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RESEARCH ARTICLE

RESEARCH IN HEALTH SCIENCES: MEANING, TYPES AND SCOPE IN TODAY'S ERA

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ABSTRACT

The word research has a wide meaning and much wider prospective than thought of. The young researchers in particular are not much aware about the actual concept of research and how elaborative is its scope, especially when they are planning to conduct a research as a beginner. Before visualizing a concept and drafting it into a project, a researcher must inculcate the meaning, concept and scope of research in its true sense.

INTRODUCTION

All what the humanity as evolved, the credit goes to nothing else, but the research work done by researchers all over the world, for all the years, tirelessly and relentlessly. Often, we talk about research and its spectrum but little we understand the deeper perspectives involved and what all can be achieved when entering into this magnificent stream. Majority of the young researchers who have enter into this stream, perform their research work, merely as a part of their curriculum, in order to complete their post-graduation. Very few understand or have inclination, in real sense, towards actual research work and its broader perspectives. The research work in health sciences is of particular concern, for it directly or indirectly affects the quality of human life. Before initiating any research work, we must understand what actually research means and how the work being conducted shall enhance the existing knowledge which affects the mankind.

Meaning, type and scope of Research in Health Science:

Meaning: The word research can be defined in various ways but on the overall the meaning remains the same. According to American sociologist Earl Robert Babbie "Research is a systematic inquiry to describe, explain, predict, and control the

observed phenomenon"(1) and as per western Sydney university "Research is defined as the creation of new knowledge and/or the use of existing knowledge in a new and creative way so as to generate new concepts, methodologies and understandings. This could include synthesis and analysis of previous research to the extent that it leads to new and creative outcomes."(2). Health research (HR) in particular may be defined as "the process for systematic collection, description, analysis, and interpretation of data that can be used to improve health"(3). If we go back to Earl Robert Babbie 's views, Research involves two methods viz. inductive and deductive methods. While the inductive research methods are used to analyse an observed event and are associated with qualitative research, deductive methods are used to verify the observed event and are more commonly associated with quantitative research (1). Accuracy is one of the most important and significant factors associated with research (4). Whether it is data/ sample collection, data/ sample analysis or data interpretation, all needs to be accurate and precise in order to maintain the sanctity of the research work.

Types: The research can be broadly categorized as basic and applied research (5). While the basic research pertains to the simple collection of data just to enhance the knowledge, the applied research focuses on analysing and solving real-life problems. Research can also be classified as Problem oriented and Problem solving research(6). The problem-oriented research on one hand is conducted to understand the exact nature of a problem to find out relevant solutions whereas the

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problem-solving method on the other hand uses applied research to find solutions to the existing problems.

A more common method of categorizing research is Qualitative and quantitative research (7): While the former is mostly an inquiry process which helps to create in-depth understanding of problems in their natural setting, the latter is a structured way of collecting data and analysing it to draw conclusions. To be more specific, pertaining to health care, there are three main types of health research: population research, laboratory research and clinical research (8).

Scope: There are three purposes of research: Exploratory, Descriptive and Explanatory. The 'Exploratory' research is conducted to handle new problem areas which haven't been explored before and this further lays the foundation for more conclusive research. The 'Descriptive' one focuses on expanding knowledge on current issues through a process of data collection and the 'Explanatory' research is conducted to understand the impact of certain changes in existing standard procedures (9).

In a sequential manner of research one must clearly identify the objectives, set the goals, plan the research, collect the data, analyse it and then finally draw the conclusions. One must remember that the method followed in research is the valuable tool for accomplishing the goals of a study. A health care research protocol must self-assess the primary question that whether it will be helpful in improving the existing knowledge available to the mankind (10). Keeping this goal in mind, any research project: small, medium or large scale, can significantly contribute to the society, thus serving the actual purpose of conducting a research. The scope of health care research lies its ability to narrow down on a specific problem/issue, identify it clearly and then proceed further to either perform innovation or suggest modification in the existing knowledge. One must remember that research is only valuable and useful when it is valid, accurate, reliable, timely and complete.

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