

## **Definition of Research:**

Social research may be defined as the systematic method of discovering new facts, their sequences, interrelationships, casual explanation and social laws which govern them. Research is often misused. Different writers define it differently.

**Research** is a systematic inquiry that investigates hypotheses, suggests new interpretations of data or texts, and poses new questions for future research to explore

**Research** is a process to discover new knowledge. "A systematic investigation ( i.e., the gathering and analysis of information) designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge." The National Academy of Sciences states that the object of research is to "extend human knowledge of the physical, biological, or social world beyond what is already known." Research is different than other forms of discovering knowledge (like reading a book) because it uses a systematic process called the Scientific Method.

According to **P.Y Young** Social research is the systematic method of discovering the new facts or verifying the old facts, their sequence interrelationships, casual explanation and the natural laws, which govern them.

**Reddmour Morey** observes that social research is a systematic effort to gain new knowledge.

**John W. Best** (1982) has defined research as the systematic and objective analysis and recording of collected observations that may lead to development of generalization, principles, or theories resulting in predictions and possibly ultimate control of events.

Ogg: The process of conscious predetermine inquiry.

Bennet: "The discovery of facts through systematic and scientific process".

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

### **W.A Friedlander:**

"Social work research is the systematic, critical investigation of questions in the social welfare field with the purpose of yielding answers to problems of social work and for extending and generalizing social work knowledge and concepts".

### **Webster:**

"Social Work research is the studious inquiry, usually critical and exhaustive investigation or experimentation having for its aim and the revision of accepted conclusions in the light of newly accepted facts.

## **Importance and Scope of Social Research**

### **1) Science Studies Nature**

Science studies nature and so increases our knowledge of nature and its working. The term “science” has been used collectively i-e physical as well as social science. Nature here refers to all phenomena existing in space and time and science studies all phenomena. It can be said that separate science such as geology, biology, zoology, sociology, chemistry, physics and psychology are not characteristic of nature but they are the devices made by man to study and teach. Nature is just there, all around us in which we are also included. Each one of the sciences has its own particular view of nature i-e its own body of empirical data with a particular aspect of nature and due to the combination of all these we can get a clear picture of nature. What the sociologist can contribute is just one view which must be supplemented by what the psychologists, the anthropologists, the biologists and every body else can contribute. Any part of nature can be studied and dealt. Any part of nature can be studied and dealt with a multitude with a multitude of view.

### **2) Conclusions Based On Research Are Authentic**

The conclusions based on research are more authentic and reliable. Research is important in all social sciences to reach a reliable conclusion, decision or an end on the bases of facts particularly gathered from the field. Suppose we want to know the causes of illiteracy, our general information would produce some causes which may not be correct because they are the product of our guesses, estimates or general information and not the product of information obtained by following scientific techniques and methods.

### **3) Research Goes Beyond Common Sense**

According to Simon scientific research is not a mystic ritual with strict rules of procedure laid down in the official dogma. Rather it is a body of useful methods to go beyond common sense when common sense is not enough.

### **4) Applicability of Research Technique to All Field Of Human-Life**

Research is not limited to any specific of life but every field of human life needs some facts to meets everyday problems. Research is very important in all fields because it provides factual data.

### **5) Research Gives Us A Clear Picture**

In order to solve any social problem, we need to have a clear picture of the problem before us, for example what is the nature of problem? How it emerged? How it has influenced the people? How many people have been influenced? Whether the problem is serious or not? What remedies would be suitable to eradicate the problem? All these types of requirements regarding the solution of a problem can be fulfilled by social research.

### **6) Research enriches Modern Social Sciences**

Knowledge is developed by research. Old facts are verified and new facts are discovered which a part of social sciences became. For the development and for checking of available knowledge in our own cultural heritage social research must be conducted.

### **7) Social research Helps to Make Better Decisions:**

Social research helps to make decisions in different fields for example what particular product should be used at a particular time or what retail price should be suggested for a particular product.

