

WRAP Exams · wrapexams.com

Prelims PYQ, Mains model answers, and copy evaluation. Write to the desk for this paper, a doubt, or the AI waitlist.

ask@wrapexams.com · +91 85951 84903 · wrapexams.com

Q4(c)

How can one resolve the issue of reliability and validity in the context of sociological research on inequality ?

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2017 · Sociology GS 1 · 10 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

- How can one resolve the issue of **reliability** and **validity** in the context of sociological research on inequality?
- Keep the answer within a 10-mark length

Revision summary

Reliability is consistency of inequality measures; **validity** is whether they name the real axis.

Stable **Census** and survey definitions, and inter-coder rules, serve **reliability**.

Unpaid care, caste honour, and capabilities test **validity**.

Triangulation and named missingness are the practical resolution.

A reliable index can still miss **Weber's** market situation or **Oakley's** housework.

Introduction

Research on inequality must measure consistently and measure the right object. **Reliability** is that consistency. **Validity** is whether the score is class, caste, gender, or only a convenient proxy. Resolution is design, not a slogan.

Body

Reliability in inequality files

- Stable definitions of work, income, and caste across waves of the **Census** or **NSSO/PLFS**.
- Inter-coder rules for occupation and for open-ended talk about humiliation.
- Test-retest only where the inequality itself has not shifted in the interval.

Validity

- **Face and content validity**: does "household income" miss women's unpaid labour, as Ann **Oakley** showed?
- **Construct validity**: does a consumption line capture Townsend's exclusion or Sen's capability?
- Criterion checks against independent records, used cautiously.

Practical resolution

- Triangulate survey, ethnography, and official series.
- **Name missingness**: hidden informal pay, proxy male respondents.

- **Max Weber's meaning-adequacy:** a valid class measure should still make sense in the actor's market situation.
- Do not treat a reliable Gini as a valid map of caste honour.

Flow diagram

Reliability consistency -> Stable definitions
Validity right object -> Unpaid labour honour
Triangulation -> Usable inequality claim
Stable definitions -> Usable inequality claim
Unpaid labour honour -> Usable inequality claim

Conclusion

Resolve the issue by separating consistency from truth, fixing definitions, coding jointly, and triangulating. Inequality research fails when a stable wrong measure is called science.

Facts & figures

Reliability

Repeatability of a measure across time, items, or raters.

Validity

Whether the measure captures the intended construct of inequality.

Oakley

Household measures that ignore housework lack gender validity.

PLFS

Periodic labour-force files whose work definitions must stay comparable to be reliable.

WRAP Exams · Write. Read. Analyse. Practice. · <https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains-answers/sociology-gs-1/2017/how-can-one-resolve-the-issue-of-reliability-and-validity-in-the-context-of-sociological-research-on-inequality/> · ask@wrapexams.com · wrapexams.com