

SOCI 221

Basic Concepts in Sociology

Session 6 – Methods and Techniques of Sociological
Research: Types of Research

Lecturer: Dr. Samson Obed Appiah, Dept. of Sociology
Contact Information: soappiah@ug.edu.gh



UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

College of Education

School of Continuing and Distance Education

2014/2015 – 2016/2017

Session Overview

- **Overview**
- The types of research sociologists undertake can be classified in many ways according to different criteria. This section explains the different types of sociological researches and examines the particular circumstances suitable for their application.
- **Objective of Session:** At the end of the session, the student will be able to
 - Identify the different types and methods of sociological research
 - Identify the tools for conducting Research
 - Understand the various sampling techniques in social research
 - Identify and apply the appropriate research technique in a particular situation

Session Outline

The key topics to be covered in the session are as follows:

- Topic One : Research Methods
- Topic Two: Tools for conducting Research
- Topic Three: Sampling Techniques

Topic 1: Research Methods and Types

- The types of research sociologists undertake can be classified in many ways.
- The important ones are:
 - Descriptive Research
 - Explanatory Research
 - Qualitative Research
 - Quantitative Research
 - Basic Research
 - Applied Research

Types of Researches (Descriptive Research)

- **Descriptive Research:**
- The aim of descriptive research is to discover facts and describe social reality.
- The main concern is to answer questions such as what is this like? How many? What do they do?
- If we want to know the characteristics of a community or a town, we just get information.
- A typical descriptive research in sociology is Social Survey, which aims at collecting vital information covering all essential aspects of social life including population size, social amenities, religious and ethnic composition and occupation.

Types of Research: Explanatory Research

- **Explanatory Research**
- In explanatory research, explanation is the main focus of attention.
- Before we explain things, however, we must have information on them.
- In explanatory research, we proceed at two levels; first the collection of facts, and then the explanation.
- In other words, Explanatory research must be preceded by a Descriptive research of the same place, event or phenomenon

Explanatory Research Conti.

- Every Explanatory Research involves at least three elements:
 - First, is the behavior or attitude we want to understand;
 - Second, is the cause or determinant of the behavior or attitude;
 - Third, is why the causal element influences the behavior or attitude.

Qualitative Research

- **Qualitative Research**
- Another way of classifying social research is to determine whether or not figures or statistics will be used;
- Where statistics will not be used; the research is known as qualitative research.
- If we want to study a particular event like a marriage ceremony or a ritual, there is no need to use any statistics.
- As such most qualitative researches are only descriptive.

Quantitative Research

- **Quantitative Research**
- In this research, statistics or figures are needed to describe or explain a social event.
- Such a research can be used for both descriptive and explanatory purposes.
- If we want to analyze people's attitude towards a particular issue or the voting pattern in an election.
- When the figures are collected they are arranged in a table.

Basic and Applied Researches

- Researches are also classified according to the use to which the information from them will be used.
- In Basic research, sociologists design the study themselves in order to expand sociological knowledge.
- It aims at expanding our knowledge of human behavior.
- A sociologist may want to examine the phenomenon of juvenile delinquency as a means of adding to knowledge.

Basic and Applied Researches Cont.

- However, where the research is not initiated by the sociologist, but by other groups in society, it is known as Applied Research.
- Applied research is conducted when a sociologists is asked to conduct a study to answer a question.
- The major difference between the two is in the initiation or determination of what the topic for the research will be.

Basic and Applied Researches Cont.

- Whereas in Applied research, sociologists are conducting studies required by other people, in Basic research sociologists design the study themselves in order to expand sociological knowledge.
- Also , unlike Applied researches, Basic research does not have a specific practical application, but Applied research are to solve some practical problem.
- Sometimes however, basic research turns out to have practical application, and applied research leads to new knowledge.

Topic 2: Tools for conducting Social Research

- In doing their researches, sociologists use variety of tools to collect their data. Some of tools are:
 - Documentary Sources
 - Questionnaire
 - Interviews
 - Focus Group Discussion (FGD)
 - Case Studies
 - Participant Observation

Tools for Conducting Research: Documentary Sources

- **Documentary Sources**
- Many people equate research with field work, that is, going to the research area to collect data.
- However, in some cases it is necessary to get some background information before going to the field.
- Documentary sources of data collection include books, journal articles, archival materials, unpublished papers and research reports.

