

The Rationale for Methodology Selection



Prof. Amila Jayarathne (University of Sri Jayewardenepura) and Dr. Jayantha N. Dewasiri (Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka) discussed the rationale for selecting research methodology as most of the researchers do not provide a justification of the selected research methodology thus high tendency to rely on their competent zone/methodologies at a recently conducted session in the Writing Impactful Research (WIR) Programme. WIR is a four month Programme conducted by the Faculty of Management Studies, Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka in collaboration with the Emerald Publishing and Gulf Medical University, UAE. This is a highly successful research programme with the participation of more than 1000 academics, researchers and postgraduate students from the different continents across the globe. This sixth session of the programme was conducted under the patronage of Prof. Athula Gnanapala (Dean, Faculty of Management Studies, Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka), Miss. Sangeeta Menon (Publishing Relationship Manager, Emerald Publishing) Prof. Sudhir Rana, (College of Healthcare Management and Economics, Gulf Medical University), Miss. Disha Lakhnpal (Regional Marketing Manager, Emerald Publishing), Mr. Achintha Ekanayake, and Miss. Warunika Hettiarachchi (Faculty of Management Studies, Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka). This article intends to address the question of what is the rationale for selection of the research methodology/design which was discussed at the sixth session of the WIR Programme.

Research designs are plans for addressing research questions, consequently direct the procedures in conducting the research. For instance, it includes the steps from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection and analysis. The general choice includes which approach ought to be utilized to consider a theme. Educating this choice ought to be the philosophical presumptions the researcher brings to the examination; methodology of request (research designs); and explicit exploration strategies for information assortment, investigation, and understanding. The determination of an exploration approach is likewise founded on the idea of the examination issue or issue being tended to, the scientists' very own encounters, and the crowds for the investigation.

The rationale for three research designs: (a) qualitative, (b) quantitative, and (c) mixed methods, was discussed. Qualitative research is a methodology for investigating and understanding social or human issue and it deals with exploring a phenomenon which is under the inductive and theory building approach. Quantitative approach is a methodology for testing target hypotheses by inspecting the relationship among variables that is deductive in nature. These variables thus can be estimated regularly on instruments, so that numbered information can be broke down utilizing statistical approaches. Mixed methods research is a way to deal with a request including gathering both quantitative and qualitative data, coordinating the two types of information, and utilizing particular plans that may include philosophical presumptions and hypothetical systems. The mixed methods approach preferably depends on a pragmatic view the philosophical perspective.

It was emphasized that research decision often starts with the reviewing literature to explore the research gaps and then it is possible to derive specific research questions/objectives. Research questions/objectives mainly guide which research design to select. In addition to the research problem, researchers' interest/competency/ experience, resource availability, and audience play a significant role in the selection of the right research design.

The Rationale for a Quantitative Inquiry

The speakers emphasized that, the research problems/questions that need a quantitative inquiry fall into four categories: descriptive, comparative, relationship bound, and historical. Descriptive questions seek quantitative analysis on more than one variable. Usually, the questions that start with "What" fall under the descriptive category. For instance, "what are the determinants of capital structure?" and "what are the factors effecting payout decisions?" could be considered as descriptively bound research questions that need a quantitative inquiry.

The comparative category of research questions/problems are to compare and/or to differ one or more variables among two or more groups. For instance, "what is the difference in levels of statistics anxiety between undergraduate male and female students" exemplifies the comparative nature of quantitatively bounded research problems/questions.

The third type is the "relationship nature" of the research questions. It is argued that these types of questions include words such as "relate," "relationship," "association," or "trend" "influence" in developing research questions/problems. For instance, when we investigate the relationship

between liquidity and stock split initiation, influence of advertising expenditure on marketing performance, the relationship nature of quantitative research designs are suitable.

The historical type of research questions/objectives are to predict the future through past information. The impact of lagged dividend payout on current dividend policy, the past investments of research and development on current performance exemplify such historically based research questions. Further, it was emphasized that researchers should not start research questions with the words of “does,” “Do,” “is,” or “are” since they lead to yes/no obvious answers.

The Rationale for a Qualitative Inquiry

It was stated that “An exploratory (qualitative) study is undertaken when not much is known about the situation at hand, no information is available on how similar problems have been solved in the past, and to get better understanding/clarity and insights on a phenomena” The speakers emphasized that research questions that have qualitative leanings discourse on “how” and “what” questions. In addition, the research questions which start with the “why” word are required in a qualitative inquiry that deals with human interactions. It was further emphasized that qualitative research designs are “evolving, open-ended, and non-directional” and case study, phenomenology, ethnography, narrative research are the main types of them). For instance, research questions such as “why do companies pay dividends, how do gang leaders select gang members, what finance decisions lead to a sustainability oriented culture in an organization, and what does it mean to teachers to win a teaching award” require qualitative inquiries since they are qualitative in nature.

The Rationale for a Mixed Methods Inquiry

The research questions that need a triangulated or mixed methods inquiry are combined with both qualitative and quantitative aspects. Whether these two phases are sequential, embedded or concurrent is depend on four criteria, namely, timing, weighting, mixing and theorizing. For instance, when determining the impact of investor sentiment on asset price movements, it is imperative to get information about both investor sentiment (qualitative, independent variable) and stock price movements (quantitative, dependent variable). In the qualitative phase, the investor’s overall attitude (sentiment) toward a particular stock price movement could be determined by developing an instrument through interviews. Then, in the quantitative phase it is possible to investigate the relationship between attitude and the level of price movements through a survey. Here, the overall research design is sequential because the qualitative phase is followed by the quantitative phase. Further it shows that a higher weightage is given for the qualitative phase. Here, the factors such as “timing” (qualitative followed by the quantitative approach) and “weightage” supported in determining the suitable research design that is sequential exploratory in nature.

There are research questions that needed a sequential explanatory design (Quantitative phase followed by the qualitative phase). For instance, for addressing a research question like “what is the difference in perceived barriers to reading empirical research articles between graduate students with low level of reading comprehension and high level of reading comprehension” a

sequential explanatory design is needed; because first we need to administer a test of reading comprehension, rank these comprehension scores, and then purposively select students who are high/level. Then we can interview them using a purposive sampling method. Here, the first approach is quantitative (using a quantitative test in measuring the reading comprehension) and it followed by the qualitative approach to determine the perceived barriers to reading empirical research articles. Hence, it required a sequential explanatory design.

Researchers' Experience, Competency, Resource Availability and Audience as the Rationale

Researchers' own preparations, interests, experiences and competencies also matter when selecting of the methodology. An individual prepared in specialized, logical composition, and quantitative aspects acquainted with quantitative journals would doubtlessly pick the quantitative designs. Researchers who appreciate writing in an artistic way or leading individual meetings or mentioning very close objective facts may incline toward the qualitative designs. The blended strategies scientist is an individual acquainted with both quantitative and subjective examination. Resource availability is also matter as some designs, mixed methods designs, require more resources. At last, researchers compose for crowds that will acknowledge their research. These crowds might be journal editors and faculty committees, conferences, meeting participants, or colleagues in the field. The encounters of these crowds with quantitative, qualitative, or blended strategies studies can shape the choice settled on about the decision of methodology selection.

The full session can be accessed through the below link.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7iSkchi4kog&t=2857s>

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