

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

Q6(a)

What are the different dimensions of qualitative method? Do you think that qualitative method helps to gain a deeper sociological insight? Give reasons for your answer

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2023 · Sociology GS 1 · 20 marks · Sociology

Sociology - The Discipline: Modernity and social changes in Europe and emergence of sociology; Scope of the subject and comparison with other social sciences; Sociology and common sense.

Core demand of the question

- What are the different dimensions of qualitative method? Do you think that qualitative method helps to gain a deeper sociological insight? Give reasons for your answer
- Keep the answer within a 20-mark length

Revision summary

Qualitative method interprets meaning through ethnography, interviews, and texts.

Dimensions include epistemology, design, researcher role, analysis, and ethics.

It deepens insight into process and standpoint, as Whyte, Goffman, and Srinivas show.

It does not generalise like a large survey and can over-represent a vivid case.

Join it to counts when both mechanism and incidence are needed.

Introduction

Qualitative method collects and interprets meaning, sequence, and context rather than only counts. Its dimensions include the site of enquiry, the role of the researcher, and the form of data. It does help to gain deeper sociological insight when the question is about lived order. It does not replace measurement when the question is about rates.

Body

Dimensions

- **Epistemology:** interpretative understanding in Weber's sense, not only external correlation.
- **Design:** ethnography, case study, life history, focus group, and qualitative interview.
- **Data:** talk, text, image, and observed sequence, as in Malinowski's field diary or William Foote Whyte's *Street Corner Society*.
- **Role:** complete observer, participant observer, or insider, each with a different access and bias.
- **Analysis:** coding of themes, *thick description* in Clifford Geertz's sense, and comparison across a small set of cases.
- **Quality checks:** *triangulation*, member check, and audit of field notes, which stand in for survey reliability.

- **Ethics:** consent, harm, and anonymity, which become acute when the researcher lives with the group.

Does it give deeper insight?

- Yes, for questions of meaning, process, and hidden labour. **Durkheim's** rates cannot show how a mourner or a clerk makes a day.
- Goffman's encounters and Mead's self become researchable only if interaction is watched and recorded in language.
- M. N. Srinivas's **Rampura** study showed Sanskritisation as a process in a village, not as a cell in a table.
- Feminist method uses qualitative talk to recover unpaid work that occupational codes miss.
- Depth here means mechanism and standpoint, not a mystic extra.

Reasons on the other side

- Small N limits generalisation. A village is not India.
- The researcher's location can colonise the account, which Smith's standpoint warns against.
- Without any count, a vivid case can be mistaken for the typical case.
- **Mixed methods therefore join rates to cases:** suicide rates plus notes, census plus ethnography.

Judgement

- Qualitative method deepens insight into how structure is lived. It is not a deeper science in every problem. Choice of method follows the question.

Flow diagram

Qualitative method -> Interpretative data
Interpretative data -> Ethnography interview life history
Ethnography interview life history -> Meaning process standpoint
Rates and surveys -> Incidence
Meaning process standpoint -> Deeper insight on lived order
Incidence -> Deeper insight on lived order

Conclusion

Qualitative method has dimensions of interpretation, design, data, role, analysis, and ethics. It does help deeper insight into meaning and process, as **Weber**, Goffman, Whyte, and Srinivas show. It does not replace rates. Depth without comparison can mislead. Use it where lived order is the object, and join it to counts where incidence is the object.

Facts & figures

Verstehen

Weber's interpretative dimension that qualitative work operationalises in the field.

Street Corner Society

Whyte's Cornerville study of gang and political structure through long participation.

Thick description

Geertz's standard that the account must include the meaning of the act for the actor.

Rampura

Srinivas's ethnography that made Sanskritisation a visible village process.

Triangulation

Using more than one source or method to check a qualitative claim.

WRAP Exams · Write. Read. Analyse. Practice. · <https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains-answers/sociology-gs-1/2023/what-are-the-different-dimensions-of-qualitative-method-do-you-think-that-qualitative-method-helps-to-gain-a-deeper-sociological-insight-give-reasons-for-your-answer/> · ask@wrapexams.com · wrapexams.com