

Exercise II: Conceptualising a study design

For quantitative studies

Exercise I helped you to develop your research problem, providing you with a clear idea about *what* you want to find out about. Now the next step is to decide *how* to go about it. Exercise II is designed to help you to take this step. This includes deciding on an overall plan and selecting procedures and methods that you propose to use during your research journey. The details of your plan and procedures become the core of your study design.

A study design describes the design per se, that is, the type of study design you propose to adopt; for example, whether the proposed study is cross-sectional, correlational or experimental. It should also provide details of the logistical procedures required for gathering information from the study population. This exercise helps you to put forward your arguments to justify the selection of the design you are proposing for your study, critically examining its strengths and weaknesses, and thus enabling you to select the best and workable study design. The exercise also challenges you to think through other logistical procedures such as outlining the process of identifying and contacting your study population and your plan to obtain the required information from your potential respondents, thus helping you to develop the roadmap for your journey.

For qualitative studies the process is the same though it varies in content.

The issues raised in this exercise will help you to conceptualise your study design. Chapter 8 details the various types of study design in both quantitative and qualitative research for you to refer to while working through this exercise.



TEMPLATE OF EXERCISE II

A: Answers to the following questions will help you to develop your study design (Step II).

- 1 Is the design that you propose to adopt to conduct your study cross-sectional, longitudinal, experimental or comparative in nature? If possible draw a diagram depicting the design.

- 2 Why did you select this design?

- 3 What, in your opinion, are the strengths of this design?

4 What are the weaknesses and limitations of this design?

Weaknesses:

Limitations:

5 Who constitutes your study population?

6 Will you be able to identify each respondent in your study population?

Yes ☐ No ☐

(a) If yes, how will they be identified?

(b) If no, how do you plan to get in touch with them?

7 Do you plan to select a sample?

Yes ☐ No ☐

In either case, explain the reasons for your decision.

8 How will you collect data from your respondents (e.g. interview, questionnaire)?

(a) Why did you select this method of data collection?

(b) What, in your opinion, are its strengths and weaknesses?

Strengths:

Weaknesses:

(c) If you are interviewing, where will the interviews be held?

(d) If you are using mailed questionnaires:

(i) From where will you obtain the addresses of potential respondents?

(ii) Are you planning to enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope with the questionnaires?

Yes ☐ No ☐

(iii) In the case of a low response rate, will you send a reminder?

Yes ☐ No ☐

(iv) If there are queries, how should respondents get in touch with you?

B: On the basis of the above information, describe your study design. (For further guidance, consult Chapter 8.)

For qualitative studies

A: Answers to the following questions will help you in developing a roadmap for your research journey.

1 In which geographical area, community, group or population group would you like to undertake your study?

2 How do you plan to get entry into the area, community or group? Which network, if any, are you planning to use?

3 Why did you select this group?

4 From whom will you gather the required information? (Who will be your respondents?)

5 If you are gathering information from secondary sources, have you checked their availability?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Applicable ☐

6 Have you checked the availability of the required information in them?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Applicable ☐

7 If you are gathering information from individuals, how many will you contact?

8 What will be the basis of selection of these individuals?

9 How will you collect the required information? List all methods that you plan to use.
