

UPSCprep Free Daily Answer Writing Initiative

Subject: Sociology

Questions

Q1. What is reliability and validity? Critically examine its importance in sociological research. (20 Marks)

Q2. Analyse Marxian Conception of historical materialism as a critique of Hegelian dialectics. (20 Marks)

Model Structures

Q1. What is reliability and validity? Critically examine its importance in sociological research. (20 Marks)

Introduction

- The two key factors that define the accuracy and efficacy of an observation and, consequently, the value of a result are reliability and validity. Validity is the extent to which the desired aim is met; reliability is the nothing but repetition of the same result. As outcomes of sociological study are not the product of a carefully controlled experiment and a situation never stays the same, these are two significant obstacles in sociology.

Main Body

Reliability

- Can the same result be achieved again, is an issue raised when a researcher discusses the trustworthiness of data. Consistency is the key of reliability, which comes in two forms:

- The reproducibility of the same outcomes through time is referred to as temporal reliability.
- Comparative reliability is concerned with the alteration of the testing procedure, targets, observers, etc. Inter-item dependability, inter-observer reliability, and inter-test reliability are additional categories for comparative reliability.
- Since participants' opinions might alter over time, reliability presents sociologists with a number of technical challenges in qualitative research. By incorporating objectivity into methodologies and processes, reliability in research can be increased. The reliability of processes and methodologies is also increased through standardisation.
- In comparison to other approaches like participant observation, open-ended interviews, and so on, some methods, such as statistical techniques, sampling, etc., are more dependable. The subjectivity brought on by the individual investigators' methods and influence from values makes sociological research less reliable.

Validity

- Validity is concerned with how well the desired outcome is being achieved. If the outcome measures what it was intended to measure, it is valid. A study's or research's success is determined by its validity. Since there are no predetermined objectives for the results of qualitative research, it is challenging to determine. Validity is evaluated in relation to a desired result or objective. Finding the validity of a result is difficult when such a goal is not defined in the first place.
- Internal validity, which confirms the causal relationship, and external validity, which addresses generalisation and the extent to which the results apply to a larger population, are two ways that validity is widely categorised.
- A valid result is always reliable, whereas a reliable result may not be valid.
- The following are some variables that may affect validity:
 - The past or passage of time
 - Instrumentation: This refers to the impact of modifications made to the measurement tool or procedure during the investigation.

- Selection Bias - This happens when test units are chosen so that they are not representative of the population.
- Most social studies don't yield quantifiable results. Changes in social conditions occur occasionally, and various sociologists have different ideological inclinations. Additionally, it is difficult to conduct controlled experiments to determine the veracity.
- As a result, validity in most sociological studies is low. Interpretivism disputes the validity claim made by positivists that sociology may utilise scientific procedures to establish validity because no method can fully capture human consciousness. The majority of sociologists, according to interpretivists, tend to ignore the issue of validity in favour of gathering more and more data and developing more complex hypotheses.

Conclusion

- While quantitative techniques like questionnaires and surveys increase the dependability of data, qualitative techniques like participant observation, interviews, etc. improve data validity. The greatest strategy to increase the validity and reliability of social research is to use a variety of methodology, data collection methods, and viewpoints. Triangulation is another name for this.

Q2. Analyse Marxian Conception of historical materialism as a critique of Hegelian dialectics. (20 Marks)

Introduction

- Karl Marx borrowed the approach of Dialectics from the Hegelian Notion of Dialectic idealism. However, he found Hegel's idealism led to a very conservative political orientation.
- He derived the idea of materialism from Feuerbach's Material materialism

Main Body

- Hegel - Ideas were the cause of change. He was an idealist and believed reason is the essence of reality. Hegel views history as a progress of the consciousness of freedom.
- Marx claimed to “put back on its feet” the Hegelian dialectic, which he accused of being “upside down”, by substituting matter for mind as the motive power of history.
- Marx believed that material sources & conditions and not ideas per se are important in the working of any mode of production. Material work is characterised by its own independent existence and is not a result of human thinking.
- History is a process of development through conflict, not a conflict of ideas, but the real conflict between economic classes.
- Two aspects of historical materialism
 - Materialistic conception of society is in terms of economic infrastructure and social superstructure – this was created by Marx to understand the modes of production of society.
 - He understands the historical evolution process in terms of a dialectic process where two opposing forces interact with each other and new structures are produced and the dialectic process continues.
- In order to survive man must produce and for this man must enter into relation with others. These relations are dynamic and conflicting. It leads to change in the mode of production. Using Historical materialism approach Marx gave 5 epochs of Human history
 1. Primitive Communism
 2. Slave society
 3. Feudal Society
 4. Capitalism Society
 5. Communist society
- Criticism -
 - Weber - The theory should be replaced by the ideal type. Marx was suffering from monoclonal economic determinism as per Weber.
 - Neo Marxist Ralf Dahrendorf - Capitalism is different from post-capitalism.
 - Herbert Marcuse says pitfalls of marxism is that Marxian understanding is one-dimensional man i.e only materialism not humanism.

Conclusion

- Though the Dialectic materialism has some inherent shortcomings but in present times where geopolitics is moving toward geoeconomics, this theory still holds valid.

A promotional banner for a sociology course. The background is a vibrant purple and blue gradient with a network of white lines connecting various human figures. The word 'Sociology' is written in a stylized, purple font inside a black speech bubble on the left. The main title 'SOCIOLOGY COMPREHENSIVE COURSE' is in large, bold, white capital letters. Below the title, it says 'With Mentorship' in a smaller, italicized font. A white rounded rectangle contains the text 'Including Test Series'. At the bottom left, it says 'Access for 3 years'.

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