

Theory & Research

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Theory - Definition

- Theory is a **set of logically interrelated statements in the form of empirical assertions** about properties of infinite classes of events or things (Jack Gibbs, 1972)
- A theory is a **collection of general ideas** that explain something. It can be a starting point of the research or it can be a result.
- Theory refers to **generalising statements** that assert a connection between two or more types of phenomena.
- Theory is not a prediction. It is a **collection of confirmed conclusions** from various research works.

Characteristics of Theory

- Theory guides research and organises its ideas.
- Theories are empirically relevant
- Theories are always tentative, liable to change.
- Theory becomes stronger as more supporting evidence is gathered; provides a context for predictions
- Theory has the capacity to generate new research.

Role of Theory in Research

- **Delimitation of the study**

- Theory narrows the facts to be studied. It helps to select a few relevant aspects of a phenomenon.

- **Conceptual model**

- Theory provides a conceptual framework which helps to formulate a proper research problem.

- **Summarization**

- Theory summarizes the empirical generalisations of an era from time to time and thus facilitating research works.

Role of Theory in Research (contd-)

- **Prediction**

- Theoretical generalisations can be used to predict further facts.

- **Uniformity**

- Theory states a general uniformity beyond the immediate observations.

- **Finding research gap**

- Theories points to areas which have not been explored. Research gaps are identified through the questions arising out of theory.

Use/importance of Theory in Research

- It suggests a problem for study
- Giving a hypotheses to be tested
- Provides a conceptual framework
- Delimiting the scope of the study
- Helping to select variables for data collection
- It makes research findings intelligible.

Contribution of Research to Theory

- Findings of research leads to the formulation of theories
 - Research tests an existing theory
 - Reformulation of an existing theory
 - Empirical research may give a new focus to the existing theory
 - Research clarifies and redefines theory
- Theory and research are separate and distinctively operating, but they are inseparable and complementary components of scientific endeavour.

References:

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