

Theme 3. Methodology in sociology and political science



Definitions of Research

- Research may be defined as the systematic and objective analysis and recording of controlled observations that may lead to the development of generalizations, principles, or theories, resulting in prediction and possible control of events (Best and Kahn, 1998).
- Research is a systematic way of asking questions, a systematic method of inquiry (Drew, Hardman, and Hart, 1996).

Definitions of Research

- The main goal of research is the gathering and interpreting of information to answer questions (Hyllegard, Mood, and Morrow, 1996).
- Research is a systematic attempt to provide answers to questions (Tuckman, 1999).

A research can be undertaken for two different purposes:

1. To solve a currently existing problem (applied research)
2. To contribute to the general body of knowledge in a particular area of interest (basic/fundamental research)

The Scientific Method

- Systematic; cyclic; series of logical steps.
 - Identifying the problem
 - Formulating a hypothesis
 - Developing the research plan
 - Collecting and analyzing the data
 - Interpreting results and forming conclusions

Ways to select a topic

- Personal experience
- Curiosity based on something in the media
- The state of knowledge in a field
- Social premiums
- Personal values

Major Limitations in Conducting a Research

- **Time**
- **Costs**
- **Access to resources**
- **Approval by authorities**
 - **Ethical concerns**
 - **Expertise**

Methodology and Method

Methodology and Method are often (incorrectly) used interchangeably

- Methodology – the study of the general approach to inquiry in a given field
- Method – the specific techniques, tools or procedures applied to achieve a given objective

Quantitative vs. Qualitative Methodological Assumption (Cresswell 1994: 5)

Quantitative	Qualitative

Quantitative Methods

- Quantitative Descriptive
 - Descriptive statistics: graphical and numerical techniques for summarizing data.
- Quantitative Analytic
 - Inferential statistics: procedures for making generalizations about characteristics of a population based on information obtained from a sample taken from that population

Qualitative

- Generally non-numerical data
- Typically anthropological and sociological research methods
- Observations of a “natural” setting
- In-depth descriptions of situations
- Interpretive and descriptive

Population, Sample, Respondent, Informant, Corpus

- Population: any set of individuals (or objects) having some common observable characteristics.
- Sample: the subset of a population which represents the characteristics of the population.
- A sample consists of respondents or subjects
- An informant: a person from whom a linguist obtains information about language, dialect, or culture.
- A corpus is a collection of written or spoken material.

Types of Sampling

