

Social Research: Introduction

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- 2. Source of Knowledge Other Than Research**
- 3. Characteristics of Scientific Research.**

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RESEARCH?

- 'Research' is a term loosely used in everyday speech to describe a multitude of activities, such as (Walliman & Baiche, 2001, p.6-7).
- ***a mere gathering of facts or information.***
- ***Moving facts from one situation to another.***
- ***As mysterious/secret activity, far removed from practical life***
- ***As a word to get your product noticed.***

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Cont'd...

- If you ask for evidence of the research process and methodology, you are likely to be faced with incomprehension, muddled (to confuse, to mix) thinking, and possibly even worse: the product may be the outcome of mere guesswork!

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So **Research**?

- *I) the systematic investigation into the study of materials, sources etc. in order to establish facts and reach new conclusions*(Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary);
- *II) an endeavour to discover new or collate old facts etc. by the scientific study of a subject or by a course of critical investigation* (Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary).
- *“Research is a procedure by which we attempt to find systematically, and with the support of demonstrable fact, the answer to a question or the resolution of a problem”* (Leedy, 1989 cited in Walliman & Baiche, 2001).
- *“the systematic, controlled, empirical and critical investigation of hypothetical propositions about presumed relations among natural phenomena”* (Kerlinger, 1970 cited in Walliman & Baiche, 2001).

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Defining **Social Research**

- *“Social Research is a process in which people combine a set of principles, outlooks, and ideas (i.e., **methodology**) with a collection of specific **practices, techniques, and strategies** (i.e., a method of inquiry) to **produce knowledge**”* (Neuman, 2007: 2).

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Research Versus other means of knowledge

Source of Knowledge	Advantage	Disadvantage/reservations
Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Simple, quick and cheap to gain knowledge ➤ Expert authorities invest time & energy ➤ Authorities are experienced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Overestimation; ➤ Talk about unrelated field; ➤ May use position to influence us; ➤ How to decide about experts; ➤ What about their disagreements?

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Research Versus other means of knowledge

Source of Knowledge	Advantage	Disadvantage/reservations
Tradition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Makes social life easier 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Unknown source of wisdom; ➤ Prejudiced ideas; ➤ Distortion of knowledge
Mass Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Easy & cheap; ➤ Expert-opinion; ➤ Up-to date 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Distortion; ➤ Sensationalisation; ➤ Entertainment not knowledge as its aim; ➤ Perpetuation of cultural biases

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Research Versus other means of knowledge

Source of Knowledge	Advantage	Disadvantage/reservations
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content;"> Common Sense & Personal Experience </div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Easy and cheap; ➤ Ready acceptability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Miscomprehension; ➤ Emotive orientation ➤ Tends to be Haphazard & Uncontrolled; ➤ Conclusions are Quickly (& Emotionally) drawn.

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Research Versus other means of knowledge

Source of Knowledge	Advantage	Disadvantage/reservations
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content;"> Reasoning </div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Five-senses based analysis & understanding; ➤ Logical 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Over-estimation; ➤ Over-generalisation; ➤ Subjective orientation.

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Characteristics of **Scientific** Research process

- Walliman & Baiche (2001: 11-12) lists 9 characteristics.

1. It's generated by question

- **What, Why, When** do things happen? & **How** do events mean? (Shortly, 3WH)
 - All these are questions which can generate research activity.
- such a question/questions often referred to as the **Research Problem OR Research Question!**

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Characteristics of **Scientific** Research process

2. Research often divides the *principal question or problem* into more *practicable sub-questions or problems*.

- Problems are often too large or abstract to examine as a whole. Dividing them into component parts (sub-problems) enables them to be practically investigated.

3. It necessitates *clarification of a goal*.

- Without a clear **statement of the objectives** and what is **intended** to be done, the research **cannot be successful**.

4. It entails a *specific programme of work*.

- Research needs to be carefully planned in order to achieve its objectives and reach conclusions.

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Characteristics of **Scientific** Research process

5. ***It's aimed at increasing understanding by interpreting facts or ideas and reaching some conclusions about their meaning.***
 - The significance of facts or ideas depends on the way in which the intellect can extract meaning from them.
6. ***It requires reasoned argument to support conclusions.***
 - In order to communicate an **ordered sequence of ideas, a clear logical argument** is required.
 - (in other words) need for considerable mastery of **logical thinking**.

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Characteristics of **Scientific** Research process

7. ***It's tentatively guided by assertions called hypotheses/conjectures (informed guesses or tentative assertions).***
 - Testing these hypotheses provides a direction for exploration.
8. ***requires measurable data in attempting to answer the question which initiated the research.***
9. ***It's reiterative in nature.***
 - Advances in knowledge and interpretations of facts are based on previous knowledge, which, in turn, is expanded by the advances.
 - The resolution of **research problems** often gives rise to further **research problems** which need resolving.

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- AND...
- These are **NOT THE ONLY** features/characteristics of scientific research!

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Further on features of scientific research

- For Bryman (2012: 46) the three “most prominent criteria for the evaluation of social research” are
 - 1. Reliability**
 - i.e., whether the results of a study are **repeatable** OR whether the measures that are devised for concepts in the social sciences (such as poverty, racial prejudice, aggression, discrimination etc.) are consistent
 - 2. Replication**
 - in order for us to assess the reliability of a measure of a concept, the procedures that constitute that measure must be replicable by someone else.

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Further on features of scientific research

3. Validity

- Logical and factual soundness of a measure and results.
- In addition to highlighting validity, reliability, & replicability, **Sarantakos (1993)** also lists
 4. precision in measurement,
 5. objectivity,
 6. ethics/ethicality
 7. Representativeness (to allow generalisation) as key elements of social scientific research.

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