

Introduction to Research Methods in Management

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Key concepts, steps, and tools for conducting rigorous managerial research

1. Why Research Matters in Management

Reason	What It Looks Like in Practice
Informed Decision Making	Use data to choose strategies, allocate resources, and set performance targets.
Problem Solving	Identify root causes of low productivity, high turnover, or market decline.
Theory Development	Build or test models of leadership, motivation, or organizational change.
Credibility & Accountability	Provide evidence for stakeholders, investors, and regulators.

2. Core Research Paradigms

Paradigm	Ontology (Nature of Reality)	Epistemology (How We Know)	Typical Methods
Positivist	Objective, measurable reality	Knowledge through observation & testing	Experiments, surveys, secondary data analysis
Interpretivist	Constructed, socially negotiated reality	Knowledge through understanding meanings	Interviews, focus groups, case studies
Critical	Reality shaped by power & ideology	Knowledge through critique & emancipation	Action research, discourse analysis
Pragmatic	Multiple realities, useful truth	Knowledge through what works for the problem	Mixed?methods, design?based research

3. The Research Process (Step?by?Step)

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1. Define the Problem / Research Question

- *Specific*: “What factors influence employee engagement in remote teams?”
- *Feasible*: Data can be collected within budget and time limits.

2. Review the Literature

- Search academic databases (e.g., Business Source Complete, Scopus).
- Map existing theories, identify gaps, and justify your study.

3. Develop a Conceptual Framework & Hypotheses

- Diagram showing variables and expected relationships.
- Example: Leadership Style ? (mediated by) Trust ? Employee Engagement.

4. Choose a Research Design

- **Exploratory** (qualitative) – to generate ideas.
- **Descriptive** (survey) – to describe patterns.
- **Explanatory / Causal** (experiment, longitudinal) – to test relationships.

5. Select the Methodology & Data Collection Techniques

Technique	When to Use	Strengths	Limitations
Questionnaire Survey	Large samples, quantifiable variables	Standardized, statistically analyzable	Response bias, limited depth
Semi-structured Interview	Exploring meanings, motivations	Rich, flexible data	Time-consuming, interviewer effect
Observation (e.g., shadowing)	Studying actual behavior	Contextual, real-time	Observer bias, limited generalizability
Experiment / Field Trial	Testing causal effects	High internal validity	May lack external realism
Secondary Data Analysis	Historical trends, financial metrics	Cost-effective, large N	Data quality depends on source

6. Sampling Design

- **Probability Sampling** (simple random, stratified, cluster) ? Generalizable results.

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- **Non-Probability Sampling** (convenience, purposive, snowball) ? Useful for exploratory or hard-to-reach populations

7. Data Collection & Management

- Pilot test instruments.
- Use digital tools (Qualtrics, SurveyMonkey, REDCap) for surveys; NVivo/ATLAS.ti for qualitative coding.
- Store data securely (encrypted files,