

## WHAT IS A RESEARCH DESIGN?

A research design is a plan, structure and strategy of investigation so conceived as to obtain answers to research questions or problems. The plan is the complete scheme or programme of the research. It includes an outline of what the investigator will do from writing the hypotheses and their operational implications to the final analysis of data. (Kerlinger 1986: 279).

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A research design is a procedural plan that is adopted by the researcher to answer questions validly, objectively, accurately and economically. According to Selltitz, Deutsch and Cook, 'A research design is the arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy in procedure' (1962: 50).

Through a research design you decide for yourself and communicate to others your decisions regarding what study design you propose to use, how you are going to collect information from your respondents, how you are going to select your respondents, how the information you are going to collect is to be analysed and how you are going to communicate your findings.

In addition, you will need to detail in your research design the rationale and justification for each decision that shapes your answers to the 'how' of the research journey. In presenting your rationale and justification you need to support them critically from the literature reviewed. You also need to assure yourself and others that the path you have proposed will yield valid and reliable results.

More explicitly, the design decisions happen to be in respect of:

- (i) What is the study about?
- (ii) Why is the study being made?
- (iii) Where will the study be carried out?
- (iv) What type of data is required?
- (v) Where can the required data be found?
- (vi) What periods of time will the study include?
- (vii) What will be the sample design?
- (viii) What techniques of data collection will be used?

(ix) How will the data be analysed?

(x) In what style will the report be prepared?