Research Methods and Analysis

a. Qualitative and Quantitative methods
Syllabus

3. Research Methods and Analysis:

a. Qualitative and Quantitative methods.

b. Techniques of data collection.

c. Variables, sampling, hypothesis, reliability and validity.
POSITIVISM

- Introduced by Comte – sociology as a science of society based on positive philosophy

- This conception of positivism involves search for laws that uses both reason as well as observation. That is, it is neither purely inductivist nor purely deductivist.

  - Durkheim: study of suicide and social facts (enriched positivism)

  - Use of statistical data

  - Correlation (b/w different social facts- Durkheim protestants and high suicide)
POSITIVISM

• Causation- to find cause and effect but possibility of third factor

• Multivariate analysis: isolating effect of particular independent variable on dependent variables

• Use of computer software to study statistical significance of correlation

• Theorisation: to form laws of human behaviour eg Durkheim (suicide), Comte (3 types of society)

• Inductive methodology
Critical Evaluation

Karl Popper in his book ‘the logic of scientific discovery’ promotes idea of deductivism and falsification (no theory is absolutely true, need to keep testing)

(Already studied in Chapter-2)
LABORATORY EXPERIMENT and SOCIOLOGY

Why sociologists don’t use lab experiment

1) Unnatural situation while society is natural
2) Artificiality of situation can lead to loss of ecological validity
3) Payne and Payne – Getting informed consent is difficult without altering behaviour (ethical issue)
4) Payne and Payne - Human beings are complex; matching one with other is impossible
5) Alan Bryman says that human beings as an independent variable cannot be manipulated beyond an extent ex: changing male to female
6) Impossiblity of fitting entire society into lab
7) Longitudinal Studies can’t be conducted - Difficult to keep subjects long in lab to study social change
SOME EXAMPLES OF LAB EXPERIMENT

• Weber’s charismatic leaders were found to be most effective

• Children were impacted by viewing violent images

• (Read more from Haralombos)
FIELD EXPERIMENT

Because of inability to perform lab experiment, field experiment becomes important

Intervening in social world such that hypothesis can be tested by isolating particular variables

Example

Study done by J.W. Sissons (an actor dresses up like businessman and then later as a labourer, asked directions, businessman gets most replies)

Natural Experiment

when researcher doesn’t intervene and simply observes
FIELD EXPERIMENT

Problems

Not completely possible to control variables as directed

Hawthorne Effect
Presence of researcher can effect results

Ethical Issues
Problem of informed consent

Mostly confined to small scale studies for short period
COMPARATIVE METHODS

Comparing various studies/societies/times/groups and variables

Identifying critical factors leading to different outcomes

Victor Jupp says this method can be used to do-
Content Analysis (comparing documents)
Historical analysis (comparing time periods)
Official statistics analysis (comparing areas, groups etc in terms of social indicators)

Data can be collected from primary as well as secondary sources
COMPARATIVE METHODS

Benefits

Less moral issues
(easier to obtain prior consents, generally, of previous researchers)

No direct intervention

Hawthorne effect eliminated
Less likely to artificially effect behaviour of subjects

Can be used in both quantitative and qualitative

Can be used to establish correlation and causal connection

Analyse large scale social change over long periods of times
COMPARATIVE METHODS

**Drawbacks**

Paucity of desired data

Difficult to determine independent variables

Used by Karl Marx, Durkheim and Weber;
Cicourel used it to compare juvenile delinquency in two Californian cities.
QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY

To supplement quantitative Qualitative data in forms of words, description, narratives and greater depth
Weber

Social action/ establishing causal relations

Verstehen

Human beings different than subjects of natural science
SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM


Does not reject attempt to establish causal relations

Individuals possess a self concept or image of themselves
Which is built/ reinforced or modified during interactions (with others)

Labelling can produce self-fulfilling prophecies
PHENOMENONOLOGY

Study of phenomenon from perspective of those who witness it
i.e. not what we know but how we come to know

Reject possibilities of causal explanations of human behaviour
reject imposing meanings
reject objective reality

They believe social world and its construction as social construction

Ex. Cicourel questions the stereotypical definition of delinquency by officials

Criticisms
Challenges very existence of sociology
Discarding other methodology making phenomenology victim of its own ideology
QUANTITATIVE VS QUALITATIVE

RAY PAWSON

Distinction exaggerated for ex Durkheim gave mental sketches of Roman Catholics and Protestants.

So even strongest advocates of either methodology have not stuck their position

60s hangover

Truce

Methodological pluralism

New methods like post modernism and feminism do not fit into any branch

Alan Bryman

Choice of methodology affects research planning and data analysis.

Purposive research.