

Public Administration as a Social Science

Social sciences are referred to as samaaji uloom in Urdu. The term sciences in Social

Sciences is distinct from the nature of physical sciences, such as physics, chemistry, geology, biology, zoology, and botany, which are collectively referred to as Pure Sciences. These pure sciences are characterized by three main attributes:

1. Certainty
2. Validity
3. Predictability

These attributes are based on scientific methods and rely on verifiable principles. The scientific

process in these disciplines includes theory building, experiments, and empirical observations, leading to precise and predictable outcomes. In contrast, social sciences lack the certainty, validity, and predictability found in the pure

sciences. Social sciences focus on the study of human behaviour, attitudes, conduct, nature, actions, and psychological processes. Unlike the natural sciences, the behaviour and psychology

of humans do not adhere to rational and definite principles. Human behaviour varies according to societal norms and is subject to change, making predictions in social sciences less

straightforward. Due to the complex and ever-changing nature of human behaviour and society, social

sciences require the establishment of comprehensive and universal principles that encompass all

aspects of human life. While many social science disciplines struggle to achieve this, some are

developing new techniques or adopting scientific methodologies to improve their certainty, validity, and predictability. The field of public administration is considered a branch of social sciences because it is

central to the management of governmental activities that directly impact the lives of citizens. Public administration encompasses a wide range of civic responsibilities, from prenatal and

healthcare for mothers and children to education, employment opportunities, and a dignified end of life. Public administration influences every aspect of citizens' lives. It is a unique branch of social sciences because it primarily relies on observation rather than experimentation, which is common in scientific administrative activities. While experimental methods in social sciences are limited, behaviourism and empirical methods have been increasingly influential in shaping public administration research.

Public administration shares commonalities with other social science disciplines, such as sociology, political science, economics, and psychology, and it plays a vital role in inter-disciplinary research. The field emphasizes positivism and normativism, focusing on questions like "What is?" and "What should be?" Public administration contributes to theory building and aims to provide comprehensive and normative insights into the organization and management of governmental activities. Social sciences, including public administration, differ from physical sciences in their focus on the complexities of human behaviour and societal structures. While they lack the precision and predictability of the physical sciences, social sciences are increasingly adopting empirical methods and striving to establish comprehensive and universal principles to enhance their scientific rigor. Public administration, as a branch of social sciences, plays a pivotal role in the management and governance of societies. Determining the boundaries between politics and public administration is not an easy task because we cannot separate politics from public administration. In fact, Woodrow Wilson himself was ambivalent about their distinctiveness and unity. After Wilson, various thinkers

provided different interpretations of their relationship.