

Readings in LEGAL AND SOCIAL RESEARCH

Edited by
Prof. (Dr.) M. Lakshmiipathi Raju

Disciplines like sociology and psychology lay more emphasis on empirical research. In legal research, doctrinaire research plays a dominant role when compared to empirical research. Social science research mostly involves empirical research which depends on surveys, sample testing, questionnaires, schedules, interviews and use of quantitative methods. In the recent years, legal research started using empirical research and quantitative methods.

The present book contains topics pertaining to both the approaches. In view of the above, this book has been compiled to include wide range of topics pertaining to all methods of enquiry—methods, techniques, statistical tools, sampling methods, interview and observation techniques, schedules, questionnaires, measures of central value or average, measures of dispersion and co-efficient of correlation.

The book is divided into six sections namely: (1) Social and legal research, (2) Research design and plan of study, (3) Methods of research, (4) Methods of data collection, (5) Quantitative methods, (6) Data organization and Report writing.

The credit of the book lies in its comprehensive nature covering both legal and social research while dealing with major aspects of the subject. The presentation is simple and lucid and it is compiled for the benefit of the students, scholars and teachers dealing with the subject.



Prof. M. Lakshmiipathi Raju is an academician with distinguishing academic record. Starting as lecturer in 1962, he worked in various schools of social work, as founder head, director and principal of post graduate studies at D.N.R. College, Bhimavaram during 1974-92. He was the founder head, department of sociology and social work Acharya Nagarjuna University, Guntur during 1992-93. He served Sri Padmavati Mahila Veda Vidyalayam, Tirupati in the position of professor and head during 1994-99, visiting professor and co-ordinator, MRPO College, Vizianagaram during 2007-12. He has acquired 55 years of teaching experience of graduate and post graduate level and 35 years of research experience and guidance. He has obtained M.A. Sociology, M.A. Social Work and Ph.D. degrees. He has guided 15 Ph.D. and 12 M.Phil. scholars.

For the last six years, he has been teaching Sociology of Law for the law students in Damodaram Sanjivayya National Law University (DSNLU), Sabbavaram, Visakhapatnam. Presently, he is a member of Executive Council and Academic Council of DSNLU. He is also the faculty adviser for the Centre for Child and Law in the same university.

He has published more than 30 books in Sociology, Sociology of Law, Research Methodology, Criminology, Social Work, Gandhian Studies, Gender Studies, Family Studies, Family Counseling and allied subjects. He has published about 100 research papers in national and international journals.

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Dedicated to

His Holiness Vedurupaka God Garu, Peetadhipathi, Sri Vijaya Durga Peetam, by whose grace and blessings, I am able to accomplish my academic and research pursuits. I owe all of my academic attainments to HIS benevolence and spiritual powers. He is the very embodiment of Goddess Sri Vijaya Durga, Divinity, Sanathana and Arsha Dharma. But for his spiritual support and succor, the present volume would not have seen the light of the day.

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Application of Scientific Method in Social Science Research

Dr. Vanaja, M.* and Prof. M.V. Ram Kumar Ratnam**

Research is a careful and exhaustive process of investigating a phenomenon, which produces knowledge that can be used for finding a solution of problems and for the generation of universal theories, principles and laws. Robert Burns describes research as a systematic investigation to find solutions to a problem. However, not all knowledge is science. The critical factor that separates scientific knowledge from other ways of acquiring knowledge is that it uses a scientific method. Social science is, in its broadest sense, is the study of society and the manner in which people behave and influence the world around us. Specifically, social research could mean the study of values (what people prefer) characteristics (who people are), human behavior (what people do), philosophical questions relating to the nature of knowledge (epistemology), values (axiology) and being (ontology), and human beings and their life contexts. Social science research is a scientific undertaking, which by means of logical methods aims to discover new facts or old facts and to

* Dr. Vanaja, M., Associate Professor, Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Gachibowli, Hyderabad-500032.

** Prof. M.V. Ram Kumar Ratnam, Former Professor, Centre for Mahayana Buddhist Studies, Acharya Nagarjuna University, Nagarjunanagar-522510.

analyze their sequences, inter-relationships, casual explanations and natural laws that govern them.

The scientific method is a method of discovering reliable knowledge about nature based on empirical evidence (empiricism), practicing logical reasoning (rationalism), and possessing a skeptical attitude (skepticism) about presumed knowledge that leads to self-questioning, holding tentative conclusions, and being un-dogmatic (willingness to change one's beliefs). In other words, science is a method, a procedure to produce knowledge, i.e. discovering universalities, the underlying principles, laws, and theories through the process of observation and re-observation. Observation, here, implies that the researcher uses "empirical experiences" for the study of the phenomena. They use the sensations and the resultant knowledge acquired through the five senses, which are possessed by every normal human being. They not only do the observation of a phenomenon, but also repeat the observation, may be for several times. The researchers do so because they want to be accurate and definite about their findings. Re-observation or re-examination could be undertaken by the same researcher at a different time and place or conducted by other professionals at some other time or place. By repeating the observation, the researchers want to be definite and positive about their findings. Those who want to be definite and positive are often referred to as positivists, who ascribed that knowledge can be derived only from sensory experience. The Logical positivist claim that science is both logical and based on observable facts and the truth of any statement lies in the verification through sensory experience.

The results are organized, systematized, and made part of the existing body of knowledge; and this is how the knowledge grows. All this procedure for the creation of knowledge is called a scientific method, whereby the consequent knowledge may be referred to as scientific knowledge. Theodorson and Theodorson define, 'scientific method as building of a body of scientific knowledge through observation, experimentation, generalization and verification'. The scientific method could be either be an inductive method or deductive method. Inductive method involves in building generalizations inferred from facts, whereas deductive method involves testing generalizations.

Important Characteristics of Scientific Method

1. Empirical

Scientific method is concerned with the realities that are observable through "empirical sensory experiences." It generates knowledge, which is verifiable by experience or observation. Some of the realities could be directly observed, like the number of students present in the class, how many of them are male, and how many are female. The same students have attitudes, values, motivations, aspirations, and commitments. These are also realities, which cannot be observed directly, but the researchers have designed ways to observe these indirectly.

2. Verifiable

Observations made through scientific method are to be verified again by using the senses to confirm or refute the previous findings. Such confirmations may have to be made by the same researcher or others. We will place more faith and credence in those findings and conclusions if similar findings emerge based on data collected by other researchers using the same methods. To the extent that it does happen, (i.e. the results are replicated or repeated) we will gain confidence in the scientific nature of our research. Replicability, in this way, is an important characteristic of scientific method. Hence, revelations and intuitions are out of the domain of scientific method.

3. Cumulative

Prior to the undertaking of any study, the researchers go through the available literature and ascertain that their study is not a repetition. Instead of reinventing the wheel, the researchers take stock of the existing body of knowledge and try to build on it. Data has to be substantiated with necessary supporting information based on which inferences can be drawn. The results have to be organized and systematized. A linkage between the present and the previous body of knowledge has to be established, and this results in accumulation of knowledge. The existing body of knowledge provides a secure foundation on which the researchers build on and hence the knowledge keeps on growing.