

Reconnaissance Study; concept and design

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تاريخ النشر Publication date	تاريخ القبول Acceptance date	تاريخ التلقي Submission date
2019-11-26	2019-10-24	2019-10-18

Abstract

Although the reconnaissance tours and visits to the field of study can start from the first moments, that the researcher thinks about while doing his study, this can precede even his choice of the theme of study. However, talking about a reconnaissance study with integrated features and clear objectives, can be achieved only after the researcher is settled on his hypotheses and objectives. These last determinants can qualify him to enter this preliminary stage that is called (the reconnaissance study), which is often treated lightly by many researchers. In some researches, it is treated as a stand-alone study, which is almost in the status of a (Conclusive study) and was granted a larger space than its size in the research report. In contrast, other researchers preferred to ignore it completely. Between this and that, the current study came to try to reconsider this important scientific stage by determining its nature, and enumerate its stages and tools, with an emphasis on its methodological value and roles.

key words: Conclusive study, Methodological Procedures Chapter, Reconnaissance Observation, Reconnaissance Interview, Reconnaissance Questionnaire, Exploratory Study.

ملخص

عنوان الورقة: (الدراسة الاستطلاعية، المفهوم والتصميم) من إعداد: (د. سعد الحاج بن جخدل؛ جامعة ابن خلدون؛ الجزائر)

رغم أن الجولات والزيارات الاستطلاعية لميدان الدراسة يمكن أن تبدأ من اللحظات الأولى التي يفكر فيها الباحث في القيام بدراسة ما، حيث يمكن أن تسبق حتى اختياره لمبحث هذه الدراسة؛ إلا أن الحديث عن دراسة استطلاعية متكاملة المعالم وواضحة الأهداف لا يمكن أن يتحقق إلا بعد استقرار الباحث على فروض دراسته وأهدافها؛ حيث أن هذه المحددات الأخيرة هي من تؤهله للدخول في هذا المرحلة التمهيدية المسماة الدراسة الاستطلاعية، والتي غالبا ما يتعامل معها كثير من الباحثين باستخفاف شديد بحيث تم التعاطي معها في بعض الدراسات باعتبارها دراسة قائمة بذاتها تكاد تكون في مقام دراسة نهائية (Conclusive study) ومُنحت لها مساحات أكبر من حجمها ضمن تقرير البحث، وفي مقابل ذلك فضّل باحثون آخرون تجاهلها تماما؛ وبين هذا وذاك جاءت الدراسة الحالية لمحاولة إعادة الاعتبار لهذه المحطة العلمية المهمة، من خلال ضبط ماهيتها، وتعداد مراحلها وأدواتها، مع التأكيد على قيمتها المنهجية وأدوارها.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الدراسة النهائية، فصل الإجراءات المنهجية، الملاحظة الاستطلاعية، المقابلة الاستطلاعية، الاستبيان الاستطلاعي، الدراسة الاستكشافية.

1. WHAT IS RECONNAISSANCE STUDY?

The reconnaissance study is the organized tour (field or documentary) conducted by the researcher as a prelude to the main study; it like those groups or vanguards that precede the armies to the battlefield in order to provide them with the necessary data to succeed in a battle.

The reconnaissance study -with concepts and hypotheses- falls within the operational effort which aims to take the research project from the theoretical state to the practical state. It is considered as the end of the bridge that connects the research problem to the main study, Although it is described as a study, it does not belong to the main study as much as it is related to the operational phase, which aims to create abstract ideas and develop them to be able to enter in the path of concrete research.

At this stage, we must pay attention to the need to distinguish between the reconnaissance study and exploratory study, as the latter is "an integrated study aimed to develop new perceptions about certain themes" (Iaramée & Vallée, 2001, 221). And thus may have its special problems and methods, while the reconnaissance study is just part of the main study whose objectives are limited to prepare for a field study.

