

UPSCprep Free Daily Answer Writing Initiative

Subject: Sociology

Questions

Q1. Phenomenological perspectives are nothing but a dissent from the assumptions of positivism.

Comment. (20 Marks)

Q2. Examine the significance of 'triangulation' in sociology. (10 Marks)

Model Structures

Q 1. Phenomenological perspectives are nothing but a dissent from the assumptions of positivism. Comment. (20 Marks)

Introduction

- Positivism is an approach of studying sociology as a discipline which aims at employing principles similar to those in natural sciences.
- According to Saint Simon, 'positivism was rooted in a science of society which is analogous to natural sciences'.

Main Body

- Positivism emphasised upon understanding 'external realities' and rejected the study of internal aspects like meanings, motives etc.
- Durkheim called for - studying 'social facts' as these are seen objectively in a similar manner by everyone.
- Discovery of 'cause and effect' relationship while studying phenomenon.

- It stressed upon use of 'scientific methods' similar to those used in natural sciences. For example Durkheim used statistical technique similar to natural sciences in his famous study of suicide.
- It focused upon 'empiricism' and rejected commonsensical speculations. Positivism also focused on formulation of 'theories' and 'universality' of laws and principles.

However, soon it was realised that sociology cannot be developed as a purely positivistic discipline.

- Phenomenologists like Peter Berger contend that facts never fall from the sky, but develop in a particular context.
- Phenomenology refers to a group of perspectives, and it is a distinctive European branch of sociology that emerged as an alternative to positivism.
- The basis of this approach is that 'an individual has a voluntary will and his thoughts cannot be understood simply in terms of external influence'. Human beings have a consciousness which cannot be predicted.
- It is argued that the subject matter of natural sciences and social sciences are fundamentally different - man has consciousness, material things don't, and hence, methods of natural sciences cannot be applied to social sciences.
- Meanings don't have their own independent existence. Instead, they are constructed and reconstructed by the actors in the course of their social interaction.
- From a phenomenological perspective, the social world is a world of meanings, and there is no objective reality that lies beyond the meanings of individuals.
- Max Weber was a big influence on the development of this stream of sociology.
- However, the non-positivist methodologies cannot resolve the dilemma of objectivity and subjectivity.
- They could also not develop a single methodological principle leading to wide variations in non-positivist research and some even stressed on using quantitative methods.
- Non-positivist methods also depend heavily on the ability of the interrogator and as a result, different explanations were given for the same phenomenon.

Conclusion

- Positivism laid particular emphasis on behavior that can be 'directly observed' and ignored factors like feelings, meanings which cannot be directly observed. And to fill those gaps one could say Phenomenology developed.
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Q 2. Examine the significance of 'triangulation' in sociology. (10 Marks)

Introduction

- In social research, triangulation is defined as the mixing of several methods, data and tools instead of adopting a single approach.

Main Body

- Norman K. Denzin identifies four types of triangulation in social research:
 - Data triangulation involves using a variety of information or data sources to increase the validity of the results.
 - Investigator triangulation involving multiple researchers in an investigation,
 - Theory triangulation involves more than one theoretical scheme,
 - Methodology triangulation involves clubbing various methods.
- Significance
 - Researchers can use the strengths of one method to compensate for the shortcomings of another.
 - Research data could be more reliable and valid.
 - Accuracy increases with the use of multiple data collection methods.
 - By gathering and aggregating different types of data (quantitative and qualitative) and sources, researchers are more likely to get a complete, fully-rounded picture of the behaviour they're studying.
- Disadvantages
 - Can be time and resource intensive.
 - Sometimes various methods lead to ambiguity in data collection.

Conclusion

- Despite certain disadvantages, various methods of triangulation have been used in a wide range of sociological research. It opens a wide range of spectrum of methodologies in sociological research.

A promotional banner for a sociology course. The background is a vibrant purple and blue gradient with abstract geometric shapes and a network of nodes connected by lines. Several stylized human figures are scattered across the network, some holding question marks or pointing upwards. The word 'Sociology' is written in a large, white, cursive font in the top left corner. The main title 'SOCIOLOGY COMPREHENSIVE COURSE' is in large, bold, white, sans-serif capital letters. Below the title, it says 'With Mentorship' in a smaller, white, italicized font. A white rounded rectangle contains the text 'Including Test Series'. In the bottom left corner, it says 'Access for 3 years' in white. The overall design is modern and educational.

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