Chapter 2
Research Methodology
2.1. Research Paradigm

The “paradigm wars” between those who believe in objective facts and those who stand for subjective meaning is ever debatable if one becomes fundamental and impractical. While the positivists boast of hard and generalisable data, the constructivist/interpretivist are relentless about their deep, rich and contextual data. Both the sides have historically opposed each other (Nau 1995). The fundamentalists have failed to understand that the research process is determined only by the research questions and the objectives. Pragmatism offers a truce in this regard.

The three stalwarts of Pragmatism are Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914), William James (1842-1910), and John Dewey (1859-1952). Pragmatism overcomes the methodological monism by offering feasible solution to the researcher by bridging the schisms.

According to Morse (1991), the primary objective of mixed methods research, which stems from pragmatist philosophy, is to obtain a holistic understanding of the behaviour and experiences of individuals, groups, communities and institutions by using more than one method within the research study. Creswell and others (2003) agree to Morse’s point of view.

2.1.1. Pragmatism: The Philosophy

Pragmatism arose as a philosophical movement in the early 1900s. The word 'pragmatism' is derived from the Greek word ‘pragma’, which means action. The words practice and practical are derived from this root word (Pansiri 2005). Pragmatism as a philosophy claims that a proposition is true only if it works satisfactorily and if found to be practical. The origin of the philosophy can be traced to the 'Metaphysical Club', an informal study circle started by four scholars Chauncey Wright, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Charles Sanders Peirce and William James in 1870.
C S Peirce, the founder of the Pragmatism, introduced the abduction logic, contrary to the deductive and the inductive stances. Abduction is the process of arriving at a “tentative theory that serves as hypothetical explanatory concepts” (Thomas 2010 b: 577).

The goal of the pragmatists is not to find fundamental truths but to focus on practical problems. Pragmatism is influenced by Kantian thought (the belief that our understanding of the external world has its foundations not only in experiences, but also in ‘a priori’ knowledge). Pragmatists vehemently refute the Cartesian Dualism (mind-material dichotomy) and propose to have an integrative perspective of the reality.

Pragmatism is also close to two major philosophical principles-scepticism and fallibilism.

Scepticism is a position that refrains from making absolute truth claims. Fallibilism, another principle in philosophy, is the belief that human beings could be wrong about their way of looking at things. Fallibilism insists that in the light of new evidence that would contradict old beliefs, one should move on. Thus, fallibilism is the consciousness that our interpretations are temporarily indexed and are subject to historical flux and change (Kompridis 2006). As Putnam (1994) points out, pragmatism builds reconciliation between anti-scepticism and fallibilism.

In recent times, neo-pragmatism has come of age. It was mainly popularised by Richard Rorty, a contemporary American scholar. He along with other philosophers and thinkers such as Hilary Putnam, W Quine, Donald Davidson and Stanley Fish have helped in the re-emergence of pragmatism, especially, in the field of linguistics.

While traditional pragmatists focus on experience, Rorty and other Neo-pragmatists focus on the language. Hence, the new approach is rightly called the ‘linguistic turn’ in pragmatics.
2.1.2. Pragmatism in Social Science

Pragmatism connects easily with social sciences. Durkheim claims that sociology and pragmatism share a sense of life and action. He calls them “children of the same era” (Durkheim 1983:1). Notably, the French neo-pragmatic movement came under the label of ‘sociologie pragmatique de la critique’ in the early 1990s (Bogusz 2012).

Both sociology and pragmatism made an important early contribution to practice theory. Practice theory is a concept explaining how social beings transform the world through their diverse motives and intentions. Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu helped in the formulation of the principles of practice theory.

In the 1990s, feminist scholars such as Seigfried, Duran, Keith and Whipps rediscovered classical pragmatism. According to Seigfried, “realigning theory with praxis, resisting the turn to epistemology and instead emphasising concrete experience is the crux of pragmatism and feminist practice” (1996:21). Thus, pragmatism and feminism reject object philophising as an intellectual endeavour. Instead, as Seigfried considers, “philosophical techniques are means to an end, and not an end in itself” (1996:37).

