

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN SOCIAL RESEARCH

Edited by

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Introduction

Report writing is a very important aspect of research that is useful to students, researchers and young academics within the university system in general and sociology in particular. Whether studying at the undergraduate or postgraduate level, one will be expected to write reports and to present findings in both written and verbal or audio and visual forms. A student, for example, writes reports for term papers, for module assignments (e.g. case study reports), for presenting the results of an individual research project, for summarising the result of a group project and presentation and for reflecting on a work experience or other placement he/she is involved in. Two words stand out in this topic. They are: 'report' and 'writing'.

In academia, good research studies are expected to culminate in good research reports (Adesemowo, Ogunkola and Ojo 2001). This is because a well-written research report bears the hallmarks of an expert who possesses the knowledge, skills and ability required for conducting research (Adesemowo, Ogunkola and Ojo 2001; Okafor 2013) and for disseminating findings meant for a specific audience. As Murphy (2009, 2010) observes, academic report writing skills are important in individual and collaborative research and report writing, and are skills that are even essential in real life. She goes further to point out the features of academic reports as follows:

- (a) they are written with a particular readership in mind;
- (b) they have clarity of communication as the key determinant of writing style;
- (c) they generally explain: why the research was done (terms of reference), how it was done: (procedure/methodology) and the outcomes (findings, conclusion and recommendations);
- (d) they generally have a set of recommendations, or action points, as the final section;
- (e) long reports generally have an abstract, definition of terms and appendices;
- (f) information is frequently presented in figures, tables, diagrams and visual images;
- (g) the style of writing is impersonal (third person), logical, direct and succinct with an emphasis on facts and details rather than on argument and discussion;
- (h) bullet points are frequently used instead of continuous text; and
- (i) there is significant use of sub-headings, numbering and a standardised layout.

Academic writing is an essential skill that is required in almost every activity that learners, researchers and/or faculty engage in during their study periods. Writing, as a process, varies according to purpose and context. In order to write effectively, linguistic competence is imperative (Sharndama and Yakubu 2013). This is more so when academic writing is considered. The knowledge of words and sentence structures is key to effective writing ability. However, academic writing styles vary according to the rules and conventions of different disciplines, whether it is the social sciences, the natural sciences, the humanities, business studies, technologies and engineering; each school has its own sub-sets of discourse conventions (Murphy 2010; UTS 2013). In the social sciences, Murphy (2009, 2010) has identified the conventions and accepted styles that guide academic writing:

- academic writing underpins social science research with its formality, objectivity and scientific dispositions;
- it is concise and adopts to-the-point writing style;
- it keeps to a clear organisation;
- it supports a succinct presentation;
- it is largely in the passive voice rather than the personalised active voice 'I';
- it competently uses necessary "jargons" for the field in which the work is carried out (whether sociology, politics, economics, geography or others);
- it uses graphs, charts and illustrations;
- it observes a clear system of headings and sub-headings;
- it uses clearly written abstracts to introduce research works;
- it adopts in-text citations and a referencing system such as the APA or Harvard;
- it skilfully employs the review of literature to contextualise information and issues;
- it makes a fetish of a high level of scholarship; and
- it supports all knowledge claims using evidence from the research or the research of others.

However, it is important to point out that academic report is a form of academic writing.

Conceptualization of Terms: Academic Report and Academic Writing
Simply, a report is a form of communication that describes, analyses, summarises, criticises, praises or predicts a subject based on an analysis of current or past events or identifiable phenomena. Reports are a highly structured form of writing often following conventions that have been laid down to produce a common format. Structure and convention in written reports stress the process by which the information was gathered as much

as the information itself. An academic report is a process geared towards solving a research problem, clarifying or establishing facts. Two parties are always involved in the process, the approver (academic supervisor) of the process and the person carrying out the process (research student). Academic reports are, therefore, the outcomes of an investigation into a problem or issue carried out to determine facts or find solution (Sharndama and Yakubu 2013). The research supervisor approves the investigation and provides terms of references which are guidelines determining the scope of the investigation and what investigators (research students) are to do. Academic reports are highly organized or structured written facts drawn from some laid-down procedures. In academia, reports are mostly written by a learner for the scrutiny of the teacher as a guide or supervisor.

Writing is an important skill useful in many contexts all through life. However, *academic writing* does many of the things that personal *writing* does not do because it has its own set of rules and practices. Academic writing is, essentially, the writing one has to do when attending the university. Instructors (also lecturers or faculty) may have different names for academic writing assignments. For example, they could be referred to as essays, papers, research papers, term papers, argumentative papers/essays, analysis papers/essays, informative essays, position papers, research reports and many others); but all of these forms of academic writing are guided by rules and conventions some of which are set by the instructors or the universities concerned. It, therefore, points to the various forms of expository prose used by university students and researchers to convey a body of information about a particular subject. It also refers to the type of writing students are expected to produce in response to content they learn about in an academic setting.

