

THOUGHTS AND PERSPECTIVES ON RESEARCH DESIGNING IN POLITICAL INQUIRY

Makodi BIEREENU-NNABUGWU

Department of Political Science, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, NIGERIA

Abstract

This paper interrogates the place of research designs in political inquiry. Beyond exploring and explaining the essence and qualities of a good research design, the objective of this work is to provide epistemological insight to the broad options and how to maximize the key options in research designing in the discipline. The paper hypothesizes first, that a good research design has identifiable qualities; and two that that given the specificities of the social sciences, particularly political science discipline, it makes epistemological sense to think and explain research designing in political inquiry from the broad prisms of whether it is quantitative, qualitative or combined. Accordingly, the paper posits in the main, that qualitative, quantitative and combinational options present formidable templates for robust research designing in the length and breadth of the discipline. In probing or arguing the proposition, the paper relies substantially on personal and public documentary sources and materials for the generation of data, while grounded theory technique and analytic inductive technique enabled one to analyze data. The findings of this study indicate that researches in the discipline have a range of three research designs each for qualitative and quantitative research design options. In each case, the trio are explanatory, interpretive and critical designs for qualitative research design options; and exploratory, descriptive and causal designs for quantitative research design options. In the quest for due conceptualization and effective application of research designs, it is also possible to rely on combinations of the two broad options.

Keywords: Designing, Political inquiry, Political science research, Qualitative research design, Quantitative research design and Sociology of knowledge.

Introduction

The place and content of research design have for some time attracted the attention, and indeed are of real interest to many research writers. One major fact that emerges from the motley of literature on research design is the existence of varieties in both scope, essence and classification of research designs. To a reasonable extent, varieties in design is a factor or consequence of variegated orientations and perspectives. On account of this, a

conscientious research designer must also contend with the choice between various ways of carrying out a specific research. As a matter of fact, the idea of design itself connotes existence of varied but acceptable options for tackling identifiable research problem.

While in everyday use, the word design easily suggests pattern or the way things are arranged, what, in research parlance, does design really connote? To what extent is research design a formal statement or plan that guides how research is conducted? How and why is it a blueprint on how to arrive at a solution to identified research problem? How does research design enable a researcher to take and state the vital decisions on how a research is to be conducted? Very importantly, given the phenomena of interest to social scientists, particularly political inquirers, which typological classification best equips a researcher in the discipline in the quest to formulate and utilize appropriate or effective research designs?

In response to foregoing, the main purpose of this paper is largely to explore the essence and typology of research designs in social science research, particularly political inquiry as well as in researches in related disciplines. Doing this, necessarily entails conceptualizing the notion of research design, underlining the essence and qualities of a good research design as well as attempting a forthright typological classification that best equips a researcher in the discipline. Accordingly, following this brief introduction is discourses on relevant literature and conceptual issues. This is followed in part three, by theoretical, methodological and propositional considerations. Part four addresses the qualities of a good research design, while five and six are on quantitative research designs and qualitative research designs respectively. Part seven, which is the last contains the concluding analysis.

Relevant Literature and Conceptual Discourses

The issue of research design has been described, analysed and appraised by a wide range of research writers. For instance, to Apter (1978), in his *Introduction to Political Analysis*, the essence of research design is that it converts strategy into an operational plan for fieldwork or an experiment. Similarly, while positing that research design is a plan, indeed the overall scheme or programme of the research, Kerlinger (1973) also points out that research design includes an outline of what the investigator will do from writing the hypotheses and their operational implications to the final analysis of data. This also includes the methods to be used to gather and analyse the data and the strategy - how the research objectives will be reached as well as how the problem encountered in the research will be tackled.

In Kerlinger's (1973) view research design is essentially a research plan that provides necessary detail about the structure and strategy of the research at hand. It is perhaps in realization of this that Nwana (1981) sees research design as a term for referring to the number of decisions that needed to be taken concerning the collection of data before ever data is collected. In this respect the major concerns of research design are Who or what constitutes the population? Will every member or sample be studied? Will the study be in the natural setting (such as associated with survey research) or will it be under controlled condition, often associated with experimental research?

