

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

a step-by-step guide for beginners



fourth edition

RANJIT KUMAR

companion
website



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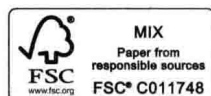
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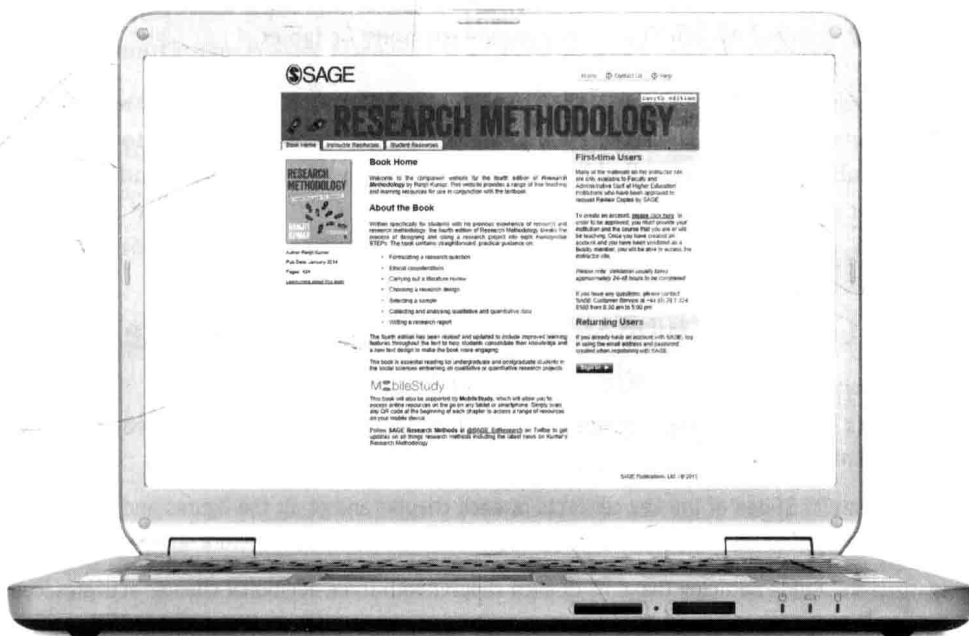
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GUIDED TOUR

How to use this book and its online resources



To better support your study, Ranjit Kumar's *Research Methodology*, 4th edition is supported by a wealth of online resources which can be accessed on the book's companion website and on a mobile version of that site called MobileStudy.

Throughout the book you will see the icons below in the margins telling you when additional resources are available online, including:



Videos containing examples of real world research and advice on how to conduct your research project.



Further Reading from selected SAGE journal articles and book chapters allowing you delve deeper into key concepts.



Weblinks to sites offering additional resources to support your study.



Printouts of the exercises and key figures from the book, to use in class or independently to guide you through your research.

Using the companion website and MobileStudy



If you want to revise using your computer, visit the companion website at www.uk.sagepub.com/kumar4e. If you are studying on the go, scan this QR code to access a mobile optimised version of the companion website called MobileStudy on your smartphone or tablet.

On the companion website and Mobile Study you will find videos, further reading and the printouts highlighted in the margins of each chapter, along with access to a research methods online community called Methodspace, multiple choice quizzes and flashcards to test your understanding.

Lecturers who visit the companion website will gain access to:

Testbanks containing multiple choice questions for each chapter that can be used for student assessment.

PowerPoint^(TM) Slides of the key concepts of each chapter and of all the figures and tables from the book. These slides can be easily adapted to be added to your own lecture slides.

Instructors' Guide outlining the aims of each chapter with three additional chapter activities ideal for use in seminars and class discussions.

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PREFACE

This book is based upon my experiences in research as a student, practitioner and teacher. The difficulties I faced in understanding research as a student, my discoveries about what was applicable and inapplicable in the field as a research practitioner, my development of the ability to effectively communicate difficult concepts in simple language without sacrificing technicality and accuracy as a teacher, and the feedback of many experts who participated in the evaluations carried out by Pearson Australia on the first edition and Sage UK on the second and third editions, have become the basis of this book. Many aspects of methodology were added on the basis of the feedback of teachers of research methods from a number of countries.

