

UPSCprep Free Daily Answer Writing Initiative

Subject: Sociology

Questions

Q1. How far the basic postulates of scientific method are applied in sociology? Also, discuss whether application of scientific methods in sociology is justified. (20 Marks)

Q2. Differentiate between objectivity and value neutrality in sociological research. (10 Marks)

Model Structures

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Introduction

- Background about the Emergence of Scientificism in Social Studies
- Mention of positivism
- Scientific method- Building a body of knowledge through observation, experimentation, generalisation and verification.

Main Body

Basic Postulates of the scientific method:

- Empiricism and identification of surface reality
- Cause and Effect Analysis
- Use of research methodologies
- Direct and calculated Observations
- Rationality

Application in Sociology -

- Positivistic Approach
- Spencer - Organismic Analogy, Social Darwinism
- Comte - finding laws that governs human behaviour
- Durkheim's methods for Direct Observation of social facts
- Debate (Positivism vs Non-Positivism)- Non positivist challenging use of scientific methods in sociology
- Interpretivism, Symbolic interactionism and Phenomenology
- Oppose the use of scientific methods
- Emphasis on identifying the underlying meaning
- The problem of objectivity in sociology –
 - Objectivity is an illusion, and all research is guided by viewpoints that involve subjectivity (Gunnar Myrdal)

Conclusion

- Despite the above criticism, the scientific methods paved the way for concrete rationalization in Social investigation.
- According to Goffman and Mead: 'Sociology is science' in itself and has its own methodology, spirit, purpose and results.

Q2. Differentiate between objectivity and value neutrality in sociological research. (10 Marks)

Introduction

- Define objectivity and value neutrality

Main Body

- Objectivity means striving as far as possible to reduce or eliminate bias in the conduct of research.
- Value neutrality, as described by Max Weber, is the duty of sociologists to identify and acknowledge their own values and overcome their personal biases when conducting sociological research.
- Objectivity is an imperative of value-free sociology or positivism
- A positivist research has goals such as quantification, containment of social reality as facts, data analysis etc.
- Invariably there must be objectivity in such research.
- Moreover, quantification in itself is a way to achieve objectivity
- Value neutrality is an imperative of non-positivists
- When using techniques such as observation or interview, there are some preconditions like the ideology of the researcher, the topic of the research, the distance between researcher and researched exist

Conclusion

- Hence, objectivity is not possible. Value contamination is bound to happen
- In order to be value-neutral, sociologists must be aware of their own moral judgments and values, and avoid incorporating them into their research, their conclusions, and their teaching.

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