

## **Classification of Research on the Basis of Purpose**

Social research can be classified according to its purpose or goal. Neuman and Babbie identify three goals of social research. These are exploratory, descriptive and explanatory. Sullivan and Dejong (1998) have added evaluative research as a goal.

### **Exploratory Research**

When a research is conducted with the purpose to explore new facts when there is little knowledge about that topic. In cases of any new developments or existing issues which are changed due to changing social conditions and government policies, exploratory research is conducted. For example a researcher could be interested to explore the social life of women living deep in Cholistan. This exploration is a new topic. Another example could be of a new angle of any existing issue. Primary school student's drop out is an existing social issue. If research is conducted to find responsibility of parents regarding primary school student's drop out, it would be a new angle of an existing issue.

### **Descriptive Research**

It is the most common type of research. It focuses on 'how', 'what' or 'who' rather than 'why' questions. It can be seen as the next step after exploratory research. Examples of descriptive research can be found in all areas of social sciences. A study was conducted about liking and disliking of college students about hostel life. The nature of this study becomes descriptive when it answers what students like and dislike in hostel life. This study answers a 'what' question. Descriptive studies are helpful to study attitudes, perceptions and beliefs in different populations.

## **Explanatory Research**

Explanatory research is considered as the ultimate (final) goal of research. It answers 'why' questions. We began exploring something new with exploratory research. Then, we conducted descriptive research to increase our knowledge of it. Lastly, we need to explain it. This type of research identifies causes of social phenomena. It is an effort to understand cause and effect, meaning researchers want to explain what is going on. Explanatory research looks at how things come together and interact.

## **Evaluative Research**

This type of research aims to determine the effectiveness of a program or policy. The research finds results whether a program has achieved its goals or not. Evaluations of social programs are conducted in many areas. For example to evaluate effectiveness and benefits of educational programs, health, community development projects, housing and many other areas. Evaluative researches are also helpful to suggest ways to improve programs and policies.