Research Design

Understanding Research Methodologies for Business Success

Philosophies	Research Types	Framework
3 Key Approaches	**Exploratory to Explanatory**	**Research Onion Model**

What is Research Design?

Definition

A systematic plan that guides the research process from **problem identification** to **data analysis**

Why It Matters

Foundation for credible, valid, and reliable research outcomes

Key Components

Research Questions

Define what you aim to discover

Philosophical Assumptions

Underpin your research approach

Methods & Procedures

Outline the research process

Data Collection Techniques

Tools to gather information

Three Research Approaches

Exploratory Research

"What's happening?"

Purpose: Gain insights into unfamiliar topics

Interviews · Focus Groups · Case Studies

Descriptive Research

"What are the characteristics?"

Purpose: Document and describe phenomena

Surveys · Observational Studies

Explanatory Research
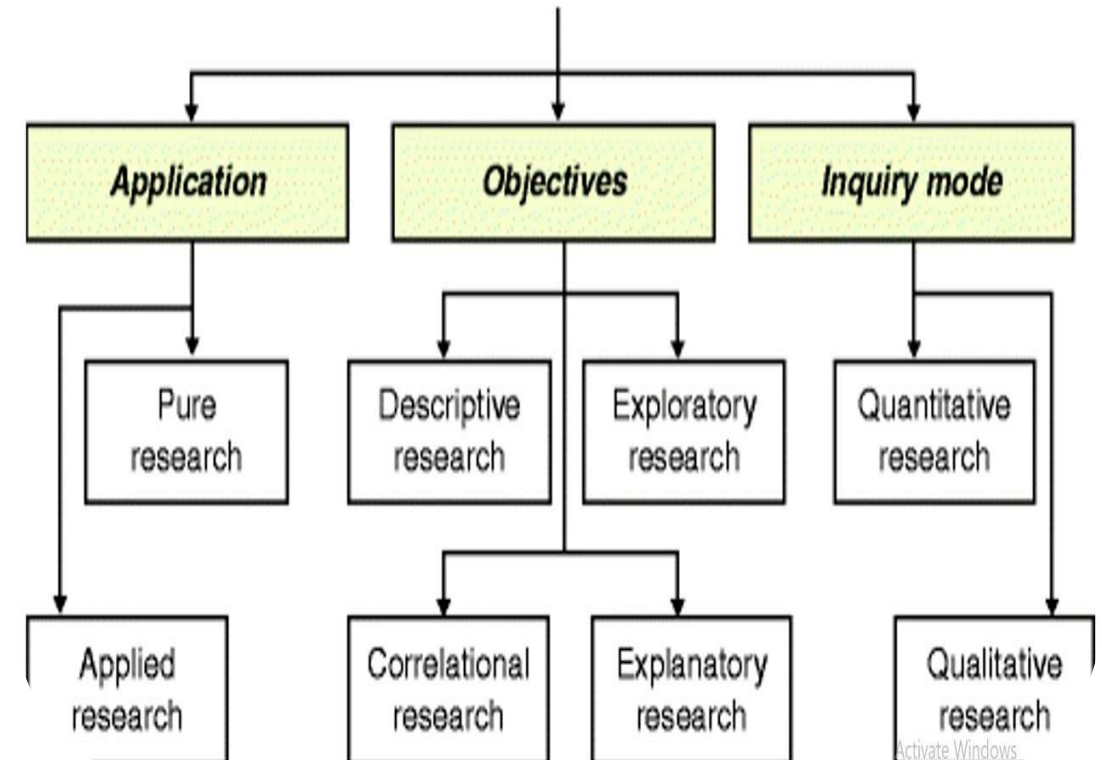
"Why does it happen?"

Purpose: Test hypotheses and identify causes

Experiments · Regression Analysis

Types of Research

From the viewpoint of

Application	Objectives	Inquiry mode
Pure research	Descriptive research · Exploratory research	Quantitative research
Applied research	Correlational research · Explanatory research	Qualitative research

