



# **RESEARCH REPORT WRITING: A SYSTEMATIC GUIDE TO WRITING AN ACADEMIC RESEARCH REPORT**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The paper is designed to acquaint the researchers about how to write a research report. The paper intends to discuss the common format of research report. There can be several reasons for writing a research report. It can be written for publishing in scholarly journals, peer-reviewed journals, publications and books. The paper will improve our understanding of writing a good academic research report with example of our research topics on various issues. The examples are based on our research on HIV positive people, adolescent health and infertility issues. The primary source of data collection for the paper is our field work.

**Keyword:** Research Report, Steps of research report, HIV Positive, Types of research reports

## **WHAT IS A RESEARCH REPORT?**

Research is a scientific approach to the social world. It is a systematic and sustained enquiry, planned and self critical, which is subjected to public criticism and to empirical tests where these are appropriate” In other words, research is not complete until it finds a public. . In the case of award-bearing courses, research reports may have a limited audience of tutors, examiners and those who use the shelves of academic libraries. However, increasingly, students work is published in academic journals and books, thus widening the scope as well as audience. In the paper we want, through demonstration, to continue our argument that the dissemination of research must persuade, must be purposive, must represent a clearly articulated position within the field and that it must have (or seek to have) some political impact. We show, too, how in making research public it is necessary also to express the ways in which the four processes of radical enquiry (radical looking, listening, reading and questioning) have shaped the study. Ultimately, the research report should not only tell story but also justify the enquiry (Peter & Cathy, 2007). The research reports are either written for the journals or for specific clients or organizations. The audience differ between both the cases and this paper basically focus on writing a research report for academic journals where the primary audience will be professors, researchers and students interested in theory development (Vanderstoep & Johnston, 2009).

For social to be scientific it is necessary to be verifiable, general and objective in nature. The systematic social observation is required by a researcher in any form of research to get a clear and accurate picture of the social world. The research report is a summarized version of the research where the researchers have to pass through various stages and to present the entire research in a more concise and precise manner. For a good research report the “quality of the research as well as the writing” (Zellmer, 1981) is significant. Report writing is vital part in research process. The researcher has to examine the relationship between various variables and then comes to a conclusion. The research report therefore must be written at the end of the research.

## **Types of research reports**

The research results can be presented in various forms like “visual, oral and written forms” (Vanderstoep & Johnston, 2009). The visual form includes posters, charts in workshops where you show the summarized version of your research with the help of visual medium. The poster must justify the research and summarize the results



effectively in an appealing manner. While presenting the results orally to the audience it is important to know the audience, deliver effectively keeping in mind the time limit. The oral presentation must be engaging, actively participating with loud and clear voice. The last way to present the findings of your research is through presenting it as a research report or paper which is the centre of discussion in this paper (Vanderstoep & Johnston, 2009).

However Ram ahuja has also pointed out of six types of research reports on the basis of the medium of publication and purpose: (1) dissemination in a book form (2) commissioned research reports (3) publication in professional journals (4) presentation before a professional audience (5) research papers for courses and (6) paper prepared for mass media (Ahuja, 2012).

## **STEPS IN RESEARCH REPORT WRITING**

A Research report has to be scientific and stage wise. The research report must follow the set order and sequencing should start from an abstract, introduction, a brief literature review, methodology, findings and conclusion. It must present a concise as well as holistic picture of the research. However it should not include a record of the entire research work or even conversations are not required while writing a research report. The researcher must follow the format for research result presenting as it helps in maintaining the legitimacy and reliability of the social science research (Vanderstoep & Johnston, 2009).

The five basic steps mentioned by Ram Ahuja in his work on research methods area clear topic, review of literature, a research design and analysed data and findings (Ahuja, 2012). This paper will discuss about various stages of research report with taking an example of our research on several issues of social significance for better understanding of the researchers.

### **1. Abstract**

The abstract is a brief summary about the research project. The abstract must do justice with the research topic and also helps in developing the audience interest in the paper. The abstract contains one liner summaries of each section of the paper.

For example:

Women have always been in a subordinated position in our society. However in today's globalised world, the modern women have understood their powers and roles and are inclined to improve their social status at large. Our government has always updated their policies and programs based on the current needs of the country. The concepts such as Gender Responsive Budgeting, Mahila Haat serve as powerful fiscal tools in empowering women with financial commitments. The present paper will analyse the role of education in empowering women to have better access and opportunities, financial inclusion and economic empowerment of women. Education in one way or another also impacts the autonomic decision making at home therefore encouraging gender equality at household level. This is purely a secondary data based paper relying exclusively on existing literature. The paper will explore the political, cultural and sociology-economic circumstances which hampers women empowerment.