#### **8) Importance Of research For Planning and Development**

Suppose we want to start social welfare programme before planning and introducing it, it is necessary that relevant data should be collected from people in order to find out their views about this programme. Then if the people's attitude towards this program is positive, it should be introduced and then evaluated after specific period in order to find out the contribution it has made, i-e its strong and weak points, or what changes should be brought to make it successful. If failure, what are its causes. All procedure involves scientific steps.

#### **9) Public Relations Programs**

Research is helpful in knowledge the condition of public i-e their problem, requirements, needs, their taste or nature.

#### **10) Research Helps An Individual in Evaluating His Personal Business**

Research helps an individual in evaluating his personal business i-e to know the causes of failure or success. It is important not only for a professional man but also for an ordinary person.

#### **11) Applicability of research For Tackling Problems of Administration.**

Prominent problems of administration like streamlining the administration, fixing pay scales, cost of living allowance, minimum wage rates, organization and management can be resolved with the help of research.

#### **12) Applicability of research in planning**

Formulation of sound economic, fiscal, industrial commercial and social planning in the form of various five year plans, Annual development Programme etc, depends on facts, which can be provided by undertaking specific research studies.

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## **Observation**

**Definition:** Using the senses to obtain information about objects and events is called observation.

Observation is one way to collect primary data. Observation is a purposeful, systematic and selective way of watching and listening to an interaction phenomenon as it takes place. There are many situations in which observation is the most appropriate method of data collection; for example, when you want to learn about the interaction in a group, study the dietary patterns of a population, ascertain the functions performed by a worker, or study the behavior or personality traits of an individual. It is also appropriate in situation where full and or accurate information can not be elicited by questioning, because respondents either are not co operative or are unaware of the answers because it is difficult for them to detach themselves from the interaction. In summary, when you are more interested in the behaviour than in perception of individuals, or when subjects are so involved in the interaction that they are unable to provide objective information about it, observation is the best approach to collect the required information.

### **Advantages of observation**

1. It is the most direct mean of studying a wide variety of phenomena. It provides first hand knowledge and information based on first hand perception of eyes therefore the information obtained are correct and reliable. More so, data collected through this method is more objective.
2. No non response because the respondent is always accessible.
3. It is free from interviewing bias because in interviewing a person may be reluctant to give answer to certain questions. But in observation we can observe with least resistance not even letting the person that he is being observed.
4. In no other way, can the behaviour of human being best studied except under this method.
5. In most cases, it is the basis for formulating hypothesis. We first observe something happening and then try to establish cause and effect relationships.
6. the research observer records events himself and he has not necessary to rely on the willingness and ability of respondents to report accurately and inaccurately.

### **Disadvantages of observation.**

1. investigator oriented
2. respondent oriented
3. situating oriented

#### **Investigator oriented**

The observer's health and intellect

Subjectivity of the observer

Convincing ability of observer

Sincerity of observer

#### **Respondent oriented**

Noncooperation of respondent

Self-consciousness of respondent

**Situating oriented**

Non absorbability of Situation

Low reliability of conclusion because of situation

## **Types of observation**

There are two types of the observation:

- Participant observation
- Non-Participant observation

### **Participant Observation**

Participant observation is when you, as a researcher, participate in the activities of the group being observed in the same manner as its members, with or without their knowing that they are being observed. For example, you might want to examine the reactions of the general population towards people in wheelchairs. You can study their reactions by sitting in a wheelchair yourself. Or you might want to study the life of prisoners and pretend to be a prisoner in order to do that.

### **Non- Participant Observation**

Non-participant observation on the other hand, is when you, as a researcher, do not get involved in the activities of the group but remains a passive observer, watching and listening to its activities and drawing conclusions from this. For example, you might want to study the functions carried out by nurses in a hospital. As an observer, you could watch, follow and record the activities as they are performed. After making a number of observations, conclusions could be drawn about the functions nurses carry out in the hospital. Any occupational group in any setting can be observed in the same manner.