Saunders' Research Onion: A Structured Approach
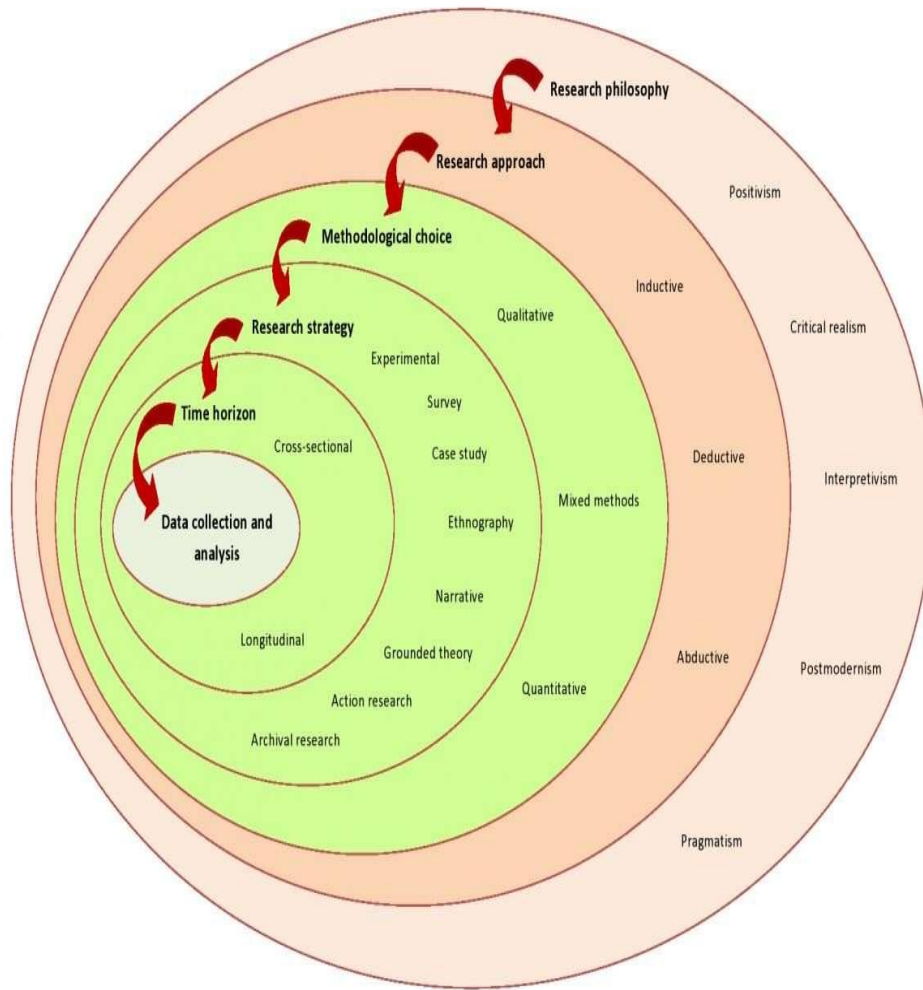
Six Layers of Research Design

Layer 1: Philosophy
Worldview & assumptions
Positivism • Interpretivism • Pragmatism

Layer 2: Approach
Reasoning process
Deductive • Inductive

Layer 3: Strategy
Research plan
Survey • Case Study • Experiment

Layer 4: Choice
Methodological path
Qualitative • Quantitative • Mixed

Layer 5: Time Horizon
Temporal scope
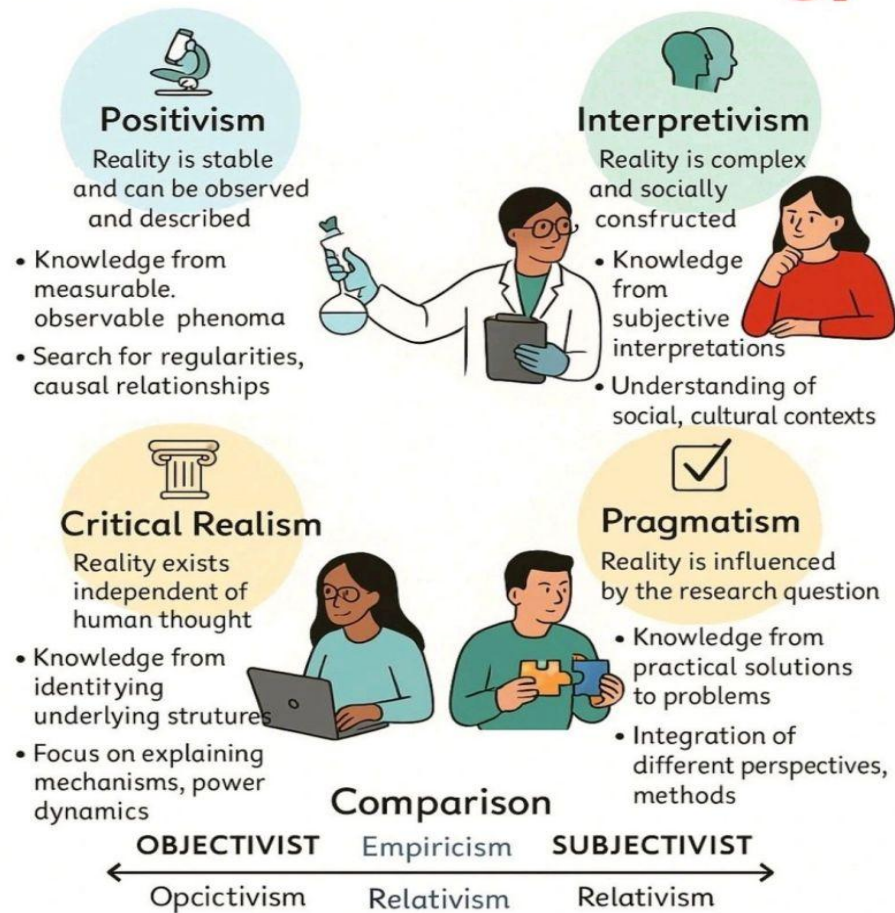Cross-sectional • Longitudinal

