M.J.M.-31

Communication Research Methods

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QUESTION PAPER
June – 2023
(Solved)
COMMUNICATION RESEARCH METHODS

M.J.M.-31

Time: 3 Hours]   *[Maximum Marks : 100*

Note: Answer any five questions. All questions carry equal marks.

Q. 1. Define research. Explain the major social forces responsible for the development of research in mass communication.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-1, Page No. 1, 'Research: Concept and Role'.

Q. 2. Define sampling. Describe various types of probability sampling techniques with suitable examples.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-4, Page No. 34, 'Introduction', Page No. 36, 'Probability Sampling'.

Q. 3. 'Review of literature serves to link the current research to a body of existing research on the subject.' Justify this statement.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-3, Page No. 22, 'Importance of Review of Literature'.

Q. 4. Describe the characteristics of survey method. Outline the precautions you will take while using this method to study the use of social media among senior citizens in your area.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-2, Page No. 67, Q. No. 1.

Also add: Studying the use of social media among senior citizens in area using the survey method requires careful planning and consideration of various precautions to ensure the validity and reliability of the data. Here's an outline of the precautions one must take:

Ethical Considerations:
- Obtain informed consent from all participants, clearly explaining the purpose of the survey, how their data will be used, and their right to withdraw at any time.
- Ensure the privacy and confidentiality of respondents' information and responses.

Sampling:
- Use a representative sampling technique to ensure that your survey captures a diverse range of senior citizens in your area. Random sampling or stratified sampling may be appropriate.
- Avoid selection bias by reaching out to a wide variety of senior citizens, including those with varying levels of social media usage.

Questionnaire Design:
- Develop a clear and concise questionnaire with questions that are easy to understand, especially for older adults who may not be as tech-savvy.
- Pilot test the questionnaire with a small group of seniors to identify any confusing or ambiguous questions and make necessary revisions.
- Include both closed-ended questions (e.g., multiple-choice) and open-ended questions to gather quantitative and qualitative data.

Feedback and Continuous Improvement:
- Gather feedback from survey participants about their survey experience to improve future data collection efforts.
- Continuously assess the validity and reliability of your survey instrument and methodology.

By following these precautions, we can conduct a comprehensive survey on the use of social media among senior citizens in the area while ensuring ethical standards, data quality, and respect for your respondents' needs and abilities.

Q. 5. Differentiate between any two of the following:

(a) **Qualitative and Quantitative approach**

Ans. The main difference between quantitative and qualitative research is the type of data they collect and analyze. Quantitative research collects numerical data and analyzes it using statistical methods. The aim is to produce objective, empirical data that can be measured and expressed in numerical terms. Quantitative research is often used to test hypotheses, identify patterns, and make predictions.

Qualitative research, on the other hand, collects non-numerical data such as words, images, and sounds. The focus is on exploring subjective experiences, opinions, and attitudes, often through observation and interviews. Qualitative research aims to produce rich and detailed descriptions of the phenomenon being studied, and to uncover new insights and meanings.

(b) **Formative research and Summative research**

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-2, Page No. 13, 'Formative Research; Summative Research'.

(c) **Questionnaire and Interview schedules**

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-7, Page No. 64, 'Questionnaires; Interviews Schedules'.

(d) **Primary and Secondary data**

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-6, Page No. 59, Q. No. 1.

Q. 6. Which tool of data collection will you choose for collecting qualitative data from a select group of film viewers? Describe the process you will follow.

Ans. For collecting qualitative data from a select group of film viewers, the more appropriate tool of data collection would be interview schedules. Film viewers' preferences, interpretations, emotional responses, and personal experiences are subjective and complex, making interviews a suitable method to explore these aspects in greater detail. Additionally, film viewers may have diverse and nuanced perspectives that can be better understood through qualitative interviews. Interview schedules, conducted in a face-to-face or even online format, enable researchers to engage in a more interactive and flexible dialogue with participants, providing richer qualitative data compared to a standardized questionnaire. This approach is particularly valuable when studying a select group of film viewers who may have unique perspectives or insights to share.

