

# University of Ladakh

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**Department of Sociology**  
**Semester: IV DSE-SOC-ID**  
(Methodology of Social Research)

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## **Unit-I Introduction**

- *Nature and Scope of Social Research*
- *Types of Social Research: Pure and Applied*

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1. What is Research?**

The first question is: what is research? Research is a careful and exhaustive investigation of a phenomena which an objective of advancing knowledge. According to Theodorson and Theodorson (1969: 347), “it is a systematic and objective attempt to study a problem for the purpose of deriving general principles”. Robert Burns (2003:3) describes it as a systematic investigation to find solutions to a problem. The investigation is guided by previously collected information. Man’s knowledge grows by studying what is already known and revising past knowledge in the light of new findings. Activity under taken for the purpose of personal learning or enlightenment or any causal investigation is not research.

While talking of research, sometime we talk of empirical (Scientific) research and sometimes of library research, historical research, social research, and so on. Empirical research involves observation of facts or interaction with people. Library research is done in Library situation. Historical research is study of history (e.g., functioning of caste system in different periods of history) or biographical research (e.g., research into the life and times of Mahatma Gandhi). Scientific research is building of knowledge through collection of empirical verifiable facts.

### **Definition of Research:**

- a) **According to Black and Champion**, “scientific research consist of obtaining information through empirical observation that can be used for systematic development of logically related propositions attempting to establish casual relations among variable”.
- b) **Emory defines research as** “any organized inquiry designed and carried out to provide information for solving a problem”.
- c) **Kerlinger defines research as a** “systematic, controlled, empirical and critical investigation of hypothetical relations among natural phenomena”.
- d) **L.V. Redman and A.V.H. Morry** have defined “systematic effort to gain new knowledge we call research”.

However, here we will be dealing with social research.

### **2. What is Social Research?**

Social sciences are not exact like physical sciences. It deals with human beings. Human nature and mans environment are so complex, that it is more difficult to comprehend and predict human behavior than the physical phenomena. Social science research is a systematic method of exploring, analyzing and conceptualizing human life in order to extend, correct or verify knowledge of human behavior and social life. Social research seeks to find explanations to unexplained phenomena, to clarify the doubtful and correct the misconceived fact of social life. It involves the application of scientific method for understanding and analyzing of social life in order to correct and verify the existing knowledge as a system. The main idea behind social research is to discover new inter relations, new knowledge, new facts and also to verify old ones. Human behavior may be involved by certain values and laws. The main purpose of social research is to discover those laws which can be proper guidelines for studying human contact and behavior. It is difficult see the underlying uniformities in the diversity of complex human behavior. Social research can be defined as the systematic and objective analysis and recording of controlled observations that may lead to the development of generalization, principles or

theories resulting in prediction and possibly ultimate control of events in society. It attempts to answer or solve social problems.

In simple words social research is a research that focuses on the study of human groups or the processes of social interaction.

### **Definition of Social Research:**

**According to C. A. Moser:** “Social research is a systematized investigation to gain new knowledge about social phenomenon and problems.”

**According to P.V. Young:** “Social research is a scientific undertaking which by means of logical methods, aim to discover new facts or old facts and to analyze their sequences, interrelationships, casual explanations and natural laws which govern them.”

**According to Wallace and Wallace,** “Sociological research refers to the structural observation of social behaviour”

### **3. Characteristics of Social Research**

Following are the characteristics of social research are as under:

- **Verifiable evidence,** i.e factual observations which other observers can see and check.
- **Accuracy:** i.e describing what really exists. It means truth or correctness of a statement or describing things exactly as they are and avoiding jumping to unwarranted conclusions either by exaggeration or fantasizing.
- **Precision:** i.e making it exact as necessary or giving exact number or measurement.
- **Systematization:** I.e., attempt to find all the relevant data, or collecting data in a systematic and organized way so that the conclusions drawn are reliable. Data based on casual recollections are generally incomplete and give unreliable judgments and conclusion.
- **Objectivity:** i.e., being free from all biases and vested interests. It means observation is unaffected by the observer’s value, beliefs and preferences to the extent possible and he is able to see and accept facts as they are, not as he might wish them to be. The

researcher remains detached from his emotions, prejudices and needs, and guards his biases.