## **Advantages and Disadvantages of Participant Observation**

### **Merits of participant Observation**

- 1- The group can be observed in its natural behavior as they do not know that they are being observed.
- 2- The participant observer is much more looser and the group also accepts him, places him in an advantageous positions.
- 3- Being associated with the groups, one develops greater sympathy and feelings to the group activities.
- 4- Participants observe can educate the people and is able to observe what he wants to observe by “striking the iron when it is red”
- 5- Being one of the group members, he solicits better information than the non-participant one.

### **Demerits of Observation**

- 1-Participant observer, due to emotional involvement, sometimes kills the objectivity by introducing his subjective judgment.
- 2-participants observer acquires a certain status in the group and thereby loses scientific references
- 3- Being a party to activities in day to day life, the range of experience as well as keenness to minute observation is diminished.

4- Sometimes a participant observer involves himself in group conflicts and thereby forgets his original purposes.

5- In certain cases, there cannot be active participation, such as in robbery etc

### **Advantages and Disadvantages of Non Participant Observation**

#### **Advantages Non Participant Observation**

1. Allows researcher to see what goes on with their own eyes - can make judgements and observe body language used
2. Researcher can be more open minded as they're an outsider looking in - less likely to feel sympathy and therefore produce bias data
3. More ethical if done overtly - no ethical issues if people are aware they are being observed

#### **Disadvantages of Non Participant Observation**

1. can lead to Hawthorne effect - people act differently as they know they are being observed
  2. May be hard to gain accurate results as watching from a distance
  3. Impression management
  4. Time consuming/costly
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## Questionnaire

Questionnaire is an important tool in obtaining the important information in a particular field of inquiry. Questionnaire is a type of tools of research which is popularly used in social research. Questionnaire is a set of questions designed to be self-administered meaning filled out by the respondent

### Merits of Questionnaire

1. It does not require any interviewing skill
  2. It provides privacy to the respondents and respondent can express himself or herself.
  3. It is less expensive because we only spend on stationery and post
  4. As wider range and coverage is possible there is it is less time consuming process
  5. As the interviewer is not present on the spot therefore there was no possibility of biased.
- The respondent freely express himself and there is no pressure for immediate responses

### Demerits of Questionnaire

1. Questionnaire cannot be served to the illiterate respondent, in a country Like Pakistan. Where majority of population is illiterate, it has limited use. It is only applicable to well-educated persons.
2. **Do not yield representative sample, return** of questionnaire is highly inadequate.
3. **Probing, clarification and checking are not possible.** The respondent answers the questions according to his own ability if any question is not clear to him he leaves that or gives wrong answers, which means that we cannot study any subject completely.

## Kinds of Questionnaire

There are two major types of Questionnaire on the basis of questions which are the close form and open form Questionnaire.

Researcher can use one form of Questionnaire exclusively or a combination of them when structuring his Questionnaire.

### Close form of the questionnaire

Questionnaire that call for short, check responses are as the restricted or close form type. They provide for marking a YES or NO, A short response or checking an item from a list of suggested responses.

### Advantages of the close form

For certain information the close form of Questionnaire is entirely satisfactory such as

- a) It is easy to fill out
- b) It takes little time by respondents
- c) It keeps the respondent on the subject
- d) It is relatively objective
- e) It is fairly easy to tabulate and analyze
- f) It provides a good looking format of to a Questionnaire
- g) Answers are standardized
- h) Answers are relatively complete
- i) As questions are self contained they can be answered quickly.
- j) They required fewer instructions than open end questions

### Limitations of the close form Questionnaire

The following are certain limitations of the closed form Questionnaire

- a. the close form Questionnaire often fails to reveal the respondents motive and does not always get information of sufficient scope and in depth and may not discriminate between the finer shades of meaning.
- b. Fixed alternative responses may make respondents take a stand on issue about which they have not crystallized opinion on may force them give answers that do not accurately express their ideas
- c. The respondents may feel frustrated because the appropriate category of their answers are either not provided or not provided in detail.
- d. There may be too many answers categories to print on the Questionnaire
- e. There is more likelihood of clerical mistakes
- f. Usually respondents check items blindly without giving attention to their purpose
- g. Sometimes a respondent check an item without understanding its meaning

### **The open form of the questionnaire**

The open form or unstructured type of questionnaire calls for a free response in respondents own words. For example when did you intend to take admission in social work program in IUB?

