



# **Research Methodology**

## **Chapter Four: The Research Process – Steps 1 to 3**

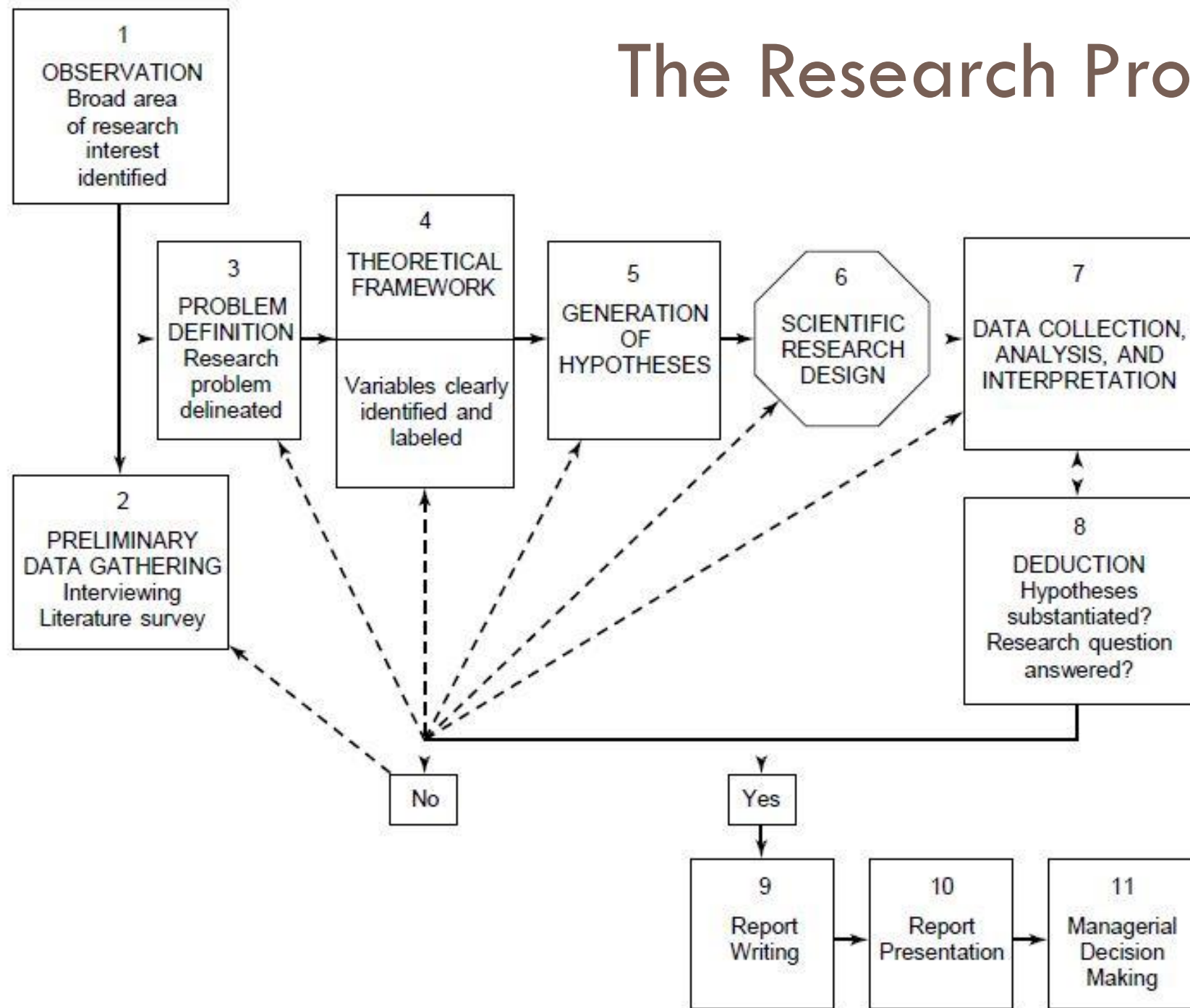
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# The Research Process



# 1. Broad Problem Area

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- The broad problem area refers to the entire situation where one sees a possible need for research and problem solving.
- The specific issues that need to be researched within this situation may not be identified at this stage.

# 1. Broad Problem Area cont.

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Such issues might pertain to

1. Problems currently existing in an organizational setting that need to be solved.
2. Areas that a manager believes need to be improved in the organization.
3. A conceptual or theoretical issue that needs to be tightened up for the basic researcher to understand certain phenomena.
4. Some research questions that a basic researcher wants to answer *empirically*.

# 1. Broad Problem Area cont.

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Examples of broad problem areas that a manager could observe at the workplace are as follows:

1. Training programs are perhaps not as effective as anticipated.
2. The sales volume of a product is not picking up.
3. Minority group members in organizations are not advancing in their careers.
4. Inventory control is not effective.

## 2. Preliminary Data Collection

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The nature of information needed by the researcher could be broadly classified as following:

- a) Background information of the organization.
- b) Managerial philosophy, company policies, and other structural aspects.
- c) Perceptions, attitudes, and behavioral responses of organizational members and client systems (as applicable).

## 2. Preliminary Data Collection cont.

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### *Nature of Data To Be Gathered*

- **Secondary Data** - data gathered through existing sources. That is, they are data that already exist and do not have to be collected by the researcher.
- **Primary Data** - data gathered for research from the actual site of occurrence of events. This data include the perceptions and attitudes of employees.