- **Recording:** i.e., jotting down complete details as quickly as possible. Since human memory is fallible, all data collected are recorded. Researcher will not depend on the recalled facts but will analyse the problem on the basis of the record data. Conclusions based on unrecorded data are not trustworthy.
- **Controlling conditions:** i.e., controlling all variables except one and then attempting to examine what happens when that variable is varied. This is the basic technique in all scientific experimentation- allowing one variable to vary while holding all other variables constant. Unless all variable except one have been controlled, we cannot be sure which variable has produced the results. However, in social sciences research it is difficult to control the entire variable, therefore, it is possible for a researcher to work with two or more variable at a time. It is called multivariate analysis. Since social scientist is not always able to control all the variable he wants, his conclusion do not permit him to predict.
- **Training investigators:** i.e., imparting necessary knowledge to investigators to make them understand what to look for, how to interpret it and avoid inaccurate data collection.

#### 4. Importance of Social Research

Research is carried on in the social field not just with academic interests. It has both academic and non-academic purposes and importance. The importance of social research can be briefly stated as under:

- Social research is essential to diffuse knowledge and to expand its horizon
- Social research helps us to verify or disprove, confirm or reject, modify and re-assert the existing theories and to establish new ones.
- Social research provides practical clues, to undertake measures that lead to social improvement, social change, and social progress.
- Social research by probing into the perplexing problems of the day provides new insight regarding their nature. Research helps us to know the nature and the magnitude of the problems.

- Social researches have commercial importance also. Industries, business firms and commercial establishments can get lot of information and clues about their endeavours in society.
- Social research can provide all the required data and facts to the administrators to adopt and undertake appropriate policies, plans, and programmes.
- Social research has educational importance. Information obtained through social research may have their educational importance.
- Social research motivates interdisciplinary studies. It stresses the interdependence of different sciences. It thus strengthens the ‘interdisciplinary approach’ which is emerging out these days.

### 5. Nature and Scope of Social Research:

Social research is a scientific tool to study and analyze social problems and has immense value. It studies social phenomenon in a purely scientific spirit. A social scientist collects and records the significant facts and figures of social problems and this, in turn, make possible correct generalizations about them by unraveling the intricacies of phenomenon it help to forecast about them. In brief, following are the scope of social research:-

- **New Knowledge:** According to L.V. Redman and A.V. Mory, systematized, “effort to gain new knowledge we can research”. The curiosity and thirst for new facts are the main levers of social research.
- **Removal of Ignorance and superstitions:** Social research helps removing superstitions, blind faith, dogmas and myths etc. through scientific knowledge. For example, before the intensive social research into crime the social causes of the crime were not realized and people thought that propensity to crime was inherited.
- **Analysis of Social problems:** the key to the solution of social problems is their accurate and unbiased analysis and therefore by and untrained observer is not dispassionate and precise. Only a social scientist is competent to undertake this task.
- **Scientific study of Society:** social research alone has the requisite methodology and tools to make a scientific study of society. Therefore, scientific knowledge about society is a great benefit in social research.

- **Practical successes:** the ability to predict future has given great fillip to social research, because as a consequence to fruitfulness of social research, the faith of people in scientific methodology strengthens and they become responsive to needs of social research.
- Social research provides new insights into the organized society and its social structure.
- Social research also provide new horizon in scientific explanation; advanced and tested principles of procedure and suggested new concepts.
- Another scope of social research is that exemplified by studies and attempt to test or challenge existing theories and revise them the light of new evidence
- Social research helpful to establish new theory and established techniques of exploration.
- Social research also provides contributions to existing stone of fruitful ideas, methodology and basis understating of social life and control of its problems.

## **6. Types of Social Research: Applied and Pure**

A classification or taxonomy of research basically depends upon the approach, the purpose and the nature of a research activity. It has a close relationship to the empirical and in this sense there is an inter-dependence between categories so that classification into one category calls the conceptual treatment in another. Research studies can be divided on the basis of the nature of data, tools of data collection interpretation of already available data and information purpose and other such criteria.