Now, it is important to distinguish between personal writing and academic writing. While writing from a personal perspective may be required at the postgraduate level (Murphy 2009, 2010), university students need to understand the differences that exist between personal writing and academic writing. Crème and Lea (2003:101) have made a fine distinction between these two forms of writing as follows:

Personal Writing	Academic Writing
Recounts, tells a personal story	Comments, evaluates, analyses
Non-technical vocabulary	Subject-specific vocabulary
I at the centre	I as the observer and commentator
Information comes from the writer's experiences, personal feelings and views	Information comes from a range of sources, and refers to what others say
	Evidence and argument
	Conventions of referencing and citation to acknowledge the work of others.

Academic Report Writing

Academic report writing is, therefore, different from mere composition writing because it is based on investigated facts and the provision of evidence of knowledge claims. It is a professional writing which requires the writer to acquire critical skills and conventions. Every kind of writing that involves investigation into a complex phenomenon in institutions of learning falls under academic report writing. It is a formal writing which requires that the facts should be presented in full grammatical sentences or standard language. In addition to formal linguistic features, academic report writing has conventional structures with peculiar information expected to be embodied in each part. In other words, it has peculiar organisational structures such as the introduction, the literature review, methodology, analysis, findings and discussions. These organizational structures vary from one discipline to the other. Academic report writing could come in the forms of term papers, laboratory reports, theses or dissertations. These reports contain facts and data from seasoned and well-educated scholars and experts in a field or people having more knowledge of the subject matter than the learners/writers. This is why in academic writing, the writer first of all reads up relevant literature on a subject he or she wants to write on before embarking on the writing process itself.

Academic report writing is an aspect of writing that students engage in as part of their academic course of study. In higher institutions of learning, students are required to write and submit laboratory, field trip, Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) or project report in partial fulfilment for the award of a certificate or degree in their programme of studies (Sharndama and Yakubu 2013). It is a purposeful exercise geared towards investigation into complex phenomenon which requires critical skills and professional knowledge. Academic reports at the final-year level forms part of the process of evaluating students to determine the extent of their professional competence. This is why students of higher institutions all over the world are required to demonstrate their competence and knowledge by carrying out independent research in their fields of study. This type of research differs from one discipline to the other in content and style. Though these reports vary in their purpose, they all have formal structures that are carefully planned, and presented in a clear and concise language.

Differences between Report Writing and Essay Writing

There is a difference between report writing and essay writing (Russell 2008; Whitaker 2009; Harper Adams University 2014). Drawing on the lucid differentiation by Harper Adams University (2014), these differences can be summarised as follows:

Report	Essay
Formal structure.	Structure can be left to the discretion of the writer.
Defined sections with headings, including, as required: Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, Results/findings, Discussion/evaluation.	Does not contain subheadings (unless specifically asked for by the tutor). Different points are written as paragraphs.
Commences with a Summary or Abstract before the Introduction.	Commences with an Introduction; there is no Abstract or Summary.
Systematically defines and analyses a subject or problem.	Discusses, explains, analyses, interprets or evaluates a topic.
Used to communicate the results or findings of a project/piece of research.	Used to develop points or arguments in depth via a sequence of paragraphs (discursive writing).
Different sections may require different styles of writing throughout, depending on their purpose.	Same writing style is generally maintained throughout.
May include tables, figures and illustrations	No illustrative material accompanies prose.
Information may be recorded in bullet points.	Written as a narrative in continuous prose.
May make recommendations for future actions.	Very unusual to make recommendations although conclusions will be drawn.

Academic Report Writing Structure for Term Papers, Research Papers, Position Papers and Academic or Research-Based Assignments

Students in higher institutions, including universities, are asked to write different types of reports, depending upon the subject area which they have chosen or which they are asked by their supervisors or lecturers to write on. These could include term papers, research papers, position papers, laboratory reports, technical reports, reports of a work placement or industrial visit, reports of a field trip or field work. These reports vary in their purpose, but all of them will require a formal structure and careful planning, presenting the material in a logical manner using clear and concise language.

