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## Qualitative Research Gains Equality: A Review of Research Methodology: A Step-by-Step Guide for Beginners

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### Abstract

In this book review of Kumar's 2011 edition of *Research Methodology: A Step-by-Step Guide for Beginners*, I provide a summary of the book's main content and a critical review of its content and structure including both the strengths and weaknesses. I conclude that this new edition of the book with Kumar presenting qualitative research as an equal methodology to quantitative research is an appropriate resource for students who are just starting to learn how to conduct empirical research studies. Two suggestions are provided for its future edition: (a) more classic resources about research methodology; and (b) more discussions about IRB application.

### Keywords

Research Methodology, Quantitative, Qualitative, Writing Research Report

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## **Qualitative Research Gains Equality: A Review of *Research Methodology: A Step-by-Step Guide for Beginners***

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*In this book review of Kumar's 2011 edition of Research Methodology: A Step-by-Step Guide for Beginners, I provide a summary of the book's main content and a critical review of its content and structure including both the strengths and weaknesses. I conclude that this new edition of the book with Kumar presenting qualitative research as an equal methodology to quantitative research is an appropriate resource for students who are just starting to learn how to conduct empirical research studies. Two suggestions are provided for its future edition: (a) more classic resources about research methodology; and (b) more discussions about IRB application. Key Words: Research Methodology, Quantitative, Qualitative, Writing Research Report.*

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*Research Methodology: A Step-by-Step Guide for Beginners* (3rd ed., Kumar, 2011) provides a clearly structured and easily understandable step-by-step guidance for beginners on how to design, conduct, and report an empirical study in various disciplines in social science. It is one of the first books aimed to solely serve novice researchers, which is one reason that the reviewer, a researcher conducting both qualitative and quantitative research in social science, is interested in reviewing the book. In my book review I will first present an overview of the content in the book, then discuss its strengths and weaknesses, and conclude with two suggestions to the author.

Kumar's (2011) book is comprised of eighteen chapters divided into eight sections. The first section provides a general introduction to research, including the first chapter, "Research: A Way of Thinking," that explains what research is and why research is needed in various areas and the second chapter, "The Research Process: A Quick Glance," that overviews the steps taken during both a quantitative and qualitative research process. The rest of the sections are arranged based on eight major steps taken in quantitative and qualitative studies respectively. In each chapter, specific steps and examples for both quantitative and qualitative research are also provided separately. The book concludes with one appendix providing a set of exercises to gauge beginners when developing a research project, a glossary explaining the technical terms used in the book, a bibliography, and index.

As the first two editions of this book focused on quantitative research, procedures for qualitative research are added on after those for quantitative research are introduced in the current edition. Although it seems the book's focus is still centered around quantitative research, the current edition provides significant amount of information about qualitative research which is portrayed as an equal methodology rather than secondary or supplementary research methodology to quantitative research.

The book's strengths lie in three aspects. Firstly, it is very logically and clearly structured. The chapters are arranged based on the steps taken during a research process, which effectively illuminates what to do when conducting a research study. In addition, each chapter starts with a list of clearly stated learning objectives and key words and concludes with a summary and a list of tasks for users to reflect on what they learn in the chapter. This structure helps users set reasonable goals and evaluate their learning when consulting each chapter. Secondly, the author uses simple language, a large number of flowcharts, figures and tables to illustrate complex and abstract concepts, such as differences between quantitative and qualitative research. Particularly, specific examples are provided to elaborate on certain research steps such as how to set up a theoretical framework, which provides more concrete guidance for each research step. Lastly, the design of juxtaposing quantitative and qualitative research steps in each chapter in this book is very plausible and necessary.

For a long time, qualitative research methodology has been deemed invalid and incomparable to the quality of quantitative research due to the so-called "subjective" and less strictly controlled research design. This book delivers an appropriate message to readers that there exist considerable similarities in terms of the steps taken in designing and conducting a quantitative and qualitative study. On the other hand, discussing issues in both quantitative and qualitative studies in one chapter, e.g. comparing one same concept in both quantitative and qualitative research, help readers develop a better understanding of the differences and similarities between the two types of research, which is particularly helpful for novice researchers, such as the readers of this book.

There are two suggestions the author of this book may incorporate in its future edition. First, although this is a guidebook for students who are just starting their research endeavor, it would be more beneficial for those students who would like to learn more about one or more issues in either quantitative or qualitative methodology if the author could provide more information about some widely cited references on both quantitative and qualitative methodology. Second, although the author discusses ethical issues while collecting and analyzing data and mentions about academic institutional regulations, more information regarding how to get prepared for the IRB screening, which is usually quite frustrating for novice researchers in social science, could be explicitly discussed to help novice researchers understand the general challenges they may face and procure they may follow before they are able to conduct their research.

In all, this book provides well-thought and detailed guidance for novice researchers to understand the nature and procedures of conducting both quantitative and qualitative research. With its structure and content including thoughtfully-designed learning objectives, reflective tasks, and exercises, it can be used as an ideal entrance-level textbook on research methodology in various disciplines. Readers would benefit more if the book could provide more information about some classic research methodology resources in both quantitative and qualitative research and about IRB procedures. For resources, such as contents, reviews, and sample materials please go to <http://www.sagepub.com/books/Book234218?siteId=sageus&prodTypes=any&q=Research+methodology%3A+A+step-by-step+guide+for+beginners+&fs=1>

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### Author Note

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