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RESEARCH REPORT PREPARATION

Aftab Alam
Research Scholar
IASE, Jamia Millia Islamia, Delhi- 110025

Abstract

A research is a systematized and organized search for the pertinent information on a specific topic or an existing problem. It is an art of scientific investigation. Research of any kind is a careful investigation through search for the new facts. A research study is a tiring and tedious task to do and calls for an exhaustive investigation on the part of the researcher; so is the writing report of the research done. This quite often leads to the accumulation of bulk data obtained from the research study. Even if the concerned study results in brilliant hypotheses or a generalized theory, it is the responsibility of the researcher to format this but study into an easy to understand writing pattern. It is here that report writing activity comes to his aid. Writing an academic report or paper involves reading about, thinking about, making a case about and finally writing about a scholarly topic. Generally speaking, the idea is to get your readers to see the topic in a new light. Preparation and presentation of a research report is the most important part of the research process. No matter how brilliant the hypotheses and how well designed is the research study, they are of little value unless communicated effectively to others in the form of a research report. Moreover, if the report is confusing or poorly written, the time and the effort spent on gathering and analyzing data would be wasted. It is therefore, vital on the part of the researcher to summarize and communicate the result in the form of an understandable and logical research report. A research report is a mean of conveying the research study to a specific target audience. The following precautions should be taken while preparing the research report:

The report should be long enough to cover the topic and short enough to preserve the interest, The report should not be dull and complicated.

The report should be simple, without the usage of the abstract terms and the technical jargons.

The report should be enlisted with respect to all the technical data in the report.

The report should offer ready availability of findings with the help of charts; tables and graphs, as reader prefer quick knowledge of the main finding. It should be attractive, neat, and clean, whether handwritten or typed.

Report writing involves paying attention towards certain points such as size, layout footnotes and documentation style. Thus, while writing a report, all the precautions should be taken for the report to be effective and accurate.

Key words: Research report, research report writing, significance, precautions during writing of research report.

Introduction

What is a report?

A report is a very important document. It provides information for decision making and follow up actions which is a self-explanatory statement of facts relating to a specific subject or a problem. It is a systematic presentation of ascertained facts about a specific event or a subject. It is a summary of findings and recommendations about a particular matter/problem. A report facilitates timely decisions and follow-up measures.

Characteristics of a report

- **Complete and Compact Document**: Report is a complete and compact written document giving updated information about a specific problem.

- **Systematic Presentation of Facts**: Report is a systematic presentation of facts, figures, conclusions and recommendations. A report writer closely studies the problem under investigation and prepares a report after analyzing all relevant information regarding the problem. Report is supported by facts and evidence. There is no scope for imagination in a report which is basically a factual document.

- **Prepared in Writing**: Reports are usually in writing. Writing reports are useful for reference purpose. It serves as complete, compact and self-explanatory document over a long period. Oral reporting is possible in the case of secret and confidential matters.

- **Provides Information and Guidance**: Report is a valuable document which gives information and guidance to the management while framing future policies. It facilitates planning and decision making. Reports are also useful for solving problems faced by a business enterprise.

- **Self-explanatory Document**: Report is a comprehensive document and covers all aspects of the subject matter of study. It is a self-explanatory and complete document by itself.

- **Acts as a Tool of Internal Communication**: Report is an effective tool of communication between top executives and subordinate staff working in an organization. It provides feedback to employees and to executives for decision making. Reports are generally submitted to higher authorities. It is an example of upward communication. Similarly, reports are also sent by company executives to the lower levels of management. This is treated as downward communication. In addition, reports are also sent to shareholders and others connected with the company. It may be pointed out that report writing / preparation acts as a backbone of any system of communication.

- **Acts as Permanent Record**: A report serves as a permanent record relating to certain business matter. It is useful for future reference and guidance.

- **Time Consuming and Costly Activity**: Report writing is a time consuming, lengthy and costly activity as it involves collection of facts, drawing conclusion and making recommendations.

- **What is a Research Report?**

- Every person has a different style of writing. There is not really one right style for a report, but there are some basic principles for writing a research report clearly. Preparing a research report involves other activities besides writing; in fact, writing is actually the last step in the preparation process. Before writing can take place, the results of the research project must be fully understood and thought must be given to what the report will say. Thus, preparing a research report involves three steps: understanding, organising and writing.

