

Methodology and Techniques in Social Research

Code: 44034
ECTS Credits: 6

Degree	Type	Year	Semester
4313228 Social Policy, Employment and Welfare	OB	0	1

Contact

Name: Dafne Muntanyola Saura
Email: Dafne.Muntanyola@uab.cat

Use of Languages

Principal working language: spanish (spa)

Teachers

Pedro López Roldán
Joan Rodriguez Soler
Sheila González Motos

Prerequisites

It is advisable after this module to study the Advanced Methods of Social Research Module (MAIS), if the objective of the TFM is also to develop and expand the knowledge of the research methods applied in the social sciences. It is also advisable to read academic articles in English.

Objectives and Contextualisation

Methodology and Techniques for Social Research (MTSR) aims to enable students to acquire the methodological knowledge required to carry out a master's degree and complete the final master's project (FMP). It is about students being able to reach the skills to carry out a small research, design a social intervention project or make a simple evaluation of a public policy. The students will learn to justify the object of study, define the conceptual framework and the methodological design and to correctly use the appropriate qualitative and quantitative techniques to generate the relevant information and analyze it. On the one hand, the basic tools for empirical research will be provided, either qualitatively or quantitatively, or in combination. The central elements of a research project will be reviewed: how to ask a good research question, how to formulate objectives and working hypotheses from the theoretical review and thus define the sociological problem, and how to make an adequate design. On the other hand, a general review of the existing panorama of quantitative and qualitative methods will be made. Students will learn to recognize and critically reflect the epistemological and theoretical foundations of these methods, and will acquire the necessary technical knowledge to apply them and perform a rigorous and quality sociological analysis. These general objectives are complemented by 4 specific objectives:

1. To provide the basic concepts to formulate a research question based on existing theoretical knowledge based on published research.
2. To have the knowledge and standards to formulate relevant, concise and verifiable objectives and assumptions.

3. To provide knowledge to develop an appropriate research design, whether in a quantitative, qualitative or mixed orientation.
4. To present the appropriate qualitative or quantitative methodology for obtaining and analyzing the data.

Competences

- Continue the learning process, to a large extent autonomously
- Design and conduct research projects on work, gender and social policy, using advanced qualitative and quantitative research techniques.
- Put forward innovative proposals for the relevant field of study.
- Use acquired knowledge as a basis for originality in the application of ideas, often in a research context.
- Use and manage bibliography and IT resources in the field of study.

Learning Outcomes

1. Continue the learning process, to a large extent autonomously.
2. Identify the root of a problem, justify research hypotheses and propose an appropriate design..
3. Interpret, apply and identify the repercussions of the different methodological paradigms and their specific methods of social research, for the research model and design and, in particular, to put together a mixed design.
4. Put forward innovative proposals for the relevant field of study.
5. Use acquired knowledge as a basis for originality in the application of ideas, often in a research context.
6. Use and manage bibliography and IT resources in the field of study.
7. Use the software that allows to analyze the results that correspond to each one of the methods and techniques implemented.

Content

The contents of the module are structured around three thematic sections:

1. Research Design [RD] (professors Dafne Muntanyola and Sheila González) (16 hours)

The general objective of this block is to start the PhD student in the world of social science research. We want to consider a reflection on what it means to research in the social sciences. The fundamental interests of the block are oriented towards clarifying the basic requirements of the scientific methodology, the concepts and instruments of the applied research to the analysis of the social reality and the routines and basic instrumental abilities that allow to develop the " research activity The organization of the block will thus be oriented to make explicit what are the central elements that allow to do sociological research, as well as to transmit to the students the necessary knowledge to build a research or diagnostic object and prepare the corresponding research design . In this sense, it is essential to know the main sources of information and scientific documentation, acquire basic research habits in the social sciences, and learn a rigorous work style, capable of combining the use of recognized criteria by the scientific community with personal creativity. The 16 hours of the section are divided into 4 sessions that include the following contents:

PROGRAM

1. Basic concepts of research (4 hours)

What is a sociological problem?
 Position of the researcher
 Stages of research
 Social intervention

2. The research process in social sciences (4 hours)

The election and definition of the subject. The formulation of the problem and the first questions.