Also add: Ref.: See Chapter-7, Page No. 64, 'Interview Schedules'.

Q. 7. Identify a research topic of your choice. Explain how observation method can be used to study this topic.

Ans. Research Topic: 'The Impact of Mobile Phone Usage on Social Interactions in Public Spaces'.

The observation method can be a valuable research tool for studying the impact of mobile phone usage on social interactions in public spaces. This method involves systematically watching and recording behaviors, interactions, and events in a natural setting without direct interference or manipulation by the researcher. The important steps are:

Selecting the Observation Setting: Choose specific public spaces, such as parks, coffee shops, public transportation, or shopping malls, where people commonly engage in social interactions.

Defining Observational Criteria: Clearly define the behaviors and interactions you want to observe. In this case, you may want to focus on non-verbal cues, body language, and the frequency and duration of mobile phone usage during social interactions.

Participant Observation vs. Non-Participant Observation: Decide whether you will conduct participant observation (where the researcher actively engages in social interactions while observing) or non-participant observation (where the researcher remains uninvolved in the interactions). Participant observation allows for a more immersive perspective, while non-participant observation may yield more objective data.

Data Collection: Conduct systematic observations in the selected public spaces. Use tools such as notebooks, audio recordings, or video cameras to document your observations.

Data Analysis: Analyze the collected data by reviewing and categorizing the recorded behaviors and interactions.

Interpreting the Findings: Interpret the observed data in the context of your research question and explore potential reasons behind observed behaviours.

Q. 8. 'The role of moderator is crucial for the success of focus group discussion.' Comment.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-10, Page No. 103, Q. No. 6.

Q. 9. Describe various components of a research report and explain their importance.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-16, Page No. 168, Q. No. 1.

Q. 10. Write short notes on any two of the following:

(a) **Hypotheses**

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-3, Page No. 28, Q. No. 5.

(b) **Validity**

Ans. Validity of research is an evaluation of how accurate the study is. It describes the extent to which the study actually measures what it intends to measure. A measurement instrument is considered valid if it accurately measures the concept or constructs that it is intended to measure. In other words, it is a valid instrument that measures what it claims to measure and produces results that are meaningful and relevant to the research question.

(c) **Sampling error**

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-4, Page No. 35, 'Sampling Error'.

(d) **Semiotic analysis**

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-8, Page No. 78, Q. No. 7.

(e) **Reliability**

Ans. Reliability in research is a concept describing how reproducible or replicable a study is. In general, if a study can be repeated and the same results are found, the study is considered reliable. Studies can be reliable across time and reliable across samples. Reliability is important because it measures the quality of the research. Findings that are true or accurate from a research study are often reliable. ■■

COMMUNICATION RESEARCH METHODS

Research: Concept, Nature and Scope | 1

INTRODUCTION

The field of mass communication research has grown significantly and now encompasses various topics. It draws upon research methods from disciplines like sociology, political science, and psychology. Different research methods, such as effects research, textual analysis, critical discourse analysis, and semiotics, are applied to different communication situations. Research is not only a skill but also a way of thinking that involves critically examining an issue, identifying and explaining governing principles, searching for solutions, and making predictions. Research serves the purpose of promoting knowledge, building theory, and finding solutions to real-life issues in industry and society. When conducting research for an organization, it is important to understand the purpose and reasons behind the extensive exercise. Research is a logical process that requires an understanding of broad concepts and the nature and purpose of research. This introduction aims to provide an overview of the complex field of communication research and prepare readers for an exciting journey in mass communication research.

CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

RESEARCH: CONCEPT AND ROLE

This section examines the fundamental aspects of research and its development influenced by socio-political factors.

