

Unit Three: Introduction to Research Designs

Research Methodology
Historical Research

Dr Chaima MENNAI

Hamma Lakhdar University of El-Oued

Faculty Of Arts and Languages

Department Of English Language

Academic Year: 2022/2023

Master I

Table of contents



Objectives	3
Introduction	4
I - What is historical research?	5
II - Sources of data used in historical research	6
III - Steps in Historical Research	7
IV - Bibliography and Further Reading	8

Objectives

By the end of this lecture, students will be able to:

- Define historical research and understand its essential characteristics.
- Recognise the main sources used in historical research.

Introduction



History is the story of the past. It is a gathering of verifiable facts synthesized into a readable and understandable account. Many people don't think of history when they first think of research. But history is

indeed a valid and important type of investigation. When the object is to understand the forces and personalities that have shaped a situation, to comprehend how we arrived at our present state, history is the only valid form of research (Freitas & Saarmann, 1989, P.143)

History is more than information about objects, customs, and situations; it is a chronological narrative of actions by persons with motives. These actions and motives are clustered into events (Barzun & Graff,

1985) and analyzed using information gathered from primary and secondary sources (Levine, 1986, P. 260).

What is historical research?

A decorative graphic consisting of three overlapping squares of varying shades of gray, with a white letter 'I' centered on the darkest square.

Definition

Vogel (1985) maintained that historical research is not a recital of events that took place at one time but a contextual analysis that leads to some accepted truth about the human experience. A story is told, ordering the past into a synthesis so that why becomes as important as how (Levine, 1986, P. 260).

Historical research involves describing and examining past events to better understand the present and to anticipate potential effects on the future. To identify a need for knowledge that requires a historical investigation. Piecing together a history, particularly when there are no people living to tell their story (Qualitative Study Design: Historical, 2022).

Like other methods of research, historiography (the writing of history) has rules and structures that are meant to assure valid and reliable results. The components of historical research are similar to qualitative and quantitative research in that there is a problem statement, a methodology, tests for reliability and validity, and a discussion of the findings.

The historiographer first decides upon the era, trend, circumstance, incident, or individual to be investigated. This decision, along with the scope of time to be covered, is the first step in the definition of the problem statement. The problem statement in an historical study will differ widely from those for quantitative studies, but its purpose is the same: to define the nature and extent of the study. The problem statement in historical research is not always explicitly stated in the research report, but it always exists in the mind of the researcher and guides the selection of data (Freitas & Saarmann, 1989, P.143)

Sources of data used in historical research



Primary Sources

Primary sources—raw data containing first-person accounts and documents—are foundational to historical and academic research. Examples of primary sources include eyewitness accounts of historical events, written testimonies, public records, oral representations, legal documents, artifacts, photographs, art, newspaper articles, diaries, and letters. Individuals often can find primary sources in archives and collections in universities, libraries, and historical societies (Norwich University Online, 2020)

Secondary Sources

Primary sources are not always easy to find. In the absence of primary sources, secondary sources can play a vital role in describing historical events. A historian can create a secondary source by analyzing, synthesizing, and interpreting information or data provided in primary sources (Norwich University Online, 2020)

Steps in Historical Research



Historical research involves the following steps:

1. Identify an idea, topic or research question
2. Conduct a background literature review
3. Refine the research idea and questions
4. Determine that historical methods will be the method used
5. Identify and locate primary and secondary data sources
6. Evaluate the authenticity and accuracy of source materials
7. Analyze the data and develop a narrative exposition of the findings.

(Berg & Lune, 2012, p.311)

Bibliography and Further Reading

IV

Freitas, L., & Saarmann, L. (1989). The Place for Historical Research. *Journal of Pediatric Oncology Nursing*, 6 (4), 143–144. <https://doi.org/10.1177/104345428900600407>

Levine, R. E. (1986). Historical Research: Ordering the Past to Chart Our Future. *The Occupational Therapy Journal of Research*, 6(5), 259–269. <https://doi.org/10.1177/153944928600600501>

Norwich University Online. (2020, December 15). How Institutions Use Historical Research Methods to Provide Historical Perspectives. <https://online.norwich.edu/academic-programs/resources/historical-research-methods>

Qualitative Study Design: Historical. (2022, July 4). Deakin University. <https://deakin.libguides.com/qualitative-study-designs>