The major setback in the foregoing delineation of major concerns of research design is that some valid issues of research design are glossed over. Some research writers have also underlined the fact that research design is important or useful in some other ways. In his work, *Essentials of Research Methodology*, for instance, Ndagi (1984) points out that research design is simply a statement on the research procedure. Thus, it is useful to note that research design is a procedural matter and that it is important or useful in two broad ways. The first is that a research design makes provision on how the hypothesis is to be tested, probed or argued. In order to reach valid conclusion, hypothesis is tested about the presumed relationships between the variables that create or are responsible for a particular state of affair. Secondly, the practical problems of the research that can be handled by research design. They include (a) Selection of objects for experimental control, (b) How observations are to be made, (c) The types of statistical instruments to be used for data analysis, (d) How variables are to be manipulated, (e) How extraneous variables are to be controlled. It is perhaps already obvious that research design encompasses more issues with practical relevance. It however appears to have centred mostly on experimental research design that necessarily involves quantitative or statistical analysis. Every research in political science and in deed the length and breadth of the social sciences need not be quantitative or statistically inclined.

On his part, Osuala (1982), underlines the need for research design to be directly related not only to the data, but also to the problem it leads to. Accordingly, he asserts that scientific problems can be solved only on the basis of data and that the major responsibility of the investigator is to set up a design capable of providing the data necessary to the solution of his problem. Differently stated, research design must have bearing not only with the data but also with the problem at hand as well as the nature of the study itself.

While classifying research design as the second stage activity in scientific research process, Anikpo (1986:56) describes research design simply as “the plan or structure of any aspect of the research procedure”. In which case though it is in one sense seen as a stage in research process, research design also extends beyond one particular aspect of the research it also applies generally to the entire research process. In specific terms, the major concerns of research design, according to Anikpo (1986) are stating The most appropriate concepts, Hypothesis, Analytical paradigm, Sampling techniques, Instruments and tools of data collection, Test for hypothesis and Research format. This outline provides a good insight of the main signposts of research design. It builds a bridge between the quantitative and qualitative aspects of research continuum. In addition, highlights research format as a major complement or aspect of research design.

On their part, McQueen and Knussen (2002) emphasize in their work *Research Methods for Social Science* that research design is “the formal plan of a research study in which all the elements necessary to test hypothesis are identified and detailed.” They also see research design as a formal statement of intent, schematic map, or diagram of a study expressed in general terms. A striking feature therefore is that design is quite different from procedure. As McQueen and Knussen points out, the point of difference is that while *research design* is a study plan of a campaign formulated before the study proper is implemented, *research procedure* describes exactly what was done. In other words,

procedure puts design into practice, providing for the reader sufficient details to, if need be, repeat the study. Thus for McQueen and Knussen (2002), in specific terms, a research design must necessarily (a) Specify the kind of investigation that is being carried out. (b) Define the variables that are being measured, manipulated or dominant in the study. (c) Distinguish between independent (predicators) and dependent variables (outcome measures) (d) State whether repeated measures are being used (e) Describe the factor level that combined to form the experimental conditions

Research design is a plan that in the main, emphasizes the nature of the study and how the study is to be carried out. It also underlines the structure of the design, dependent and independent variables as well as extraneous variables, indeed how a researcher intends to fulfil the goal of a proposed study. In line with this, we note that research design has been usefully defined as a plan that:

guides the investigator in the process of collecting, analysing and interpreting observations. It is a logical model of proof that allows the researcher to draw inferences concerning causal relations among the variables under investigation. The research design also defines the domain of generalizability, that is, whether obtained interpretations can be generalized to a larger population or to different situations. (Bailey, 1978: 111).

Research design can be classified based on generalized or dominant methods of data collection contained in such a design. Using this yardstick, in *Fundamental Political Inquiry* Biereenu-Nnabugwu (2011) identified seven types of research designs. They are (a) Historical research design (b) Descriptive research design (c) Survey research design (d) Experimental research design (e) Case study research design (f) Causal research design (g) Evaluative research design. Though this satisfies some level of classification, it does not seem to take into consideration the fact of broad paradigms in political inquiry – qualitative (positivist) and qualitative (Interpretivist-constructivist) paradigms.