The open form probably provides for greater depth of response.

The respondents reveal his/her frame of references. Since it requires greater depth of response. The respondent reveals his/her frame of references .since it requires greater efforts on the part of respondents which

### **Advantages of the open form questionnaire**

1. Open end questions are flexible they have the possibility of depth and have the capacity to encourage cooperation and achieve support and to make better estimates of respondents true intentions, beliefs and attitude.
2. They can be used when all possible answer categories are not known.
3. They allow the respondents to answer adequately
4. They can be used when there are too may potential answer categories to test on the questionnaire
5. They are preferable to complex issues that can not be condensed into small categories
6. They allow more opportunity for creativity thinking and self expression
7. They are used for complex questions that could be answered in a few simple categories but require more detail discussion

### **Disadvantages of the open form questionnaire**

1. There is possibility of collection of worthless or irrelevant information
  2. Data collection through open end questionnaire are not often standardized from person to person
  3. Coding is difficult
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## **Interview Guide**

Interview guide is one of the tools of data collection for research. It consists of a list of, main points or main questions regarding the subject matter which are to be covered during the course of interview with respondents.

It's not an Interview schedule.

### **i) It include topics**

The list of topics or questions is not placed before the respondents. It is either memorized by the researcher and if possible is written on a paper which the interviewer may keep in his pocket etc. to make sure that all the relevant facts have been corrected.

### **ii) No fixed order of the Questions**

The question can be asked in any order or language appropriate to the situation of the respondent.

### **iii) No Limitation in number of Questions**

There is no limitation with regard to the number of the questions

### **vi) Lot of freedom for interviewer**

The use of interview guide gives a lot of freedom to the interviewer as he/she can also ask those questions which arise during interview.

### **v) Observation of the respondent**

At the same time, the interviewer is able to observe the gesture, movements and face impressions of the respondent which enable him to further probe relevant information from respondents and greater details.

### **vi) Consideration of the subject**

The way of interview guide depends upon the nature of the subject under investigation as it is used mostly in the study of the subject which are present and where the information are sought concerning the private life of the people.

### **vii) Useful for the in-depth study**

It is also used in the study of the topics which require deep investigation

### **viii) Additional Questions can be asked**

The freedom involves its use enables the interviewer to bring about the information which normally are not possible through structured interview, the interviewing guide enables the researcher to ask as many questions as one likes. Additional questions may arise from the respondents responses as well as.

### **ix) Motivation of the Respondent is possible**

While using the interview guide as a tool of data collection, Researcher can motivate the respondents speak more on the subject which is not possible while using other structured tools.

### **x) Useful in case studies.**

It is particularly useful in case studies of the criminals, delinquents and mentally ill persons. Case study is used to investigate the lives of the peoples.

### **xi) Recording should be done.**

There should be arrangements for the recording of the interview if the respondent is cooperative and willing, and then recording should be done at the time of interview.

## **Advantages**

- i) Intensive and deep study is possible

- ii) Compilation of the study in time.
- iii) Probing is possible during interview process
- iv) Flexible tool of data collection
- v) Lot of freedom for the researcher

#### **Disadvantages**

- I) Expertise of the researcher are required
- II) There may be objectivity on the part of researcher
- III) There may be difficulties in classification of responses.
- IV) Recording is difficult.

## **Interviewing Schedule**

It is a sort of Performance containing questions, the answers to which are obtained through a face to face interview with the respondent. In Interviewing Schedule the questions are pre-determined and fixed with regard to the member, the order and the language of the questionnaire. The questions may be in the question form or in the form of simple statements.