The exploration: Collection and systematization of information.
Preparation of the state of the arts. Definition of the problem. The recognition of the disciplinary tradition.
Objectives.
The analysis model. Definition of key concepts. Delimitation of research hypotheses.
The initial diagnosis.

3. The design of research and communication of results. (4 hours)

Quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods.
Methods and tools: the empirical analysis procedures.
The design of an intervention program.

4. Evaluation of a public policy (4 hours)

What do we evaluate?
Why do we evaluate?
How do we evaluate?
Evaluation design and type of evaluations
Evaluation methodology: phases and instruments
Evaluation results

There will be several bibliographical references regarding each block session but it is recommended to follow the following manual:

Quivy, Raymond; Van Campenhoudt, Luc (2005/1988): Manual of research in social sciences. Mexico: Limusa.

2. Qualitative analysis [AQL] (professor Joan Rodríguez) (8 hours)

This section offers an overview and the basic knowledge of four of the most fundamental methods for collecting data in the social sciences, such as qualitative interview, discussion group, document analysis and observation. In addition, it is also intended to offer the basic knowledge for the correct and rigorous analysis of qualitative data. For this, two of the most used qualitative data analysis methods will be presented, such as the analysis of qualitative content and the analysis of the discourse.

The objectives of the section are four. The first is that the students know the main types of methods. The second is that the student learns to select the method and its most appropriate variety depending on the object of study and the practical possibilities. The third objective is that the students acquire the sufficient technical knowledge of each method to use them correctly and, in this way, it can collect valid qualitative data and of quality. Finally, the aim is also for the student to know the two methods of analysis of qualitative data mentioned so that, with this, he can carry out valid and sustained interpretations of the data.

PROGRAM

1. The qualitative interview

Basics and general characteristics

Types of interviews and selection of the sample

The script and aspects of development

Potentialities and limits

2. The discussion group

Basics and general characteristics

Composition and number of groups

The script and aspects of development

Potentialities and limits

3. Analysis of documents

What are types of documents?

The selection of the type and corpus of documents

Potentialities and limits

4. The observation

Basics and general characteristics

Type of observation and registration of data

Potentialities and limits

5. The analysis of qualitative data

The analysis of qualitative content

Discourse analysis

There will be several bibliographic references related to each of the four methods of collected data, but the basic bibliography will be:

Verd, J.M; Lozares, C. (2016). Introduction to qualitative research. Phases, methods and techniques. Madrid: Synthesis.

3. Quantitative analysis [AQN] (Professor Pedro López) (8 hours)

The general objective of this section is to offer an applied overview of the different quantitative data analysis techniques and to treat the most basic techniques of univariate and bivariable statistical data analysis. This set of more fundamental analysis techniques make it easier to establish the conceptual basis of quantitative data analysis, allowing further knowledge and the extension of knowledge to more complex multivariable analysis procedures. The subject will give the foundation of the selection of treated techniques, with a very applied orientation and with the objective that the students acquire the sufficient elements so that they can use the knowledge of these techniques in their search. The main concepts of descriptive and inferential statistics, the issue of measurement in social sciences, a classification overview of the different quantitative analysis techniques and the techniques of univariable and bivariable analysis (analysis of contingency tables, analysis of variance and analysis of variables) regression).

The course involves two elements that are necessary for its monitoring and for its use. The first is the knowledge and use of the essential mathematical and statistical instruments for analysis; the corresponding information will be given in a basic and balanced way for the formalization of these procedures but where the main objective is the understanding and interpretation of the information they generate for the realization of an applied study. The second is the use of the statistical software R that will allow to illustrate and apply the knowledge related to the different analysis procedures.

There will be several bibliographical references related to each analysis technique presented but a main manual published in open with all the theoretical and practical material that will be followed during the course will be followed:

López-Roldán, P .; Fachelli, S. (2015). Methodology of Quantitative Social Research. Bellaterra (Cerdanyola del Vallès): Digital Document Repository, Autonomous University of Barcelona. 1st. edition.