There are important stages in putting up reports of this nature and these will be considered briefly. The following stages are involved in writing a report:

- (1) *There is need to clarify the terms of reference.* In other words, what are you writing on? The terms of reference of a report are a guiding statement used to define the scope of investigation. You must be clear from the start what you are being asked to do. You will probably have been given an assignment from your lecturer but you may need to discuss this further to find out the precise subject and purpose of the report. Why have you been asked to

write it? Knowing the purpose of the report will help to communicate the writer's information more clearly and make him/her more selective when collecting information.

- (2) ***There is need to plan the work.*** Careful planning will help the student to write a clear, concise and effective report, giving adequate time to each of the developmental stages prior to submission. This process will include having the time to consider the report as a whole, break down the task of writing the report into various parts, find out how much time it would take to write the work, know how much time it would take to write the report, divide the report into the various planning stages and set deadlines for the various stages.
- (3) ***Data collection is critical to a well-written academic or research report.*** Academic report is different from personal writing or most forms of writing because the writer must read up other people's works that address the issue at hand and build on this existing 'template'.
- (4) ***The report must be organised according to a structure.*** There are different reports as mentioned earlier and they might require different structures. However, the following are common elements found in different reports in the social sciences:
 - ***Title page:*** This should include the title of the report (which should give a precise indication of the subject matter), the author's name, course title and code, the tutor's name and date. Sometimes, students are expected to indicate their departments and faculties (or colleges) and their programmes.
 - ***Acknowledgements:*** The student is expected to acknowledge any help he/she has received in collecting the information for the report. This may be from librarians, technicians or computer centre staff, for example. Or it could refer to the role of respondents, key informants, donor organisations for the research, study organization and staff and many others.
 - ***Contents:*** This includes listing all the main sections of the report in a sequence with their page numbers. If there are charts, diagrams or tables included in this report, these should be listed separately under a title such as 'List of Tables and Figures' together with the page numbers on which they appear.
 - ***Abstract or Summary:*** This should be a short paragraph summarising the main contents of the report. It should include a short statement of the main task, the methods used, conclusions reached and any recommendations to be made.

The abstract or summary should be concise, informative and independent of the report.

- *Introduction:* There is disagreement as to whether this section should be written first or last. Some writers argue that it should be written after the report has been done because the writer will be in a better position to couch the introduction having known what the rest of the report says. Another school feels it may not matter because if the writer has done his/her homework well, it will be easy to prepare a captivating introduction for the report. Essentially, what is important is that the introduction should be able to give the context and scope of the report and should include the terms of reference. The writer should state the objectives of the report clearly, define the limits of the work, outline the method of enquiry, give a brief general background to the subject of the report and indicate the proposed development.
- *Methodology:* In this section, the writer should state how he/she carried out his/her enquiry. The section must address what form the enquiry took. It must say whether the enquiry conducted interviews and/or administered questionnaires. It must mention the data collection methods and the measurements used. It must also let readers know how respondents were chosen and why. This information has to be presented logically and concisely.
- *Results or Findings:* Findings have to be presented in as simple a way as possible. The more complicated the information looks, the more difficult it will be to interpret it. Results can be presented using:
 - Tables
 - Graphs
 - Pie charts
 - Bar charts
 - Diagrams

However, it is important that all diagrams or illustrations be clearly labelled with titles and they must show a link between the text and the diagram. The headings too need to be precise and axes of graphs need to be clearly labelled. Tables must also be easily interpreted and the writer must ensure he/she abides by any copyright laws when including illustrations/tables from published documents.

- *Discussion:* This is the section where you can analyse and interpret your results drawing from the information which you have collected, explaining its significance. Identify important issues and suggest explanations for your findings. Outline any problems encountered and try and present a balanced view.
- *Conclusion and Recommendations:* This is the section of the report which draws together the main issues. It should be expressed clearly and should not present any new information. The student could list some recommendations in a separate section or include them with the conclusions.
- *References:* It is important that the researcher or writer should give precise details of all the works of other authors which were cited within the report. At the end of the report, these works should be fully referenced. Using the ASA style, the reference should be written thus: author's or authors' names in full, starting with the surname(s), date of publication, title of the publication, place of publication and publisher's name. In citing journals, it should be written thus: Author's last name, followed by a comma and the first name and middle initial ending with a period. This is followed by year of publication followed by a period, title of article in "quotations," ending with a period inside the closing quotation mark, title of journal in italics, no period following and volume number followed by issue number in parentheses, followed by a colon, page number(s) and period.
- *Appendices:* An appendix contains additional information related to the report but which is not essential to the main findings. This can be consulted if the reader wishes but the report should not depend on this. The writer could include details of interview questions, statistical data, a glossary of terms, or other information which may be useful for the reader.

(5) After all these, there is need to write the first draft.