#### **Advantages of Interviewing Schedule**

Following are the advantages of the interviewing schedule

##### **i) Complex questions can be studied**

The study of the complex questions is possible and easier on the account of the presence of the interviewer.

##### **ii) It has general application**

It can be useful for both literate and illiterate respondents

##### **iii) Clarification and explanation becomes possible**

Clarification and explanation can be made easily by the interviewer, in case of respondent is unable to understand the questions

##### **iv) Better return is possible**

Better return is possible owing to the perception of interviewer of the refusal from the respondent and in such cases better return is possible

##### **v) Probing questions may be asked**

Probing is also possible through interview schedule

Contradiction and Inconsistency can be checked

Through this tool of data collection, contradiction and inconsistency can be avoided through different checks.

#### **Disadvantages of the Interview Schedule**

Following are the disadvantages of the interview schedule

##### **i) More expensive**

It is comparatively more expensive to deploy skilled and trained interviewer to collect information

##### **ii) Uniformity is difficult**

While using the interviewing schedule, it is not possible to maintain uniformity as interview process varies from one interviewer to another.

##### **iii) Wide coverage is difficult**

Wider coverage of the target population is not possible due to financial constraints while using the interview schedule as a tool for data collection.

**iv) Confidentiality of the respondent can not be ensured**

It does not ensure anonymity and confidentiality of the respondent who has to respond to the questions through face to face interview.

**iv) It requires immediate response**

Interview Schedule requires immediate response from the respondent as interviewer is there to get the answer at that particular time. There is thus some sort of pressure for immediate response.

**v) Difficulties to access the respondent**

The use of interview schedule involves difficulties liking tracing the respondents, finding out his address and getting appointments etc.

**Difference B/W Questionnaire and Interviewing Schedule**

Questionnaire and interviewing schedule both are tools of the data collection and are used to get information, the purpose is same but they differ from each other in following aspects

**i) Administration**

Interviewing schedule is administered by the interviewer, where as the questionnaire is self-administered.

**ii) Instructions**

The questionnaire requires more elaborated definitions and instructions about the concept, the purpose of the study for the benefits of the respondents. In interviewing schedule, on the other hand, these are not necessarily required except in the data collection. Here the definition and instructions etc are meant for the interviewer so that the questions are administered in a uniform manner.

**iii) Probe Questions**

In case of interviewing schedule, one can raise additional probe questions if the answer is not forthcoming and if the respondent is unable to understand, while in questionnaire probe questions can not be asked.

**iv) Confidentiality**

Anonymity and the confidentiality is not assured in the use of interviewing schedule where as it can not be ensured by the use of questionnaire.

**v) Pressure on the respondent.**

The use of interviewing schedule involves a certain pressure on the respondent to respond to the question at a given time, but there is no such pressure when questionnaire is being used.

The use of interviewing guide for data collection involves a certain amount of pressure on the respondent, while questionnaire gives a time to the respondent to respond.

**vi) Return**

The use of interviewing guide ensures almost 100 percent returns which can not be expected while using questionnaire as a tool of data collection

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## **Conducting Focus Group Discussions**

The purpose of focus group discussions is to gain knowledge about a particular topic or need by interviewing a group of people directly affected by the issue. Focus group data can be used to collect information for many purposes, such as conducting a needs assessment or evaluating a program. Below are brief pointers regarding the “why” and “how” of focus groups.

### **When Are Focus Groups Appropriate?**

#### **Focus Groups are appropriate when you want to:**

- \_ Explore the depth and difference of opinions regarding an issue
- \_ Understand differences in perspectives
- \_ Understand what factors influence opinions or behavior
- \_ Test materials or products
- \_ Test reactions to actual or proposed services
- \_ Design a large study or understand its results
- \_ Capture opinions and perspectives of a program’s target audience
- \_ Learn about participants by observing their interactions

#### **Focus Groups are not appropriate when you:**

- \_ Need to ask participants sensitive information
- \_ Need statistical information about an entire population
- \_ Are working with emotionally or politically charged groups
- \_ Can’t ensure confidentiality
- \_ Want people to come to a consensus
- \_ Do not have the skills to analyze the data

