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Q3(c)

"Hypothesis is a statement of the relationship between two or more variables."Elucidate by giving example of poverty and illiteracy.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2016 · Sociology GS 1 · 15 marks · Research Methods and Analysis

Research Methods and Analysis: Qualitative and quantitative methods; Techniques of data collection; Variables, sampling, hypothesis, reliability and validity.

Core demand of the question

- "Hypothesis is a statement of the relationship between two or more variables."Elucidate by giving example of poverty and illiteracy
- Keep the elucidation within a 15-mark length

Revision summary

A hypothesis states a testable relation among defined variables.

Poverty and illiteracy must be operationalised, as in **Census literacy** and a poverty line.

Links may run both ways; third variables such as caste, region, and gender matter.

Marx, Weber, Durkheim, and Merton demand structure, not two floating traits.

A moral topic is not yet a hypothesis.

Introduction

A hypothesis states a testable link among variables, not a vague topic. Poverty and illiteracy are two such variables. The sentence in the question is a good school definition. Elucidation must add direction, unit, and the risk of reversing cause.

Body**What the definition requires**

- **Each variable must be defined:** poverty as consumption or income below a line; illiteracy as inability to read and write with understanding, as **Census literacy** is coded.
- The relation may be association, co-variation, or a causal sketch.
- Robert K. Merton wanted middle-range hypotheses, not a whole philosophy of misery.

Example statements

- **H1:** Higher household poverty is associated with higher probability of adult illiteracy.
- **H2:** Parental illiteracy increases the risk of child poverty in the next generation, a reverse or two-way link.
- **H3:** The relation weakens where public schooling is strong, introducing a third **variable**.

Elucidation with the pair

- **Emile Durkheim** taught us to ask whether a third social fact, such as caste or region, explains both.
- **Karl Marx** would treat both as outputs of class relations, not as two free-floating traits.
- **Max Weber would add status honour:** literacy as a status good, poverty as class situation.
- **Gender:** Ann Oakley's unpaid work and NFHS women's schooling show that "household poverty" is not one person's **variable**.
- **Direction:** illiteracy can cause poverty through labour-market closure; poverty can cause illiteracy through child labour. A good hypothesis specifies which, or states reciprocity.

What is not a hypothesis

- "Poverty and illiteracy are social problems." That is a value topic, not a relation.
- A table without a stated expected link is exploration, which may still precede a hypothesis.

Flow diagram

Poverty -> Hypothesis of relation
Illiteracy -> Hypothesis of relation
Caste gender school -> Hypothesis of relation

Conclusion

A hypothesis is a specified relation among defined variables. Poverty and illiteracy can be linked as association, as reciprocal causation, or as jointly produced by class and gender. Merton, **Durkheim**, **Marx**, and **Weber** all demand that the statement be clearer than a slogan.

Facts & figures

Variable

A property that takes more than one value across cases.

Census literacy

Official operational definition used as a variable in Indian research.

Middle-range theory

Merton: limited, testable statements rather than a total system.

NFHS education

Household survey measures that let researchers test poverty-schooling links by sex and wealth quintile.