An essential import of the above is that research design recognises, aligns or specifies the appropriate paradigm of the study and at the same geared towards stating how the research is going to be carried out. It provides early in the research process, the plan of how to do it, or indeed 'how it is going to be done'. It specifies the plan of the study, choice – pattern or scheme for attacking or solving research problem systematically. Simply stated, this initial formal study plan or research blueprint, choice pattern or scheme for attacking or solving research problem systematically is what is often referred to as a research design.

Theoretical, Methodological and Propositional Considerations

This work is anchored in the theory of sociology of knowledge. The theory focuses on the relationship between human thought and the social context within which it arises, and on the effects prevailing ideas have on societies. Pioneered by Emile Durkheim the theory has attracted the most robust treatment from Mannheim's [1929, 1936] *Ideology and Utopia*:

An Introduction to Sociology of Knowledge. Aspects of the theory also attracted the attention of Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Marcel Mauss and Michel Foucault.

The emphasis of Durkheim's [1858-1917] sociology of knowledge is on the "concept of collective representation". Through collective representation he conceptualizes sociology of knowledge as symbols and images that come to represent ideas, beliefs and values that are elaborated by a collectivity, and which is not reducible to individual constituents. According to him, these include words, slogans, ideas and other material items that serve as symbols. Simply stated, his conception of the theory draws attention to the fact that collective representation is created through intense interaction and that the society or group exerts pressure on the individual to conform to society's norms and thoughts, and therefore helps the individual to order and make sense of the world. From the issues raised in the foregoing discourse, there is a glaring interface between human logical thought, objective conditions and distinctive paradigm-oriented classificatory prisms. The linkage offers us a veritable theoretical framework for examining the qualities of a good research design and for typological classification of research design in a manner that takes into consideration the epistemological realities, social environment and objective conditions of the phenomena in question.

This paper relies largely on *personal and public* documentary sources and materials including conference papers, work shop materials, journals and books for the generation of relevant data. The generated data were analysed by examining the critical issues that have come to assume importance in research design. Grounded theory technique enabled us to analyse gathered data closely alongside analytic inductive technique. Putting all we have discussed above in perspective, it is now necessary for us to set out two interrelated propositions. We hypothesize, first, that a good research design has identifiable qualities; and two that it makes greater sense to think of research designing in political science research from the broad prism of whether it is quantitative, qualitative or combined. Let us first highlight and discuss the objectives and essential qualities of a good research design.

Objectives and Qualities of a Good Research Design

The primary goal of all research designs is to test or argue the hypothesis. In line with this, four different objectives of research design are identified. (a) *Establishment of relationship* A major objective of a good research design is to establish relationship between two or more variables or occurrences. Usually dependent and independent variables, the research designs are usually crafted so as to be able to establish the actual relationship between the identified variables. Research design enables a researcher to consider and decide on how to observe the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. This is usually done in a manner that enables the researcher draw appropriate conclusions about the way, and extent to which, the variables are related or their pattern of relationship. (b) *Relating results to true world* Researchers use research designs to demonstrate that the results of the research are generally true in the real world. In doing this, it shows in concrete terms how the research is conducted. (c) *Reveals order of time* A good research design reveals time. By stating or revealing time, it shows whether one phenomenon

precedes another in time. It shows the relation between what is done and the amount of time spent on it. (d) *Eliminates alternative explanations* Research design eliminates as many alternative explanations for a phenomenon as possible (Johnson and Joslyn, 1995). In this way it focusses on relevant specifics of the research.

