

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

Q2(c)

What are variables? How do they facilitate research?

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2023 · 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

- What are variables? How do they facilitate research?
- Keep the answer within a 10-mark length

Revision summary

A variable is a property with more than one value across cases.

Independent, dependent, and control variables structure causal claims.

They enable hypothesis, measurement, and comparison, as in **Durkheim's** suicide rates and survey tables.

Operationalisation turns concepts into observable values.

A variable remains an index. It is not the whole social relation.

Introduction

A variable is a property that takes more than one value across cases. Research proceeds by naming variables, stating how they relate, and measuring those values. Without variables, a study remains a stack of stories that cannot be compared.

Body**Types that matter**

- An **independent variable** is the condition the researcher treats as a presumed cause or grouping factor.
- A **dependent variable** is the outcome to be explained.
- Control variables are held constant so that a false association is less likely.
- Discrete variables take categories, such as sex or caste group. Continuous variables take degrees, such as income or years of schooling.
- **Durkheim** treated suicide rates as a social fact that varied with integration and regulation, which is variable analysis at the level of rates.

How they facilitate research

- **They turn a vague interest into a hypothesis:** as education rises, age at marriage rises, other things equal.
- **They allow operationalisation:** poverty becomes a consumption line or a multidimensional index, not a mood.

- They make comparison possible across time, region, and group, which is why census and National Family Health Survey tables can be read sociologically.
- They discipline theory. If class is said to explain voting, class must be specified as occupation, income, or relation to surplus.
- Experiments, surveys, and even qualitative coding use variables when they sort cases by presence or absence of a trait.

Cautions

- **Reification is the risk:** a scale is not the whole of caste or piety.
- **Spurious correlation** appears when a third variable is ignored.
- Feminist method reminds us that the choice of variables already contains a standpoint.

Flow diagram

Research question -> Named variables
Named variables -> Independent
Named variables -> Dependent
Named variables -> Controls
Independent -> Hypothesis and comparison
Dependent -> Hypothesis and comparison
Controls -> Hypothesis and comparison

Conclusion

Variables are properties that vary. They facilitate research by making hypotheses, measurement, comparison, and control possible. **Durkheim's** rates and contemporary surveys show the gain. The gain is lost if the variable is mistaken for the full social relation it only indexes.

Facts & figures

Independent variable

The grouping or presumed causal condition in a design.

Dependent variable

The outcome the study seeks to explain.

Durkheim's suicide rates

Rates treated as variables of integration and regulation, not as private moods.

Operationalisation

The step that turns a concept into a measurable indicator.

Spurious correlation

An association that vanishes when a third variable is controlled.

WRAP Exams · Write. Read. Analyse. Practice. ·

<https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains-answers/sociology-gs-1/2023/what-are-variables-how-do-they-facilitate-research/> ·

ask@wrapexams.com · wrapexams.com

WRAP Exams