

**The Fundamental Steps to Writing  
Thesis/Seminar Papers: A Review of  
Common Mistakes and Errors Associated  
with Students Papers**

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# Fundamental Steps

- In writing any
  - (1) dissertation
  - (2) Thesis
  - (3) Seminar Paper

- There are five principle guidelines a student must be familiar with:
  - (1) Study Introduction
  - (2) Review of Instant Literature
  - (3) Methodological Approach
  - (4) Research Findings
  - (5) Research Interpretation and Recommendation

# What Does a Research Introduction Entail

- A research introduction entails the following:
  - (1) Background
  - (2) Purpose of the Study
  - (3) Problem Statement
  - (4) Theoretical Framework
  - (5) Variable Definitions
  - (6) Scope of Study

# Review of Literature

- Literature review in any research endeavor is the base that gives information support to the research and its possible claim.
- It reviews existing work that are relevant to the study
- Literature review consolidates the entire research
- It weighs what already exists and how what is being presented matter in future

- Insufficient literature does not help your research
- Detailed literature abstracted from sources relevant to your research legitimizes your claim and significantly makes your view point stronger
- It is rather scholarly advisable to increase the landscape of your literature review

# Methodological Approach

- Your Dissertation/Thesis/Seminar Paper methodological approach should follow these steps:
  - (1) Research Method – What Research Method are you applying
  - (2) Instrumentation
  - (3) Sample and Sampling Method

(4) Reliability and Validity

(5) Statistical measures and Analysis

Note:

How do you define and discuss each of these research variables



- Example:

Reliability: The degree to which a particular procedure enables one to collect the same data each time in repeated observation of the same phenomenon (consistency in data classification than replication)

- A reliable study therefore:
  - (1) should always produce the same results from the same set of data irrespective of circumstances
  - (2) coders in such study must agree on the units of analysis

- If agreement among coders is perfect for all units, then reliability is assured
- But where there are no agreement among coders no matter how good the study turns out to be, reliability is absent.
- Reliability may take the form of (a) stability (b) accuracy or © reproductibility

- **Validity:** The focus on whether an instrument actually measures what it intended to measure
- A Research exercise may be valid and not reliable and vice versa.

# Research Findings

- At the methodological approach level, a student will be able to report the:
  - Demographic descriptions
  - Data analysis
  - What the research was able to find

At this part of the research, details of the findings must be clearly presented

# Interpretations and Recommendations

- At the interpretations and recommendation level, a student has to show:
  - Competence in interpreting and discussing data collected
  - Competence in using statistically analyzed data to support various claims
  - Making solid recommendation for future research

# Common Mistakes and Errors

In writing dissertation, thesis and seminar papers, students makes mistakes and errors such as:

1. Lack of accurate introduction of the study
2. Lack of and inconsistent study Abstract
3. Writing in a Clear and Concise Manner

Example: (a) Length

(b) Organization of thought

(c) Organization of Content Area

(d) Organization of Source  
Materials



# Writing Styles

4. Writing Styles
  - (a) Presenting Continuity in Ideas
  - (b) Expression must be smooth
  - (c) Must Maintain consistency in linking Ideas and Viewpoints
  - (d) Precision and Clarity in Expression

# Grammar and Usage

## 5. Grammar and Usage

- (a) Usage of Verbs
- (b) Subject and Verb Agreement
- (c) Appropriate Use of Pronouns
- (d) General usage of Conjunctions

# Style and Mechanics

## 6. Style and Mechanics

- (a) Punctuation
- (b) Spacing after Punctuation Marks
- (c) consistency in using the following:  
period, comma, semicolon, dash, question marks etc.

# Spelling

- (a) Spelling should conform to standard American English as shown in any identified American College Dictionary
  
- (b) Capitalization: Must use uppercase letter for the first letter of a word

(c) Spell-Check

(d) Peer Review and Reread

# Crediting Sources (Citation)

## When is the Proper Time to Cite?

No time is most appropriate to cite because any research endeavor must cite the work of people whose ideas, theories, or research influenced their own work directly or indirectly.

Citation is very crucial in any empirical research

In the absence of adequate citation or using data that does not belong to a researcher provides room for the “P” word =Plagiarism otherwise referred to as academic fraud.

# Plagiarism

There are two types of plagiarism

- (a) Plagiarism
- (b) Self-Plagiarism

Plagiarism is defined as the practice of claiming credit for the words, ideas, and concepts of other.



Self-Plagiarism is defined as the practice of presenting a researcher's own previously published work as though it were new

All these errors contribute in denying a student either the furtherance of his work or defending it

# Citing References

1. Citing one work by one author

*Chester (2010) found that Bowie State University is one of America's top ten best value public universities.*

2. Citing one work by Multiple Authors

*Chester, Grant, Gabriel, and Joppy (2010) found*

.....

3 When multiple authors are quoted the second time = *Chester et al.* and omit year

- Quoting work that was quoted by another source:
  - Example:
    - “The use of technomedia strategies as a tool in effective healthcare delivery in nascent democratic system in Nigeria” In Nwokeafor C, and Langmia K. (eds.) Media and Technology in Emerging African Democracies, University Press of America, Lanham MD (2010).

# Process of Submitting Research Application to IRB

The acronym IRB stands for:

- \*Institutional Review Board which is an offshoot of the Federal Government Agency that upholds the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects.
- \* For any research endeavor on the campus of BSU to move forward, it must seek IRB approval.

- The Steps to submitting a proposal must:
  - (a) complete an IRB application
  - (b) submit the first three chapters with references
  - (c) attach the study instrument (survey)
  - (d) submit a consent form
  - (e) submit a letter of support from the research faculty advisor

- \* (f) Make sure that the application form is properly filled out most importantly researcher's name, working e-mail address, name of faculty advisor, title of the research and so on.
- (g) The 15 Questions on the application form must be answered as they reflect to your research. For example **Questions #4**  
*Describe the risk of the subjects? Could the research be done without using humans?*

- (h) The answer to this question is determined by two cardinal factors:
  - (1) if your research is using a primary data
  - (2) if the research is using a secondary dataExplain briefly

# Submission

- (a) Submit three copies of your IRB package to the Graduate School
- (b) Your submission must be in a package and not loose stapled papers.
- (c) Please allow 2-4 weeks for the IRB review process to be completed prior to the submission of the proposal.
- (d) 2 weeks for proposal using secondary data and 4 weeks for those using primary data.



- As soon as your proposal application is either approved or denied, you will receive an e-mail either from me or Dr. Kehbuma Langmia.
- Please stop calling for your interest is highly taking care of and we will return to you and your faculty advisor when review is completed.

# Questions & Answers

- You have been a wonderful audience and please ask your questions