

Chapter 11

Research Report Writing: Proposals, Dissertations, and Academic Writing

ABSTRACT

This chapter discusses the critical aspects necessary to produce a research report from a study undertaken. Since research is based on a systematic endeavour which seeks to establish valid findings, the chapter addresses notions of criticality that ought to be espoused by the inquirer and the need to present findings being mindful of the demands related to academic writing. Furthermore, the chapter outlines the structures and steps that are necessary to produce a good enough proposal, ethical issues, gaining consent and ultimately how to produce a dissertation report at the end of all research activities and data analysis. It is noted in this chapter that a good proposal is most likely to end as a plausible research output. An informative study need not be diminished by a lack of academic writing skills, poor organisation, and unethical conduct.

INTRODUCTION

After reviewing many literature sources, coupled with data collection and analysis, the researcher will have to decide on how to structure their report and which style of writing to follow. Most universities tend to provide their students with adequate guidance on this process to ensure that dissertation

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reports are not only professionally written but are also scholarly in content and structure. A properly organised output ensures that the research results and findings are presented with clarity and are accessible to the reader for enhanced understanding. It would be disconcerting for the reader to find that the research report is not properly ordered, for example, starting with the research findings instead of providing a sound introduction which gives contextual background and effective framing of the study, or where references are listed first before the report. Such a dissertation or research report is most likely to be discarded by those who read it even before reaching the conclusion section. A poorly written report which is lacking formal structure will put at risks all its content and knowledge sharing potential, however good. Furthermore, such a report would appear haphazardly imbalanced and will give credence to those who criticise its epistemological foundations and outcomes.

It is therefore important for the researcher to structure their report following acceptable academic guidelines and referencing styles. This chapter intends to guide research students on how to present research findings more professionally and academically. It is noted that following academic writing guidelines may seem frustrating and time-consuming, yet it is the best possible way to reach those who desire to use the research's findings. Referencing properly using the accepted versions such APA, Harvard and Chicago styles is also an important facet in academic writing. It is critical to ensure that the research report is disseminated and indexed accordingly. While adhering to referencing rituals of in-text citations, the rigour to avoid improper citations, and appropriate listing of citations may appear daunting, it is a necessary measure to standardise all scholarly and academic work in a way that adds value to knowledge development in various fields of endeavour.

As noted earlier most academic institutions will tend to opt for a referencing style which they then use to guide their research staff and students. This chapter addresses the generic structure required to produce a research report and expounds on what is needed in each of the specific sections listed or generally recommended by most academic organisations. The sections of a research report or dissertation are more likely to include the following:

Example: Research Report Structure

Title Page, (with Abstract)

Introduction

Literature review

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