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Q5(b)

Discuss the importance and sources of hypothesis in social research.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2020 · 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

- Discuss the importance and sources of hypothesis in social research
- Keep the discussion within a 10-mark length

Revision summary

A hypothesis is a testable relation that directs evidence.

It is important for discipline, middle-range theory, and public check.

- **Sources:** theory, **Census/NFHS** puzzles, ethnography, policy.

Grounded theory uses working conjectures, not a void.

If nothing could refute it, it is not yet a research hypothesis.

Introduction

A hypothesis is a testable statement of a relation, often derived from a theory. It is important because it directs what counts as evidence. It is not a guess to decorate a questionnaire.

Body

Importance

- It links **Emile Durkheim**'s demand for social facts to a checkable claim, as in suicide and integration.
- It disciplines **Max Weber**'s verstehen so meaning becomes a type that can fail.
- Without it, surveys dump tables. Robert **Merton**'s middle-range work lives on hypotheses.
- Falsifiability, in a modest sense, separates research from sermon.

Sources

- **Theory:** **Marx** on class, Bourdieu on capital, feminist standpoint on care.
- **Prior studies and official files:** **Census** cells that puzzle, **NFHS** gaps.
- Ethnographic hunches after fieldwork, then restated as hypotheses.
- Practical policy questions, which still need a sociological mechanism.

Caution

- Grounded theory may delay a formal hypothesis, yet still works with working conjectures.
- A hypothesis that cannot be observed is not yet a research tool.

Flow diagram

Theory files field -> Hypothesis
Hypothesis -> Test in research
Test in research -> Claim revised

Conclusion

Hypotheses matter because they make social research a check, not a tour. Sources are theory, prior data, field hunches, and policy puzzles. **Durkheim**, **Weber**, and **Merton** all required a stated relation. Write it so a table or a case can wound it.

Facts & figures

Durkheim

Suicide rates hypothesised as varying with integration and regulation.

Merton

Middle-range theory as clusters of testable hypotheses.

Weber

Ideal-typical hypotheses about meaning and cause, then historical check.

NFHS

A source of empirical puzzles that can be restated as hypotheses.

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