A good research design has identifiable qualities. As a matter of fact, an implication of the idea of design is the existence of varied but acceptable options for tackling identifiable research problems. This position presupposes that a good research design must align with some specific qualities. Quality, in this case, refers to certain attributes or characteristics which a research design must possess for such research design to be deemed good or have the capacity to perform or serve as a worthy research design. Seven qualities of a good research design are easily identifiable. First, a good research design is necessarily a brief or concise blueprint. A blueprint is a detailed plan of how to do something or how something is made. As a research blueprint, research designs state clearly but briefly the main issues of how the research is to be carried out. Since a research design is deemed a blueprint for the entire research effort, every good research design is actually expected to provide necessary guide to the researcher. Secondly, good research designs also show or identify relevant variables. It specifies the dependent and independent variables of the study.

It is important to point out that a good research design necessarily states the sources of data: whether primary or secondary; and how such data are to be collected: documentary, observation, questionnaire or interview instruments. In other words, it states or specifies the specific data collection instrument it is going to use. Fourthly, a good research design must as much as possible specify the population and sample size being studied. This is particularly an imperative for positivist, quantitative or survey inclined researches that must necessarily state in specific terms the relevant population and same size. In the fifth place, a worthwhile research design states the method of data analysis. It behoves on a research designer to also state how the generated data are to be analysed and interpreted. The method of data analysis adopted, ultimately affects the entire research effort.

Sixthly, a good research design shows how to test reliability and validity. It is oftentimes necessary to establish how reliable the result of the study is, and to state the methods for ascertaining whether the test is actually measuring what it is supposed to measure. A good research design shows or stipulates how it will test result reliability and validity of the test instrument. Furthermore, it stipulates boundaries. A good research design states or clarifies the boundaries of the study. It does this by delimiting and delineating the extent of the research or the study area. Lastly, it is oftentimes necessary for a good research design to conceptualize, think about and if deemed expedient, involves formal description of the area of the area being studied and the structure of the research itself. Stated differently, a good research design stipulates the area of the study and the layout of the entire research. Research layout is usually called the *research format*.

On the classification of research designs, it is important to note that given the nature and focus of political science, it now makes greater sense to align research designing in the discipline based on the broad prism of whether it is quantitative, qualitative or combined

(McNabb, 2009 and Biereenu-Nnabugwu, 2014). Thus, it is now increasingly more fashionable to think and align research designing in the discipline from the broad prism of whether it is quantitative or qualitative. Accordingly, contemporary and plausible research designs are outlined or classified as qualitative and quantitative research designs.

Broad Types of Research Designs: The Qualitative Options

The term qualitative research refers to “a set of non-statistical inquiry techniques and processes used to gather data about social phenomena” (McNabb, 2009: 341). Strictly stated, qualitative research is the use of predominantly non-numeric tools and instruments in the generation and analysis of data. Data is deemed qualitative when collection of words, symbols, pictures or other non-numerical records, materials or artefacts involved are collected by, or relied upon by the researcher. Qualitative research typically involves studies in inductive, theory-generating, subjective and non-positivist processes (Lee, 1999). In doing this, it relies more on careful observation, logical reasoning, intuition and sequential evidence. As is often the case, collected data are not easily measurable. Accordingly, they are generally amenable to textual descriptions, as well as nominal (classificatory) and ordinal (ranking) levels of measurement.

Whatever is the case, the guiding principle is that in qualitative research, the data in question, and the method used in gathering and analysing it, must have relevance to the phenomenon or social group being studied. Qualitative research designs are grouped into three strategic classes or identifiable types. They are: Explanatory research design, Interpretive research design and Critical research design.

Explanatory research design Explanatory research design is popular in most mainstream qualitative researches. An outstanding objective of explanatory research design is to explain why some phenomena occur and is conducted to build theories and predict future similar behaviour or events as they occur. Explanatory research design’s main goal is often to go beyond the traditional descriptive designs of the positivist paradigm. It is used as a means of gathering fundamental information about a topic, its contributory factors and the influence a phenomenon might have on various outcomes. Thus, explanatory research is useful in gaining insight and ideas about a study problem, and often require follow-up researches. It is perhaps also necessary to point out that the purpose of explanatory research design is broader than that of descriptive research, and that this is largely because explanatory design provides meaning and description.

