

Prime Minister, increasing political corruption, government's apathy towards taking action against those political leaders who are believed to be involved in big scams of crores and crores of rupees, and so on. The declared programme and policy of a political party could be that it would reconsider the reservation policy and fix a time-limit to end it, that it would continue to support liberalism, that it would firmly deal with those neighbouring countries which are sending militants to India to create terrorism and unrest, and so forth. Thus, knowing the importance of all these seven variables in SES and three other variables of political ideology of the voter and his political party preferences in terms of party's declared change-oriented programmes and faith in the seriousness of the party in tackling the perceived crucial issues. Keeping all these factors in mind, the researcher can focus only on one SES variable (comprising seven sub-variables) or deciding to take three other variables too in analysing the voting behaviour of the people. He will thus move from the abstract concept of SES to the concrete variables of education, occupation, income, religion, caste, etc., and from general and abstract concepts of political party's programmes and policies to concrete issues of party's policy on liberalism, reservation, corrupt political leaders involved in big scams and so on. In other words, he will consider only those variables which can be measured and observed in the social world.

### OPERATIONALISATION OF CONCEPT/VARIABLE

Accurate definition of the concepts and variables is considered very essential for the study. Operationalisation is the process of converting concepts in their empirical measurements, or of quantifying variables for the purpose of measuring their occurrence and frequency.

*Operational* definition of a concept or a variable assigns measuring to a construct by specifying the activities necessary to measure the construct or variable. For example, 'political elite' may be operationally defined as "persons who are decision-makers and monopolisers of power in politics and are considered the highest status people", e.g., minister, MP, MLA, president or secretary of a political party or a person (like Jaya Prakash Narayan/Mahatma Gandhi) who without holding any formal political position is known as 'king-maker' in politics, are all political elite. Operationalisation, according to Sarantakos (1998:130), contains three elements: (i) selection of indicators which reflect the presence or absence of the element, e.g., indicator of meas-

uring intelligence is IQ, (ii) quantification of the *indicators*, and assignment of scores that represent the degree of presence or absence of the concept or variable, and (iii) quantification of the *variable*, i.e., identification of the continuum of values the variables can assume, e.g., in measuring level of intelligence, a person having an IQ of less than 75 is identified as 'feeble-minded', of 100 as an 'average person' and more than 130 as a 'genius' person.

Here, we can cite an example of the variable 'alienation'. This variable is divided into five dimensions, namely, powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, social isolation, and self-estrangement. Indicators are chosen for each dimension. For instance, powerlessness may be measured in terms of indicators such as control, decision-making, etc. Further, alienation can be measured in at least five contexts: polity, economy, education, religion, and family. Since the five dimensions of alienation can be measured in each of the five contexts, twenty-five combinations can be identified, such as political powerlessness, economic normlessness, religious self-estrangement, family isolation, and so on.

Another example could be of the concept of 'religiosity'. Its dimensions could be: religious beliefs, religious practice, religious emotions, religions understanding, and religions effects. Thus, selecting indicators is the most difficult part of operationalisation. The selection (of indicators) could be by means of speculation, experience, theoretical principles, exploration and analysis.

It may thus be concluded that concepts and hypotheses are the core of social research. According to Blumer (1969), to speak of a science without concepts suggests all sorts of analogies—a carpenter without tools, a railroad without tracks, a man without bones, a love story without love.

### *Further Readings*

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### 3 Hypotheses

After operationalising the variables, the researcher wants a clear framework and guide for collecting and interpreting the data. His interest is to determine relationships between variables. Hypotheses provide such guidance. While in qualitative research, hypotheses emerge out of the research, in quantitative research, hypotheses act as a step towards research.

#### WHAT IS A HYPOTHESIS?

A hypothesis is an assumption about relations between variables. It is a tentative explanation of the research problem or a guess about the research outcome. Before starting the research, the researcher has a rather general, diffused, even confused notion of the problem. It may take long time for the researcher to say what questions he had been seeking answers to. Hence, an adequate statement about the research problem is very important. What is a good problem statement? It is an interrogative statement that asks: what relationship exists between two or more variables? It then further asks questions like: Is A related to B or not? How are A and B related to C? Is A related to B under conditions X and Y? Proposing a statement pertaining to relationship between A and B is called a hypothesis.

According to Theodorson and Theodorson (1969:191), "a hypothesis is a tentative statement asserting a relationship between certain facts. Kerlinger (1973:8) describes it as "a conjectural statement of the relationship between two or more variables". Black and Champion (1976:126) have described it as "a tentative statement about something, the validity of which is usually unknown". This statement is intended to be tested empirically and is either verified or rejected. If the statement is not sufficiently established, it is not considered a scientific law.

Webster (1968) has defined hypothesis as "a tentative assumption

made in order to draw out and test its logical or empirical consequences". 'Test' here means "either to prove it wrong or to confirm it". Since statements in hypothesis have to be put to empirical investigation, the definition of hypothesis excludes all statements which are merely opinions (e.g., aging increases ailments), value judgements (e.g., contemporary politicians are corrupt and have a vested interest to serve), or normative (e.g., all people should go for a morning walk). Normative statement is a statement of what ought to be, not a factual statement that can be shown through investigation to be right or wrong.

In other words, a hypothesis carries clear implications for testing the stated relationship, i.e., it contains variables that are measurable and specifying how they are related. A statement that lacks variables or that does not explain how the variables are related to each other is no hypothesis in scientific sense.

Following are a few examples of hypotheses:

- Group study increases higher division achievement.
- Hostlers use more alcohol than non-hostlers.
- Young girls (between 15-30 years) are more victims of crimes against women than middle-aged women (between 30-40 years).
- Lower-class men commit more crimes than middle-class men.
- High-status high-ability students participate much less in students' agitations than low-status low-ability students.
- Suicide rates vary inversely with social integration.
- Young people are more satisfied with efforts for social development by democratic leadership than by autocratic leadership.
- Educated women have more adjustment problems after marriage than illiterate women.
- Economic instability hampers development of an establishment.
- Job satisfaction decreases as working hours increase.
- Aggression is caused due to frustration.
- Children from broken homes tend to become delinquents.
- Unemployment decreases juvenile delinquency.
- Upper-class people have fewer children than lower-class people.

#### CRITERIA FOR HYPOTHESES CONSTRUCTION

Hypothesis is never formulated in the form of a question. Bailey (1982), Becker (1989), Selltiz et al (1976), and Sarantakos (1998:134)