2. ROLES OF RECONNAISSANCE STUDY

The description of this stage as a study came from the enormity of the roles entrusted to it, it is located in the research like the status of the handle of the sword to the blade, it connects the body of research with its mind through a wide spectrum of roles, among them are:

- 2.1. **Understanding the Conditions and specificity:** The reconnaissance study helps the researcher to understand the different conditions of his research, starting from his social, psychological or physical specificities, and ending with the total difficulties and obstacles that he may face when entering the target phenomenon.
- 2.2. **Understanding the guarantees:** Understanding the possibility of accomplishing this research, and the amount of winning opportunities within this scientific adventure. This reduces the tension that affects the researcher after diving into the unknowns and questions of the problem; "It is important to know the field and to ensure that the work can be accomplished by identifying its fulcrums and points of

resistance, which entails building a strategy to deal with this field" (Beaud, 1999, 60)

- 2.3. **Trajectory Design:** Once he formulates his hypotheses, the researcher faces many questions such as: What will I study? How will I study? ... Therefore, he is in a dire need for a preliminary round through which he designs a primary plan, in the form of a standard model that guides him during the main study, and will not be able to accomplish this construction, only after carrying out this preliminary reconnaissance study.
- 2.4. **Understanding metric efficiency:** The reconnaissance study is a real opportunity for the researcher to select or design the appropriate research tools and methods for his research, as well as to ensure the extent of its ability to measure his research indicators by tracking their validity and reliability, as these tools are considered as arms that the researcher will use in the battle of scientific research, Therefore, this procedure may not be delayed until another time.
- 2.5. **Accustoming on the search:** The reconnaissance study gives researchers generally and the beginner researcher specifically a good possibility to get used to the research and prepare his scientific thinking to deal with the phenomenon under study. Selltiz et al, (1977) argues that "There is a possibility that reconnaissance studies can play a role in accustoming the researcher to the phenomenon that he proposes to study later in a more organizational way, in the same context, allowing him to arrange future priorities" (Iaramée & Vallée, 2001, 221)

3. RECONNAISSANCE STUDY TOOLS:

The reconnaissance study relies on those research tools on which the regular study relies, from observation and interview to questionnaire. However, the difference is in the way these tools are used, both in terms of the nature of the objectives, or the level of audit and the degree of accreditation; apart from their definition, we can provide the basis for the use of these tools in the reconnaissance study through the following (Saad, 2018):

- 3.1. **Reconnaissance observation:** Although the reconnaissance study requires the researcher to deal quickly with the various events, which weakens the possibility of relying on the observation tool, which requires careful organization and follow-up of the elements of the phenomenon; however, observation is one of the most commonly used tools in the reconnaissance study, thus serious researchers when they visit the fields and potential areas of work, they unleash their different senses in order to monitor the various signals and signs that characterize the status and location of the phenomenon; because of the informal nature of this phase of the study, the reconnaissance observation does not require higher levels of organization and construction, which are closer to spontaneity than to organization; however, before proceeding with its use, the researcher must define his objectives well, which are merely following the details of the above roles. Understanding the circumstances and privacy and end up with getting used to the phenomenon.

In this regard, the researcher has a choice between adopting one of the two types of observation; or entering the reality of his phenomenon as a participant or a non-participant (observer). In this case, the researcher is between adopting one of the two types of observation; If his goal, for example, is to get used to the research and get the respondents get used to it, he can adopt the observation with participation, but if he is interested, for example, in designing the virtual paths that he will take during his main study, he can rely on the observation without participation, where it is sufficient to monitor a set of points or behaviors on which to build his initial plan.

- 3.2. **Reconnaissance interview:** the reconnaissance interview does not differ from the reconnaissance observation at the level of the goal; it is like the previous one aiming to collect data to achieve a role among the roles assigned to the reconnaissance study, which is mentioned in the previous stage. However, the difference between these two tools is in the nature of the practice and the extent of employing and capturing the outputs

of the studied phenomenon, while the reconnaissance observation employs all the senses to monitor the various outputs of the phenomenon, the reconnaissance interview satisfies only to listen to the human components of the phenomenon.