Research methodology is taught as a supporting subject in several ways in many academic disciplines such as health, education, psychology, social work, nursing, public health, library studies and marketing research. The core philosophical base for this book comes from my conviction that, although these disciplines vary in content, their broad approach to a research enquiry is similar. This book, therefore, is addressed to these academic disciplines.

It is true that some disciplines and professionals place greater emphasis on quantitative research, some on qualitative and some on both. My own approach to research is a combination of both. Firstly, it is the objective that should decide whether a study is carried out adopting a qualitative or a quantitative approach. Secondly, in real life most research is a combination of both approaches. Though they differ in the philosophy that underpins their mode of enquiry, to a great extent their broad approach to enquiry is similar. The quantitative research process is reasonably well structured whereas the qualitative one is fairly unstructured, and these are their respective strengths as well as weaknesses. I strongly believe that both are important to portray a complete picture. In addition, there are aspects of quantitative research that are qualitative in nature. It depends upon how a piece of information has been collected and analysed. Therefore I feel very strongly that a good researcher needs to have both types of skill. I follow a qualitative–quantitative–qualitative approach to an enquiry. This book, therefore, has been written to provide information about various methods, procedures and techniques that are used in both the research approaches in a simple step-by-step manner, linked to operational steps. In terms of methods, techniques and procedures, as the mixed/multiple methods approach uses qualitative and/or quantitative approaches, I did not consider it appropriate to describe mixed/multiple methods separately. Thus, although Chapter 1 of this book describes three approaches to a research enquiry in social research, the subsequent chapters describe only the two approaches as the third, mixed methods, is covered under them.

Research as a subject is taught at different levels. The book is designed specifically for students who are newcomers to research and who may have a psychological barrier with regard to the subject. I have, therefore, not assumed any previous knowledge on the part of the reader; I have omitted detailed discussion of aspects that may be inappropriate for beginners; I have used many flow charts and examples to communicate concepts; and areas covered in the book follow a 'simple to complex' approach in terms of their discussion and coverage. I have also made a deliberate attempt not to make this book too theoretical. This primarily is a 'nuts and bolts' book that aims to develop elementary skills rather than a theoretical and philosophical knowledge base.

The structure of this book, which is based on the model developed during my teaching career, is designed to be practical. The theoretical knowledge that constitutes research methodology is therefore organised around the operational steps that form this research process for quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods research. All the information needed to take a particular step, during the actual research journey, is provided in one place. The information is organised in chapters and each chapter is devoted to a particular aspect of that step (see Figure 2.3). For example, 'formulating a research problem' is the first operational step in the research process. To formulate a 'good' research problem, in my opinion, you need to know how to review the literature, formulate a research problem, deal with variables and their measurement, and construct hypotheses. Hence, under this step, there are four chapters. The information they provide will enable you to formulate a problem that is researchable. These chapters are titled: 'Reviewing the literature', 'Formulating a research problem', 'Identifying variables' and 'Constructing hypotheses'. Similarly, for the operational step, Step III, 'Constructing an instrument for data collection', the chapters titled 'Selecting a method of data collection', 'Collecting data using attitudinal scales' and 'Establishing the validity and reliability of a research instrument' will provide sufficient information for you to develop an instrument for data collection for your study. For every aspect at each step, a smorgasbord of methods, models, techniques and procedures is provided for both quantitative and qualitative studies (and thus also, by extension, for mixed/multiple studies) in order for you to build your knowledge base in research methodology and also to help you to select the most appropriate ones when undertaking your own research.

It is my belief that a sound knowledge of research methodology is essential for undertaking a valid study. To answer your research questions, up to Step V, 'Writing a research proposal', knowledge of research methods is crucial as it enables you to develop a conceptual framework that is sound and has merits for undertaking your research endeavour with confidence. Having completed the preparatory work, the steps that follow are more practical in nature, the quality of which entirely depends upon the soundness of the methodology you proposed in your research proposal. Statistics and computers play a significant role in research, but their application is mainly after the data has been collected. To me, statistics are useful in confirming or contradicting conclusions drawn from simply looking at analysed data, in providing an indication of the magnitude of the relationship between two or more variables under study, in helping to establish causality, and in ascertaining the level of confidence that can be placed in your findings. A computer is used primarily in data analysis, the calculation of statistics, word-processing and

the graphic presentation of data. It saves time and makes it easier for you to undertake these activities; however, you need to learn this additional skill. This book does not include statistics or information about computers.