(6) After the first draft, if there is still some time to spare, the student should leave the work for a day or two so he/she can have a fresh pair of eyes to look at it again.

Academic Report Writing Structure for Projects, Dissertations or Theses

While the structure for research reports such as projects, dissertations or theses is similar to that of the term papers, research papers, position

papers, technical reports and others, the structure for the former is more elaborate and complex. It also requires more detail, organisation, greater technicalities and care. A research report has three major parts, namely:

- (1) The preliminary section
- (2) The middle section or body of the report
- (3) The supplementary section which includes references, bibliography and/or appendices.

What is contained in these sections may vary according to different disciplines, but in the social sciences in general, and sociology in particular, there seems to be a general semblance with regards to the above-mentioned report structure. Presented below is a breakdown of the three major parts of a research report.

The Preliminary Section

This section has to do with the initial pages of the research report. Its pages are usually numbered using Roman figures such as i, ii, iii and so on. It consists of the following items:

The Title Page

This contains the following:

- The title of the study
- The name of the researcher
- The matriculation number and other forms of identification
- The name of his or her department and the institution to which the project/dissertation/thesis is to be submitted
- Date of the submission of the research project

Abstract

This is a summary of the entire research work. The abstract should include brief statement of the problem, objectives of the study, sample, the data collection procedure, results and some recommendations. Usually, the abstract is only presented in one paragraph but the number of words varies depending on the nature of the research work. Project works tend to be between 150 and 200 words, while dissertations and theses might be up to 500 words. The abstract is also expected to have some keywords related to the research topic.

Acknowledgements

In this section, the researcher appreciates the contributions of various individuals (including his/her parents, guardians, relatives, friends, lecturers/supervisors, colleagues in school and others), groups of people, institutions or organisations towards the successful completion of his/her

programme and the research. These individuals are shown gratitude by the researcher for their financial, moral, and instructional contributions to the researcher.

Dedication

In this instance, the researcher singles out one individual or a group of people or an institution or God Almighty to dedicate the work to. The researcher is at liberty to do this.

Certification

On this page, the researcher is certified by the supervisor(s) as having carried out the work independently of other people. The supervisors go further to put their signature on the page as a way of authenticating the work as being original. For Master's degree dissertations and Ph.D. theses, spaces are created for the Head of Department and Dean of the Faculty or College to countersign the page.

Table of Contents

This page is where the breakdown of the work is done into its relevant sections with corresponding page numbers against the sections and sub-sections. Every element of the work from the Title Page to Appendices is listed in this section. This helps the reader to identify the content of the work and to be able to locate any section of the work he or she is interested in reading easily.

List of Tables and Figures

This section compiles the list of tables and figures or illustrations used in the research for ease of location for the reader.

The Middle Section

This section covers the chapters adopted in the research work. In Nigeria, most, if not all universities, advise their students to adopt the five-chapter model in their research works. Therefore, this section includes chapters one to five as explained below.

Chapter One - Introduction

This chapter begins by examining the background of the study, the statement of the problem, or why the research is worth working on, and other elements that make up the chapter as briefly discussed below:

Background to the Study. This section in Chapter 1 introduces the study to the reader and states its focus by examining the background information regarding the problem under investigation. It is meant to provide readers with a brief summary of literature and the research related to the problem

being investigated. In the main, the introduction begins with a broader perspective of the problem and becomes narrower as the Introduction proceeds. The Introduction narrows the focus of the study and provides a brief rationale why the particular study is worth pursuing. It normally leads up to the problem statement.

Statement of the Problem. Statement of the problem is among the most critical parts of the research proposal or dissertation because it provides focus and direction for the remainder of the study (and subsequent report). This is the foundation of every research and must be got right, otherwise the focus of the research will be lost. A well-written problem statement defines the research problem and helps identify the variables that will be investigated in the study. In social sciences, there are three main sources of research problem. These are *from personal experience*, *from personal observations* and *from the literature*. The very last source (i.e. *from the literature*) is very common in the comity of scholars in forming statement of the problem for research. While there is no one "correct" or "best way" to write the problem statement, however, no matter the source, the gap in knowledge and focus of the study must be clearly stated. It is this gap in knowledge that forms the basis for investigation. In other words, if there is no gap in knowledge to be filled, then there is no basis for research.

Research Questions. A research question refers to interrogative statement that suggests a relationship between independent and dependent variables. Usually research questions emerge from statement of the problem. That means, they must eminent from the problem identified. Research questions should be stated in clear terms and should be itemised. Research questions suggest methodology for the study and serve as the basis for drawing conclusions at the end of the research. For instance, suppose the topic of a research study is ***“Teenage Pregnancy and School Dropout Among Junior Secondary School Students in Lagos State, Nigeria”*** a research question that may be written from statement of the problem will emanate from the topic above is: “What are the causes of teenage pregnancy of junior secondary school students in Lagos State?” Or, “is there a relationship between teenage pregnancy of junior secondary school students and their dropout from school?”

