

University of djilali bounaama

Faculté des Sciences Sociales et Humaines

Département of Social Sciences

English Scale

second Year of bacheor's

1.3. Sociological Research Methods

1.3.1. The Scientific Method Inductive vs. Deductive Approaches

Sociology is a science. As such, it is concerned with systematically observing and classifying facts, and establishing verifiable laws. It, like any other science employs scientific method, which is the source for scientific knowledge. The scientific method is a logical system used to evaluate data derived from systematic observation. The scientific method as a precise way of designing and conducting research consists of the following basic steps: “(1) establishing a hypothesis, a general statement based on observed facts; 2) determining ways to test the hypothesis, incorporating them in research design; 3) testing the hypothesis through research and further observation...” (Howard and Dunaif-Hattis, 1992:7) Sociology as a science employs the two very important approaches in research design and in the overall research framework: inductive methods and

Introduction to Sociology deductive method. Inductive method is a method by which the scientist first makes observation and collects data, on the basis of which he or she formulates hypothesis and theories (Scupin and DeCorse, 1995). The researcher tries to build theories from particular observations and instances. Induction moves from the particular to the general; where as deduction moves from the general to the particular. In deductive approach, the researcher attempts to derive specific assertions and claims from a general theoretical principle. In short, deductive approach in research goes from general theory to particular claims (Dooley, 1995:65-66).

Box 1.5. Inductive vs. deductive approaches

- Inductive method is a method by which the scientist first makes observation and collects data, on the basis of which he or she formulates hypothesis and theories
- In deductive approach, the researcher attempts to derive specific assertions and claims from a general theoretical principle.

As a science, the primary aim of sociology is doing research; to produce, accumulate, and disseminate scientific knowledge on society and social phenomena. However, there are some people who question the scientific status of sociology and other social sciences. They argue that sociology is not strictly science because its subject matter is very much complex. It is not possible to subject human behavior into laboratory manipulations. People have their own motives and hidden aspirations and other complex aspects. However, it is generally accepted that sociology is a science in the sense that its primary aim is doing scientific research to promote scientific knowledge. Sociology can and should employ the scientific methods. The scientific method is defined as a method of observing the world critically, empirically and rationally to collect and analyze data systematically to arrive at a scientific knowledge. Introduction to Sociology

1.3.2. Steps in Sociological Research Generally, there are about seven steps in doing a sociological research. These steps are not, however, typical to sociology alone. It should also be noted that these steps are not fixed ones. Some steps may not necessarily be followed in some research projects. They steps may not necessarily be put in sequential order.

1. Identification of Research Problems The first step in doing sociological research (for that matter, any other research) is to come up with a research problem. Identification of research problem basically involves choosing a research topic. The ways and manners in which researchers identify a research problem and choose a topic vary according to various factors. The research interests of sociologists are, often, triggered by their own life experiences and observations (Howard

and Dunaif-Hattis, 1992). The initial ideas for research thus may occur at any time and place for a researcher. Walking down a street, reading through newspapers, watching television, etc may suggest a topic of research for an observing and curious person (Mann, 1976). Once a research topic comes to our mind, we should ask the following questions: • Is it researchable? • Is it sociologically/ socially significant? • What is new about it? • What gap will it fill? • Is it manageable in terms of time, money, expertise and other resources? In other words, do you have the needed resources to do the research? If you answer these and other related questions adequately, then you are on the right track to conduct the research.

2. Literature Review This step involves familiarizing or orienting yourself with the concepts, theories and the works already done pertaining to the topic identified. Relevant available literature on the topic chosen should be reviewed; we should also check out what works have already been done by others, what gaps are remaining, what questions remain unanswered, etc.