The fourth edition incorporates a number of suggestions made on the third edition by international experts in social research during a review undertaken by Sage Publications. I have made every effort to incorporate as many of these suggestions as possible, without changing the basic structure of the book. Some of the major changes in the fourth edition are as follows:

- The 'mixed/multiple methods approach' to social research has been incorporated as a philosophy in Chapter 1. To me, a 'mixed methods approach' is a philosophy rather than an approach, unlike quantitative and qualitative, as it does not have its own body of methods and procedures. Therefore, it could not be covered in the same manner as the quantitative and qualitative approaches, that is, by **linking** the methods and procedures that comprise the mixed methods methodology with the operational steps which are the basis of the book.
- A companion website has been developed for the fourth edition to provide additional information. This website can be accessed on your mobile using the QR code at the end of the chapters, or by visiting www.uk.sagepub.com/kumar4e.
- The fourth edition reflects my desire to further break down the barrier between quantitative and qualitative research. Extremely positive reviews and feedback have made me all the more convinced that both these methodologies can be described in a common framework. Therefore the fourth edition has much more coverage of qualitative methods than the third. Coverage of qualitative research has been further strengthened to provide a more balanced picture of both the methodologies.
- Exercises, a part of the appendix, have now been further developed and linked to the appropriate operational steps in the belief that students will learn more if they are given an opportunity to operationalise, in an actual situation, what they have learnt in the chapters.
- Title pages dividing chapters and operational steps have now been redesigned to provide greater clarity as well as informing students in advance what they can expect to learn in a chapter. Also, each chapter has a list of keywords that students will encounter in the chapter.
- In places the language has been changed to enhance flow, understanding and ease of reading.

I am grateful to a number of people who have helped me in the writing of this book. First of all, to my students, who have taught me how to teach research methods. The basic structure of this book is an outcome of the feedback I have received from them over the years. How, and at what stage of the research process, a concept or a procedure should be taught, I have learnt from my students. I thank them all for their contribution to this book.

I am extremely grateful to my friend and colleague, Dr Norma Watson, whose efforts in editing the first edition were of immense help. The book would not have reached its present stage without her unconditional help.

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I am also grateful to my friend, Dr Deenaz Damania, a very well-known expert in qualitative research, for her interest, encouragement and help in the completion of this edition.

I am immensely grateful to the international research experts who participated in the in-depth review of the book, undertaken by Sage Publications, and provided valuable suggestions for its further improvement. A number of changes in the fourth edition are a direct result of their feedback. The many reviews on the Sage website by teachers of research from universities in many countries have been very positive and a source of encouragement, motivation and reinforcement for the fourth edition, and I am immensely grateful to the reviewers.

Ranjit Kumar

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

'This edition contains essential information for beginning researchers and it is presented in a clear and coherent way which engages the reader. The reader is supported through references to research, questions posed and very well thought through examples. This is a publication which is a pleasure to read cover to cover, although it can be dipped into as necessary.'

Dr Liane Purnell, Senior lecturer, Newman University College

Praise for the third edition:

'Great book, we really like it. Students were motivated much better this year than in any of the previous years, this book was a large factor in that.'

Dr Dirk Janssen, IGAD, NHTV – International Breda University

'Does exactly what it says. It gives an excellent base to build upon. Especially in a subject that some find difficult to immediately grasp. The layout is excellent and the content inclusive. The text and diagrams are very good and enables the student to have a good basis to work from during the tricky first research steps taken. I am also sure that it will be a suitable aide memoire for those more experienced researchers who may have been out of the environment for a while.'

Ms Joanne O'Donnell, School of Nursing, Midwifery and Social Work, University of Manchester

'Fast becoming a firm favourite amongst many of our students; it is both comprehensive and accessible. This third edition marks a substantial improvement over the second. Students find his chapters on formulating a research problem and reviewing the literature, particularly helpful.'

John Hoffman, Medical and Social Care Education, University of Leicester

To my daughter, Parul

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