of their study in order to produce a comprehensive, in-depth account of the group, organization, etc. Another technique used in qualitative research is the life history method, which involves reconstructing the lives of one or more

persons. The two most significant sources for creating histories are diaries and autobiographies, among other kinds of information. Another technique utilized by the qualitative approach is group discussion. Essentially, it is an unstructured interview but with multiple subjects. This technique is currently progressively rising in popularity.

### **The Intellectual Underpinnings of Qualitative Research**

Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research has a different intellectual foundation. Phenomenology, symbolic interactionism, verstehen, naturalism, and ethnogenics are the primary conceptual currents that are frequently seen as giving qualitative research its unique epistemology.

#### **Phenomenology**

Many positivist presumptions are rejected by phenomenological viewpoints in sociology. It entails a methodical examination of consciousness, which is thought to be the only phenomenon about which we can be certain. They contend that there are fundamental differences between the subjects covered by the social and scientific sciences. As a result, they presumptively believe that the methods and premises of the natural sciences are inadequate for the study of man. They believe that since they lack mind, meaning, and purpose, which guide their behaviour, natural sciences, which deal with matter, may be understood by simply looking at them from the outside. They respond to outside stimuli. According to phenomenologists, human beings possess consciousness, which includes thoughts, feelings, meanings, intentions, and an awareness of one's own existence. He defines situations and lends meaning to his own and other people's actions as a result, making his actions and those of others meaningful. As a result, he acts rather than just reacting to stimuli from outside sources.

#### **Symbolic Interactionism**

According to symbolic interactionism, meanings develop as a result of interaction. It sees social interaction as a process in which a person interprets his surroundings and behaves accordingly. The definition of the circumstance and the social self are two crucial ideas in this theory. The social self develops throughout time. The upshot of the dialectic between I and me is self. The process includes action and engagement, but we don't just act for the sake of acting; rather, we act based on how we characterize the circumstance and

how we believe others will perceive our actions. The hypothesis focuses on four main areas:

1. It emphasizes the different ways in which humans are 'symbol manipulating creatures'. Men are capable of creating culture and transferring history through the use of symbols.
2. The social world is a dynamic and dialectical network for symbolic integrationists; events are constantly encountered with uncertain consequences, and people's lives and biographies are constantly changing and evolving, never fixed and permanent.
3. The social environment is always interacting, meaning that people are constantly interconnected.
4. Symbolic interactionism explores social life's underlying patterns or forms by looking beyond symbols, processes, and interaction.

#### **Characteristics of Qualitative Research**

**A Subject's Perspective:** The most crucial aspect of qualitative research is that it views situations, behaviours, norms, values, etc. from the perspective of the subjects. It is crucial that the researcher spend a lot of time in the field as a result.

**Description:** To explain the social environment being investigated in more depth is one of the extremely important characteristics. It provides hints to reality and aids in understanding what is happening in a specific setting. Yet, qualitative research attempts to do more than simply describe the situation it is looking at. Description provides a social context for understanding the events and circumstances under study.

**Context:** Understanding social entities in their entirety is a requirement for qualitative research. The meanings people assign to their own behaviour must be understood in light of the norms and values, beliefs and practices, underlying structure, and numerous widely held perspectives of the relevant entity. This is the implication of context.

**Dynamic Social Life:** In qualitative research, social existence is not seen in static terms, but rather as a process. It emphasizes transitions because it sees social existence as a series of occurrences. The emphasis on process is a response to the goal of the qualitative researcher to capture the reality of everyday life, which they usually contend takes the shape of streams of connected events.