

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

a step-by-step guide for beginners

fourth edition

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 SAGE

The eight steps of the research process

- 1: Formulating a research problem
- 2: Conceptualising a research design
- 3: Constructing an instrument for data collection
- 4: Selecting a sample
- 5: Writing a research proposal
- 6: Collecting data
- 7: Processing and displaying data
- 8: Writing a research report



When planning your research, don't forget:

- ✓ Methodologies differ due to underpinning philosophy
- ✓ The process is the same for quantitative and qualitative research
- ✓ Each approach uses different research methods for data collection, data processing, analysis and style of communicating the findings



Step 1: Formulating a research problem

This is the most important step, because the steps which follow are influenced by the research problem.

When formulating your problem think about:

- ✓ **What** do you want to find out **about**?
- ✓ Have you got sufficient funds to do the research?
- ✓ Have you got the time available to conduct the study?
- ✓ Have you got knowledge of relevant disciplines?
- ✓ Do you have sufficient knowledge of skills needed?



Step 2 : Conceptualising a research design

- ✓ *What* you find depends on *how* it was found
- ✓ Select an appropriate research design:
 - Quantitative
 - Qualitative
 - Mixed methods
- ✓ The design has to be
 - Valid
 - Workable
 - Manageable
- ✓ Be aware of its strengths and weaknesses



Step 3: Constructing an instrument for data collection

How

- ✓ Construct a research instrument or research tool to collect data (interview schedules, questionnaires, notes on observations, diaries, interview guides, etc.)
- ✓ Or use secondary data (information already collected for other purposes)
- ✓ Pre-test your research tool (pilot study)



Step 4: Selecting a sample

Ask yourself, who will take part in your research?

- ✓ Select appropriate sample/participants to represent the study population
- ✓ Avoid bias
- ✓ Random / probability samples
- ✓ Non-random / non probability samples
- ✓ Be aware of strengths and weaknesses of different sampling methods



Step 5: Writing a research proposal

Write a detailed plan about your research. Make sure you include:

- *What* you are proposing to do
- *How* you plan to proceed
- *Why* you selected the proposed strategy



Step 6: Collecting data

Collect your data using one or more data collection method, such as:

- conducting interviews
- mailing out questionnaires
- Conducting focus groups discussions
- making an observation

Be aware of ethical issues!



Step 7: Processing and displaying your data

What did you find out?

- ✓ Keep in mind. How you analyse your data depends on the *type* of information you collected. This also impacts how you communicate the findings.
- ✓ Distinguish between
 - Descriptive
 - Quantitative (statistical procedures)
 - Qualitative (narrative, content analysis etc)
 - Attitudinal



Step 8: Writing a research report

Congratulations! Now that you have collected and analysed your data, it's time to write your report. In your report be sure to include:

- ✓ *What you have done*
- ✓ *What conclusions you have drawn from the findings*
- ✓ Different format for quantitative and qualitative research
- ✓ Structure using main themes of study
- ✓ Adhere to academic conventions