### **What are the differences between Focus Groups and Surveys?**

#### **Focus Groups**

- \_ Provide depth over breadth
- \_ Use small samples and the findings cannot be generalized
- \_ Enable the agency to ask a variety of questions and explore the answers as they arise
- \_ Generate rich, complex ideas and are difficult to analyze

#### **Surveys**

- \_ Provide breadth over depth
- \_ Require large samples and are more readily generalized
- \_ Are standardized but do not allow the exploration of answers in depth
- \_ Can be relatively simple to analyze but yield less rich data

### **Focus Group Facilitation Tips**

Conducting effective focus groups requires training in specific approaches and skills.

#### **1. Approaching Focus Group Facilitation**

For each group, you should have a moderator and an assistant moderator. The moderator leads the discussion, keeps the conversation flowing and takes a few notes to remember comments that s/he may want to use later. The assistant moderator takes comprehensive notes, operates the tape recorder, handles the environmental conditions and logistics, responds to unexpected interruptions and keeps track of time.

##### **a) Two approaches are essential to facilitating focus groups.**

- The first is being a “blank slate.” This means approaching the focus group with an open mind and as few preconceptions as possible about what participants are likely to say or not say.
- The other essential approach is to be aware of potential biases as a moderator.

Differences in race/ethnicity, class/and education levels between the moderator and participants can bring unforeseen biases to how a facilitator runs a focus group.

- b) Practice questions out loud, know why you are asking each question, and know how much time you plan to spend on each question.
- c) Stick to the facilitation guide that you develop beforehand.
- d) In addition to taking notes, tape record the discussion and transcribe it.
- e) Check the tape recorder before and immediately after each session—if it did not work, do an immediate debrief.
- f) Be ready for unexpected problems, such as bad weather, fewer participants than expected, poor meeting space, field coordinator did not make adequate preparations, participants bring other adults, other uninvited people show up, or the group doesn't want to talk.
- g) Anticipate running out of time—think about what you would do to modify the agenda.

## **2. The Physical Environment**

- It is important to choose or set up a physical space for the focus group that is going to feel welcoming and comfortable to the participants. It should be neutral, private, free from distractions and easily accessible.
- Arrange participants in a circle.
- Tell participants where the bathrooms are.
- Provide refreshments and place them away from the circle to avoid distractions.

## **3. Tell Participants “They’re the Experts”**

It is important to convey to participants that you value their opinions, that they are the experts, and that the focus group facilitator and other staff have come to learn from them. This empowers participants, helps them feel a sense of purpose and helps eliminate any barriers that may arise as a result of differences between participants and focus group staff.

## **4. Facilitator Affect: Warm But Neutral**

In order to avoid “leading” participants with any reaction to their comments, we suggest that reactions should be warm but value-neutral. Ways to be value-neutral are: *informationseeking* (e.g. “tell me more about that...”), *clarifying* (e.g. “Can you explain what you mean?”) and *acknowledging* (“I hear what you are saying...”).

## **5. Ask Only One Question at a Time**

Don't ask more than one question at a time, even if the questions go together. Participants usually cannot remember several questions at one time, and asking multiple questions makes it hard for them to know where to start.

## **6. Frequently Repeat Key Phrases from the Question**

Participants tend to lose focus on the question after 2-3 other participants have responded to it. Repeating key phrases from the question at strategic times, or asking participants to link their response to key terms in the question will help participants stay focused.

## **7. Be Comfortable with Silence**

It is also important that moderators be comfortable with silence and pauses. Some participants may participate more if they have more time to consider the question before they speak.

## **8. Use Probes When You Need More Information**

When participants are not providing enough information, try the following probes:

- a. Would you explain further?
- b. Would you give me an example of what you mean?
- c. Would you say more?
- d. Tell us more.

- e. Is there anything else?
- f. Please describe what you mean.
- g. I don't understand.
- h. Does anyone see it differently?
- i. Has anyone had a different experience?