

## **Historical Research**

Historical research is the method of research that examines past events or combinations of events to arrive at a result of what has happened in the past. Historical research has been defined by Wiersma (1986) as “**a process of critical inquiry into past events in order to produce an accurate description of those events**”.

It is a valid question that why would we conduct historical research. Historical research is carried on to uncover the unknown and answer questions related to past events. It is to identify the relationship that the past has to the present. This research method records and evaluates the accomplishments of individuals, agencies, or institutions. It provides aid in understanding the culture in which we live.

### **Historical research tells about the present**

Historical research can show patterns that occurred in the past and over time which can help us to see where we came from and what kinds of solutions we have used in the past. We usually will see that what we do today is specifically rooted in the past. Understanding this can add perspective on how we examine current events.

### **Steps involved in historical research?**

Here are the five steps:

- Identification of the research topic and formulation of the research problem or question.
- Data collection or literature review
- Evaluation of materials
- Data synthesis (combination of components or elements)
- Report preparation

Much of the time in conducting historical research involves the process of collecting and reading the research material collected, and writing the manuscript from the data collected. The researcher often goes back-and-forth between collecting, reading, and writing.

### **Sources of historical research topics**

Here are a few sources of topics in social work field:

- Current issues in social welfare in Pakistan
- Desire to understand the impact of a specific individual, an institution, or an organization on social welfare policy or welfare reforms
- A researcher might want to understand the relationship among different events (e.g., decisions to give trainings and then to drop trainings to voluntary organizations)
- Desire to understand the historical roots of social welfare policy
- One may decide that past events have not been presented accurately so he decides to write up his new interpretation (which must be based on some evidence).

### **Information used to conduct a historical research**

- **Documents and records** include written or printed materials such as diplomas, diaries, autobiographies, newspapers, photos, memos, periodicals, reports, files, attendance records, census reports, budgets, maps, and tests.
- **Oral histories** are another very useful type of information. An oral history is what you obtain when you interview a person who has had direct or indirect experience with or knowledge of the chosen topic.

- **Relics** are also used and include articles of clothing, buildings, books, architectural plans, desks, or any other object that might provide useful information about the past.

Historical information exists in libraries. Historical documents can be found in other places such as local courthouses.

### **Primary and secondary sources**

A primary source is an original, first hand record or account or artefact that has survived from the past and has direct involvement with the event being investigated. A secondary source is an account of the past created after the event or created from primary sources.

### **External criticism and internal criticism**

**External criticism** refers to telling the authenticity, validity, or trustworthiness of the source (to see if the source is what it claims to be). It is about where, when and by whom it was produced. **Internal criticism** refers to the determination of the reliability or accuracy of the information contained in the source. It is about the meaning and accuracy of the content of the document.