Research Objectives. This is a very important section of any research report. This must be itemised and should flow from the research questions. It may not necessarily be back to back with research questions. In other words, it is possible to have two research questions and have five objectives. Usually there is a general/broad objective which is the re-statement of the research topic. The specific objectives will then flow from the general objectives. In all cases, objectives of the study should be clearly stated. This is because they will later form the basis for analysis. In

stating objectives, active research terms should be used such as to: "Examine" "Explore" "Identify" "Investigate" "Evaluate" "Establish" etc. Such clumsy terms such as to: "Find out" "Know" should be avoided. It important to note in using any the above verb, the researcher should know that they have methodology/theoretical implications. For instance, if the researcher indicates he/she wants to "explore" or "evaluate" the reasons behind certain events, it conveys an idea that the research design will include as an exploratory design or that the study is an evaluative one.

Research Hypothesis. A hypothesis refers to a tentative statement or answer suggesting a relationship between independent and dependent variables. This should emerge from the research questions and objectives. All the variables that appeared in hypothesis should be operationalised. That is, should be defined in such a way that they can be measured. Hypotheses also suggest methodology for the study and serve as the basis for drawing conclusions in Chapter five. A hypothesis can be written in line with the research questions above is: *There is no positive relationship between teenage pregnant junior secondary school students and their dropout from school.* It is important to emphasise that hypothesis may be stated either as a null hypothesis or as an alternate hypothesis. In all cases, hypothesis is often tested with inferential statistics.

Significance of the Study. This section describes or explains the potential value of the study and findings to the social sciences or the field of sociology or to industry or society. This section, therefore, seeks to identify the audience for the study and how the results will be beneficial to them. Since research is conducted to add to the existing body of knowledge and/or to solve a problem, this section articulates how the research will achieve this goal. For example, the study could indicate that findings made would be relevant to government, business, religion or the civil society or certain institutions in the state such as education, law, and others.

Scope/Delimitation of the Study. Delimitations are factors that affect the study, but over which the researcher still has some degree of control. Delimitations describe the scope of the study or establish parameters or limits for the study. For example, the researcher could set limits on the sample size, extent of the geographic region from which data are collected, response formats included in data-collecting instruments, or the time-frame for the study, factors that would make the study feasible for the researcher. Technically, delimitations (factors which the researcher controls) are different from limitations (over which the researcher has little or no control). However, in some dissertations, the researcher includes delimitations within the section on limitations (although technically they are distinct and should be included in separate sections in Chapter 1). An

example of delimitation might be as follows: *Due to the large number of potential respondents in the study population, the population involved in the current study focused only on junior secondary pupils on Mainland Lagos.*

Definition of Terms. This section of Chapter 1 provides definitions for terms used in the research report, proposal or dissertation that are unusual or not widely understood. In addition, common terms that have special meaning in the study are defined in this section. Acronyms (except those in common usage) are also defined at this point.

The Limitation of the Study. Limitations are factors beyond the researcher's control that may affect the results of the study or how the results are interpreted. Stating limitations of the study may be very useful for readers because they provide a method to acknowledge possible errors or difficulties in interpreting results of the study. Limitations that are not readily apparent at the start of the research project may develop or become apparent as the study progresses. In any case, limitations should not be considered as excuses; they are simply factors or conditions that help the reader get a truer sense of what the study results mean and how widely they can be generalised. While all studies have some inherent limitations, the writer should address only those that may have a significant effect on his/her particular study.

Organization of the Study. In some research reports, there is a section that examines the organisation of the study by describing the components of each chapter in the work. Thus, this section summarises the contents of each of the chapters that will comprise the study. This permits readers to know what information will be found in each chapter and facilitates finding specific information without searching through the dissertation page by page to do so. This section also provides a logical transition into the next chapter of the dissertation.

Chapter Two – Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

The purpose of Chapter 2 is to provide the reader with a comprehensive review of the literature related to the problem under investigation. The review of related literature should greatly expand upon the introduction and background information presented in Chapter 1. This chapter is broken down into Literature and Theoretical Framework.