### **Pure Research:**

Pure research also called basic research or fundamental research in which a researcher in his quest for the truth makes persistent efforts to discover something new to enrich human knowledge. It aims to improve scientific theories for improved understating or prediction of natural or other phenomena. Pure research is the source of most new scientific ideas and ways of thinking about the world. In a simplest way, research concerning some natural phenomenon is known as pure or fundamental research. The research directed towards findings information that has a broad base of application and

adds to the already existing organized body of scientific knowledge. In social sciences research studies concerning human behavior are examples of fundamental research. It is mainly concerned with generalization and the formulation of a theory. It is actually a search for knowledge without primary concern for its practical use. It is pure, basic and original in character. It has two ways:

- **Discovery of new theory:** fundamental research is consisted of entirely new discoveries that are the knowledge which has not existed so far. It depends upon the researchers' own ideas or imagination.
- **Development of the existing theory:** it emphasizes an improvement in the existing theory either by way of replacing some of its assumptions or by reinterpreting it or by developing a new theory of akin to those already existing. Since theory is always based on assumptions. Therefore, there exists enormous scope of altering or formulating new set of assumption and adding new dimensions to the existing theory. For example, theories developed in capitalist countries have often challenged by the socialist and they often developed new theory akin to the socialist theory.

### **Applied Research:**

Applied research is based on the application of known theories and models to the actual operational fields or populations. It is conducted to test empirical contents or the basic assumption or the very validity of a theory under given circumstances or condition. The main aim of applied research is to discover solutions for immediate problems. It is a research for ways of using scientific knowledge to solve practical problems. A sociologist making a study of the social structure of a slum neighborhood is working as a pure scientist if this followed by a study of how to prevent delinquency in a slum neighborhood is called as applied research. It often takes the basic data for verifying the applicability of existing theories and models in the given situation. The adequacy and accuracy of data have a considerable effect on the applicability of the theory and or model.

Moreover, applied research uses scientific theories to develop technology or techniques to intervene and alter natural or other phenomena. This type of research plays an important role in

solving everyday problems that often have an impact on life, work, health, and overall well-being.

The research can also be of following types:

- **Experimental research:** which is conducted by controlling one or more variable and comparing control and experimental groups
- **Evaluation research:** which is a study measuring the effectiveness of an action programme, e.g., research conducted by this author in 1988-89 on the evolution of the working of voluntary organizations in Rajasthan getting financial assistance from ministry of Welfare, Government of India for the rehabilitation of physically handicapped persons.

### **Differences between Applied Research and Pure (Fundamental/Basic) Research.**

The difference between applied research and pure research is straightforward- findings of applied research can be applied to resolve issues, whereas fundamental studies are used simply to explore certain issues and elements.

Moreover, differences between applied and basic research can be summarized into three points:

- **Differences in purpose:** the purpose of applied studies is closely associated with the solution of specific problems, while the purpose of fundamental studies relate to the creation of new knowledge or expansion of the current knowledge without any concern to applicability.
- **Differences in context:** In applied research studies, research objectives are set by clients or sponsors as a solution to specific problems they are facing, fundamental studies, on the other hand, are usually self-initiated in order to expand the levels of knowledge in certain areas.
- **Differences in method:** Research validity represents an important point to be addressed in all types of studies. Nevertheless, applied studies are usually more concerned external validity. Whereas internal validity can be specified as the main point of concern for pure researcher.

# UNIT-II: RESEARCH DESIGN

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- Meaning and Significance
- Types of Research Design: Descriptive, Analytical and Exploratory

## **Meaning and Definition of Research Design:**

The term 'design' means "drawing an outline" or planning or arranging details. It is a process of making decisions before the situation arises in which the decision has to be carried out. 'Research design' is planning a strategy of conducting research.

It plans as to: what to be observed, how it is observed, how to record observations, how to analyse/interpret observations, and how to generalize.

Suppose we want to study the role of political elite in the development of Indian society. Here what do we specifically want to find? The main objectives are to determine: what were the goals set by the political elite in economic, social, political and cultural areas; what was their level of commitment to development at national and regional levels, whether they were caste, religion or region oriented; what barriers did they face; what measures did they take in removing these barriers; and so on. Other related questions are: who are political elites? What are their interests, ideologies, commitments and loyalties? Whom to include in the sample for study? What should be the size of sample? What is development? What were the types of political elite we had in first two decades after independences? The answers to all these questions will depend on planning every step of data collection, processing, and analysis in advance based on scientific objectivity and integrity.

**According to Henry Manheim** (1977; 140) research design and only anticipates and specifies the seemingly countless decisions connected with carrying out data collection, processing and analysis but it presents a logical basis for these decisions.