Layer 6: Data & Analysis
Collection & techniques
Interviews • Surveys • Statistics

Work from outer layers (philosophy) to inner layers (data collection) for coherent design

Understanding Research Philosophies

Philosophies in Research Methodology

Positivism
Reality is stable and can be observed and described
- Knowledge from measurable. observable phenoma
- Search for regularities, causal relationships

Interpretivism
Reality is complex and socially constructed
- Knowledge from subjective interpretations
- Understanding of social, cultural contexts

Critical Realism
Reality exists independent of human thought
- Knowledge from identifying underlying strutures
- Focus on explaining mechanisms, power dynamics

Pragmatism
Reality is influenced by the research question
- Knowledge from practical solutions to problems
- Integration of different perspectives, methods

Comparison
OBJECTIVIST — Empiricism — SUBJECTIVIST
Opcictivism — Relativism — Relativism

Positivism

Reality
Objective

Knowledge
Measurement

Methods
Surveys, Experiments

Strength
Generalizable

Limitation
Oversimplifies

Interpretivism

Reality
Subjective

Knowledge
Interpretation

Methods
Interviews, Ethnography

Strength
Rich Insights

Limitation
Limited Generalizability

Pragmatism

Reality
Flexible

Knowledge
Usefulness

Methods
Mixed Methods

Strength
Practical

Limitation
Needs Justification

Key Decision

Choose philosophy that aligns with your research questions and objectives. Each philosophy shapes methodology, data collection, and interpretation approaches.

Choosing Your Research Methodology

QUALITATIVE VS QUANTITATIVE Analysis

Qualitative

Purpose

Understand meanings & experiences

Data Type

Words, images, narratives

Methods

Interviews, focus groups, observations

Analysis

Thematic, content analysis

When to Use

Explore complex phenomena

Quantitative

Purpose

Measure & test relationships

Data Type

Numbers, statistics

Methods

Surveys, experiments, questionnaires

Analysis

Statistical tests, regression

When to Use

Test hypotheses

Mixed Methods Approach

Combine both approaches for comprehensive insights. Start with qualitative to explore, then use quantitative to test findings on larger scale.

Research Design in Business Context - Karachi

Consumer Behavior Study

Exploratory

Use focus groups to understand changing consumer preferences in Karachi's retail market

Employee Satisfaction Survey

Descriptive

Conduct cross-sectional survey to document satisfaction levels across Karachi's banking sector

Marketing Strategy Impact

Explanatory

Use experiments and regression analysis to test how digital marketing affects sales in Pakistan's e-commerce

Each research type serves different business objectives. Match your approach to your research question for actionable insights.

Key Takeaways for MBA Students

Match Research Type

Choose exploratory, descriptive, or explanatory based on objectives

Follow Research Onion

Use systematic framework for methodology design

Align Philosophy

Match philosophy with research questions and methods

Select Appropriate Method

Match qualitative or quantitative approach to data needs

Consider Context

Account for Karachi business environment and constraints

Justify Decisions

Explain every methodological choice for academic rigor

Strong research design ensures credible findings for business success