Literature Review. The researcher uses Literature Review to examine studies carried out in the recent past on the subject matter by other scholars within or outside his or her immediate environment or both. This is essential in order to know the state of knowledge in the subject matter of

investigation. There are two types of review, conceptual review and empirical review. The findings of the latter are noted, their methodology is examined and their study population and other factors are considered. This approach enables the researcher to know what gaps exist in what areas and how to go about making his or her own work an original study.

Since Chapter 2 may be lengthy, it is essential that researchers divide the chapter into as many sections and subsections as needed to logically organise the information presented. Also, citations should be used extensively throughout the chapter to present information and conclusions drawn by other researchers and scholars whose works are being used in the present study. The overuse of direct quotations should be avoided as the inclusion of many direct quotations could produce a literature review that usually lacks transitions and flow, and is difficult to read.

Theoretical Framework. The Theoretical Analysis ensures that theoretical explanations are provided for the variables or constructs in the work as enunciated by renowned scholars and authors. A study on “Conflict Management as a Precursor of Employee Performance in Work Organizations”, for instance, could require the application of the Functionalist Theory, the Social Conflict Theory by Karl Marx, as well as others such as the Human Needs Theory, Political Theories, and others. Theories provide strong arguments for the positions taken in the research. Depending on what is investigated, a theory may not be able to explain all the issues in the investigation, hence the need for more than a theory. However, no matter the number of theories used, the relevance of the theory to subject matter of investigation must be clearly stated.

Conceptual Framework. The Conceptual Analysis may go further to examine the meanings of terms or constructs to be used in the research. At the end of that sub-section, a conceptual framework can be created showing the relationship between the constructs and the independent and dependent variables. Usually Conceptual Framework is used mostly in a situation where more than one theory is used. Conceptual Framework construct must the links and relationships between the theories in relation to the objectives of the study.

Chapter Three – Methodology

This chapter reports the entire methodology of the research. It is advisable that the information regarding methodology be comprehensive and detailed enough to permit replication of the study by other researchers. The chapter is broken into these components:

Design of the Study. This section discusses briefly the type of design used for the study.

Target Population. This sub-section looks at the target population which is the entire population in focus for the study. In the example given earlier, the population would be young girls enrolled in Junior Secondary Schools on Mainland Lagos. It could be further narrowed down to public or private secondary schools.

Sample. It is from this population that a sample is drawn for the study. While the sample must be small enough to provide a manageable volume of data, it must accurately represent the population if any valid inferences are to be drawn from the sample results. It is recommended that samples for survey research be statistically derived, and there are simple formulae to do this.

Sampling Procedure. The sampling procedure has to do with the selection of the sample size to be used for the study. There are various ways to do this. The commonest method is the Simple Random Sampling Method. Other methods include Stratified Sampling Method, Systematic Sampling, Cluster Sampling, Quota Sampling, Purposive Sampling, Snowball Sampling, Expert Sampling, and many others.

Instrumentation. This section describes the procedures used for developing an instrument to gather data from the selected population/sample. This includes sources of items for the instrument as well as a description of the instrument itself (e.g., number of items on the instrument, response format of the items, among others). Sources of items for an instrument might include information gleaned from the literature review or may be an adaptation of a previous study or commercially available instrument. Instrument reliability and validity data should be described in this section whenever possible. Instruments developed by the researcher should always be pilot tested (or field tested) to ensure instrument validity and clarity of instructions and items. In general, subjects similar to those who will be in the study sample (but not included in the actual sample) may serve as subjects for pilot testing. Results of pilot testing and accompanying comments should be used, if necessary, to revise the instrument before distributing it to the actual sample.

Procedure. This is where the various steps taken to execute the study are reported. Various activities are supposed to be reported here, i.e. how the questionnaire was administered, for instance. The section should also answer questions such as whether the questionnaire was personally administered by the researcher or whether he or she trained some research assistants to help out. It could also explain whether the respondents in the study were given some orientation before they could participate in the

interview or survey. The sub-section must also address the issues of objectivity of response, and confidentiality of information given, among others.

Method of Data Analysis. This section of Chapter 3 will provide detail treatment and analysis of the collected data. Methods of data analysis are primarily determined by the hypotheses to be tested or research questions to be answered (which also determine the format of the instrument and how the data are gathered) and the level of data being gathered (nominal, ordinal, and/or interval). When several hypotheses/research questions are being addressed, it is helpful to describe the data analysis that will be used for each hypothesis/research question. It is essentially concerned with the description of the statistical tools employed in the research.

Chapter Four – Findings and Presentation of Results

This chapter provides results of data analyses and findings of the study. This chapter is limited to reporting findings and results, and is not the proper place for conclusions or discussion of the findings.) This chapter begins with an introduction (as do all chapters), which delineates the major sections to be included in the chapter, and may include a restatement of the research problem (and accompanying hypotheses or research questions). While there is no one “correct” format for dividing Chapter 4, information regarding response rate and response demographics (when relevant) is usually reported first, followed by reporting of results of data analysis for each hypothesis/research question.

