

# Conceptualisation: The Foundation of Any Solid Quantitative Research

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**Abstract:** This paper discusses the importance of conceptualisation in quantitative research. It explains in simple terms what conceptualisation entails, and indicates where and how the researcher should apply the techniques of conceptualisation. The paper has been prompted by the recurring challenges higher degree students and early career researchers face in enabling the readers of their research reports (dissertations or theses) to gain a common understanding of what they have written about. Problems with this have caused some dissertations or theses to be rejected for reporting on something other than what the candidate purports to have studied. In this paper, conceptualisation is examined as a multi-dimensional concept, starting with the process of forming concepts that describe the identified research problem, and proceeding to the derivation of agreed-on meanings of concepts, as well as the operationalisation of study variables, in order to avoid ambiguity and misinterpretation in a researcher's work. In the paper, the author attempts to explain in some detail how misconceptualisation can lead the researcher to err when conducting research, and the implications of this at each stage of the quantitative research process. In short, the paper demonstrates that a solid quantitative study cannot be conducted without appropriate conceptualisation. The paper may thus be used as a guide in planning and conducting quantitative studies by higher degree students and early career researchers.

**Keywords:** Concept, conceptualisation, research, variables, operationalisation, dissertations