

Research Report Writing

Definition of Research Report

Research is the systematic investigations into study of a natural phenomena or materials or sources or existing condition of the society in order to identify facts or to get additional information and derive new conclusions. It is a production process, which needs a number of inputs to produce new knowledge and application of new and existing knowledge to generate technology that ultimately may generate economic prosperity of a nation. Simply, a research paper/report is a systematic write up on the findings of the study including methodologies, discussion, conclusions etc. following a definite style. The research report writers in making the report good qualitative should remember the saying 'Try to express, not to impress'. More elaborately and precisely, a report or systematic write up on the findings of a research study including an abstract/executive summary/summary, introduction (Background with literature review, justification, objectives etc.) methodology/materials and methods (including statistical design, if any), results and discussion, conclusions and recommendations, references etc. following a definite style or format may be called a Research Report.

Why to Prepare a Research Report?

The purpose of the research report is to convey the readers the problem investigated, the methods used to solve the problem, the results of the investigation and the conclusions inferred from the results. Research reports are used to obtain scholarly findings about professional practices, which are used as a basis for making improvement in educational activities of institutions. The research report serves as a source of information which could be utilized for replication of research in different contexts. The information presented in a research report contributes to the body of knowledge. A report of an academic research project is usually a requirement of a post graduate course or of an advanced degree. It is summarized as:

- Dissemination of research outcome findings
- Used as reference material or for review of related literature to get guidance and to record and utilize the findings for further work
- Utilization of the research recommendations for decision making
- Replication of research methods in different contexts
- A medium to share research experiences and results of research

Types of Research Report

Researchers, disseminate their research findings through research articles prepared for print and on-line journals, conference papers, theses and dissertation, and project reports. Research reports are usually written for a special group of audience such as one's fellow researchers or peer groups, practitioners, policy makers, curriculum planners and developers, teachers or the general public. Therefore research reports are prepared keeping in view different purposes and different audiences and also of different length for different audiences.

There are debates and discussions pertaining to different format and style of writing a research article, an abstract, a thesis and dissertation and a project report. Before drafting a research report, you must ask yourself who will read it. It is useful to think about a variety of reports that results from a research.

Research articles: The purpose of research articles are to inform the readers of what you investigated, why and how you conduct the investigation, the results and conclusions. These articles are usually reports of empirical studies, review articles or theoretical.

Abstracts: An abstract is a comprehensive summary of the contents of the article or a thesis/ dissertation submitted for evaluation. It allows the audience or readers to go through the contents of a journal article or a research report quickly. In other words, an abstract is a summarized form of a research report (within one or two paragraphs of about 150-200 words). It includes the problem hypothesis or research questions, procedures, principal results and conclusions of a research work.

Theses and dissertations: A Thesis or a dissertation is a record of research activities. It is usually produced in partial fulfillment of the requirements of a course/programme or for an advanced degree. It involves presenting a research problem with an argument or point of view. The methods or procedures adopted substantiated with reasoned argument and evidence. This is written to share the issues and concerns related to a specific research problem with fellow researchers supported by discussions besides presenting the outcomes/findings.

Project reports: The format of a project report will depend upon the level at and audience for which the research is done. For example, the academic research project for a degree and projects funded by funding agencies like UNICEF, World Bank or UNESCO differ in their formats. These research reports may vary in length. While preparing a project report one should bear in mind the audience for the report. For example, scientific or general report is prepared **as** per the theme and audience of a project work.

Structure of Research Report Writing

The Basic sequence of any research report writing is as: a) preliminary Section b) body of the report (Chapter 1 to Last Chapter) & c) End pages. The details of each section are summarized below.

1. Preliminary Pages

This part locate any body interested to read your report easily by channeling the required information. This part entails;

- Title Page: Title of the research, name of researcher, Supervisor, institution, date of publication/completion
- Certification
- Copy right (intellectual property right)
- Declaration (originality of the work)
- Dedication (To whom the work clinched to)
- Acknowledgements (recognizing who assisted you to accomplish your task).
- Abstract (provide a quickly scan of work)
- Table of content
- List of abbreviations
- List of tables
- List of figures
- List of plates

2. Introduction & back ground of the study

It introduce the research to the readers. It include the following sections;

- General overview/background of the study.

- Problem of the statement (state the researcher experience towards the problem, signifies the needs of defining the problem).
- Research objectives (tentative suggestion (null/alternative hypothesis). Mostly applies for qualitative research)
- Hypothesis (Mostly applies for quantitative research)
- Research questions (should be one to one with research objectives & mostly, applies for qualitative research).
- Significant/justification of the study.
- Scope of the study
- Limitation of the study
- Definitions of key concepts(this part is flexible to literature view)
- Organization of the study(how sections of the study is arranged)

3. Description of study area

A brief description of study area including location, physical and social characteristics are needed to mention. Here focuses should be given on preliminary information/ history/ background related to the research problem pertain to study area.