Chapter Five – Summary, Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter contains summary, discussion, conclusion and recommendations.

Summary. The Summary section of Chapter 5 provides a brief recap of the entire study. Generally, this section summarises the introduction, problem statement and hypotheses/research questions, literature review, methodology, and findings. Someone reading this section would have a good overview of why the study was done, the specific purpose of the study and hypotheses/research questions, what the literature relates about the problem under investigation (very briefly), the methods used to gather data for the study, and findings emerging from analysis of the data. Note that the findings are part of the Summary and are not included in a separate section.

Discussion. In this section, the researcher will write out each hypothesis/research question, briefly mention the result and provide sensible

explanations/interpretations to the results. Also, the researcher will do well to connect this discussion to findings that corroborate or contradict it in the literature review section of the report. The researcher should also explain why the findings are similar to those in the literature review or explain why the results differ. This is to be done for all the hypotheses/research questions.

Conclusion. This section presents conclusions drawn from the findings and results of the data analysis. Findings from the present study should provide the primary information for drawing conclusions. Frequently, conclusions provide answers to hypotheses or research questions posed in Chapter 1. While conclusions may be written in narrative form or listed one at a time, listing them one at a time is generally easier for readers to follow and helps maintain clarity of focus for each conclusion. It is important to mention that: conclusions are not the same as findings and should not simply be restatements of findings from Chapter 4. A conclusion should be broader and more encompassing than a specific finding, and several findings may be incorporated into one conclusion. While several findings may be used to support one conclusion, it is also possible that one finding might give rise to several conclusions (although this is less common). Generally, while specific findings are stated in the past tense (e.g. the study showed that junior secondary school girls were victims of sexual harassment in secondary schools in Lagos State), conclusions are stated in the present tense (e.g. young girls in junior secondary schools need to be protected from all forms of sexual harassment within and outside the school environment in order to safeguard their continued education and career development).

Recommendations. The final section of Chapter five contains recommendations that emerge from the study. Generally, recommendations are of two distinct types; recommendations for action or practice (based on the study's findings and conclusions, and sometimes entitled as *Recommendations from the Study* or *Recommendations for Practice*), and *Recommendations for Further Study* (Baron, n.d.). Frequently a separate section is included for each set of recommendations, each with an appropriate section heading. Recommendations for practice are generally prescriptive in nature and address what could or should be done by practitioners or members of the intended audience in terms of professional practice and policy. These recommendations are based upon results of the study. Recommendations for further research are based on the researcher's suggestions for further studies.

The Supplementary Section

This section contains references, bibliography and appendices.

References

The references section is a very important section even though it is part of the section that comes last. The list of references following Chapter 5 should include all references that were cited throughout the body of the proposal or dissertation. Conversely, there should be no references listed that did not appear as citations within the paper. Bibliographies, on the other hand, may include works consulted from which no specific citations were used and should be subdivided into sections distinguishing works actually cited in the text from works consulted but not cited. While the reference section of this work was prepared in line with the American Psychological Association (APA) Style, the examples of references immediately after this section adopted the American Sociological Association (ASA) Style in order to expose students to the style.

Referencing Using the American Sociological Association (ASA) Style

Book with One Author

This can be done following this format:

- (1) Author's last name, followed by a comma and author's first name and middle initial, ending with a period.
- (2) Year of publication followed by a period.
- (3) Title of book italicized ending with a period, followed by edition number if 2nd ed. or later.
- (4) City of publication (with state abbreviation if it's not a well-known city), followed by a colon and name of publisher, ending with a period.

See example below:

Isiugo-Abanihe, U.C. 2003. *Male Role and Responsibility in Fertility and Reproductive Health in Nigeria*. Ibadan: Centre for Population Activities and Education for Development (CEPAED).

Onyeonoru, I.P. 2005. *Industrial Sociology: An African Perspective*. Ibadan: SAMLAD Press.

Book with Two or More Authors

Same as with one author, but do not invert authors' names after the first author. Separate authors' names with a comma (unless there are only two authors), and include the word *and* before the final author. Note that the word "edition" is abbreviated, and not italicized or capitalized.

Imhonopi, D. & Urim, U.M. 2012. *Sociology, Culture and Social Problems: Essays and Insights*. Lagos: Institute of Communication and Entrepreneurship Development.

