
Researching a Research Paper: An Overview

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Abstract:

Research writing is a serious academic undertaking by researchers envisaged by universities and research institutions. It is, by nature, argumentative, logical, and analytical writing with an application of methods and research processes that are outlined in certain academic and research environments. It comes to shape as a product through effective inputs: identifying the research title, proper understanding of the research gap, reviews of literature, formulation of research questions, and understanding of delimitations. Moreover, the nature of research largely determines how a researcher would carry out his research process in order to attain his task. Familiarity and awareness of research techniques are equally useful in carrying out actual tasks of research writing. Against this backdrop, this article tries to give pragmatic approaches to research writing that graduate students usually encounter when they start the process of research work.

Keywords: limitation, problematic, research claim, research gap, warrant

Introduction:

Writing good research or academic papers has become one of the most prized academic pursuits for many academicians. Many students are required to write academic papers for an academic degree in universities, but the professors comment that their papers are not as good as they should be. Writing a good research paper, however, is not an easy task; it does not spring merely from an academic degree or training. Rather, it comes from consistent and deliberate attempts at academic writing procedures by being familiar with research writing procedures. At the same time, institutional demands, purpose, research methodology, and documentation style play important role

The beginning of research writing stems from being aware of the things that a researcher is required. This is not just one personal writing, like a travelogue or personal story. Understanding the research process of the past in academia provides some insights as to how one may head further. As Paul Oliver (2005) states, "One of the most useful exercises when you are planning to write a thesis is to read existing theses in the general area of your research. Quite apart from issues about content and subject matter, it is often very helpful to see the way in which other research students have approached both the structuring and writing" (p. 17). Familiarity with the research process leads to the areas of research and then about the authors, finding relevant literature, and preparing bibliographies. This beginning process of research paper writing can be productive when a research writer keeps on brainstorming and consults academicians for expert advice. Men's institutions provide counseling and advice to experienced professors to ease research procedures. In some countries like Nepal, the university has assigned a research cell to look into these matters.

Academic or research writing has a certain process. Commonly, it is understood that it is formal, argumentative writing based on proper reasoning with factual details like references and opinions proven and established in academia. Graff and Birkeinstein (2010) have something similar to say, "Broadly speaking, academic writing is argumentative writing, and we believe that to argue well, you need to do more than assert your own position. You need to enter a conversation, using what others say (or might say) as a launching pad or sounding board for your own vies"(p. 3). To elaborate, what a researcher says is an outcome of what he gathers from what other people say. There is always a ground basis for the researcher to say when he can pick some flawless arguments and facts from others.

This may include activities like making a notebook of the things he undergoes one stage after another. Furthermore, reading, thinking, analyzing, and critical reviews may help him have research perspectives. Plainly to put, a research or thesis writing is an effective process of argumentation based on what others say, and what one is prepared to say. This link can maintain a chain of argumentative chain of thoughts. Apparently, this comes to shape through good process of reasoning.

Process of Reasoning:

What is the process of reasoning when preparing a research paper? This question is always on the front line of discussion in academic sessions and discussions among researchers. We know that research work is well organized, documented, and written in argumentation, supplanting facts, and supporting details in a congenial logical sequence.

In addition, research argumentation is an analytical process specifically based on a topic to prove a claim with objective and scientific analysis. Unlike creative writing, which is personal and imaginary, research writing is an academic

act carried out by a researcher for academic purposes. That said, the academic pursuit is well-written, finely organized, and flawless in systematic reasoning, which is also known as a scientific paper. According to Katz (2010):

The essential characteristic of scientific writing is clarity. Slippery words and vague phrases are confusing, and there is no place for ambiguity, arcane language, or froth in the archives of scientific records. In science, descriptions must be precise, recipes must be complete, data must be exact, logic must be transparent, and conclusions must be clearly stated. (p. 3)

Research is a process of engaging oneself in reasoning and applying specific research techniques at the expense of acceptable documentation and format. The process of research results through a researcher's critical, skeptical, arguable, and inquisitive perceptions.

