“For smaller scale studies, an exploratory approach may be used. The subject and scope of the exploration can be expressed in a statement of intent. Again, this must be derived from the research problem, imply a method of approach and indicate the outcome.” – Research Methods the Basics, Nicholas Walliman

“To gain familiarity with a phenomenon or to achieve new insights into it (studies with this object in view are termed as exploratory or formulative research studies).” – Research Methodology, C.R. Kothari, p. 2

“The objective of exploratory research is the development of hypotheses rather than their testing, whereas formalized research studies are those with substantial structure and with specific hypotheses to be tested.” – Research Methodology, C.R. Kothari, p. 4

“How does one go about developing working hypotheses? The answer is by using the following approach: Exploratory personal investigation which involves original field interviews on a limited scale with interested parties and individuals with a view to secure greater insight into the practical  aspects of the problem.” – Research Methodology, C.R. Kothari, p. 13

“It is only on the basis of its primary function that a study can be categorised either as an exploratory or descriptive or hypothesis-testing study and accordingly the choice of a research design may be made in case of a particular study. Besides, the availability of time, money, skills of the research staff and the means of obtaining the information must be given due weightage while working out the relevant details of the research design such as experimental design, survey design, sample design and the like.” – Research Methodology, C.R. Kothari, p. 33

“Exploratory research studies are also termed as formulative research studies. The main purpose of such studies is that of formulating a problem for more precise investigation or of developing the working hypotheses from an operational point of view. The major emphasis in such studies is on the discovery of ideas and insights.” – Research Methodology, C.R. Kothari, p. 35-36

“Generally, the following three methods in the context of research design for such studies are talked about: (a) the survey of concerning literature; (b) the experience survey and (c) the analysis of ‘insight-stimulating’ examples.”

…

“Experience survey means the survey of people who have had practical experience with the problem to be studied. The object of such a survey is to obtain insight into the relationships between variables and new ideas relating to the research problem.“ – Research Methodology, C.R. Kothari, p. 35-36

\*“Unstructured interview, however, happens to be the central technique of collecting information in case of exploratory or formulative research studies. But in case of descriptive studies, we quite often use the technique of structured interview because of its being more economical, providing a safe basis for generalisation and requiring relatively lesser skill on the part of the interviewer.” – Research Methodology, C.R. Kothari, p. 98\*

“Exploratory research, as the name suggests, is often conducted to explore the research issue and is usually done when the alternative options have not been clearly defined or their scope is unclear. Exploratory research allows researchers to explore issues in detail in order to familiarize themselves with the problem or concept to be studied. Familiarization with the concept helps researchers in formulating research hypothesis. Exploratory research is the initial research, which forms the basis of more conclusive research. It can even help in determining the research design, sampling methodology and data collection method. In some cases, exploratory research serves as the formative research to test concepts before they are put into practice. Exploratory research, as mentioned earlier, explores the issue further, hence it relies more on secondary research, that is, the review of available literature and/or data, or qualitative research approaches such as informal discussions with primary and secondary stakeholders, project staff, donor agencies and more formal approaches, like in-depth interviews, focus groups or case studies. Exploratory research thus cannot provide a conclusive answer to research problems and usually are not considered useful for decision-making, but they can provide significant insights to a given situation. However, the results thus obtained cannot be generalized and should be interpreted with caution as they may or may not be representative of the population being studied.” – Quantitative Social Research Methods, Kultar Singh, p. 63-64

“Exploratory studies are most typically done for three purposes: (1) to satisfy the researcher’s curiosity and desire for better understanding, (2) to test the feasibility of undertaking a more extensive study, and (3) to develop the methods to be employed in any subsequent study.” – The Practice of Social Research, Earl Babbie, p. 92

“Exploratory studies are quite valuable in social science research. They’re essential whenever a re- searcher is breaking new ground, and they almost always yield new insights into a topic for research.” – The Practice of Social Research, Earl Babbie, p. 93

“The chief shortcoming of exploratory studies is that they seldom provide satisfactory answers to research questions, though they can hint at the answers and can suggest which research methods could provide definitive ones. The reason exploratory studies are seldom definitive in themselves has to do with representativeness; that is, the people you study in your exploratory research may not be typical of the larger population that interests you. Once you understand representativeness, you’ll be able to know whether a given exploratory study actually answered its research problem or only pointed the way toward an answer.” – The Practice of Social Research, Earl Babbie, p. 93

“An exploratory report points the way to more-refined research on the topic.” – The Practice of Social Research, Earl Babbie, p. 522