

# TRIANGULATION APPROACH TO RESEARCH IN ACCOUNTING AND FINANCE

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## ABSTRACT

The adoption of multiple strategy, techniques and research design construct in accounting research is perceived by some researchers as capable of enhancing the validity of results and boost confidence on the reliability of the outcome. These advocates, viewed triangulation as a medium of exploring various perspective of theories, data and environmental setting to examine a research in accounting. The study seeks to appraise the concept of triangulation, historical antecedence, rationale, types and prior literatures on the subject matter. Finally, the study recommends that flexibility in accounting and finance research phenomenon is complementing the advancement of knowledge and bridging perceive inadequacies in adopting the tradition of conducting research without triangulation.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Accounting as a field of study has evolved overtime, the development of the various branches of accounting into independent field on its own shows how dynamic accounting profession is in this 21<sup>st</sup> century. In recent times, various areas of accounting have been affected one way or the other as a result of changes in business environment, regulatory framework and emergence of new concepts (e.g. Forensic Accounting, Sharia Audit, sustainability accounting, agricultural business Accounting, peace accounting, Islamic accounting and finance etc.) (Dandago, 2019). These multi faced nature of the field of study has interlope into other disciplines such as Economics, Management, Geography, Islamic studies and Law to mention but few which have given a new dimension to research phenomenon in accounting. The utilization of multiple research underpinnings is complementary to a research phenomenon in accounting and finance. The proponent of these approach viewed utilization of a single theory to examine a research model as grossly inadequate in explaining the dynamism of most research in contemporary organization, as such, multiplicity of theories, data and environmental setting will give a clear picture as possible (hopper & Hoque, 2006). Triangulation in the context of social science research is simply an attempt to vividly explain the richness and complexities of human behaviour by studying it from different perspectives (Cohen & Manion, 1986). Also, Triangulation is the techniques employed in research to give more detail and balance picture of the situation (Altrichter & Somekh 1996). From the above, one can deduce that triangulation in the context of social science research is the adoption of multiplicity of tactics, multiple research design construct and exploring the dynamism of the environment in evaluating a research phenomenon in accounting and finance.

### 1.1 Types of Triangulations

The following are the various types of triangulations as reported in some literatures:

**Data triangulation:** This implies using multiple sources of data such as questionnaires and interviews to enhance the quality of the research findings. Most studies explore the use of both primary and secondary sources of data in their studies. See for example, a study conducted by Olawale L. S (2012), he employed the used of mixed mode (both questionnaires and annual report) in the study of compliance with international financial reporting standards and performance of Nigeria banks.

**Investigator triangulation:** This implies using several investigators in the analysis processes in the study. This method of triangulation is not commonly applicable in accounting and finance research.

**Theoretical triangulation:** This involves adopting multiple theory to examine a similar research phenomenon. For example, Hoque and Hopper's (1994, 1997) studied management control in a Bangladeshi jute mill by employing technical-rational model, human-relations approach, interpretive theory and political economy approach, Hoque and Hopper provide evidence to support earlier research claiming that multiple theoretical perspectives facilitate accounting research in identifying

and explaining the many factors causing failure of formal accounting and control systems in an organisation. Berry et al. (1991) suggest that each approach offers something different and appears to offer something practical and organizationally helpful if not always individually helpful. They claim that multiple approaches (whatever their limitations) can provide windows into organisational activity and allow one to achieve a wider and richer understanding of accounting and control procedures.

**Methodological triangulation:** This involves the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods in the same study. For example, Ambali (2009) conducted a study E-government policy: Ground issues in tax e-filing system in Malaysia. He employed the use of both questionnaires and unstructured interview in his study as methodological contribution in the research area.

**Environmental triangulation:** This involves the use of different location settings and other key factors related to the environment on which the study took place such as time, day and seasons. For example, replicating studies conducted in different continents in order to compare results. For example, conducting a study on the perception of accounting teachers towards environmental Accounting education in Nigeria, the perception of an average northerner will be tailored towards desert encroachment while that of a Niger delta will be towards oil pollution and environmental degradation. The perception defers as a result of the differences in environmental challenges faced by the two different regions in the same country. Therefore, a broader scope in population could enrich the value of responses and the quality of the research findings

## 1.2 How to Use Triangulation in Your Research Work

1. Download as many publish articles as you can afford in your area of research
2. Critically review the prior literatures, extract a literature map of important component contained in the prior studies such as, country, variables, theories, method, data, and major findings etc.
3. From the literature map, identify the commonly used theory, methods, source of data and location.
4. Attempt to use a distinct combination of theories, data sources, location and method which has not been explored by prior studies in your research area.
5. The identification of this void could either be your theoretical or methodological contribution.
6. In order to add value to the richness of your findings, combining multiple sources of data distinct from prior studies in the research area could add value to the outcome of your research.

## 2. CONCLUSION

Contemporary social science research is broader in scope and is interwoven with other disciplines which makes research in these areas without triangulation not adequately providing the required output. The multi-dimensional nature of social science has added impetus for triangulation to be adopted in contemporary accounting and finance research. Research in these area must be flexible in its strategy to encapsulate the dynamics of the study and advance the quality of research findings. If one intend to triangulate, it is important to be clear about why you want to adopt it and how you intend to apply it in your research.

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