### **2. A clear topic**

The first stage of writing a research report is to clearly define the research question in the simplest and most concise manner and to give a definition to develop understanding about research question. Research questions are designed shortly in context with area and one's view with title and subtitle. It must be one bold line which provides a quick summary of the entire research work.

For example:

In the above abstract the title can be – “Women empowerment and education in a gendered society”

### **3. Introduction**

After defining the research topic, the next step is to write an introduction to your research report. The introduction acquaints the audience to the theme of the paper and the problem under scrutiny. It also contains a “review of the research literature which is relevant to the study”. Another purpose of this section is to justify the relevance of your research, introduce the area of study along with its theoretical application (Vanderstoep & Johnston, 2009).

### **4. Literature Review**

The next Step of research report is to review existing literature on the topic. In this stage, previous research becomes base for the present research or we can unite the present research with the previous or earlier research. A review of literature is “The studies made by other scholars on the relevant problems under study may be referred. This literature could be used either for supporting one's owns findings or criticizing their conclusions or developing a hypothesis or a theory and so on” (Ahuja, 2012). It is the existing published studies on which we are



building our research (Vanderstoep & Johnston, 2009). The section can be divided into various sections as per the requirement of the research. For example in one of our study on HIV positive people in the context of ART Centres in Ahmedabad, the review of literature was divided in three different parts namely - 1) International studies 2) Study done in India 3) Regional studies.

Thus, it is necessary for the researcher that he has to introduce new things or new research in his research report while taking the previous research as base. Along with this the researcher must identify the research gap and tries to fill that void with the present research.

## **5. Research methodology**

This section of the research report contains the blue print of the research. As stated by some scholars it is like a “recipe” or the “how to” section (Vanderstoep & Johnston, 2009). It is like a map before making a new house likewise it is necessary to think about different aspects of research before starting a research. The section is divided into several parts like the description of the study area, research method adopted, sample design, sampling technique, mode of data collection, data analysis techniques, hypothesis can also be stated here in this section.

It is important to discuss various aspects like research question, methodology, research techniques, population, sampling, time frame and money in research design so that we can minimize the limitation of research. Research design is “a design or strategy that justifies the logic, structure and the principles of the methodology and methods and how these relate to the research questions, hypothesis or proposition. There are several reasons for devising a research design. First, an effective research design will demonstrate that the research will produce valid and credible conclusions that flow logically from the evidence generated. Second, it sets out the research strategy for the benefit of the audience, readership, funders, gatekeepers and those researched. Third, the process of devising it not only ensures that research will be of value in terms of intellectual credibility, external accountability, coherence and rigor, but that it becomes a useful plan or schedule for the researcher” (Jupp, 2006).

For example: Primary Information of Respondents and Methodology

In the research on HIV Positive people 110 respondents were studied by sample survey method. Some cases were studied by case study method, focus group discussion was also conducted and personal interviews were done for better understanding the research problem. The survey showed that most of the families were from the middle class, some were married and rest were from the nuclear families. Male respondents were working in unorganized sector, while female respondents were mostly involved in house hold work. Most of the people were residing in Ahmedabad city.

So the research methodology section provide a complete over view of how the research has been conducted, the method adopted like is it an experimental research, comparative research, qualitative or quantitative research.

## **6. Findings and conclusions:**

This is the last part of any research report is publishing the results or findings. In case of a quantitative research this section summarizes if the results are valid and supports the hypothesis stated at the outset. In case of qualitative research the section states the direct observation from the field and the theoretical evidences from the field work.

The method and result section are written in the past tense as when the researcher is writing the research has already been conducted. So these two sections must be written in past tense (Vanderstoep & Johnston, 2009).