Definition

Research is defined as a thorough investigation and inquiry aimed at uncovering new knowledge in any field of study. The term "search" highlights the continuous pursuit of answers and the uncertainty researchers face regarding what they will discover and where. The word "research" itself signifies an ongoing quest for truth and a disregard for the status quo.

In the realm of social sciences, research shares a similar emphasis on inquiry for theory development and testing existing theories. Communication, as a subject, has evolved into a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary discipline over the past century. It draws on the theoretical foundations of both physical and social sciences. Communication research specifically focuses on any research discipline that can provide fresh insights into mass communication processes, effects, institutions, and changes within those institutions (Westley and Stempel, 1981).

The Central Concept

Research is characterized by its dynamic nature and the pursuit of "tentative truth." Researchers aim to explore and uncover unnoticed, hidden, or problematic aspects of a subject. Theory and research have a symbiotic relationship, where each is both a part of the process and a result of the other. Research findings contribute to the development and refinement of theories, while theories form the foundation for further investigation.

The evolution of theories in communication has involved numerous revisions and refinements, often carried out by the original authors themselves. Some theories have withstood the test of time, while others have been rejected. For example, the Bullet theory of the early 1900s gave way to the Two-step Flow hypothesis in the 1940s, and Everett M. Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations theory experienced a reversal within five years, rendering its original premise irrelevant. Other theories relevant to media development were also discarded when repeated results contradicted their assumptions. Therefore, both theory and research are essential in validating or refuting each other's findings.

Growth and Development

The development of research in mass communication can be attributed to four major social forces throughout history. The first force was World War I, which highlighted the power of media as a tool for propaganda. The Hypodermic needle (Bullet) theory emerged during this time, suggesting that audiences passively received messages from the media without much choice.

The second force was the Manufacturers' and Advertisers' Lobby. After the wars, manufacturers sought buyers in an oversaturated market. They recognized the importance of message effectiveness and media planning, leading to the demand for research on communication science and art. Circulation figures, demographics, and other data became crucial for tailoring and placing advertising messages effectively.

The third force was the Publishers' Lobby. As the printing industry grew into an established business, publishers realized the profitability of selling newsprint space to advertisers. They conducted research to understand readers' preferences and needs, resulting in extensive readership and audience surveys.

The fourth social force was Public Concern. With the increasing power and intrusiveness of media, people became more aware of its impact on their lives and society. This led to the emergence of institutional and public policy research in communications, aiming to address the concerns raised by the public.

Phases of Development: Research in a particular medium can be divided into four interlinked phases, as identified by R.D. Wimmer and J.R. Dominick in Mass Media Research. These phases are not strictly chronological but are interconnected.

Phase 1 involves an exploration of the medium itself. Researchers examine its characteristics, technology, similarities to existing media, functions, accessibility, and cost. This phase applies to mediums like the Internet, Mobile Telephony, and other forms of New Media.

Phase 2 begins once the medium is developed and focuses on its uses and users. Researchers investigate the extent and nature of activities facilitated by the medium among different user groups. They analyze demographic profiles, patterns of usage by different demographics, and whether the medium serves as a functional alternative to traditional media. They also explore unintended uses of the medium.

Phase 3 delves into the social, psychological, and physical effects of the medium. Researchers examine usage patterns, identifying when usage becomes excessive or problematic. They assess the benefits of the medium, such as whether it enables shy individuals to express themselves more freely or reduces the need for physical activity. They explore how the medium influences perspectives, levels the playing field in business, and attracts players with different agendas.

Phase 4 focuses on improving the medium, both in terms of usage and technology. This phase is primarily driven by the private sector. The competition among media companies motivates efforts to enhance transmission, reception, penetration, and content quality. The goal is to retain and increase audience share, with consumer comfort becoming a key factor for success.

Importance of Research

Research holds significant importance in both knowledge creation and solving real-world problems. It serves as a critical input in the development, design, production, delivery, and evaluation of courses and content. Research findings should inform the theory of multidisciplinary and epistemological inquiries. To achieve a comprehensive perspective, each element should be examined in association with others throughout the research process.