To generate requisite data, explanatory research design relies heavily two methods: case study and historical methods. As pointed out by Yin (1984), as a research strategy, the distinguishing characteristic of a case study method is that it attempts to examine a contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. Case studies are often intensive studies that focus on one or a few exemplary individuals, families, events, time periods, decisions, processes, programmes, institutions, organizations, groups or communities (Lang and Heiss, 1990; McNabb 2009).

Historical method in research is essentially an attempt to understand a phenomenon or determine its process of growth and dynamics of internal change. It is hinged on the

realization that modern political explanations and theories can be applied in the historical context to shed light on what otherwise might have remained hidden. Historical method is important when the problematic is or borders on the evolution of organised social control and the elucidation of the nature of state, government and its agencies. Sources of data in historical method are primary and secondary. Primary sources are eye witness accounts, observation of historical objects, interview and questionnaire. Secondary sources are newspapers and magazines, books, journals and archival records. For Hocker (1958) historical research method takes in three steps. The first is the gathering of data. This is followed by the critical evaluation of the said data, and then the presentation of the facts, interpretation and conclusion from the facts.

Besides logical reasoning and sequential evidence, numerical description and simple statistical analysis are also popular in the analysis of generated data in explanatory research design. This includes descriptive tools of data presentation and analysis such as discussions and logical statements, tables, graphs, pictorials and so on.

Interpretive research design Many human events and actions are better explained through interpretation of a phenomenon by developing meanings of social events and actions. Sometimes used as synonym of hermeneutics and phenomenology, interpretative researches help us to achieve understanding of actions of people in social circumstance and situations (White in McNabb, 2009). In addition, it is characterised by a strong sense of connection between the researcher and the subjects who are part of an interpretive study. The goal in this design is to build understanding between the participants and the observer. It focuses on standards, worries, rules and values held in common and how they influence human interaction; and as Schwandt (1997) points out requires that the researcher goes beyond simply describing or explaining what a phenomenon is to also interpret the phenomenon to the reader. Interpretative research design's aim is to enhance people's understanding of symbols, artefacts, beliefs, meanings, feeling or attitudes of the people in the situation.

There are basically two methods of research used in interpretive research: grounded theory and ethnographic methods. While the objective of grounded theory method is to develop a theory out of the information gathered, the hallmark of ethnographic method is the generation of research notes that exhibit great depth and detailed complexity. The snag here is that ethnographic method – very popular in anthropology and sociology - requires more time than many political scientists are able or willing to devote to research and research exigencies.

Critical research design Critical research design is the most radical of all qualitative research designs. The objective is usually to change people's beliefs and actions in the ways the investigator believes will better satisfy their needs and wants. A study is considered critical in nature if (a) it is a social critique that exposes harmful or alienating social conditions. (b) its purpose targets to emancipate members of the society from the harmful conditions, thus eliminating the cause of the alienation. Critical research design evolved from two broad approaches, namely: (a) the Marxian critical sociology and (b) the Freudian psychotherapy. Critical research design calls to question the basic assumptions and asks to evaluate them as basis for action. It is rooted in the criticism of the social structure and

capitalist economic system that emerged in reaction to the excesses of the Industrial Revolution. An analytical tool in overcoming oppressive regimes and governments, critical research design assumes that people can misunderstand themselves and situations.

Critical research design relies on action research method. The method focuses on researching the way the group functions and the problems affecting the group. The method also helps members of the group to bring about the needed change that they perceive as right for them. Incidentally, critical research design, no doubt a very useful design, is the least used design in political science.

Broad Types of Research Designs: The Quantitative Options

Quantitative research refers to a set of statistical and largely numeric techniques and processes used to gather and analyse data about social phenomena. This type of research that relies heavily on numeric figures, samples and statistical instruments involving statistical calculations and processes. In political science inquiry, quantitative research design has as its fundamental focus either of three concerns. The concerns are (a) The exploration or illumination of concepts and theories (b) The description of events or phenomena (c) The determination of casual effects that the manipulation of one or more factors may have on variables of interest. The three concerns enable quantitative research designs to explore the character, describe trends and determine relationships. Accordingly, there are three types of quantitative research designs, namely: Exploratory research design, Descriptive research designs and Causal research designs.

