**STEPS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH. WRITING A RESEARCH REPORT**

**Degree Course (Three Years)**

**Psychology Honours**

**B. A. Part– III Honours Paper VI: Group A (Research Methodology)**

**By**

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A research report deals with results of completed research work. After completing a research work, it is generally produced in the written ‘form, and is called research report or thesis. A detailed description of research activities are provided in it. It has a variety of formats and vary as to its length. It is written in past tense and in third person. It is the final form of the research work. A research report includes usually the following chapters-Introductory or theoretical background, Review of related literature, Methodology, Data collection, Analysis of data, Discussion of results and findings of the study, Bibliography and Appendices. It is also submitted for evaluating its contributions. It serves the purpose of communicating the results of a research work done.

**NEED OF RESEARCH REPORT**

Writing a research report is very challenging task for the researcher. A good research report requires sufficient-experience and insight about his research activities. A research report is needed due to the following reasons:

• The research must be reported in full and its results should be subjected to a criticism and verification.

• The research work is done for the benefit of human being, therefore, it must be communicable to the general public for the practical use.

• The research should be considered to be the culminating act for reflective thinking. It encourages other persons to take up some problem for further investigation.

• The research report requires the creative thinking of a researcher to review the related studies and discussing the result of the study and also suggest some new problems for further studies.

• The research report is also necessary for giving shape and form to the investigation and solidifying it.

• It is needed for providing a clear picture of research method, sample and techniques used in conducting the research work.

• The research report is meant for popularizing the new contributions in the discipline.

**DIFFERENT STEPS IN WRITING REPORT:**

Research reports are the product of slow, painstaking, accurate inductive work. The usual steps involved in writing report are: (a) logical analysis of the subject-matter; (b) preparation of the final outline; (c) preparation of the rough draft; (d) rewriting and polishing; (c) preparation of the final bibliography; and (f) writing the final draft. Though all these steps are self explanatory, yet a brief mention of each one of these will be appropriate for better understanding.

**Logical analysis of the subject matter:** It is the first step which is primarily concerned with the development of a subject. There are two ways in which to develop a subject (a) logically and (b) chronologically. The logical development is made on the basis of mental connections and associations between the one thing and another by means of analysis. Logical treatment often consists in developing the material from the simple possible to the most complex structures. Chronological development is based on a connection or sequence in time or occurrence. The directions for doing or making something usually follow the chronological order.

**Preparation of the final outline:** It is the next step in writing the research report “Outlines are the framework upon which long written works are constructed. They are an aid to the logical organisation of the material and a reminder of the points to be stressed in the report.”

**Preparation of the rough draft:** This follows the logical analysis of the subject and the preparation of the final outline. Such a step is of utmost importance for the researcher now sits to write down what he has done in the context of his research study. He will write down the procedure adopted by him in collecting the material for his study along with various limitations faced by him, the technique of analysis adopted by him, the broad findings and generalizations and the various suggestions he wants to offer regarding the problem concerned.

**Rewriting and polishing of the rough draft:** This step happens to be most difficult part of all formal writing. Usually this step requires more time than the writing of the rough draft. The careful revision makes the difference between a mediocre and a good piece of writing. While rewriting and polishing, one should check the report for weaknesses in logical development or presentation. The researcher should also “see whether or not the material, as it is presented, has unity and cohesion; does the report stand upright and firm and exhibit a definite pattern, like a marble arch? Or does it resemble an old wall of moldering cement and loose brick.”4 In addition the researcher should give due attention to the fact that in his rough draft he has been consistent or not. He should check the mechanics of writing—grammar, spelling and usage.

**Preparation of the final bibliography:** Next in order comes the task of the preparation of the final bibliography. The bibliography, which is generally appended to the research report, is a list of books in some way pertinent to the research which has been done. It should contain all those works which the researcher has consulted. The bibliography should be arranged alphabetically and may be divided into two parts; the first part may contain the names of books and pamphlets, and the second part may contain the names of magazine and newspaper articles. Generally, this pattern of bibliography is considered convenient and satisfactory from the point of view of reader, though it is not the only way of presenting bibliography. The entries in bibliography should be made adopting the following order:

For books and pamphlets the order may be as under: 1. Name of author, last name first. 2. Title, underlined to indicate italics. 3. Place, publisher, and date of publication. 4. Number of volumes.

**Writing the final draft:** This constitutes the last step. The final draft should be written in a concise and objective style and in simple language, avoiding vague expressions such as “it seems”, “there may be”, and the like ones. While writing the final draft, the researcher must avoid abstract terminology and technical jargon. Illustrations and examples based on common experiences must be incorporated in the final draft as they happen to be most effective in communicating the research findings to others. A research report should not be dull, but must enthuse people and maintain interest and must show originality. It must be remembered that every report should be an attempt to solve some intellectual problem and must contribute to the solution of a problem and must add to the knowledge of both the researcher and the reader.