Tools for conducting Research: Questionnaires

- **Questionnaires**
- This is a collection of questions compiled by a researcher to solicit the information needed.
- Questions asked in questionnaires may be either open-ended or closed ended.
- Closed-ended are framed to provide a number of possible answers for the respondent to select from.
- In open-ended questions, the respondent is given the opportunity to express him or herself on an issue.

Tools for conducting research: Interviews

- **Interviews**
- With questionnaires, there is not much scope for supplementary questions or in-depth questioning or probing.
- Interviews provides a list of major questions that is Interview Schedule while at the same time the researcher is given the opportunity to ask supplementary questions and get more insight into the issue.
- The process by which interview schedules are used in getting information is called interviewing.

Tools for conducting research: Focus Group Discussions

- **Focus Group Discussions(FGD)**
- This is a form of in-depth interview with a group of people rather than with separate individuals.
- A group for FGD is between a minimum of five people to a maximum of 12 to 15 people.
- It must also have a moderator or facilitator who leads the discussion and a note taker or recorder.
- The FGD must also take care of majority and minority views, remarks, contradictions and contrary views.

Tools for conducting research: Case Studies

- **Case Studies**
- This involves the study of specific events, groups, individuals, or even communities.
- As a means of getting information on them for illustrative purposes. It is an example of in-depth study.
- The case being studied may either provide information to support a point of view or an exception to the rule.
- Where the Case Study involves an in-depth study of an individual it is called the Life History.

Tools for conducting research: Participant Observation

- Participant Observation
- In this method the researcher interacts and lives with the group of people he is studying for a reasonably long time, sometimes up to three or four years.
- During this time the researcher observes and participates in many group activities.
- The participant observer can be **overt**, in that the researcher is easily identified and the people know they are being studied.
- The participant observer could also be covert in that he disguises his/her identity and acts like the people.

Topic 3: Sampling Techniques

- In social research, it is impossible to study all the people involved.
- Sociologists have a way of solving this problem of large numbers .
- They have devised a means by which only a small fraction can be selected to represent the population.
- The proportion or percentage selected for study is called a **sample** while the procedure for the selection is known as **sampling**.

Sampling Techniques Cont.

- There are many sampling techniques, but the common ones include:
- Simple Random
- Systematic Random
- Cluster/Area Sampling
- Stratified Smapling



Simple Random and Stratified Sampling

- **Simple Random sampling**
- With this technique, every member of the population is given equal chance of being selected.
- This can be done by writing YES or NO on a piece of paper for every one to choose. Those who choose yes are part of the study.
- **Stratified Sampling**
- With this way, the population is grouped according to age, sex, education or other criteria, before a random sample is made of each stratum
- This is to make sure there is representativeness among the strata.

Systematic and Cluster Sampling

- **Systematic Sampling**
- Here instead of just mixing the units within the population any how before selection, the units, are arranged in a particular order and numbered.
- After determining the sample fraction, the intervals at which the sample will be selected will be made.
- **Cluster/Area Sampling**
- In this technique, the units of investigation are grouped into a number of larger clusters or areas.
- Examples of clusters include University Halls of residence, Regions of a country.

Sample Question

- Explain the relationship between Descriptive and Explanatory researches (if any).
- When is sampling necessary in a Sociological research?

Reading List/References

- Refer to students to relevant text/chapter or reading materials you will make available on Sakai
- Henslin, J.M. (2007). *Essentials of Sociology: A Down-to-Earth Approach*. Boston: Pearson Custom Publishing. (Pages 20-32).
- Hughes, M., Kroehler, C.J. (2005). *Sociology: The Core (7th Edition)*. Boston: McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc. (Pages 26-36).
- Schaefer, Richard T. (2004). *Sociology: A Brief Introduction*. (5TH Edition) Boston: McGraw Hill Companies, Inc.