Since the reconnaissance interview is related to the human element, the researcher should know well who should meet. He is not obliged to approach all the individuals involved in the phenomenon, and here we can identify three important categories to meet with:

- A- The category of officials or leaders of groups who interact with the phenomenon.
- B- The category of researchers dealing with these phenomena.
- C- The category of those interested in the issues and characteristics of these phenomena such as the heads of associations or journalists or political activists ..etc.

As we mentioned with the previous tool, even a reconnaissance interview is not much concerned with the conditions of the interview for the main study, according to Quivy & Van Campenhoud (1988, 89) "reconnaissance interviews should be conducted in a very open and flexible manner, without using these precise and multiple questions, leaving the administrator with great freedom, since the reconnaissance interviews are used to create thought paths through which hypotheses are to be tried"

- 3.3. **Reconnaissance questionnaire:** Although the reconnaissance questionnaire is less used than the previous tools in the reconnaissance study, but it remains good in terms of ease of use and the degree of the achievement of the roles of the reconnaissance study. It is used in terms of collecting data on the field of study, and collecting human characteristics of the study population, sometimes the metric characteristics of the study tools are studied based on the questionnaire.

As stated in the interview; the design of the reconnaissance questionnaire is also advisable to take into account those open questions that motivate respondents to answer openly, resulting in many indicators that can be useful to the researcher in designing a clear and guaranteed work model for success in the rest of the main study stages; among the most important axes touched by the questions that may be included in the reconnaissance questionnaire are:

- A- Demographic characteristics of the target population.
- B- Criteria that the researcher must respect, when entering the study population.
- C- The historical and social dimensions of the phenomenon to be studied.
- D- The quality of life that frames the coexistence of individuals with the studied phenomenon.
- E- Sources and access of obtaining the information within the units of the studied population.

Although the reconnaissance questionnaire is easy to apply and design compared to other tools, this is not a reason to distribute large numbers of questionnaires; rather, the researcher should be satisfied with a few units so as not to affect the different units of population, and reduces their willingness to participate in the main study, but must provide the questionnaire cautiously and quickly in line with his reconnaissance goals.

4. EMPLOYING THE RECONNAISSANCE STUDY:

After relying on the above tools to achieve the objectives and roles of the reconnaissance, the researcher faces a new challenge, which is how to employ and present the results of the reconnaissance study!?!; To facilitate this challenge, we emphasize that the use of the results of the reconnaissance are distributed according to their roles through three aspects (Saad, 2019):

- 4.1. **Accustomedness appearance:** It is linked to those roles related to accustom to research, and assimilation of guarantees, and understand the circumstances and particularity. This appearance is employed on the mental and psychological level where its effects are described as moral and reflected indirectly on subsequent research practice. we can notice the positive impact of these visits and reconnaissance studies on the behavior of the researcher who seems more accustomed with the new research conditions.
- 4.2. **Metric appearance:** Part of the results of the reconnaissance study is employed in this aspect according to the metric efficiency roles, where the results of the construction and examination of different measurement tools are placed within a special element of the presentation of research tools, which is in methodological procedures chapter , by highlighting on different steps and stages of construction and examination these tools in the reconnaissance phase, with emphasis on presenting the results of this process in order to benefit the reader or interested persons from the magnitude of the metric efficiency of these tools, which will collect data in order to verify the various hypotheses.
- 4.3. **Introductory appearance:** This appearance includes the various elements of introduction and encouraging to proceed with the completion of the main study, and is mainly related to the presentation of the circumstances of the reconnaissance visit, dates and the extent to achieve its objectives to understand the conditions of the place and the characteristics of the phenomenon to be studied; as well as the ability to deal with the constituent units of the study population.

The previous different elements are exposed within a report under the heading (reconnaissance study) and at the beginning of the methodological procedures chapter, before the presentation of the elements of the method, sampling and research tools. The researcher should not exaggerate in presenting the details of this element through fill it with those data that do not serve those who are interested in understanding the course of the research process at this reconnaissance stage; rather, he should present only the most

important objectives of this study and shows the time stages and the most important events that took place, after that he seeks to highlight on the extent to which the objectives are achieved by presenting the facts that have been demonstrated to him during this reconnaissance study.

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