

Research Methodology



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RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

(For Students of Social Sciences)

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PREFACE

This book on 'Research Methodology' is the outcome of a long felt desire to have a very simple book for the research students of Social Sciences (Economics, Sociology, Political Science, Public Administration etc.). Several years of experience in research and teaching has given us confidence to undertake this venture. The coverage of the book is very comprehensive. It is bound to give a very clear cut, explicit and definite answers to the questions that arise when the students learn the subject. This book is a good piece of academic literature and it is intended to help the students to answer any type of questions in the university examination. We are confident that the students and the teachers will find the book immensely useful for learning and teaching Research Methodology. Suggestions for the improvement of the book are always welcome.

We thank the publishers for their encouragement in bringing out the book.

AUTHORS

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NATURE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF SOCIAL RESEARCH

In the modern complex world every society today is faced with serious social, economic and political problems. These problems need systematic intelligent and practical solution. Problem solving is a technical process. It requires among all other things accumulation of new knowledge. Research provides the means for accumulating such a fund of knowledge and wisdom. In other words research is a systematic effort at gathering, analysis and interpretation of the problems confronted by humanity. It is a thinking process and a scientific method of studying a problem and finding solution.

Research is not the exclusive preserve of a chosen few. Any individual belonging to any field of activity can undertake research or activities to repeat a search. Research or activities to repeat a search. Research helps to push the frontiers of knowledge beyond the horizon. It is an indepth analysis based on reflective thinking of the various phenomena or observed units to make a generalisation. Research is essential for building up of the knowledge base in social science. It develops concepts, theories and tools of measurement. It also provides the research investigator necessary skills to analyse problems scientifically and find solutions.

SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

Like physical, biological and technological research, social research is one of the major fields of research. Social research includes social sciences, humanities and languages. Social research studies man and his institutions. It is largely empirical. It is bound to be inter-disciplinary as the social phenomena are not isolated.

Social science research or social research is the systematic method of discovering new facts, verifying old facts, their sequences, interrelationships, causal explanation, and the natural law that governs them. In other words, it is scientific undertaking in the field of social sciences to acquire facts. It is also stated that social research is the manipulation of things, concepts and symbols, with a view to extend new knowledge or verify the old knowledge whether that knowledge aids in the construction of a theory or in the practice of an art.

Social science research has been defined by Rummel in the following words “It is devoted to a study of mankind in his social environment and is concerned with improving his understanding of social orders, groups, instructions and ethics”.

Social science research according to M.H. Gopal is the scientific analysis of the nature and trends of social phenomena or groups or in general of human behaviour so as to formulate broad principles and scientific concepts.

Characteristics of Social Science Research

On the basis of the above analysis the following characteristics of social research may be derived.

1. Social research deals with the social phenomena. It studies the behaviour of human beings towards the society he lives. It encompasses the study of social phenomena covering the economic, political, educational, administrative and related aspects of social life as also the social groups and institutions.

2. Social research aims at discovery of new facts and verification of the old ones. The object of every science is the discovery of new facts, new relationship and new laws governing the phenomena. But constant verification of the old concepts is also needed particularly in the case of dynamic sciences. Verification is needed due to two reasons. Firstly, there may be an improvement in the technique of research and it is necessary to test the old concepts by this improved technique. Secondly, the phenomena under study might have undergone a change and it may be required to test the validity of old concepts under changing circumstances.

3. Social research tries to establish causal relationship between various human activities. There is a general belief that human activities are complex. These activities are performed at random without any sequence, law or system behind them. But a close and patient examination of different cases would reveal that most of them are not merely haphazard as they appear to be but motivated by a perfect system with definite rules and regulations. The main purpose of social science research is therefore, to discover these rules or laws so that they be used in the guided growth of human society.

4. Social research assists in the understanding of evolution of new theories. Every research highlights some broad principles, establishes some scientific truth and analyses their sequences, interrelationship and causal explanations. This results in expansion of knowledge, improvement in the understanding of the social phenomena and in the evolution of new theories.

5. Social science research involves the use of scientific methodology. It implies the development of new scientific tools, concepts and theories which would facilitate reliable and valid study of human behaviour.

The social science research thus goes through all these phases from sensing a problem till finding solutions and applying them. But still there are certain problems. In social sciences human beings are the sources of data. So much so their attitude, environment, honesty, personal values and biases of the researcher would change the research decisions considerably.

Purpose of Social Science Research

The purpose of social science research may be classified into two parts viz. academic and utilitarian. The academic purpose of social science research is to acquire first hand knowledge about the society. The quest for knowledge in social science makes the investigator to conduct specific study in areas of theoretical significance even when no material incentive was present. Thus the primary object of social science research is to get true and intimate knowledge of human society and its functioning, to know and understand the laws that are operating behind various activities of man.

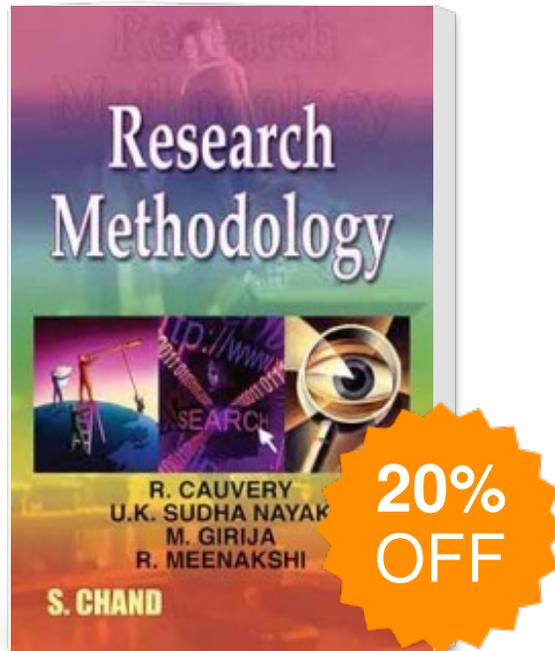
The other purpose of social research is utilitarian in nature. In this type of research, the primary goal is to understand social life and thereby gain greater knowledge which will be helpful for his project or to gain control over social behaviour. Human society suffers from a number of social evils like murders, suicides, thefts, robberies, quarrels and wars. Most of these evils have their root in the organisation of human society and its working. If these roots are destroyed, then the society will be cured of evils and everlasting human happiness might be secured.

A perfect understanding of human society and its various activities is essential. This is because it has been proved by social researches that no amount of remedial measure can cure the society if its evils. Despite the number of jails, police and the punishment the crimes have continued and would continue. Hence, there is need for going into the root cause of these evils and destroy those grounds where the crimes are born and flourish. More and more social research is being directed to this purpose.

All the same the utilitarian view should not lead one to conclude that the purpose of social research is to find a remedy for all social evils. Social research is concerned with pathological problems only in so far as they throw light on the fundamental social processes on human behaviour and the development or disorganisation of personality. Social research is not concerned with practical and immediate social planning or social engineering nor with ameliorative and therapeutic measure, it is not concerned with administrative changes and refinements of administrative procedures nor with social reform.

Social disorganisation is the outcome of causes which may be classified into two. Firstly, those which are influenced by human nature and secondly those that are caused by faulty social planning or defective administration. The first type of causes are dealt by social surveys. For example, the attention of the government may be drawn to growing delinquency among the school children. A survey may reveal them to be caused by mismanagement of schools, ill treatment by the teachers or guardians or a bad company. Through administrative reforms the prevalence of delinquency may be reduced. But it can not be stopped altogether. A closer examination may reveal its causes to be deeprooted like psychological frustration or temptation towards evil and

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