The process of argumentation, however, differs from the way research work is carried out. Some research processes give due importance to objective data, such as facts and figures. Some others, however, just need the qualitative process of argumentation. That being the case, any research work has to fulfill the condition of acceptability, relevance, and validity. Argumentation and logical sequence with facts and details are prerequisites for any research, whether a research work is based on objective data or subjective procedures.

This begins with a simple thesis sentence to the supporting details until one makes his concluding remarks. That is, a research writer begins with the thesis idea, which is also known as the central idea. Then, he will have reasoning information in consecutive flow, for any claim is not justified until a host of logical information is supplied. Finally, he may use several warrants to prove his reasoning in coherence and cohesion. We can understand this as:

Research Claim: The pensioning date of people must be extended to 70 (as now it is just sixty five).

Reasoning Process: Life expectancy has been extended because human health conditions have improved, and they can be active in the office till seventy. (Reason 1). Many people are capable of having a productive life even after seventy years of age. (Reason 2)

Warrants: Modern life conditions are becoming good from a health point of view. Each government is giving top priority to health. People are now conscious of their health conditions. They have chosen healthy ways of living and follow daily exercises and *yogas*. In addition, they can check their blood sugar and pressure and other health conditions easily at home. This way, a person becomes active till his eighty years of life. Furthermore, a person can become an asset for any company or office because he has years of experience, which a beginner may obtain after a long time. The younger ones have chances to learn from their seniors. Companies should not miss obtaining his academic, technical, and managerial experience in the office for five

more years.

First, the above example shows how the claim can be convincing. Second, the reasoning process is effective through selecting arguable warrants. A good argument is, thus, an interconnected sequence and order of argumentation among claims, reasoning processes, and warrants. Whether the reasoning process is deductive or inductive, the researcher will have a flawless argumentation process. Because of the process of argumentation, the integrity of the research paper and academic writing is maintained.

Research writers determine applicable process to make arguments feasible. However, techniques may vary. There can be several paragraphs to develop in logical frame which might come into a body paragraphs in the reasoning process. According to Colona and Gilbert (2003), "The body of an essay consists of several paragraphs and includes information that supports the thesis statement. This information may be in the form of Statistics, Anecdotes, Facts, Examples, or Reason (SAFER)" (p. 31).

In the body paragraph, a writer, according to Colona and Gilbert, needs to fix either of the five elements (SAFER) as needed. We can see this in the following examples:

Suppose we have a topic or thesis sentence like the following:

Students, after obtaining their bachelor's degrees in Nepal, prefer to study at a reputed foreign university. To make an argument effective, we need to supplant statistics, anecdotes, facts, examples, or reason.

Statistics: According to the recent statistics, the flow of students with graduate degree has risen from 17 to 26 percentages within five years, from 2018 to 2023.

Anecdote: In anecdote, one can talk about personal experiences as it were a story as: There were 10 students doing bachelor degrees in my neighborhood. Among them, 8 already left country for their further studies. It means the number of graduate students have risen over the years.

Facts: The writer now enumerates facts this way. Attaining bachelor degree is considered a process of making oneself competent for job. This is, however, less probable for many because Nepal is experiencing a great crisis in jobs and other professional opportunities. Thus, many students prefer to study at reputed foreign universities.

Examples: The writer may use examples to prove his claim. We know that education has purpose. For example, it tries to make a person ready for academic and professional prospect. Students are also conscious of opportunities after their bachelor degree. They have two alternatives. For example, either they want to have a job or they seek foreign university for higher education.

Reason: This is the time the writer may argue or think of reasoning. When a person has a bachelor's degree, he attains a moderate academic degree. However, it does not allow him to compete in the international job market because he still lacks certain

skills and academic qualities. This being the case, many students in developing worlds seek university degrees at foreign universities. This case is applicable in Nepal. This is the reason that many students, after a bachelor's degree, flow to foreign universities.

