UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Research Methodology for Services and The Third Sector

2324-1-F8701N083

Learning objectives

The course illustrates the main methodological and technical tools for conducting empirical research in the social sciences, and specifically in the field of services and the third sector. By the end of the course, students will have learnt the main fundamentals of quantitative and qualitative approaches in the social sciences. They will also have acquired basic methodological skills to design and conduct empirical research. Finally, students will have acquired skills in constructing data collection tools, analysing data and communicating research results.

Contents

The course examines the main methodological and technical tools for conducting social research with a quantitative and qualitative approach in the field of services and the third sector. In particular, the focus is on the goals of social research, research design and data collection techniques. During the course, particular emphasis is placed on the role of the researcher at the interface between institutions, operators and service users, highlighting the relationship between social research, services and the needs of the subjects.

Detailed program

The course aims to provide students with the main methodological and technical tools to design and carry out quantitative and qualitative empirical research in the social sciences, with a specific focus on the field of services and the third sector. After dealing with the goals and design of social research, the main quantitative and qualitative data collection tools are explored, addressing reflection on the research questions typical of the two approaches. Subsequently, the course focuses on the operational implementation of social research, also addressing the role of the researcher in the contexts of study and the ethical dimension of working with marginalised and/or vulnerable subjects. The final part of the course is focused on the analysis of qualitative data and the communication of

research results.
Specifically, the course is structured as follows:

- social research and its goals;
- elements of methodological discourse;
- social research design;
- social research tools: questionnaire, interview, focus group, (participant) observation, stories and vignettes;
- social research in practice: survey, case study, action research, biographical approach, ethnographic research, experiment;
- research ethics with marginalised and/or vulnerable subjects: informed consent, anonymisation of data, protection of subjects;
- analysis of qualitative data;
- writing and communicating research results.

Prerequisites

No prerequisites.

Teaching methods

Lectures. During the course, students' active participation will be encouraged through the assignment of short research papers, to be carried out individually or in groups, on the topics of the course.

Assessment methods

Attending and non-attending students will be assessed through an individual oral examination based on the reference texts.
The assessment criteria (for attending and non-attending students) are:

1. correct use of language - appropriate use of terms;
2. accuracy in the logical exposition of the arguments;
3. ability to make connections between the various topics;
4. completeness of exposition.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

De Rose C. e Taddei L. (2022) Introduzione ai metodi della ricerca sociale. Manuale per assistenti sociali, educatori e operatori di comunità. Santarcangelo di Romagna: Maggioli Editore.

De Carlo M. (2018) Scientific inquiry in social work. Pressbooks.
o P2.1 – Getting started. (available online)

Joubert L. and Webber M. (eds.) (2020) The Routledge handbook of social work practice research. London:

Routledge.
o C2 – Identifying the conceptual foundations of practice research (Austin M.J.)
o C4 – From research question to practice research methodology (Fisher M.)

Berger R. (2015). Now I see it, now I don’t: researcher’s position and reflexivity in qualitative research. Qualitative Research, 15(2), 219-234.

Further study materials will be provided on the following topics: questionnaire construction, web survey, research ethics, software for analysing qualitative data (CAQDAS), communication of research results.

Sustainable Development Goals