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## RESEARCH METHODS IN SHS

At the end of this lecture, you are going to know the following:

- The importance of using the methodology in SHS.
- The main methods used in SHS.

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### REMINDER :

SHS research is a *scientific undertaking* which by means of a **logical method**, aims:

- 1- To discover new facts or old facts,
- 2- To analyse their sequences.
- 3- To know their interrelationships,
- 4- To understand their explanations, and
- 5- To know the natural laws which govern them.

**What is Science?** Etymologically, the word “**science**” is derived from the Latin word *Scientia*, meaning knowledge. To some people, science refers to difficult high school or college-level courses such as physics, chemistry, and biology meant only for the brightest students. To others, science is a craft practised by scientists in white coats using specialized equipment in their laboratories. Science refers to a systematic and organized body of knowledge in any area of inquiry that is acquired using “the scientific method”.

**Scientific Method:** The scientific method refers to a standardized set of techniques for building scientific knowledge, such as how to make valid observations, how to interpret results, and how to generalize those results. It allows researchers to independently and impartially test pre-existing theories and prior findings, and subject them to open debate, modifications, or enhancements.

### SCIENTIFIC METHODS IN SHS

**1- The scientific method is important in SHS as in physical or natural sciences. SHS scientists have to:**

- Observe carefully,
- Classify,
- Analyse their facts,
- Make generalizations,
- And attempt to develop and test hypotheses to explain these generalizations

**2- Types of Methods Used in SHS:**

- SHS applies scientific methods to social inquiry on human beings and their life contents.
- SHS methodology starts with an assumption and is gradually filled by a series of observations and experiences.
- The scientific method applied to SHS, includes a variety of research approaches, tools, and techniques, for **collecting and analyzing qualitative or quantitative data**. These methods include: laboratory experiments, field surveys, interviews, case research, focus groups, ethnographic research, action research, observation and so forth.

- The data collection is often done by a variety of methods like field observations, interviews, and focus group discussions

### Why SHS problems are difficult?

#### 1- SHS Problems are often more difficult than that of natural sciences because:

- ❖ Facts about it, maybe unique, difficult to explain, and interpret.
- ❖ Generalizations and Laws in SHS are likely to be less definite and certain than those in natural ones.
- ❖ SHS deals with systems that are very difficult, adaptive and not rigorously rule-bound,
- ❖ Social sciences are among the most difficult of disciplines, both methodologically and intellectually. The larger the social or political issue, the more difficult it is.

#### 2- Human scientists face some specific challenges when they apply the scientific method:

- ❖ Firstly, collecting data (through observation) is not that straightforward.
- ❖ Secondly, it is not always easy to falsify and test hypotheses.
- ❖ Finally, bias or hasty generalizations may lead to incorrect knowledge.

These problems are not solely confined to the human sciences, but some of them are magnified when we study human behaviour. It would, nevertheless, be foolish to dismiss all knowledge produced by human scientists as "unscientific" or of lesser quality in se.

### What are the main approaches used by SHS scientists?

SHS scientists use the following approaches:

- Observe,
- Define the problem,
- Review the literature (become familiar with others)
- Observe some more,
- Develop a theoretical framework,
- Formulate a hypothesis «Make a statement predicting the result »,
- Choose the research design,
- Collect the necessary data,
- Analyse the result (s),
- Draw conclusion.

*Each science in SHS has its own sophisticated methods of inquiry through which the scientist is enabled to probe the phenomena. A good scientist in SHS generally takes a while and see position about claims until they are tested and retested.*

### The main objectives of the SHS process are:

- To discover new facts.
- To Verify and test old facts.
- To understand human behaviour.
- To know the connection between human activities and natural laws.
- To develop new scientific tools, concepts and theories –in order to extend the area of knowledge.
- To understand the functioning of the society.
- To study individual behaviour and social action.
- To evaluate social problems, their effects, and solutions.
- To explore social reality.