## 2. Preliminary Data Collection cont.

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### a) Background information of the organization:

- ▣ The origin and history of the company.
- ▣ Size in terms of employees, assets, or both.
- ▣ Charter - purpose and ideology.
- ▣ Location - regional, national, or other.
- ▣ Resources - human and others.
- ▣ Financial position during the previous 5 to 10 years.

## 2. Preliminary Data Collection cont.

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- b) Information on structural factors and management philosophy:
  - ▣ Roles and positions in the organization and number of employees at each job level.
  - ▣ Extent of specialization.
  - ▣ Communication channels.
  - ▣ Reward systems.

## 2. Preliminary Data Collection cont.

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- c) Perceptions, attitudes, and behavioral responses
  - ▣ Nature of the work.
  - ▣ Participation in decision making.
  - ▣ Rewards provided by the organization, such as pay raises.
  - ▣ Opportunities for advancement in the organization.
  - ▣ Extent of absenteeism.

# Literature Review

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- The literature review, also called literature survey, is a clear and logical presentation of the relevant research work done thus far in the area of investigation.
- The purpose of the literature review is to ensure that no important variable that has in the past been found repeatedly to have had an impact on the problem is ignored.

# Literature Review cont.

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A good literature survey ensures that:

1. Important variables that are likely to influence the problem situation are not left out of the study.
2. A clearer idea emerges as to what variables would be most important to consider (parsimony), why they would be considered important, and how they should be investigated to solve the problem.
3. The problem statement can be made with precision and clarity.

# Literature Review cont.

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4. Testability and replicability of the findings of the current research are enhanced.
5. One does not run the risk of “reinventing the wheel” that is, wasting efforts on trying to rediscover something that is already known.
6. The problem investigated is perceived by the scientific community as relevant and significant.

# Literature Review cont.

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There are three steps to conduct a literature survey, as following:

1. Identifying the relevant sources
2. Extracting the relevant information
3. Writing up the literature review

# Literature Review cont.

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## 1. Identifying the relevant sources

- Basically, three forms of databases come in handy while reviewing the literature, as indicated below.
  1. The **bibliographic databases**, which display only the bibliographic citations, that is, the name of the author, the title of the article (or book), source of publication, year, volume, and page numbers.
  2. The **abstract databases**, which in addition provide an abstract or summary of the articles.
  3. The **full-text databases**, which provide the full text of the article.



# Literature Review cont.

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- Some Online Databases Useful for Business Research:
  - ▣ American Science and Technology Index (ASTI)
  - ▣ The Business Periodicals Index (BPI)
  - ▣ Human Resources Abstract
  - ▣ The Public Affairs Information Service (PAIS)
  - ▣ The Wall Street Journal Index

# Literature Review cont.

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## 2. Extracting the relevant information

- ▣ While reading relevant articles, detailed information on the problem that was researched, the design details of the study (such as the sample size and data collection methods), and the ultimate findings could be systematically noted in some convenient format.
- ▣ While reading the articles, it is possible that certain other factors are also found to be closely related to the problem at hand.

# Literature Review cont.

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## 3. Writing up the literature review

- ▣ A point to note is that the literature survey should bring together all relevant information in a cogent and logical manner instead of presenting all the studies in chronological order with bits and pieces of uncoordinated information.
- ▣ A good literature survey also leads one logically to a good problem statement.

# Literature Review cont.

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## 3. Writing up the literature review (cont.)

- ▣ There are several accepted methods of citing references in the literature survey section and using quotations such as:
  - *The Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (2001).
  - *The Chicago Manual of Style* (1993).

# Literature Review cont.

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Cite

MLA Churchill Jr, Gilbert A., and Carol Surprenant. "An investigation into the determinants of customer satisfaction." *Journal of marketing research* (1982): 491-504.

APA Churchill Jr, G. A., & Surprenant, C. (1982). An investigation into the determinants of customer satisfaction. *Journal of marketing research*, 491-504.

Chicago Churchill Jr, Gilbert A., and Carol Surprenant. "An investigation into the determinants of customer satisfaction." *Journal of marketing research* (1982): 491-504.

Harvard Churchill Jr, G.A. and Surprenant, C., 1982. An investigation into the determinants of customer satisfaction. *Journal of marketing research*, pp.491-504.

Vancouver Churchill Jr GA, Surprenant C. An investigation into the determinants of customer satisfaction. *Journal of marketing research*. 1982 Nov 1:491-504.

BibTeX

EndNote

RefMan

RefWorks

# 3. Problem Definition

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- A problem does not necessarily mean that something is seriously wrong with a current situation that needs to be rectified immediately.
- A “problem” could simply indicate an interest in an issue where finding the right answers might help to improve an existing situation.
- Thus, a problem may be defined as **“any situation where a gap exists between the actual and the desired ideal states.”**

### 3. Problem Definition cont.

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- It is very important that **symptoms** of problems are not *defined* as the real problem.
- **Problem definition or problem statement** *is a clear, precise, and succinct statement of the question or issue that is to be investigated with the goal of finding an answer or solution.*

### 3. Problem Definition cont.

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- Problem definitions could pertain to:
  - ▣ existing business problems where a manager is looking for a solution
  - ▣ situations that may not pose any current problems but which the manager feels have scope for improvement
  - ▣ areas where some conceptual clarity is needed for better theory building
  - ▣ situations in which a researcher is trying to answer a research question empirically because of interest in the topic.