

SOS POLITICAL SCIENCE & PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

MBA HRD- RESEARCH METHODOLOGY 203

UNIT V

TOPIC: SOCIAL RESEARCH AND PHYSICAL SCIENCES

Meaning

Research is broadly divided into natural (physical) sciences and Social research. Physical Science deals with the study of nature and properties of non-living matter and energy. It is a broad discipline concerned with natural resources. It comprises variety of fields such as Physics, Chemistry, astronomy, earth sciences, geology and the ocean. Social research includes various disciplines dealing with human life, human behavior and institutions. E.g. Anthropology, History, Economics, Education, Commerce, Demography etc.,. Social research is not exact science 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. It is difficult see the underlying uniformities in the diversity of complex human behavior.

There are two major classifications of science. They are the physical and social science. The physical science is also known as the natural science. This classification of science deals with natural, concrete and inanimate objects. Experiments are conducted by physical scientists with the relationship between cause and effect established. They are precise, concise and less dubious. No external factor or force can act on the objects of experiment except if introduced by the scientist. Physical scientists study the universe and the physical environment to establish universal laws such as the law of gravity, Archimedes principle and so on. Disciplines in the physical sciences include Astronomy, Geology, Biology,

Physics, Chemistry, and Mathematics. On the other hand, social sciences study the social environment, man and his society. In contrary to the physical scientists, social scientists study the environment we live in, social interaction, human behavior, and social circumstances that influence human act. Disciplines in social science include Psychology, Sociology, Anthropology, Geography, Demography, and Economics among others.

Nature of Social Research and physical sciences

Despite the similarities between the social and physical sciences, they are slightly different. Physical science is objective while social science is subjective. A physical scientist does not allow his preconceived knowledge, values, and beliefs to interfere in his studies. Objects of study or those under experiments are totally value-free and they retain their identities. They cannot be influenced by external values; results expected are constant and are as expected. On the other hand, a social scientist can influence his studies by his own values, beliefs and preconceived knowledge. Results gotten from research (experiment) are not always totally correct, concise and value-free but instead are value-laden although the interference of the observer's value(s) on the studies are not deliberate. But unlike in physical science where the observer is objective, a social scientist gives room for subjectivity.

If we want to classify disciplines as scientific on the basis of how difficult or complex they are, we will be wrong to say that physical science is more difficult than social science. This is because the subject matter of study in physical sciences, the inanimate objects, are not complex. They do not have values, emotions, attitudes that varies or that can change with time, they are constant and their

constitutions are not dynamic. The compositions of water will always be hydrogen and oxygen.

In contrast to the physical science the social science lack the power of exact prediction; this is attributed to the “erratic”, irregular nature of human behavior. Social scientist point out that the low predictable potential in social science is due to our limited knowledge of relevant variables operative in the group like customs, traditions etc,. The cause and effect are difficult to be segregated clearly. The present state of development of social science is far behind physical science. Merton advises to social scientist against their despair; it is possible to develop border applicability.

Social Science Research

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.

NATURAL SCIENCE VERSUS SOCIAL SCIENCE

Natural science is a branch of science that deals with the physical world

Social science is the study of human society and social relationships

Includes fields such as biology, chemistry, physics, earth science, and astronomy

Includes fields such as economics, political science, law, geography and history

Always use scientific methods

Use scientific methods as well as other methods

Students can become medical doctors, nurses, engineers, biologists, chemists, astronomers, etc.

Students can become lawyers, linguists, historians, writers, journalists, teachers, accountants, etc.

According to P.V. Young, we may define social research as “the systematic method of discovering new facts and verifying old facts. Their sequences inter relationship, causal explanations and the natural laws govern them”. From the above definition we can identify the following,

- Social research deals with social phenomena. It studies human behavior and their feelings.
- Social research is carried on both for discovering new facts and verification of the old ones.
- Social research tries to establish casual connection between various human activities.

Objectives of Social Research

The major objectives of social research are listed as follows:-

- The aim of social research is to discover new facts and verifying or testing old facts.
- It tries to understand the human behavior and its interaction with the environment.
- It tries to find out the casual connection between human activities and natural laws governing them.

Functions of Social Science Research

The important functions of social science research are discussed below;

1. Discovery of facts and their interpretation

Social research provides answer to questions of what, when, how and why of man, social life and institutions. Discover of facts and their inter relationship

help us to discard distortions and contribute to our understanding of social reality.

2. Diagnosis of problems and their analysis

Our society has innumerable problems such as poverty, unemployment, economic inequality, social tension etc.,. The nature and dimensions of such problems have to be diagnosed and analyzed. An analysis of problems leads to an identification of appropriate remedial actions.

3. Systematization of knowledge

The facts discovered through research are systematized and the body of knowledge is developed. It contributes to the growth of theory building.

4. Control over social phenomena

Research in social science provides first hand information about the nature of social institutions. This knowledge helps us to control over the social phenomena.

5. Prediction

Social research aims at finding an order among social fact and their casual relations. This affords a sound basis for prediction in several cases

6. Development planning

Systematic research can give us the required data base for planning and designing developmental schemes and programs.

7. Social welfare

Social research can identify the causes of social evils and problems. It can thus help in taking appropriate remedial actions. It also provides guideline for social welfare.