**William Zikmund** (1988; 41) has described research design as “a master plan specifying the methods and procedures for collecting and analyzing the information”.

**Martin Bulmer** (1974;86) has said that “research design is the specification of problem, conceptual definitions, derivation of hypothesis to test, and defining of population to be studied”.

Thus a research design is the researcher’s plan for assembling and analyzing certain facts by following certain specific rules and procedures. It is a blue print for the collection, measurement and analysis of data. It enables the investigator to come up with solutions to these problems. It is a logical model of proof that guides the investigator to conduct research in the various stages.

### **Significance of Research Design**

The significance of Research Design is described as under:

➤ **It provides blueprint:**

Just as a house faces problems without drawing and plan, i.e where to place foundation, what materials are required, how many workers are required, how many rooms are to be constructed, how many doors and windows are needed in a room, on which side is the door/window to be given, how big is to be the door/window and so on, similarly a researcher faces many problems like what sample to be taken, what is to be asked, what method of data collection is to be used, and so forth. Research plan minimizes all these problems of the researchers are taken beforehand.

➤ **It limits (dictates) boundaries of research activity**

There refers to determining whether only one (or selected) cause out of many causes is to be examined, only one (or few selected) hypothesis is to be tested, only attitudes of students of one educational institution are to be studied, and so on. Since the objectives are clear and the structure is also provided, systematic investigation is possible.

➤ **It enables investigation to anticipate potential problems**

The researcher studies available (other) literature and learns about new/alternative approaches, e.g., he gets an estimate of personal required as investigator (s), cost, possible measurement of problems, and so forth.

- It offers a guide that directs the research action, which reduces time and cost
- It offers a systematic approach to the research operation, so that all steps are executed in the right sequence.
- It encourages coordination and effective organization.
- It helps in the use of resources effectively, avoiding errors and bias.
- It enables the researcher to control the research operation most effectively, when research investigators are employed.

### **Phases in Research Designing**

The research process proceeds in six phases as under:

- Identify the research problem clearly and justify its selection, particularly in relation to any valid alternative designs that could have been used,
- Framing research design.
- Planning a sample (probability or non probability or combination)
- Collection of data
- Analyzing the data (editing, coding, processing, tabulating)
- Preparing the report

## **Design for different types of Research**

Methodologists have discussed various types of research design we will discuss are: descriptive, exploratory and analytical research.

### **1. Descriptive research:**

Also known as Diagnostic Research Design, descriptive research describes social reality or provides facts about the social world. A descriptive study would be undertaken to determine whether people who have served time in prison have more trouble finding jobs than people who have not been in prison, or to determine what percentage of college students smoke marijuana more than once a week.

The aim of descriptive research is not to prove or dis-prove anything but it helps to provide answers to the questions of who, what, when, where, and how associated with a particular research problem; a descriptive study cannot conclusively ascertain answers to why. Descriptive study is concerned with conducting a survey related to a research problem. All descriptive studies share the goal of providing data on social facts, which are reliable and valid items of information about society. A fact could be a behavior, an attitude, a law, or even a static.

Descriptive research is used to obtain information concerning the current status of the phenomena and to describe "what exists" with respect to variables or conditions in a situation.

### **What do these studies tell you?**

- The subject is being observed in a completely natural and unchanged natural environment. True experiments, whilst giving analyzable data, often adversely influence

the normal behavior of the subject [a.k.a., the Heisenberg effect whereby measurements of certain systems cannot be made without affecting the systems.

- Descriptive research is often used as a pre-cursor to more quantitative research designs with the general overview giving some valuable pointers as to what variables are worth testing quantitatively.
- If the limitations are understood, they can be a useful tool in developing a more focused study.
- Descriptive studies can yield rich data that lead to important recommendations in practice.
- Approach collects a large amount of data for detailed analysis.

### **What these studies don't tell you?**

- The results from a descriptive research cannot be used to discover a definitive answer or to disprove a hypothesis.
- Because descriptive designs often utilize observational methods [as opposed to quantitative methods], the results cannot be replicated.
- The descriptive function of research is heavily dependent on instrumentation for measurement and observation.