Understanding social order requires research due to the complexity of social phenomena. Various influences, such as environmental, psychological, and social factors, constantly interact with individuals, social groups, and society as a whole. Research is necessary to investigate isolated patterns of behaviour and identify consistent patterns exhibited by social groups and societies. By systematically interrelating diverse facts, research enables us to understand, generalize, predict, and manage social behaviour.

Research generates extensive social data that inform the formulation of social policies, planning, and priorities. In culturally diverse countries like India, such data are crucial for the judicious use of resources and the coherent development of a rapidly changing society.

Research is both cumulative and self-correcting. Its value lies in its reliability when conducted effectively. Conclusions derived from research studies are firmly grounded in reality, based on observation and measurement. This enhances the trustworthiness of research outcomes.

RESEARCH: NATURE AND CHARACTERISTICS

Once we have discussed the concept, role, and significance of research, it is essential to delve into its nature and characteristics.

Nature of Research

Research is driven by the purpose of advancing knowledge and finding solutions to problems. It begins with simple questions, similar to those used in journalistic practice, such as who, what, why, where, when, and how. However, in research, these questions are approached in a systematic, reliable, testable, and replicable manner.

While dealing with human behaviour and social phenomena, it can be challenging to separate these questions from one another. Research aims to isolate and thoroughly study each question individually and in conjunction with others. The fundamental assumption is that any issue, event, or phenomenon can be examined using appropriate systematic and objective scientific procedures, leading to conclusions that can ideally be generalized to the population. Furthermore, these results and conclusions should be replicable, as research follows defined rules and procedures that are commonly understood and shared across scientific disciplines.

Characteristics of Scientific Research

Research must be conducted in a systematic and logical manner, adhering to a set of steps and protocols. This systematic approach is crucial for research to be considered scientific. Let us explore the fundamental principles of research:

(i) Research is empirical: Research is focused on empirical observations and measurable phenomena. Researchers aim to investigate, identify, and measure observable factors or variables. These variables are defined in operational terms, allowing for direct observation or measurement of behaviour patterns that represent abstract concepts. For example, educational levels can be easily measured by the degree obtained, while more complex concepts like modernity can be measured using scales or researcher-created instruments.

The primary objective of research is to gain an understanding of why a phenomenon occurs or is likely to occur. Concepts are used to organize and make sense of observations, acting as labels to structure the research. They also facilitate the measurement of associations and correlations between different concepts. For instance, in studying the relationship between violent behaviour and viewing violent TV content, researchers grapple with defining violence and determining the significance of the impact of televised violence on behaviour.

By operationally defining terms and observing respondent behaviour, researchers can gather data, measure variables, and draw conclusions from their research.

(ii) Research is objective: To ensure accuracy and objectivity in research, it is crucial to minimize biases and preconceived notions. Researchers should strive for ethical neutrality and follow the scientific method, which establishes explicit rules and procedures. Regardless of the research approach, various methods exist to reduce bias. The collected data should speak for itself, independent of the researcher's opinions. Results may not always align with expectations, but the facts should prevail and reflect an objective finding.

The creative aspect of research typically lies in identifying and formulating the research problem. However, once the methodology is determined, its implementation should adhere to established procedures. The reliability and validity of research findings are influenced by the chosen methodology.

Research contributes to knowledge generation by using primary or secondary data to support or reject hypotheses. Objectivity is maintained through the use of operational definitions, which establish logical and reasoned parameters for studying a phenomenon. These definitions facilitate replication of the study by other researchers and help define the meaning of terms specific to the research effort. Triangulation, where multiple researchers or data sets are used to observe the same phenomena or compare data, further ensures objectivity and helps arrive at a consensus. Triangulation can also involve using multiple data collection tools to cross-verify observations or measurements.

