

6. Research Methods

Objectives

At the end of this chapter, students will be able to:

- Describe the different techniques and practices used in research

Research methods

- Methods – the specific techniques, tools or procedures applied to achieve a given objective
- The techniques the researchers use in performing research operations
- All those methods used by the researcher during the course of studying his research problem

Components of research methods

- Study setting
- Study design
- Population
- Sample size and sampling procedure
- Variables
- Operational definitions of key terms
- Tools/instrument
- Data collection procedures
- Plan for analysis of data and interpretation of the results
- Ethical considerations

6.1. Study setting

- It is related to the study area and other characteristics which are more related to the study
- Include map if possible (1-2 Paragraphs)

6.2. Study Design

- A study design is the process that guides researchers on how to collect, analyse and interpret observations.
- It is a logical model that guides the investigator in the various stages of the research.

Study designs could be exploratory, descriptive or analytical

1. Exploratory studies

- An exploratory study is a small-scale study of relatively **short duration**, which is carried out when **little is known** about a situation or a problem.
- It may include **description as well as comparison**.

Example:

- A national AIDS Control Programme wishes to establish counselling services for HIV positive and AIDS patients, but lacks information on specific **needs patients have** for support.
- To explore these needs, a number of **in-depth interviews** are held with various categories of patients (males, females, married and single) and with some counsellors working on a programme that is already under way.

- When doing exploratory studies, we **describe the needs of various categories** of patients and the possibilities for action.
- **If the problem and its contributing factors are not well defined**, it is always advisable to do an exploratory study before embarking on a large-scale descriptive or comparative study.

2. Descriptive studies:

- Descriptive studies may be defined as studies that describe the patterns of disease occurrence and other health-related conditions by person, place and time.