Book: Group as Author (Agency, Organisation or Company)

International Labour Organisation (ILO). 1982. *Resolutions Concerning Economically Active Population, Employment, Unemployment and Underemployment Adopted by the 13th International Conference of Labour Statisticians*. Switzerland.

Book: No Author

Merriam-Webster's Geographical Dictionary. 1997. (3rd ed.). Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster.

Edited Book

Shoremi, M.O., Edewor, P.A. & Olutayo, A.O. eds. 1999. *The Science of Society: A Sociological Introduction*. Ago Iwoye: Centre for Sandwich Programme, Ogun State University.

Chapter in a Book

Okafor, E.E. 2012. 'The Nigeria Economy' In *Peoples & Cultures of Nigeria*, edited by A.S. Jegede, O.A. Olutayo, O.O. Omololu and B.E. Owumi. Ibadan: Department of Sociology, University of Ibadan. pp. 192-207.

Journal Article: Print

Okafor, E.E., Imhonopi, D. and Urim, U.M. 2011. 'Utilization of Internet Services and Its Impact on Teaching and Research Outputs in Private Universities in South Western Nigeria' *International Journal of Emerging Technologies and Society*, Vol. 9, No. 2, pp. 135-151.

Okafor, E. E. 2004. 'Globalization and Development: A critical Overview of Nigerian Technological Infrastructure in the Globalized World'. *African Journal for Psychological Study of Social Issues*, Vol. 7, No.1, pp.14-29.

Journal Article with doi

Sweeten, G., Bushway, S.D. & Paternoster, R. 2009. 'Does Dropping Out of School Mean Dropping Into Delinquency?' *Criminology* 47(1):47-91. doi:10.1111/j.1745- 9125.2009.00139.x.

Magazine Article

Olufemi, J., Isine, L. & Akinwumi, R. 2015. 'Shocking: 2015 Budget: National Assembly's N150 billion enough to fund capital votes for 20 Federal MDAs' *Premium Times*, May 18, pp. 7- 8.

Magazine Article: Online

Standing, G. 2013. "Defining the Precariat: A Class in the Making." *Eurozine*, April 19, pp. 10-11. (Retrieved from <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2013-04-19-standing-en.html> on June 8, 2015)

Newspaper Article

Nwakanma, O. 2014. "Nigeria's democracy: Expensive shit?" *The Vanguard*, June 8, p. 21.

Newspaper Article: Online

Nda-Isaiah, J. 2015. 'Buhari: A cabinet without complete ministerial portfolios' *Leadership Newspaper*, November 2, p. 4. Retrieved December 10, 2015 (<http://leadership.ng>).

Book Review

Bishin, B. G. 2009. 'Review of *The Persuadable Voter: Wedge Issues in Presidential Campaigns*' *The Forum* 7(2).

Source: Trinity College Library

Web Site

World Population Statistics. 2014. "World Population 2014." Retrieved November 3, 2015 (<http://www.worldpopulationstatistics.com/world-population-2014/>).

Source: Imhonopi and Urim (2015)

Web page: No Author, No Date

'Youth Unemployment in Nigeria: Shocking Statistics, Facts and Why the Future may not be so Bright After All'. N.d. Retrieved May 4, 2014 (<http://risenetnetworks.org/2013/05/16/youth-unemployment-in-nigeria-is-there-hope-for-nigerian-youth/>).

Online Publication

Elements of Democracy. 2010. 'Democracy education for Iraq—nine brief themes' Retrieved January 5, 2012 (<http://www.stanford.edu/~ldiamond/iraq/DemocracyEducation0204.htm>).

Appendices

The final attachments to the proposal or dissertation are the Appendices. The Appendices contain pertinent (and often supplementary) materials that are not important enough, do not fit appropriately in any specific section of the body, or are too long to include in the body of the research, but which may be of interest to some readers. Common elements found in the Appendices include a copy of the data-gathering instrument, a copy of the cover letter, copies of any letters of permission required for the study, and tables that are very long or of only minor importance to the study.

Conclusion

Academic report writing or research report writing is a well-structured and organized process that the young researcher or university student needs to be aware of. While adhering to the structure may be somewhat restricting, the framework ensures that report writers include all the relevant information and also helps them set out the information in a logical way. The framework also helps the readers to decide whether the report is going to be relevant and if so helps them to find the information they need fairly quickly. However, it is important to point out that the ultimate form and content of the report will be determined by the lecturer, research supervisor, doctoral advisor, committee members, and the researcher. Each student, therefore, should work closely with their supervisor and clarify any questions or problems as soon as they arise. Academic report writing, if mastered by the research student, can boost an individual's career whether within or outside academia.

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