William James, one of the prominent leaders of pragmatism, was a psychologist and medical doctor. He underscores his psychological method of introspection as looking into our own minds and reporting what we discover (James 1950). Following his entry in the Theosophical movement, he became a close follower of Peirce's pragmatism.

James held that theories are instruments, and not answers to enigmas. He also believed that ideas become true when it helps us to get into satisfactory relations with other parts of our experience (James 2005). Thus, he connected pragmatism to psychology. Rightly, he is called the father of American psychology. William James further developed the idea of stream of consciousness, a point of view that the human mind is just a stream of consciousness rather than a succession of ideas.
This was picked by literary critics. Writers such as May Sinclair, Dorothy Richardson, James Joyce and William Faulkner furthered the method.

In recent times, social workers have found pragmatism as a philosophical foundation of their practice. According to Guerra (2013:51), “(a) social worker not only has a professional everyday life, but also acts in the everyday life of other subjects, usually seeking their immediate modification. In the realm of daily life, immediatism, spontaneity, and the point of view of common consciousness predominate.” Thus, taking a practical perspective is important for social workers.

Guerra argues that “social work lays emphasis on practice, which is identified as pure experience” (Guerra 2013:53). He also finds three categorical similarities, namely anti-foundationalism, consequentialism, and contextualism, which strengthen the relationship of pragmatism with social work. Thus, it is clear that social work truly aligns with pragmatism in spirit and action.

2.1.3. Pragmatism as a Paradigm in Social Research

The philosopher Thomas Kuhn, in his famous book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, popularised the word paradigm. A paradigm is a world view that permeates every aspect of a research inquiry. There are three major paradigms in social science research - positivism, interpretivism/constructivism, and pragmatism. These paradigms offer opposing worldviews that guide researchers (Tashakkori and Teddlie 1998).

Positivists believe that reality is out there, objective and measurable. On the other hand, interpretivists argue that reality is subjective and cannot be measured. Pragmatism offers an alternative to both positivism and interpretivism. Pragmatism “sidesteps the contentious issues of truth and reality, and accepts philosophically, that there are singular and multiple realities that are open to empirical inquiry and orients itself toward solving practical problems in the real world” (Creswell & Clark 2007: 20 cited in Feitzer 2010:8).
Feitzer (2010) adheres to the position of Creswell and Clark that “pragmatism allows the researcher to be free of mental and practical constraints imposed by the forced choice dichotomy between post positivism and constructivism” (Creswell & Clark 2007: 27 cited in Feitzer 2010). He further reiterates what Robson encourages researchers to do, that is, “not to be prisoner of a particular research method or technique” (Robson, 1993:291 cited in Feitzer 2010:8).

2.1.4. Mixed Methods Approach and Pragmatic Beliefs

The paradigm wars became intense after 1960s. For the next thirty years, both quantitative researchers (positivists) and the qualitative researchers (interpretivists) fought vehemently.

However, in the 1990s, the arrival of pragmatic beliefs in research methodology field, brought to light a radical third way of doing research, called as Mixed Methods Approach. Pragmatists link the choice of the research design directly to the nature of the research questions. They embrace multiple methods, sometimes methods radically opposite and used by opposing camps to capture data.

For example, the Pragmatists employ one positivistic method (survey) and another interpretivist method (in-depth interviews) to get the maximum from the field. Thus, suspending all philosophical belief and the mixing of methods for research purpose came to be known as mixed methods approach.

According to Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003), mixed methods approach is superior to a mono-method approach in three ways. Firstly, in the mixed methods approach, the researcher has the ability and freedom to answer research questions that other approaches cannot take up. Secondly, the inferences arrived through mixed methods approach is contextual. Thirdly, mixed methods approach allows divergent viewpoints to be expressed freely.