(iii) Research is systematic and cumulative: Research is not conducted in isolation but builds upon existing knowledge. Previous studies serve as the foundation for current research, either strengthening existing theories or identifying gaps and shortcomings to be addressed. Before formulating the research terms and methodology, a review of the literature is conducted to examine previous research. Research progresses from observing individual events to formulating theories and laws. These theories are then applied to new observations and tested, leading to a cycle of testing, verification, rejection, and rebuilding of theories.

(iv) **Research is predictive:** Science, including research, aims to establish a connection between the past or present and the future. The purpose of research is not only to understand and analyze current phenomena but also to develop theories that can predict future behaviour in various contexts. By studying and examining the past and present through research, scientists seek to gain insights that can inform and forecast future outcomes and behaviours.

(v) **Research is public:** Researchers, particularly those in academia, conduct their work in a public manner. Publicly available research plays a crucial role in theory-building and is essential for academic colleagues to evaluate, critique, and contribute to the body of knowledge. Sharing research findings openly allows for collaboration, scrutiny, and the advancement of scientific understanding within the academic community.

PURPOSE OF RESEARCH

Research can be categorized into two main types: pure research and applied research. Pure research focuses on expanding knowledge and understanding without immediate practical applications. It aims to enhance theoretical frameworks and explore fundamental concepts. Applied research, on the other hand, is conducted with specific practical objectives in mind. It aims to address real-world problems, develop solutions, and inform decision-making processes.

Both pure and applied research are interconnected and mutually beneficial. Pure research contributes to the development of theories and provides the foundation for applied research. Applied research, in turn, tests and validates theories in real-world contexts, contributing to their refinement and application.

Regardless of the type, research should adhere to scientific methodology, possess explanatory power, and have implications for theory or practical decision-making. Research that lacks scientific rigor or fails to provide meaningful contributions to theory or practical applications should be avoided.

Pure Research: Pure research refers to the pursuit of knowledge driven by intellectual curiosity rather than immediate practical applications. Its focus is on discovering, developing, and testing theories, regardless of their present or future practicality. It involves exploring concepts, understanding phenomena, and refining research methodologies.

Pure research contributes to the development of theories, such as the Agenda Setting Theory that explains how audiences prioritize certain news stories.

It also involves advancing research procedures, techniques, and methodology, such as creating standardized scales to measure phenomena like Internet addiction or developing more sensitive instruments to assess Emotional Quotient (EQ).

The primary goal of pure research is the acquisition of knowledge and understanding, without specific consideration for immediate practical outcomes. Its outcomes often serve as foundations for applied research and contribute to the overall progress of scientific knowledge.

Applied Research: Applied research is conducted to address practical problems and improve efficiency and profitability. In mass communication, applied research includes readership studies, need gratification studies, studies on presentation variations, management studies, ratings research, and non-ratings research. In advertising, research focuses on crafting effective advertising copy, determining the right media mix, and assessing advertising impact. In public relations, research involves monitoring public opinion, conducting audits of image management and communication activities, and measuring social performance.

It's important to note that the distinction between pure and applied research is not always clear-cut, as pure research can be influenced by previous knowledge and applied research can have theoretical aspects. Additionally, categorizing a study as purely pure or purely applied can be challenging. The distinction between the two is based on the specific problem being addressed and the nature of the research itself.

SCOPE OF COMMUNICATION RESEARCH

The scope of communication research extends to various specific areas within the field. Some of these areas include:

(i) **Marketing Communication Research:** This involves studying the communication strategies and tactics used in marketing, advertising, and branding. It focuses on understanding consumer behaviour, message effectiveness, market segmentation, and the impact of advertising on consumer attitudes and purchase decisions.

(ii) **Persuasive Communication:** This area explores the persuasive techniques and processes used in communication. It examines how messages are designed to influence attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours of individuals or audiences.

(iii) **Political Communication:** This field investigates communication processes within the political sphere, including political campaigns, media