Entering the Actual Research Area:

When we see a common phenomenon in any research, it begins with the research topic. A researcher works on the topic through a rigorous study based on a research gap. The more effective the research gap a researcher finds, the stronger the approach for the research he makes. In the same line, Coffin et al. point out (2003):

Research articles emphasize a clear line between recognizing a gap in the understanding of some aspects of the natural world (introduction) through setting up an experiment and interpreting the results as filling that knowledge gap (methods and results, and discussion). There is little or no space in this type of writing for serendipity, the chance discoveries, or the discussion of blind alleys or alternative plausible research directions that are often the real social context in which research takes place. (p. 49)

The research gap hints at most of the researcher's procedures. It is the gap between what others have said so far and what the researcher is trying to say. Finding a viable research gap, however, takes place not just by accident but by deliberate study of the areas for a long time. Moreover, the research gap is associated with three fundamental elements: the researcher, prevailing knowledge, research process, and research purpose. The research gap, research topic, and research questions open up the researcher's journey to take a systematic flow, connecting sequences of writing in a coherent and cohesive manner. In fact, this takes scientific reasoning.

According to Kerlinger (1978), "Scientific research is systematic, controlled, empirical, and critical investigation of hypothetical provisions about the presumed relations among natural phenomena" (p. 11). Research work, thus, is a systematic procedure of finding new facts and applying prevailing facts in the desired field. Academic research works are conducted to write well-documented research papers. Similarly, P.V. Young (1988) is of the opinion that social research may be defined as a scientific undertaking, which by means of logical and systematized techniques, aims to i) discover new facts or verify or test old facts, ii) analyze their sequences, interrelationships, and casual explanations which were derived within an appropriate theoretical frame of reference, and iii) develop new scientific tools, concepts, and theories which would facilitate the reliable and valid study of human behavior (32). Considering these basic tenets of research, a research writer grows to progress from a simple magnitude of research to a higher magnitude. In that process, the following questions become critical:

- a. How can we adopt the process of reasoning on a particular fact?
- b. What research objectives are we following?

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- c. Does our research fit a particular theoretical frame?
 - d. What kinds of literature reviews have we come across?
 - e. Whether this research topic will lead to a sound academic research journey?
 - f. Can it ensure an effective research gap?

As we are already aware of research procedures from selection of the topic to the final submission, selection of the topic is the seminal process. There are, however, important matters to consider: personal interest of the researcher, an access of getting researchable research gap, and resource availability, among others. Some researchers make a long list of topics before they finally make sure which ones are viable for them.

The selection of the topic is not merely related to an individual statement; it is the small picture in words of the large research. Broadly, it takes shape from the process of identifying problems. A good topic only takes shape when the researcher is able to consider a comprehensive process of problematization of the research topic. This means he figures out the scope of the research, is skeptical of the research premise, and demystifies the subject of the research. The concept of problematization, though, dates back; it was common with educationists and philosophers as early as 1972. Freire expounded the concept of problematization as an approach, being skeptical of conventional facts and theories taken for granted in his epoch-making book entitled *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

Statement of Problem:

Statement of the problem means the idea of the problem. For example, a researcher would try to see mythical symbols in modern poetry. We understand that he is interested in seeing mythical symbols in modern poetry by W.B. Yeats. He would write that because this is a researchable problem for him. He explains why this is such a prominent area. What others have said about this? What new thing could he say about this? The statement of the problem, therefore, structures proper justification and grounds for research validity. He would also mention specific issues he has witnessed. At the same time, the statement of the problem should be linked with feasible research questions.

Ascertaining Research Topic:

Many academic researchers contend that the more effective the research topic, the better the outcomes of academic research pursuits! Selecting a topic for a research paper is an important task; it then leads to a process of research writing. The topic, however, should not be:

- too broad,
- too simple that things have already been discussed,
- too narrow that does not open up academic pursuits,
- too controversial,

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- to bias,
 - too technical,
 - too unrelated to the term paper writer's area of study,
 - and too entangled with multifarious issues.

With these basic insights, the research writer is also required to find answers to the following questions:

- Is the topic innovative?
- Is it part of the area of interest of the research writer?
- Has it been explored before?
- Is it researchable?
- Can the researcher add knowledge and help future researchers?
- Can he convince his audience?
- Can he find sufficient materials for it?