Different steps in report writing

Research reports result from a measured, thorough, accurate and inductive work. There is no such particular format suitable for report. The usual steps, however, to be pursued while writing reports are as follows:

Logical analysis of subject matter: It concentrates on the development of a subject or a problem. A subject can be developed in two ways:

Logical development: This is based on the mental connections and associations between two   things.

Chronological development: This is based on a connection or sequence in relation to time.   **Preparation of the final outline:** 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: It comprises information about the procedure adopted in collecting data, the technique of analysis used the findings and generalisations offered, along with the several limitations encouraged.

Rewriting and polishing the rough draft: This is the most difficult step of all the format writing. While rewriting and polishing, the researcher should check the report for linguistic and informative weaknesses from the point of view of a logical development. He should also check if the material presented has unity and cohesion. The researcher should also concentrate on being consistent in the rough draft.

Preparation of the final bibliography: The bibliography is generally appended to the research report. It is list of books relevant to the research, which has been performed. It should include the names of all those works, which the researcher has referred. The bibliography should be in the alphabetical order and may be divided into two parts; the first part may contain the names of the books and pamphlets and the second part may contain the name of the magazine and newspaper articles. The entries in bibliography can be recorded in the following order:

For books, the order should be:

Name of the author, last name first

Title, underlined to indicate italics

Place, publisher and date of publications

Number of volumes

For magazines and newspaper, the order can be:

Name of the author, the last name first

Title of article in quotations marks

Name of periodical underlines to indicate italics

The volume or volume and number

The date of the issue

The pagination

Writing the final draft: This makes up the last step. The final draft should have a concise and objective writing style and should use simple language. It should avoid vague expressions such as 'it seems', three may be and the jargons.

TYPES OF REPORTS

Research reports vary extensively in length and type. The kind of audience addressed in the research report decides the type of the report. For example, a technical report is meant for researchers and popular report is meant for a more general audience like the government. The details concerning these reports are as follows:

Report: A technical report is written for the researchers. The main emphasis in a technical report is given on the methods employed, the assumptions made and the detailed presentation of the findings along with limitations and supporting data. A general outline of a technical report can be given as follows:

- Summary of results
- Nature of the study
- Methods employed
- Discussion of data collected
- Analysis of data and presentation of findings
- Conclusions
- Bibliography
- Technical appendices
- Index

Even in a technical report, simple presentation and readily available findings are of utmost importance and hence, it is desirable to use as many charts and diagrams as necessary.

Popular Report: The popular report is intended for a more general audience. This kind of report gives an emphasis on simplicity and attractiveness; along with practical aspects and policy implications. A general outline of the popular report can be given as follows:

- The findings and their implications
- Recommendations for action
- Objectives of the study
- Methods employed
- Results
- Technical appendices

In a popular report, as in technical, simplicity is most important. Mentioning the policy implications with the operational perspective and avoiding technical details of all possible sorts is also essential while writing a popular report.

MECHANICS OF WRITING A RESEARCH REPORT

There are several rules, which are strictly followed for preparing the technical report. The following points should be considered for writing a technical report:

Size and physical designing the manuscript's properties

if handwritten, should be in black or blue ink and on unruled paper of 8½"X11" size. A margin of at least one paper. The top and bottom margins should be of one inch. If the manuscript is to be typed, then all typing should be doubled-spaced and on one side of the paper, except for the insertion of long quotations.

Procedure: Various steps in writing the report should be strictly followed.

Layout: According to the objective and nature of the research, the layout of the report should be decided and followed properly.

Quotations: Quotations should be punctuated with quotation marks and double spaces, forming an immediate part of the text. However, if a quotation is too lengthy then it should be single-spaced and indented at least half an inch to the right of the normal text margin.

Footnotes: Footnotes are meant for the cross-references. They are placed at the bottom of the page, separated from the textual material by a space of half an inch as a line that is around one and half inches long. Footnotes are always typed single space thought they are divided from one another by double space.