Exploratory research design Exploratory research designs are associated with research designs used primarily for gaining insights and ideas about research problems as well as variables and issues associated with those problems. Often employed in studies as a first step in a multipart or extensive research project, exploratory research design helps the researcher to gain greater understanding and to identify variables and how related they are. This explains why they are sometimes seen as pilot studies

Exploratory research design may involve quantitative, qualitative or combinational strategies in data gathering. Both primary and secondary sources of data have similar validity in exploratory research. As a matter of fact, reported findings of other researches, often referred to as *review of related literature*, RRL, is a very important research technique in exploratory research designs. This is because researchers use RRL to gain knowledge of what they should be looking out for in their data gathering effort as well as weigh the applicability of their proposed research method. As a technique in exploratory research designs, RRL is also important because, it enables the researcher to locate or identify major themes for possible incorporation into the research questions in the research at hand.

According to Knight (2002) some major themes in RRL are identifiable. They are (b) What is the point of concern with topic at hand? (b) Why is it important, and to whom is it important? (c) On what point do other researchers agree, and on what and why do they disagree? (d) Out of all the literature, what research question has been treated too lightly? (e) what research question or questions, should the research at hand focus on? (f) What research methodology and methods have been used to study the problem of interest.

Exploratory research designs also take advantage of both in-depth interviews (IDI), pilot survey, case studies and focused group discussion (FGD) as well as administrative records, literature review and documentary evidence in the generation of data. In analysing generated data, exploratory research design relies either on quantitative or qualitative forms or a combination of both.

Descriptive research design Descriptive research design is used when there is need to develop a snap short or quick photo of a given phenomenon of interest. It involves large sample, describes events, helps define attitude, opinions, behaviour that are observed or measured at a given time and environment. The focus of descriptive research design is on careful mapping out of a situation, circumstance or set of events to describe what is happening or has happened. Descriptive researches are of two types: cross-sectional or longitudinal.

Cross-sectional study is a one-shot assessment of a sample of respondents in the context of a given or specific frame time. Note that the assessment in a cross-sectional study may change after or on a later date or if conducted with another sample even if of the same population. The purpose of cross-sectional research design is to determine to what extent different classes in a sample differ on some outcome variable, that is, independent variable. Categories in cross-sectional research design could be gender, different age groups, income, social classes, ethnic groups, etc. Cross-sectional research designs have four basic elements, which according to de Vaus (2001) are (a) Variations are measured in response to independent variables in the sample. Example: Attitude of men and women in relation to a particular candidate. (b) Use at least one independent variable with a minimum of two categories. Example: as in the case of (a) above, the dichotomy could be two, approve / disapprove or it could be five-point scale. (c) the third element of cross-sectional research design is the fact that data collected is time specific. On account of this, the result is concerned with a particular moment. (d) For a known population, it is necessary to select sample randomly.

A longitudinal research studies same sample repeatedly, over two or more time intervals so as to measure change in respondent's responses. The purpose of longitudinal study is usually to identify and measure the change in subjects' or respondents' responses. It is important to note that the same basic elements that apply in cross-sectional research design also apply in longitudinal research design, except that there is a follow-on measurement taken after a period, or periods of time. When longitudinal research designs, follow a sample overtime so as to evaluate attitudes and behaviours they are called *cohort studies*. Reflecting on this, McNabb (2009) points to the fact that cohort researches are popular largely because they measure changes in voter attitudes as campaign progresses or as an administration serves its tenure or elected period in office.

Field surveys involving the use of questionnaire on large samples of individuals, groups or institutions is by far the most appropriate and popular technique in gathering data in descriptive research design. Oftentimes, respondents in questionnaire for descriptive research are asked open-ended or closed questions. The idea is to let them respond as appropriate. In line with quantitative tradition, descriptive research design relies on statistical techniques and instruments for the analysis of generated data. The

target at this point is often to describe, compare, classify or analyse entities and events so as to achieve some levels of numerical accuracy.