Thus, the approach provides an opportunity for researchers to study an issue from varied points of view using multiple methods and analysis strategies.
According to Creswell and others (2011:4), mixed methods research “focuses on research questions that call for real-life contextual understandings, multi-level perspectives, and cultural influences. It employs rigorous quantitative research to assess magnitude and frequency of constructs and rigorous qualitative research exploring the meaning and understanding of constructs. Thus, it utilizes multiple methods and intentionally combines these methods to draw on the strengths of each and frames the investigation within philosophical and theoretical positions.”

There are three strategies in handling data in mixed methods studies, namely merging data, connecting data and embedding data (Creswell et al 2011:5).

In the first (merging data) strategy, qualitative data in the form of texts or images are presented within the quantitative data. This integration is achieved by reporting results together in a discussion section of a study.

In the second (connection data) strategy, integration involves analysing one data set (either quantitative or qualitative) and then using the information for subsequent data collection. In this way, the integration occurs by connecting the analysis of results from the first phase with the data collection from the second phase of research.

In the third (embedding data) strategy, a dataset of secondary priority is embedded within a larger primary design (Creswell 2011). All the three strategies are used in different research studies.

Triangulation is the common feature of mixed methods approach. There are four ways in which triangulation can be attempted. They are:

- Data triangulation (using variety of data sources for studying the subject)
- Investigator triangulation (using several researchers in the project to counter bias)
- Theory triangulation (using multiple perspectives/theories to interpret the results available)
- Methodological triangulation (using multiple methods in the study to address the research questions)
In most of the mixed methods studies, a combination of triangulation techniques is used. Through these attempts, method, data and researcher bias is reduced.

Creswell and others (2003) suggest that data collection in mixed methods study can be conducted concurrently or sequentially. They suggest integration of data at one or more stages in the process of research. According to them, there are six recognised mixed methods designs, namely, Sequential Explanatory, Sequential Exploratory, Sequential Transformative, Concurrent Triangulation, Concurrent Nested, and Concurrent Transformative (Creswell et al 2003).

Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) suggest that researchers using mixed methods approach should mindfully choose designs that effectively answer their questions. If possible, adaption of the designs can be attempted by researchers based on their need.

2.2. Design of this Study

Based on the research questions, Sequential Exploratory Design was chosen for the study. The Sequential Exploratory Design is normally conducted in two phases. In the initial phase, qualitative data is collected and analysed. In the second phase, quantitative data is collected and analysed. “Priority is given to the qualitative aspect of the study and the findings of the two phases are integrated in the interpretation stage” (Jeanty and Hibel 2011: 639). The researcher has made modifications in the Sequential Exploratory Design to suit the study. He has divided the study into two stages:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 1</th>
<th>Stage 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In-depth interview with trustees/ chief functionaries/ senior managers in three NGOs</td>
<td>In-depth interview with nine stakeholders (three each from donor, beneficiaries and grassroots staff categories)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey with chief functionaries of 30 NGOs</td>
<td>Survey with 90 stakeholders (30 each from donor, beneficiaries and grassroots staff categories)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig: 2.1
The two stages are further divided into three phases respectively. In the first phase (of the first stage), three NGOs (details covered in 2.2.1) were selected and in-depth interviews were conducted with the chief functionary and senior management. Additionally, archival data like the annual reports were reviewed.

In the second phase (of the first stage), the qualitative data was analysed. Survey questions were generated based on the emerging data. Survey was conducted with chief functionaries of 30 NGOs in Mumbai (details covered in 2.2.1). In the third phase (of the first stage), integration of qualitative and quantitative data was done at the end.

**First Stage**

- **P1**: Selection of three NGOs and in-depth interview with chief functionary and senior management. Review of archival data.
- **P2**: Analysis of qualitative data. Survey questions generated based on the data. Survey conducted with chief functionaries of 30 NGOs.
- **P3**: Integration of qualitative and quantitative data was done.
Similarly, in the first phase (of the second stage), nine stakeholders (three beneficiaries, three grassroots staff and three donors) were selected and in-depth interviews were conducted with them (details covered in 2.2.1).

In the second phase (of the second stage), the qualitative data was analysed. Based on the data, survey questions were generated based on the findings. Survey was conducted with 90 stakeholders in Mumbai (details covered in 2.2.1).