Research Questions:

Though research gaps and research questions are understood somewhat similarly, they are, however, different. A research gap indicates an expansive area or threshold of research, whereas research questions indicate specific ranges of the research, confining the gap.

We know a researcher has broad perspectives in the beginning when a researcher is thinking of the research title. As he is in process of exploring, he starts limiting his area. That is to say, he narrows down the area. This is universal principle of research. This, however, requires an objective analysis.

Further to note, research questions bridge the research gaps in such a way the research gaps seems justifiable in order to arrive at particular answers. The research gaps and research questions are not extraneous elements, they are there to supplement the research title and process of problematization.

Suppose a researcher is conducting research on "Increasing use of digital resources in research." What is his research gap? Admittedly, his research gap would be Finding why digital resources are becoming popular or facilitating the process of research. He will concisely concentrate on the growing use of digital resources. And possibly, his research questions would likely be:

- a. How are digital resources facilitating research works?
- b. Are they replacing traditional research procedures?
- c. Are research works through digital mode becoming sustainable?

Literature Review:

Literature review refers to the range of studies on a particular research area. It is not merely details of articles or research works in compendium. Rather, it is a collection of ideas that leads to effective research, from the process of topic selection to the final outcome of the research. More specifically, a review of the literature tries to fill research gaps with logical, analytical, and objective justifications convincingly

based on the process of documentation. Moreover, research pays attention to what others have said in the areas and what needs to be said in the relevant issue. A review of literature, furthermore, is a body of research writing with good reasoning through synthesis, antithesis, analysis, enumeration, explications, and validation of research ideas at work.

In addition, a review of literature includes how early research works are taken into account. There are three basic elements in the process of review:

- a. Research works relating to the research areas,
- b. Research theories relating to research areas,
- c. Research methods relating to research areas.

These three elements are put in systematic order so that they can be complementary to each other. At the same time, they are interdependent.

Methodology:

Research writing works on established norms and methods. Any research writing comes into shape when a researcher is confident of using academic and research conventions that are established and work as guidelines, though there could be modifications as desired by the institutions. Though there could be personal interests and approaches on the part of individual researchers, methods are the guiding components to lead the research process. Knorr, Heine & Enberg (2014) in this connection state:

Research methods are at the core of assumptions, hypotheses, research questions, and research interests in writing research projects, regardless of researchers' personal preferences, underlying research decisions, theories, situational circumstances, obstacles and hindrances, etc. Hence, research methods are, without doubt, a principal variable of any approach taken to investigate production and its outcomes. (p. 7)

The methodological context, hence, gives principle research landscapes. This further helps make research investigations more methodological and scientific. Moreover, research methods try to indicate the following components:

It reflects the strategy of research.

It gives a valid justification for the research.

It bridges the topic, research questions, hypothesis, and then the research process to be carried out.

It can be compared to the research blueprint.

It is specific but not generic.

It is the combination of both theoretical and pragmatic research processes.

It is to combine fragmentary research approaches to build a justifiable theory.

Limitation:

Research is a specific way to reason a claim from one research perspective, leaving several other potential areas that could be researchable. A researcher has

certain constraints. He could face constraints of resources, time, and researchable insights and access that he could or could not make. These components, therefore, limit his areas of research. That is, the researcher needs to be aware and then ascertain a distinction between researchable and non-researchable areas. Obviously, the nonresearchable area, therefore, is part of his limitation. He has to specifically define this and write about it in the research. Let's see a situation. Suppose a researcher is writing research on nineteenth-century fiction as "social criticism." This is a broad area. There could be several novels dealing with social and cultural issues. He has to, therefore, limit. He has to select some striking novels, possibly one or two. For example, he could take Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist* or *Hard Times*.

Conclusion:

Task of research writing gets accomplished by two prominent processes: the familiarity of basic techniques prevalent in the academia on part of a researcher and argumentative, analytical, and structured writing to satisfactorily prove the claim. Successful research writing therefore is a contemplative academic work and application of feasible research process, techniques, and methods, starting from selecting of the topic to final production.

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