Causal research design Causal research design is concerned with the investigation of possible cause-and-effect relationship. This, it does, by observing an existing or prevailing condition and by searching back in time for probable causal factors. Casual research is also known as *ex-post facto* meaning after-the-effect and are of two types: (a) Relational and (b) Experimental. We focus first on *Relational Studies*. Sometimes called correlational studies, relational studies seek to identify how one or more variables are related to one another. Examples: one relational study may be interested on how ethnicity or religion is related to voter choice in governorship or presidential elections; while the other is interested how social power, wealth or money spent on electoral campaign is related to electoral performance. See also chapter eighteen of Biereenu-Nnabugwu (2011). The unique thing here is that the researcher investigates by observing a dependent variable in retrospect, that is backward reflection, in order to establish a possible relationship or effects on the independent variable.

As the name suggests, *Experimental Studies* has to do with experimentation. Researchers conduct experiment when they want to determine whether a causal relationship exists between the two or more variables. It connotes the testing of one or more hypotheses under controlled conditions. Accordingly, experimental research involves planning and conducting experiments, indeed a deliberate manipulation of relevant variables with the view to ascertain the causal relationship of one to another. The purpose of experimental study is to identify the cause or causes of change in a variable or event. It determines “what leads to what” (Rosenthal and Rosnow, 1991). In doing this, it follows a process that essentially experimental – it manipulates different treatments or interventions to examine their effects on a variable of interest. Essentially, experiments involve subjecting two or more samples or sub-samples to different treatments or interventions. One or two independent variable may be manipulated in the same treatment experiment. For example: a piece of political message may be communicated to two or more samples, say communities, to determine their attitude or response to the message.

Causal research is called experimental research because it follows an experimental design. Unlike in exploratory and descriptive designs, where the researcher is the collector of the data or information that already exists, in experimental research, the researcher is an active participant in the data generating process. This because, he manipulates different treatments to examine their effects on a variable of interest. Both parametric and non-parametric statistical tools such as t-test, ANOVA, chi square, etcetera are useful in the analysis of generated data in causal research designs.

Summary and Conclusions

Research design is a formal statement, blue print or plan that guides how research is conducted to arrive at a solution to identified research problem. Research design enables a researcher to take and state the vital decisions on how a research is to be conducted. It focuses on the research process and states the choice, pace and direction of the research effort. It provides early in the research process, the plan of how to do it, or indeed ‘how it

is going to be done'. Specifies the plan of the study, choice – pattern or scheme for attacking or solving research problem systematically. In a nut shell, the initial formal study plan or research blueprint, choice pattern or scheme for attacking or solving research problem systematically is what is often referred to as research design.

This study also underlined the fact and need that a good research has some identifiable objectives and salient qualities. While conceptualizing quality as certain attributes or characteristics which a research design must possess for such research design to be deemed good or have the capacity to perform and serve as a worthy research design; the study identified seven qualities of a good research design. They range from being a brief or concise blueprint of the main issues of how the research is to be carried out to the issues of appropriate description of the study area and layout of the research endeavour. Since a research design is deemed a blueprint for the entire research effort, every good research design is actually expected to provide necessary guide to the researcher

The idea of design itself connotes existence of varied but acceptable options for tackling identifiable research problem. The existence of varieties in design is no doubt, a factor or consequence of variegated orientations and perspectives. What these imply is that a research designer must contend with choice between various ways of carrying out a specific research. In line with this, the primary logic inherent in this study is that political inquiry and related researches lend itself to two broad group: Exploratory research design, Descriptive research designs and Causal research designs for quantitative and Explanatory research design, Interpretive research designs and Critical research designs.

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Biographical Note

Makodi BIEREENU-NNABUGWU, *PhD*, is a Professor of Political Theory and Methodology of Political Inquiry and former Head, Department of Political Science, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, NIGERIA. He has published widely and has over a dozen book titles – including *Methodology of Political Inquiry: Issues and Techniques of Research Methods in Political Science* (2006) and *Africa in the March of Civilization* (2005) - to his credit.