4. Literature review

Attaches the related literatures of the study. Review focused on books, journals, articles, past researches and internet sources). Generally this part include;

- Theoretical review (study related concepts and theories)
- Empirical review (finds the previously studies)
- Conceptual framework (thematic ideas, sketch, it dwell on researcher understandings on how the particular variables in his study connected with each other).
- Research gap/knowledge gap (entails content gap, contextual, geographical gap).

5. Research methodology

Shows how the study was carried out. Provides rationale why a particular method of research, sampling, data collection and data analysis has been selected. It involves the following subsection;

- Research design (constitutes the blueprint for data collection, measurement and analysis of data).
- Area of the study (provides the reason of selection desired coverage,)
- Population of the study (entails objects, individuals, items where the samples are taken for measurement).
- Sampling design (gives why a certain kind of sample is used in the study).
- Data collection (indicates the method of data collection both primary and secondary data)
- Validity & reliability of the study
- Data analysis
- Ethical consideration

6. Study Findings, Analysis and Discussion

Presents the study results, analyses results and discuss based on the objectives of the study. It includes analytical write-up, Tables, Diagrams and maps.

7. Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

It sum up, draws conclusion on study and recommend further actions based on the study.

8. End pages

It enlist all supporting stuff used in the study. Including;

- Acknowledgement
- References
- Appendices (questionnaires, sample information, mathematical derivations and etc.)

Citation and Referencing

There are many styles for reporting the review of research. For this purpose the publication style manual of the American Psychological Association, 1994 could be used.

While referencing and citing in a research review the reviewer should keep in mind two important issues:

- Citations are placed in the text either to refer the reader to additional relevant information on the topic or to provide credit to the original source of the idea or information presented;
- References are provided to aid the reader in locating the original source of information cited in the review.

A citation in the text is required whenever the idea or information is not the original idea of the reviewer. If a reviewer quotes directly the basic substance of the information from a source, a citation must be provided. To use the information or ideas of another researcher/ author without proper acknowledgement through a citation is a serious issue. The names of the author(s) and the publication data are always provided in a citation. For example, John, W. Best, and Kahn, V. James, *Research in Education* (New Delhi: Prentice Hall of India, 2001), pp. 61-80. Both author and date are essential information because a specific author or group of authors may have written more than one document included in the review. Thus for a reader to understand which document is being cited, both the author and data are necessary in every citation. In case of a direct quotation (identified by the use of quotation marks the page from which the quotation was taken must be provided. Page numbers are always required for direct quotations or statistics.

End Notes: These are like footnotes but are located at the back rather than the bottom of each page. These would include all of the references for all works cited in the Review of Related Literature or any other sections of the report as well as the references for quotations, direct or indirect, taken from other sources, or any footnote comments that might have been included. These are listed in numeric order as presented in the text.

Footnotes: Footnotes are occasionally used to support substantive information in the text. A content footnote may be placed at the bottom of the page on which it is discussed or on a separate page following the references

Bibliography or Literature Cited: These are the bibliographic reference for each of the works cited in the End Notes.

Appendix: Any tables, figures, forms, or other materials that are not totally central to the analysis but that need to be included are placed in the Appendix.

Literature Review:

- ✎ A literature review discusses published information in a particular subject area, and sometimes information in a particular subject area within a certain time period.
- ✎ A literature review can be just a simple summary of the sources, but it usually has an organizational pattern and combines both summary and synthesis.
- ✎ A *summary* is a recap of the important information of the source, but a *synthesis* is a re-organization, or a reshuffling, of that information.

- ✎ It might give a new interpretation of old material or combine new with old interpretations.
- ✎ Or it might trace the intellectual progression of the field, including major debates.
- ✎ And depending on the situation, the literature review may evaluate the sources and advise the reader on the most pertinent or relevant.
- ✎ The format of a review of literature may vary from discipline to discipline and from assignment to assignment.
- ✎ A review may be a self-contained unit -- an end in itself -- or a preface to and rationale for engaging in primary research. A review is a required part of grant and research proposals and often a chapter in theses and dissertations.
- ✎ *Generally, the purpose of a review is to analyze critically a segment of a published body of knowledge through summary, classification, and comparison of prior research studies, reviews of literature, and theoretical articles.*
- ✎ A literature review is the effective evaluation of selected documents on a research topic.
- ✎ A review may form an essential part of the research process or may constitute a research project in itself.
- ✎ In the context of a research paper or thesis the literature review is a critical synthesis of previous research.
- ✎ The evaluation of the literature leads logically to the research question.