In the third phase (of the second stage), integration of qualitative and quantitative data was done.

Fig: 2.3
2.2.1. Selecting the Subjects and Data Collection in Stage-1

During the first phase in the stage I of the study, three NGOs were selected. The following principle was followed to select the subjects (NGOs):

- The subject (NGOs) should fulfil the basic criteria set-up for the study (explained in the next paragraph)

Tandon’s (2002) classification of NGOs in India was primarily used by the researcher to develop a criterion for subject selection. According to the classification, there are three major types of NGOs, namely service providers, support organizations and development promoting organizations. Service Providers are those NGOs involved in welfare activities in the area of health, education, relief and rehabilitation. Support Organizations are those NGOs involved in capacity building, research, etc. Development Promoters are those rights-based NGOs focusing on empowerment (Tandon 2002).

By utilising Tandon’s (2002) classification, an adapted typology including three more type of NGOs based on the levels of presence was developed. The combined matrix is given below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of presence</th>
<th>Type of NGO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Service Providing Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Level</td>
<td>![Symbol]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State/ Regional Level</td>
<td>![Symbol]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Level</td>
<td>![Symbol]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Fig: 2.4*
Based on the matrix, three organizations were selected using purposive sampling strategy. This type of sampling helps in generating sufficient data on the phenomenon being studied (Jeanty and Hibel 2011). Hence, the strategy was adopted.

In selecting the three NGOs, these procedures were followed:

- The organizations should be in the field for the last 20 years
- The organizations must have done exemplary work in the field
- The leaders and managers of the organization should have good insight and reflective ability
- The organizations should be transparently posting their annual reports in their website
- The organizations should be accredited/ or in the process of accreditation with agencies like Credibility Alliance

Few organizations, which fulfilled these criteria, were initially approached through gate keepers (staff and volunteers who are associated with these organizations and who knew the researcher). Finally, three NGOs were selected for the study. The first NGO is a service provider at community level. The second NGO is a support/capacity development organization at state level and the third NGO is a development promoter at the national level. The organizations were selected from different parts of the country. They are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NGO Type</th>
<th>Name of the NGO **</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local Service Provider</td>
<td>Centre for Action and Sexual Health (CASH)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Organization</td>
<td>Association for Sustainable Development (ASD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development Promoter</td>
<td>National Development Association (NDA)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The names of the organizations are changed to protect identity**
The data collection process was as follows:

- Details of the contact persons were obtained from the gate keepers (staff and volunteers) who supported the researcher
- E-mail with details of the PhD research project was sent to the contact persons/ organizations
- Acceptance email was received from contact persons/ organizations
- Three NGOs that matched the criteria were finally selected
- The researcher made a preliminary visit to these organizations. During the visit, discussion was held about the logistics of data collection. Tentative interview dates were fixed.
- At the decided dates, the researcher reached the respective organizations and interviewed the respective participants.

The process of data collection and the protocol followed are explained:

- One of the senior trustees/ board members or the chief functionary of the NGO was interviewed
- Interviews were conducted with the senior managerial staff, who volunteered to participate in the study
- Simultaneously, documents such as annual reports and internal communication materials were reviewed to understand the history and nature of the organization

- After the data collection was done, the interviews were transcribed. The transcripts were sent to the research participants who sought for review and correction. After confirmation from the participants, qualitative data analysis was done through thematic analysis technique.
- Based on emerging themes, a survey was prepared. According to the government estimate, Maharashtra has the highest number of registered NGOs (4.8 lakh). In the state, Mumbai, has the maximum NGOs. Hence NGOs in the city served as population for the survey.
• A list of 100 NGOs in Mumbai was drawn up based on the Give India and Karmayog e-database.

• From the list, 30 organizations were selected using purposive sampling strategy. The survey was administered with chief functionaries of all these 30 NGOs in Mumbai.

• The data was uploaded in the SPSS package and descriptive statistics was done to organise the tables.

• Finally, integration of qualitative and quantitative data was done.

