TASK: *critically explore some of the issues that should be considered when conducting research in the social sciences.*

Answer:

social science is the science of people or collections of people, such as groups, firms, societies, or economies, and their individual or collective behaviors. Social sciences can be classified into disciplines such as psychology (the science of human behaviors), sociology (the science of social groups), and economics (the science of firms, markets, and economies). (Bhattacherjee Anol, n.d.) Social science research is the systematic understanding of social facts or phenomena by gathering information about the social world and interpreting it to make decisions on a course of action and/or to develop new knowledge. This kind of research attempts to discover cause-and-effect relationships between social problems and answer or solve social problems (PRIA, 2013)

Conducting research in the social sciences involves a range of complex issues that researchers need to consider. These are:

Research ethics: are principles that guide one's research practices and design (Bhandari Pritha, 2023). Because of this, every researcher conducting a study on, although not limited to human subjects is required to adhere to certain codes of conduct. Some of the ethical issues to be considered in research include voluntary participation, anonymity as well as informed consent, confidentiality, potential for harm, communication of study report, and others. Research ethics is an important issue to be considered because in social science studies, subjects are exposed to harm and researchers are also likely to violate human rights, this aspect aims at mitigating that.

Another critical issue to consider is how the researcher intends to **collect data**. It is upon the researcher to choose a suitable method of data collection based on the design of the study and at the same time ensure that the method aligns with the search questions and the fact that the method

can help collect reliable and valid data. Various data collection methods can be employed in social science studies. These include but are not limited to observation, interview, questionnaire survey, documentary, etc. Observation involves gathering data through watching behavior, and events, or noting the physical characteristics of subjects in their natural setting. On the other hand, an interview as a method of data collection in social science research involves two or more people exchanging information through a series of questions and answers. Where a questionnaire survey is adopted, a set of predefined questions is used to collect information from subjects. These questions may be self-administered or researcher-administered depending on the characteristics of the subjects. The other method of data collection that can be employed is the documentary method. The documentary method of data collection is the technique used to categorize, investigate, interpret, and identify the limitations of physical sources, most commonly written documents, whether in the private or public domain.

Design of the study. Research design is a strategy for answering research questions using empirical data. Creating a design involves making decisions on research objectives and approaches (McCombes, 2023). When choosing a research design, the researcher should be mindful of the possibility of having biased samples that will not accurately represent the broader populations as this will affect the validity of the findings. the researcher should also use instruments and methods that are validated and reliable.

Positionality and power dynamics: positionality usually influences the way the researcher portrays the research analysis and it can be shown as damage-centered or in a more holistic view (Harding, 2023). Because of this, the researcher should acknowledge the potential impact of their own biases, perspectives, and background on the research process and findings. On the other hand, Power dynamics pose a risk of creating tensions between the researcher and the participating

subjects and this can significantly affect data (Harding, 2023). The researcher should be conscious of power dynamics between him and the participating subjects and the possibilities of having power imbalances within the community being studied.

Cultural sensitivity of the subject being studied. This is an important issue to be considered as cultural appropriateness is key in any study. The researcher should recognize and respect the differences in cultures ensuring that the methods chosen and the questions chosen are appropriate and sensitive to the cultural context of the study.

The **social impact and responsibility** of the study. When undertaking research in social science, the investigator should always consider the possible impact of the study on society and aim at conducting a study that can positively contribute to knowledge and well-being (Rapple, n.d.). The investigator should involve the community in the process of the research especially when the research directly affects them or involves them. The researcher may also involve other stakeholders where relevant.

Previous studies done on similar subjects: Another key issue to consider when conducting research in social science is reviewing literature. A literature review gives the researcher an overview of the topic being studied. The purpose is usually to provide the researcher with a foundation of knowledge on the topic under study, enable him. or her to identify areas previously covered to avoid duplication as well as be able to give credit to previous researchers. Another importance of doing a literature review is to identify gaps, conflicts, and the need for additional research (LibGuides: Literature Review: Purpose of a Literature Review, n.d.).

Data analysis methods: data analysis is an important issue to be considered because the researcher is at risk of interpreting data in a manner that supports preconceived notions or even considering alternative explanations to the findings of the study. Researcher biases can potentially lead to

questionable research practices in data analysis, which can distort the evidence base (Baldwin et al, 2022).

Validity and Generalizability of the study. The validity of a research study indicates how well the findings in the study participants represent true findings among similar individuals who are outside the study (Patino and Ferreira, 2018). on the other hand, the generalizability of the study is the extent to which the findings of a study can apply to other settings. generalizability is also referred to as external validity (Validity, Reliability, and Generalizability | Health Knowledge, n.d.). The researcher should assess the extent to which the study accurately represents the relationships it claims to examine and the extent to which findings can be generalized beyond the study sample.

The findings of the study and independence. The researcher should be in a position to disclose any potential conflicts of interest that might influence the process of research and the outcome of the research. He/she should also ensure that the study is conducted independently and is not influenced unduly by external factors. Some of the factors that may influence the study include but are not limited to the funding sources and the researcher should be aware of them.

Publication ethics and replicability. Publication bias and reporting is one other issue to be considered in social science research. the researcher should be transparent and accurate when reporting findings and at all costs avoid the urge to suppress unfavorable results and selectively report data. the researcher should also try as much as possible to make the research methods and data accessible to allow for independent verification and replication.

Finally, the long-term impact of the study should also be considered. The researcher should anticipate and consider potential unintended consequences of the study. This is both positive and negative.

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