<http://ddd.uab.cat/record/129382> <http://pagines.uab.cat/plopez/content/manual-misc>

PROGRAM

1. Introduction to quantitative data analysis

Blog presentation: content, dynamics and evaluation

Quantitative analysis techniques in models and analysis designs

General concepts and classification of techniques

2. Analysis of data with a variable

Frequency distribution and graphic representations

Characteristics of a frequency distribution

Exploratory data analysis

Fundamentals of inferential statistics

3. Analysis of contingency tables

Presentation and reading of a contingency table

Analysis of the relationship between variables: independence and association

4. Analysis of comparison of means and analysis of variance

Descriptive and inferential analysis in the comparison of means

The analysis of unifactorial variance

5. Linear regression analysis

Concept, measurement and representation of the correlation

Simple regression analysis

COURSE SCHEDULE

30/9: RD

07/10: RD

10/14: 1st TFM / RD session

10/21: RD

10/28: RD / AQN

04/11: 2nd TFM session

11/11: DIR / TCN

11/18: AQL / AQN

11/25: 3rd session TFM / AQN

12/02: AQL

12/09: AQL

Methodology

The section will combine participatory master lectures with reading sections, practical exercises and sessions in the computer class. Lecturers will seek the participation of students by providing topics for discussion and examples from their research experience. They will provide adequate empirical material to be analyzed with the procedures corresponding to each sections. Students will also be asked to be able to analyze their own data, whether they are produced by themselves or coming from secondary sources.

Activities

Title	Hours	ECTS	Learning Outcomes
Type: Directed			
Self-evaluated assignments to consolidat the knowledge acquired in class and in readings	20	0.8	2, 3, 1
Theoretical Lectures	40	1.6	3, 5
Type: Supervised			
Office Hours	5	0.2	2, 4, 1
Type: Autonomous			
Completion of assignments	44	1.76	2, 3, 7, 6

Assessment

1. Design of the investigation [RD]

The evaluation of this section will require the carrying out of a practical project of methodological design. A sociological recerch project or the formulation of an intervention program will be requested. In the first case, the formulation of a basic sociological model will be developed with the corresponding research question, construction of a general and specific problem with theoretical review and drafting of objectives. In the second case, a diagnosis of the situation, the theoretical foundations of the investigation, an intervention panel and a design of the evaluation of the program will be demanded. In both cases, a methodological design will be requested that includes the choice and justification of qualitative, quantitative or mixed tools according to the object of study built. The final work will be an oral presentation recorded in 10-15 minute video with 10-15 slides, including all the drafted research or intervention stages plus the bibliography.

2. Qualitative analysis [AQL]

The assessment of this section will require carrying out of a practical work that will consist of a first part of designing a data collection using one of the four methods explained and a second part of qualitative data analysis. The first part will have to include the justification of the method chosen based on the objective and the hypotheses or the specific questions of investigation; the preparation of the interview script, the discussion group or the observation guidelines; the justification of the sample. The second part will consist of analyzing a qualitative material (audio or transcription of an interview or discussion group, audio or text of a document, or

fieldnotes and observation material. The work will have an extension of between 4 and 5 pages (about 2000 words) of writing, without counting the annexes.

3. Quantitative analysis [AQN]

The evaluation of this section will require the realization of a practical work of data analysis. Based on considering the relationships between two variables, it is about analyzing them through one of these three bivariate analysis procedures treated in the subject: analysis of contingency tables, variance analysis or regression analysis. The work will be presented taking into account the formulation of a basic sociological model with the corresponding statement of the hypotheses of relation between the variables and the subsequent contrast with the analysis and interpretation of the data. The work will have a maximum extension of 7 pages (about 2500 words) of writing, including the graphs and tables elaborated, in addition to the bibliography and the annex.

Assessment Activities

Title	Weighting	Hours	ECTS	Learning Outcomes
Development of a research project or Intervention program	50	1	0.04	2, 1, 5
Qualitative Methods Assignment	25	20	0.8	3, 4, 1, 5, 6
Quantitative Methods Assignment	25	20	0.8	3, 4, 7, 6

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