Importance of Literature Review

- ✎ Literature reviews provide you with a handy guide to a particular topic. If you have limited time to conduct research, literature reviews can give you an overview or act as a stepping stone.
- ✎ Literature reviews also provide a solid background for a research paper's investigation. Comprehensive knowledge of the literature of the field is essential to most research papers.
- ✎ For professionals, they are useful reports that keep them up to date with what is current in the field.
- ✎ For scholars, the depth and breadth of the literature review emphasizes the credibility of the writer in his or her field.
- ✎ The purpose of a literature review is for you to take a critical look at the literature (facts and views) that already exists in the area you are researching.
- ✎ A literature review is not a shopping list of everything that exists, but a critical analysis that shows an evaluation of the existing literature and a relationship between the different works.
- ✎ It demonstrates the relevance of the research.
- ✎ Literature can include books, journal articles, internet (electronic journals), newspapers, magazines, theses and dissertations, conference proceedings, reports, and documentaries.
- ✎ Literature reviews are written occasionally in the humanities, but mostly in the sciences and social sciences; in experiment and lab reports, they constitute a section of the paper.
- ✎ Sometimes a literature review is written as a paper in itself.

Steps of Literature Review

The whole process of reviewing includes:

- Searching for literature
- Sorting and prioritizing the retrieved literature
- Analytical reading of papers
- Evaluative reading of papers
- Comparison across studies
- Organizing the content
- Writing the review

- ✎ The aim is to extract key points by comparing and contrasting ACROSS studies, instead of reading one paper after another.
- ✎ Key points for a review may concern areas of similarities and/or differences in: Research aim(s) or hypotheses; Research design and sampling; Instruments and procedures used; How data were analysed; Results or findings; Interpretations.
- ✎ Find similarities and differences between studies at **different levels**, e.g. philosophy, epistemology, morality, methodology, methods, types of data, data analysis, and interpretation

Referencing Styles

These can be referred to as the rules or guidelines which tell the researcher/writer(s) how to give credit to the works of other people while writing an academic piece.

Referencing styles consist of two basic elements, these includes:

- An in-text citation: This is simply a brief form of reference which can be included in the body of an academic piece.
- A reference list: This is the overall compilation of both the sources cited in the body of an academic piece and the sources that were relied on for information during the course of academic research and writing. It is often written at the end of the assignment or paper.

Both elements contain basic information about the previously published work and the author of the work. The information needed during the course of referencing includes:

- The name of the author(s).
- The title of the work.
- The year of publication.

Depending on the type of source referred to during the course of academic research, these elements could also contain:

- The name of the publisher(s).
- The volume of the work.
- The edition of the work.

There are many different ways of citing resources from your research. These styles are APA, MLA, Oxford, Harvard, Chicago etc. The citation style sometimes depends on the academic discipline involved. For example:

- APA (American Psychological Association) is used by Education, Psychology, and Sciences
- MLA (Modern Language Association) style is used by the Humanities
- Chicago style is generally used by Business, History, and the Fine Arts

APA 7th Citation Examples

Material Type	In-text Citation	Bibliography
A book	(Sapolsky, 2017)	Sapolsky, R. M. (2017). <i>Behave: The biology of humans at our best and worst</i> . Penguin Books.
Chapter in an <u>edited</u> book (If the chapter is from an authored book, use the book citation)	(Dillard, 2020)	Dillard, J. P. (2020). Currents in the study of persuasion. In M. B. Oliver, A. A. Raney, & J. Bryant (Eds.), <i>Media effects: Advances in theory and research</i> (4th ed., pp. 115-129). Routledge.
An article in a print journal	(Weinstein, 2009)	Weinstein, J. (2009). "The market in Plato's Republic." <i>Classical Philology</i> , 104(4), 439-458.
An article in an electronic journal	(Grady et al., 2019)	Grady, J. S., Her, M., Moreno, G., Perez, C., & Yelinek, J. (2019). Emotions in storybooks: A comparison of storybooks that represent ethnic and racial groups in the United States. <i>Psychology of Popular Media Culture</i> , 8(3), 207-217. https://doi.org/10.1037/ppm0000185
A website	(Bologna, 2019)	Bologna, C. (2019, October 31). <i>Why some people with anxiety love watching horror movies</i> . HuffPost. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/anxiety-love-watching-horror-movies_l_5d277587e4b02a5a5d57b59e