**LAYOUT OF THE RESEARCH REPORT**

Anybody, who is reading the research report, must necessarily be conveyed enough about the study so that he can place it in its general scientific context, judge the adequacy of its methods and thus form an opinion of how seriously the findings are to be taken. For this purpose there is the need of proper layout of the report. The layout of the report means as to what the research report should contain. A comprehensive layout of the research report should comprise (A) preliminary pages; (B) the main text; and (C) the end matter. Let us deal with them separately.

(**A) Preliminary Pages**

In its preliminary pages the report should carry a title and date, followed by acknowledgements in the form of ‘Preface’ or ‘Foreword’. Then there should be a table of contents followed by list of tables and illustrations so that the decision-maker or anybody interested in reading the report can easily locate the required information in the report.

**(B) Main Text**

The main text provides the complete outline of the research report along with all details. Title of the research study is repeated at the top of the first page of the main text and then follows the other details on pages numbered consecutively, beginning with the second page. Each main section of the report should begin on a new page. The main text of the report should have the following sections:

1. Introduction;
2. Statement of findings and recommendations;
3. The results;
4. The implications drawn from the results; and
5. The summary.
6. **Introduction**: The purpose of introduction is to introduce the research project to the readers. It should contain a clear statement of the objectives of research i.e., enough background should be given to make clear to the reader why the problem was considered worth investigating. A brief summary of other relevant research may also be stated so that the present study can be seen in that context. The hypotheses of study, if any, and the definitions of the major concepts employed in the study should be explicitly stated in the introduction of the report. The methodology adopted in conducting the study must be fully explained. The scientific reader would like to know in detail about such thing: How was the study carried out? What was its basic design? If the study was an experimental one, then what were the experimental manipulations? If the data were collected by means of questionnaires or interviews, then exactly what questions were asked (The questionnaire or interview schedule is usually given in an appendix)? If measurements were based on observation, then what instructions were given to the observers? Regarding the sample used in the study the reader should be told: Who were the subjects? How many were there? How were they selected? All these questions are crucial for estimating the probable limits of generalizability of the findings. The statistical analysis adopted must also be clearly stated. In addition to all this, the scope of the study should be stated and the boundary lines be demarcated. The various limitations, under which the research project was completed, must also be narrated.
7. **Statement of findings and recommendations:** After introduction, the research report must contain a statement of findings and recommendations in non-technical language so that it can be easily understood by all concerned. If the findings happen to be extensive, at this point they should be put in the summarised form.
8. **Results:** A detailed presentation of the findings of the study, with supporting data in the form of tables and charts together with a validation of results, is the next step in writing the main text of the report. This generally comprises the main body of the report, extending over several chapters. The result section of the report should contain statistical summaries and reductions of the data rather than the raw data. All the results should be presented in logical sequence and splitted into readily identifiable sections. All relevant results must find a place in the report. But how one is to decide about what is relevant is the basic question. Quite often guidance comes primarily from the research problem and from the hypotheses, if any, with which the study was concerned. But ultimately the researcher must rely on his own judgement in deciding the outline of his report. “Nevertheless, it is still necessary that he states clearly the problem with which he was concerned, the procedure by which he worked on the problem, the conclusions at which he arrived, and the bases for his conclusions.”
9. **Implications of the results:** Toward the end of the main text, the researcher should again put down the results of his research clearly and precisely. He should, state the implications that flow from the results of the study, for the general reader is interested in the implications for understanding the human behaviour. Such implications may have three aspects as stated below:

A statement of the inferences drawn from the present study which may be expected to apply in similar circumstances. The conditions of the present study which may limit the extent of legitimate generalizations of the inferences drawn from the study. The relevant questions that still remain unanswered or new questions raised by the study along with suggestions for the kind of research that would provide answers for them.It is considered a good practice to finish the report with a short conclusion which summarises and recapitulates the main points of the study. The conclusion drawn from the study should be clearly related to the hypotheses that were stated in the introductory section. At the same time, a forecast of the probable future of the subject and an indication of the kind of research which needs to be done in that particular field is useful and desirable.

1. Summary: It has become customary to conclude the research report with a very brief summary, resting in brief the research problem, the methodology, the major findings and the major conclusions drawn from the research results.

**(C) End Matter**

At the end of the report, appendices should be enlisted in respect of all technical data such as questionnaires, sample information, mathematical derivations and the like ones. Bibliography of sources consulted should also be given. Index (an alphabetical listing of names, places and topics along with the numbers of the pages in a book or report on which they are mentioned or discussed) should invariably be given at the end of the report. The value of index lies in the fact that it works as a guide to the reader for the contents in the report.