

Introduction to Social Research

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1. What Is Social Research?

- **Definition** – Systematic investigation aimed at understanding human behavior, social structures, and cultural patterns.
 - **Goal** – Generate reliable knowledge that can explain, predict, or influence social phenomena.
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2. Why Do We Conduct Social Research?

Purpose	Example
Description	Mapping demographic trends in a city.
Explanation	Exploring why certain groups experience higher unemployment.
Prediction	Forecasting voting behavior in upcoming elections.
Evaluation	Assessing the impact of a community health program.
Policy Development	Providing evidence for new education legislation.

3. Core Principles

1. **Systematic** – Follows a clear, replicable plan.
 2. **Empirical** – Relies on observable, measurable evidence.
 3. **Critical** – Questions assumptions and examines bias.
 4. **Ethical** – Protects participants' rights and welfare.
 5. **Transparent** – Documents procedures and decisions for peer review.
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4. Types of Social Research

Type	Main Focus	Typical Methods
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Quantitative	Measuring variables & testing hypotheses	Surveys, experiments, secondary statistical data
Qualitative	Exploring meanings & processes	Interviews, focus groups, participant observation
Mixed?Methods	Combining numeric breadth with narrative depth	Sequential or concurrent integration of quantitative & qualitative techniques
Action Research	Solving practical problems while generating knowledge	Collaborative cycles of planning, acting, observing, reflecting
Comparative Research	Analyzing similarities/differences across cases	Cross?national surveys, historical document analysis

5. The Research Process (Step?by?Step)

1. Identify the Problem / Research Question

- Start with a gap in knowledge or a societal issue.
- Formulate a clear, focused question (e.g., “How does social media use affect political participation among young adults?”).

2. Review the Literature

- Summarize existing theories and empirical findings.
- Locate the study’s niche and justify its relevance.

3. Select a Theoretical Framework

- Choose concepts that will guide variable definition and interpretation (e.g., Social Capital Theory, Symbolic Interactionism).

4. Choose a Research Design

- Decide on methodology (quantitative, qualitative, mixed).
- Determine whether the study is exploratory, descriptive, explanatory, or evaluative.

5. Develop the Sampling Plan

- **Population** – the full set of individuals/events of interest.

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- **Sample** – a subset that represents the population.
- **Sampling techniques** – probability (simple random, stratified) or non-probability (convenience, purposive).

6. Design Data Collection Instruments

- Surveys/questionnaires, interview guides, observation protocols, or archival data extraction forms.
- Pilot test instruments to improve reliability and validity.

7. Collect Data

- Follow ethical protocols (informed consent, confidentiality, risk minimization).
- Keep detailed field notes and logs.

8. Analyze Data

- **Quantitative** – descriptive statistics, inferential tests (t-tests, ANOVA, regression), multivariate modeling.