For example in the study conducted on HIV Positive people the following conclusions have been made-

- Major population (83.33%) had to face economical problems due to H.I.V.
- The economical problems are related with frequent sickness, expenditure on drugs and negative impact of disease and it is the only reason of increase in domestic as well as social problems.
- Most of the respondents were engaged in lower level occupations mostly in unorganized sector. So with less income and burden of disease their debt also creates pressure and struggles on their family environment.
- Poor Income, Inferior wages, Debt along with their H.I.V status increased Domestic, Social and Economical Problems for the respondents suffering from the disease.
- The women respondents were also apprehensive about giving birth to child as the future of child would suffer due to the disease. They were afraid if the baby will also be H.I.V positive.
- Most of the respondents (63.64 %) also reported that they thought for suicide after knowing their disease status. They reported of eating the leaves of Dhatura, attempt to drink acid and also taking sleeping pills for conducting suicide. The fear of disowning by the society and also family members and relatives also encouraged them for suicide.
- In some cases persons were also disowned by their family after knowing the disease status. It was women who suffered the most as the disease created suspicion for her character.
- In few cases it was also seen how family played a major role in creating negative environment for the person when they came to know about the H.I.V status of the respondents. They preferred that the person with



H.I.V must live separately with everything separate. This kind of behaviour towards the family member made him/her sicker along with the burden of disease. It was observed that they had a separate earthen pot for drinking water; they were not permitted to go to kitchen and even not allowed to go outside their homes, washing clothes on their own. This decreased their self esteem and confidence to fight and live. Thus the family which must be a protective sheet for the person became a major place of discrimination and thus creating more burdens for the person.

- The H.I.V. Positive people were also discrimination by their friends (61.82%) and their respective family (40 %). Their behaviour suddenly changed toward them in which they started decrementing contact, stopped to go for outing and decreased frequent meeting, sometimes they have to be insulted in the society and the person is also affronted that he is not loyal to his wife.
- In most of the cases (31.82%) the people who were infected with H.I.V. were not supposed to take part in any religious function by their own family and relatives and permitted to meet anyone after completion of function.
- Some of the respondents were also discriminated by doctors (33.64%) and other hospital staff members (49.09%). Case studies and Focus group discussions showed that man went to hospital for some tooth related ailment and the doctor refused for surgery after knowing the health profile for H.I.V. Doctor told that the kit for the removal of teeth is not available right now. But actually it was not the case and indirectly he refused for surgery.
- The H.I.V. positive person was also insulted by nursing staff as she denied for coming when the H.I.V. person called her for some help.
- There were some cases in which children of H.I.V. positive people were also discriminated (19.57%) Even more there were separate arrangement and orphanage house for them in Surat and Gandhinagar. They were also hated by their relatives. This hatred and discrimination keeps them at bay of the social system.
- Even if most of the women (97.96%) were infected by their husbands they were still doubted and thought to be responsible for H.I.V.
- When H.I.V. infected people were told to give the grades according to the forbearing discrimination they categorized them as: (1) Members of family (2) Neighbours (3) Friends (4) Public and Economical places. Thus it was observed that the discrimination started from the important primary social unit.
- Most of respondents were not aware about H.I.V./AIDS (88.18%) and other sexually transmitted disease (87.72%) because of lack of knowledge about sexual education and social-cultural activities of society related to the sexual education.

The example cited above showed the way to write conclusion or findings in the research report. The findings can be written in paragraph style or even numbered but the most importantly they must be written in past tense. Now after the researcher has covered all the important sections of a research report they can move towards suggesting ways to cope the situation or to recommend the solution for the issue under scrutiny. The next section of a research report then is the discussion or recommendations.

## **7. Discussion/Suggestion/Recommendations**

This section can be written in paragraph style or even numbered as per the convenience or choice of the researcher. This is the section where the researcher can give creative and forward looking ideas about the social issue to inspire future researchers. They can also depict the future course of research in the field.

## **8. References**

The last section of any research report is references or bibliography. This section provides the correct citation of all the referred texts throughout the research. The researcher can choose any citation style like APA style, MLA style, Chicago style etc. The APA style example can be :

“Stewart, D., & Simmons, M. (2010). *The business playground: Where creativity and commerce collide*. New Riders Press”

“Chodorow, N. J. (1978). *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*. Berkley and Los Angeles, California: Univeristy of California Press.”

In APA Style refrencing the citations comes in alpabetical order by author’s names. The researcher must be cautious about any biasness in the research resport. The language must be gender sensitive. The research to be scientific must be value neutral as intended by Max weber. The researher must adhere to the ethical standards for conducting any social science research. The research ethics are a set of guidelines that deals with the privacy of the personal information od the respondnets; handling of data of the respondents; revealing their personal information or names to others; these are some of the ethical guidelines which must not be breach by the



researchers. The researcher must be vigilant about any form of plagiarism in their content. It is also considered a breach of ethical dimensions when it comes to writing any research report (Vanderstoep & Johnston, 2009).

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