## **2. Exploratory Research:**

It is also known as Formulative Research Method. Exploratory research aims to gain better understanding of different dimensions of the problem. This research studies subjects about which either no information or little information is available. Generally this type of research is qualitative which becomes useful in formulating hypotheses or testing hypotheses and theories. In this research, the assumption is that the researcher has little or no knowledge about the problem or situation under study, or he is unfamiliar with the structure of the group he is studying (say, prison, industry, university, village, and so on). As an example, in an exploratory study of prison, the researcher points out how a prison is divided in barracks and wards; what

type of work is assigned to different types of prison officer; what recreational, medical, educational, etc, facilities are provided to prisoners; what rules they have to follow in interacting with other inmates or with officials. The researcher also comes to explore how prisoners reject the prison norms and come to follow the norms of the inmate world, say always keep grumbling about the food, work, and the facilities provided, always work less, do not reveal the secrets of inmates to prison officials, and so forth.

Exploratory designs are often used to establish an understanding of how best to proceed in studying an issue or what methodology would effectively apply to gathering information about the issue.

**The goals of exploratory research are intended to produce the following possible insights:**

- Familiarity with basic details, settings, and concerns.
- Well grounded picture of the situation being developed.
- Generation of new ideas and assumptions.
- Development of tentative theories or hypotheses.
- Determination about whether a study is feasible in the future.
- Issues get refined for more systematic investigation and formulation of new research questions.
- Direction for future research and techniques get developed.

**What do these studies tell you?**

- Design is a useful approach for gaining background information on a particular topic.
- Exploratory research is flexible and can address research questions of all types (what, why, how).
- Provides an opportunity to define new terms and clarify existing concepts.
- Exploratory research is often used to generate formal hypotheses and develop more precise research problems.

- In the policy arena or applied to practice, exploratory studies help establish research priorities and where resources should be allocated.

### **What these studies don't tell you?**

- Exploratory research generally utilizes small sample sizes and, thus, findings are typically not generalisable to the population at large.
- The exploratory nature of the research inhibits an ability to make definitive conclusions about the findings. They provide insight but not definitive conclusions.
- The research process underpinning exploratory studies is flexible but often unstructured, leading to only tentative results that have limited value to decision-makers.
- Design lacks rigorous standards applied to methods of data gathering and analysis because one of the areas for exploration could be to determine what method or methodologies could best fit the research problem.

### **3. Analytical Research:**

An analytical methodology designed to systematically evaluate and summarize the results from a number of individual studies, thereby, increasing the overall sample size and the ability of the researcher to study effects of interest. The purpose is to not simply summarize existing knowledge, but to develop a new understanding of a research problem using synoptic reasoning. The main objectives of meta-analysis include analyzing differences in the results among studies and increasing the precision by which effects are estimated. A well-designed meta-analysis depends upon strict adherence to the criteria used for selecting studies and the availability of information in each study to properly analyze their findings. Lack of information can severely limit the type of analyzes and conclusions that can be reached. In addition, the more dissimilarity there is in the results among individual studies [heterogeneity], the more difficult it is to justify interpretations that govern a valid synopsis of results.

**A meta-analysis needs to fulfill the following requirements to ensure the validity of your findings:**

- Clearly defined description of objectives, including precise definitions of the variables and outcomes that are being evaluated.
- A well-reasoned and well-documented justification for identification and selection of the studies.
- Assessment and explicit acknowledgment of any researcher bias in the identification and selection of those studies.
- Description and evaluation of the degree of heterogeneity among the sample size of studies reviewed.
- Justification of the techniques used to evaluate the studies.

**What do these studies tell you?**

- Can be an effective strategy for determining gaps in the literature.
- Provides a means of reviewing research published about a particular topic over an extended period of time and from a variety of sources.
- Is useful in clarifying what policy or programmatic actions can be justified on the basis of analyzing research results from multiple studies.
- Provides a method for overcoming small sample sizes in individual studies that previously may have had little relationship to each other.
- Can be used to generate new hypotheses or highlight research problems for future studies.

**What these studies don't tell you?**

- Small violations in defining the criteria used for content analysis can lead to difficult to interpret and/or meaningless findings.
- A large sample size can yield reliable, but not necessarily valid, results.
- A lack of uniformity regarding, for example, the type of literature reviewed, how methods are applied, and how findings are measured within the sample of studies you are analyzing, can make the process of synthesis difficult to perform.

- Depending on the sample size, the process of reviewing and synthesizing multiple studies can be very time consuming.

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