Steps in Social Research

A social research is a systematic procedure to seek explanation to unexplained social phenomena to clarify the doubtful and misconceived facts. A research is a scientific process to discover new facts and verify old facts in attempt to explain causal relationship of a phenomenon. Research is aimed at generating concepts, theories and reliable explanations.

A social research involves the following steps.
1. Selection of Research Problem
2. Review of Related Literature
3. Formulation of Research Objectives
4. Devising Hypotheses
5. Making the Research Design - *methodology*
6. Sampling procedure
7. Data Collection
8. Data Analysis and Interpretation
9. Hypotheses Testing
10. Deriving Øndings, conclusion and suggestions
11. Report Writing

Selection of Research Problem

Research problem is simply the topic of the research. Selection of research problem involves selecting a broad area and then narrowing it down to a specific topic. For example, a research may select a broad area for his research such as **Domestic Violence**. He split this broad area into sub-areas to select one sub-area from them as a topic for his research. For instance, the broad area 'Domestic Violence' is split into following sub-areas:
Cause of Domestic Violence
Impact of Domestic Violence on Family
Impacts of Domestic Violence on Children
Services available to victims of Domestic Violence
Extent of Domestic Violence in a Society

One of the above sub-areas is selected as a research topic. The purpose of narrowing down the broad area in to sub-areas is to select a specific and manageable topic for the research.

Review of Related Literature

The next step is to study available literature on the topic – all the previously done work on the topic including research thesis, research papers, books, reports and publications. The purpose of reviewing the related literature is:
To understand various aspect of the topic – *required for conducting the research.*

To understand the nature of work done on the topic
To identify research gaps – *those areas which have not been explored by others*
To make a theoretical background for the study – *as it is added as a chapter to your Ønal report.*

Formulation of Research Objectives

Objectives are aims that you want to explore in the research. The simple way to make objectives is to first make questions that what do you want to explore about the topic and then convert these questions into objectives.
For example, you select '**Impact of Domestic Violence on Children**' as your research topic. You can raise the following question about this topic.

What is the impact of DV on the emotional development of a child?
How DV affects the child's academic performance?
What are the effects of DV on child physical health?
How DV inÙuences the social behavior of children?

Now, convert the above question into objective by using action-oriented words (e.g. *to explore, to investigate, to know etc)* as follows:
To understand the impact of DV on the emotional development of a child.
To examine the inÙuence of DV on the child's academic performance.
To know various effects of DV on child's physical health.
To explore the impact of DV on the child's social behavior.

Devising Hypotheses

A hypothesis is a testable assumption showing a relationship among certain variables. It can be a false or true statement. It is put to test in the research to check its authenticity. Hypothesis is a logical relationship and is relevant to the theme of the research. It becomes a base for the research. It specifies the focus of the research. It makes it easier for the researcher to carry on the research to generate productive findings. The examples of hypothesis are as follows:
Higher the illiteracy in a society, higher will be the poverty.
Higher the poverty in a society, higher will be the crime rate.
Higher the illiteracy in a society, higher would be the discrimination against women.

Making Research Design

The research design is a plan for a research. It outlines the methods and procedures used in the research. It tells how the researcher wants to conduct the research. It includes the following:
Which methodology will be used? - *e.g. quantitative or qualitative method*

Which tool of data collection will be used? - *e.g. questionnaire, interview, or observation*
Who will be the respondents and how many respondents?
How will be the collected data analyzed? - *e.g. software, manual, graphs, tables etc.*
Which test will be used to verify hypothesis or other facts? – *e.g. chi-square test etc*
A research may also mention other considerations of research in the research design such as description of the geographical area of research, ethical considerations and variables of the study. Research design keeps the researcher on tract during the research.

Sampling Procedure

Sampling means to select a part of population for study. It is difficult for a researcher to study all the population of an area due to limited resources – *time, money and energy.* Hence, a part of the population is selected for research study. The number of total respondents for a sample is known as sample-size. The sample size can vary depending upon your study.
Sampling procedure means how to select respondents from population to make a sample which is true representative of the entire population. There are various sample procedures such *as random sampling, stratified sampling, purposive sampling, probability sampling, non-probability sampling and so on*. The sampling procedure and sample sized is always mentioned in the research design.

Data Collection

Data collection is an important phase of the research. The data is collected for deriving findings, results and theories. There are two types of data: primary data and secondary data.
Primary data: It is the data which is collected for the first time by the researcher from respondents. The research has to visit the respondents and collect data from them using his selected tool of data collection, *e.g. a questionnaire, interview or observation etc.* It requires a lot of fieldwork activity.
Secondary data: It is the data which has already been collected by others and is available in the form of books, reports, papers, websites, magazine, encyclopedias and so on. Such a data is called secondary data.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The collected data is properly analyzed to generate findings. Data analysis involves data editing, data coding, data classification, measurement and interpretation. **Data editing** means to check the collected data for errors or missing information and correct it accordingly. **Data coding** means to scale the variables in the data so that they can be measured. Various scaling methods may be used, *such as nominal scale, ordinal scale or interval scale.*
The data is classified on the basis of relevancy and is presented in the forms of **tables, graphs, charts, diagram or texts** so that it can be easily analysed by the researcher. The data may also be statistically measured with the help assigned scales. The researcher analyse the data to extract

the important findings from the data.

Hypothesis Testing

The hypothesis of the research is tested in the light of analysed data. For example, the hypothesis 'Higher the poverty in a society, higher will be the crime rate'.

The relationship of poverty and crime rate in the analysed data will either verify or reject this hypothesis. Similarly, the researcher may use some test to test the hypothesis such as chi-square test.

Deriving findings, conclusion and suggestions

Data analysis generates findings of the study. The research has to derive conclusion and suggestions on the basis of the finding the study. The conclusion is usually a summary of the findings which include only the most significant findings. The research has to devise some suggestions or recommendations, in the light of findings, to the audience of the research report – *e.g. to government, to the community, to a specific section of society.*

Report Writing

After conducting a research, all the details of the research *(e.g. basic concepts, literature studied, methodology, findings, suggestions etc)* are compiled into a **research report**. The purpose of writing the research report is to record your work as well as to present your work in written form to the audience. The widely accepted format for writing a research report is as follows:

1. **PRELIMINARY PAGES**
- Title Page
- Abstract
- Table of contents

2. **MAIN BODY**

Chapter 1 - Introduction
Chapter 2 – Literature Review
Chapter 3 – Research Design
Chapter 4 – Data Analysis and Interpretation
Chapter 5 – Findings and Suggestions

3. **CLOSING PAGES**
- Bibliography / References

REFERENCES

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