Descriptive research Design

Descriptive research is concerned with facts, and it aims to describe a specific phenomenon (kothari, 2004). descriptive research design "is concerned with describing the characteristics of a particular individual, or of a group" (kothari, 2004, p37). In this type of research, researchers cannot control all studied variables, they rather able to measure frequencies, preferences, or data alike. this type of research if often used in Masters dissertations, as students are primarily exposed to learning how to conduct research using mixed method approaches, and this type highly supports the use of surveys data, as some researchers refer to it as 'survey' design since it includes all steps taken into account in survey research. In descriptive studies, description is not enough, there should be an explanation of an association between variables to clearly describe a specific situation. Researchers, in descriptive studies need to identify their sample population, what they will measure, and how they will measure it. The research design must protect the study from bias, and must maximise reliability.

The design in descriptive research must be rigid and not flexible, kothari (2004, p37) and it must focus attention on the following:

(a) Formulating the objective of the study (what the study is about and why is it being made?)

(b) Designing the methods of data collection (what techniques of gathering data will be adopted?)

(c) Selecting the sample (how much material will be needed?)

(d) Collecting the data (where can the required data be found and with what time period should the data be related?)

(e) Processing and analysing the data.

(f) Reporting the findings.

Objectives of the study must be well established, for instance, each question in the survey (check survey handout on e-learning platform) should be associated with another (variables

connections). Structured observation (check observation type handout e-learning platform) is highly used, researchers should know what and how to record data collected.

In descriptive research design, the population should be identified based on the sample analyses selected for the study. More often, one or more of probability sampling, or what is known as random sampling are employed in descriptive research designs. The data, can be presented in texts, tabulations, performing different statistical analyses (factor analyses, test-analyses). Statistical Software is needed, with the enhancement of technology, accuracy and reliability are better safeguard for drawing conclusions on the research.

Table 3.1

Research Design	*Type of study*	
	Exploratory of Formulative	*Descriptive/Diagnostic*
Overall design	Flexible design (design must provide opportunity for considering different aspects of the problem)	Rigid design (design must make enough provision for protection against bias and must maximise reliability)
(i) Sampling design	Non-probability sampling design (purposive or judgement sampling)	Probability sampling design (random sampling)
(ii) Statistical design	No pre-planned design for analysis	Pre-planned design for analysis
(iii) Observational design	Unstructured instruments for collection of data	Structured or well thought out instruments for collection of data
(iv) Operational design	No fixed decisions about the operational procedures	Advanced decisions about operational procedures.

Table 1: Exploratory vs Descriptive Designs

References

Kothari, C. R. (2004). ***Research methodology: Methods and techniques*****. New Age International.**