Documentation Style: The first footnote reference to any given work should be complete, giving all essential facts about the edition used. Such footnotes follow a general sequence and order as mentioned below:

In case of the single volume reference:

- Author's name in normal order
- Title of the work, underlined to indicate italics
- Place and date of publication
- Pagination references

For example:

John Gassner, Master of the Drama, New York: Dover Publications, Inc. 1954, p.31

In case of multi-volume reference:

- Author's name in normal order
- Title of work, underlined to indicate italics
- Place and date of publication
- Number of volume
- Page number reference.

For example: arranged alphabetically such as encyclopaedias and dictionaries, no pagination reference is usually needed. In such cases, order is illustrated according to the names of the topics.

George Birkbeck Hill Life of Johnson June 2004, Whitefish, Volume 2 p.121.

In case of works arranged alphabetically:

- topics.
- Name of the Encyclopaedia
- Number of Editions

For example:

"Salamanca" Encyclopaedia Britannica, 14th Edition.

In case of periodicals reference:

Name of the author is normal order   Title of article, in quotation marks

Name of the periodical, underlined to indicate italics   Volume number

Date of issuance   Pagination

For example

P.V. Shahad "Rajesh Jain's Ecosystem", in Business Today, Vol.14, December 18, 2005, p.22

* In case of multiple authorship

If there are more than two authors or editors, then in the documentation the name of only

the first is given and the multiple authorship is indicated by "et al"or "and others".

Author's name in normal order

Title of work, underlined to indicate italics

Place and date of publication

Pagination references

For example:

Aleandra K. Wigdor, Ability Testing: Uses Consequences and Controversies, 1981, p21
Subsequent references to the same work need not be so detailed as above. If the work is cited again without any other work intervening, it may be indicated as ibid, followed by a comma and the page number.

Punctuations and abbreviations in footnotes:

Punctuation concerning the book and author names has already been discussed. They are general rules to be strictly adhered. Some English and Latin abbreviations are often used in bibliographies and footnotes to eliminate repetition.

Abbreviations used in bibliography and footnotes   Meaning

Ante.,	Before
Art.,	Article
Bk.,	Book
Ch.,	chapter
Col.,	Column
Ed.,	editor, edition, edited
Ed. Cit.,	edition cited
e.g.	Exampli gratia: for example
et.al.,	and others
f.ff.,	figure(s)
fn.,	footnote
ibid., ibidem	in the same place
id., idem.,	no date
n.p.,	no place
no. pub.,	no publisher
p.p	pages
post	after
vid or vide:	see, refer to
viz.,	namely
vol. Or vol(s)	volume(s)

USE OF STATISTICS, CHARTS AND GRAPHS: Statistics contribute to clarity and simplicity in a research report. They are usually presented in the form of tables, charts, bars, line-graphs and pictorials.

THE FINAL DRAFT: It requires careful scrutiny with regard to grammar errors, logical sequence and coherence in the sentences of the report.

INDEX: An index acts as a good guide to the reader. It can be prepared both as subject index and author index giving names of subjects and names of the authors, respectively. The names are followed by the page numbers of the report where they have appeared or been discussed.

PRECAUTIONS FOR WRITING RESEARCH REPORTS:

Research report is a means of conveying the research study to a specific target audience. The following precautions should be taken while preparing the research report:

It should be long enough to cover the subject and short enough to preserve the interest.

It should not be dull and complicated.

It should be simple, without the usage of the abstract terms and technical jargons.

It   should offer ready availability of findings with the help of charts, tables and graphs, as

readers prefer quick knowledge of main findings.

The layout of the report should be in accordance with the objective of the research study.

There should be no grammatical errors and writing should adhere to techniques of report

writing in case of quotations, footnotes and documentation.

It should present the logical analysis of the subject and reflect a structure in which the analysis   related to   research study fits well.

It should be original, intellectual and contribute to the solution of a problem or add knowledge   to the concerned field.

It should be attractive, neat and clean, whether handwritten or typed.

SUMMARY

As we know research is a process to interpret facts and events to make practical decisions and preparations as well as presentation of the research report is the most important part of the research process. Research process involves preparation of the research report to explain the hypothesis through various steps such as logical analysis of the subject, preparing the rough draft and then preparing the final draft of the base hypothesis. Layout of the research report includes preliminary pages, main test and end matter. Report writing involves paying attention towards certain points such as size, layout, footnotes and documentation style. While writing a research report, certain

precautions should be taken for the report to be effective and accurate.

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