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the relevance of the research findings to their needs. It is assumed that such involvement will increase the possibility of the community accepting the research findings and, if need be, its willingness and involvement in solving the problems and issues that confront it. You can undertake a quantitative or qualitative study in these perspectives but the main emphasis is on people's engagement, collaboration and participation in the research process. In a way these designs are based on the community development model where engagement of a community by way of consultation and participation in planning and execution of research tasks is imperative. You are not merely a researcher but also a community organiser seeking active participation of the community.

As a researcher you work at two different levels: (1) community organisation and (2) research. As community organiser you seek a community's involvement and participation in identifying community demands and needs, prioritising them, developing solutions, planning strategies and executing tasks to meet them. In terms of research, your main responsibility is to develop, in consultation with the community, the research tasks and procedures and share research findings with its members. Consultation with research participants at both these levels is a continuous and integral part of these designs.

Summary

In this chapter various study designs in both quantitative and qualitative research have been examined. For each study design, details have been provided on the situations in which the design is appropriate to use, its strengths and weaknesses, and the process adopted in its operationalisation.

In quantitative research the various study designs have been examined from three perspectives. The terminology used to describe these perspectives is that of the author, but the names of the study designs are universally used. The different study designs across each category are mutually exclusive, but not so within a category.

The three perspectives are the number of contacts, the reference period and the nature of the investigation. The first includes cross-sectional studies, before-and-after studies and longitudinal studies. The second categorises the studies as retrospective, prospective and retrospective-prospective. The third classifies studies as experimental, non-experimental and semi-experimental studies. Designs such as after-only experimental designs, before-and-after experimental designs, control designs, comparative designs, matched control, the placebo design have been described in detail. The chapter also details some of the commonly used designs in quantitative research. These are online surveys, cross-over comparative design, trend studies, cohort studies, panel studies, and blind and double-blind studies.

Qualitative study designs are not as specific, precise and well defined as designs in quantitative research. Also, there is a degree of overlap between study designs and methods of data collection. Some designs can easily be considered as methods of data collection. Some of the commonly used designs in qualitative research are: case study design, oral history, focus group studies, participant observation, community discussion forums and the reflective journal log.

Four additional approaches to research have been described: action research, feminist research, participatory research and collaborative enquiry. Though these cannot really be considered designs in themselves, they have acquired their own identity. Both action and

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feminist research can be carried out either quantitatively or qualitatively, but participatory and collaborative enquiries are usually qualitative in nature.

FOR YOU TO THINK ABOUT

- Refamiliarise yourself with the keywords listed at the beginning of this chapter, and if you are uncertain about the meaning or application of any of them revisit them in the chapter before moving on.
- Identify two or three situations relating to your own area of interest where you think qualitative study designs might be more beneficial, and consider why this might be the case.
- Take an example from your own academic field or professional area where an experimental control or placebo group might be used and explore the ethical issues relating to this.

Now, as you have gone through the chapter, try answering the following questions:

- What are the differences between quantitative and qualitative study designs?
- In this book the typology of study designs is developed from three perspectives. Critically examine the validity of these perspectives.
- Define the following:
 - ☐ Regression effect
 - ☐ Maturation effect
 - ☐ Reactive effect
- In an experimental study, what purpose does a control group serve?
- What is the difference between an experimental and non-experimental study?
- What is randomisation and what purpose does it serve in a study?



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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.



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:

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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:

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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?

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- 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.