2.2.2. Selecting the Subjects and Data Collection in Stage-2

In the first phase (of the second stage), nine stakeholders were selected for the study. The following criterion was followed to select the stakeholders:

✓ They should have rich information related to the NGO
✓ They should be associated with the organization for at least two years
✓ They should have good insight and reflective ability

The data collection process is explained below:

• Stakeholders who fulfilled these criteria were selected using purposive sampling. Nine stakeholders (three beneficiaries, three grassroots staff and three donors), who were willing to participate, were selected for the study.

• In-depth interviews conducted with the nine stakeholders.

• Based on the qualitative data from the in-depth interviews with the stakeholders, themes were generated.

• Based on the themes, three (stakeholders) survey schedules (on each for donors, beneficiaries and staff) were prepared.

• Mumbai, by virtue of being the capital city of Maharashtra and having the maximum number of NGOs in the state, was taken as the site for survey data collection.
Based on the list of 100 NGOs in Mumbai drawn earlier, 10 organizations were purposively selected. Three staff and three beneficiaries from each of the organization were surveyed.

Similarly, for the donor survey, a list of institutional and individual donors was prepared based on the data from e-sources and from sources of consultants. Finally, 15 individual donors and 15 institutional donors were purposively selected.

The data was later entered in SPSS software and descriptive statistical analysis was conducted.

In the end, integration of qualitative and quantitative data was done.

2.3. Ethical Protocol

Very few research studies are conducted on this theme because of the ethical aspects involved in selection, data collection and reporting the study. Hence the following ethical protocols were followed in the study.

- Principle of voluntary participation

NGOs and stakeholders were not pressurized to participate in the study. A brief orientation was given to the selected NGOs and stakeholders before the start of the data collection to put them at ease.

- Principle of no harm to participants

No external force was used to get the desired answers from the research participants. A convenient atmosphere was created to take care of the genuine aspirations and problems of the research participants.

- Principle of anonymity, confidentiality and non-fabrication of data

Complete anonymity of the research participants is maintained in the study and oral informed consent is obtained in all cases. The researcher did not tamper the data obtained from the research participants.
2.4. Field Work Experiences

The researcher had approached many NGOs for the study. Some of the organizations refused to entertain the researcher. Even with the selected organizations for the study, availing minutes of meetings and other details related to the finances was very difficult, primarily due to the lack of awareness among NGOs to allow researchers to conduct research in these areas.

During the data collection process, on many occasions, interviews could not happen on the said date and time because the staff or trustees had other pressing work to attend to and found it extremely difficult to find quality time for the researcher. The staff initially showed hesitation and mistrust to share information to the researcher. On the contrary, most of the stakeholders interviewed for the study were very cooperative and felt that the exercise helped them to reflect and understand more about the NGOs. However, finding stakeholders with rich information was very difficult. It was those individual contacts that helped finally.

2.5. Constraints and Limitations

There cannot be any study without constraints and limitations. There were certain constraints and limitations in this study too. They are as follows:

- Literature: The researcher found it difficult to collect high quality contemporary material/literature. The researcher visited quite a few libraries in the city, but could not get much of the recent works on stakeholder accountability of NGOs. This was mainly due to the nature of the topic (NGOs are the least researched institutions in India)

- Universal Database on NGOs: Although there are databases available at the Planning Commission, Give India, and Credibility Alliance portals, they are not in total or universal. This led the researcher to use his contacts and these web portals to develop a database of NGOs for the study.
- Lack of Prior Empirical Research: There is seldom any empirical research done of topic (NGOs from the accountability perspective) in India. Hence, it was completely a different set of challenge to find those, mostly in the form of Masters and PhD thesis in libraries and e-repositories.

- Paradigm and Design: The research paradigm and design used in the study is also new. This led the researcher to spend more time in understanding the nuances of the paradigm and intricacies of the design.

- Access to Data: The researcher wanted to have access to key organizational data such as minutes, official communication and other documents. Unfortunately, the researcher was not able to gather much data due to lack of access to these key documents.