Business Research Process: Easing Beginners' Attempt

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ABSTRACT

Many aspirants in business school find it challenging to write research articles, and few receive a specific course in presenting their research work in a written layout. Nevertheless, the publication is often crucial for career and research advancement to achieve grants, academic qualifications, or all these drives. This article stimulates research motivation and satisfy research urge among business school students. The primary roles of business students in conducting research are to increase knowledge in the discipline and provide evidence for informing and advancing business styles, policies, and implications to develop economic outcomes for society. The business research process may generate fear and apathy towards students. Simultaneously, they may have confusion and misunderstanding in research preparation - what it is, and how to do it? To achieve business leadership in the future, business school students should at the very least understand evidence-based research and the research process. Thus, this paper finds a rationale to explain the business research process step by step by demonstrating possible examples and has been deliberately practical rather than theoretically focused. The paper outlines the main sections that an average article should cover,

the elements that should occur in the different sections of a scientific article, and some indicators for making the overall research attractive and standard for publication.

Keywords – Business research, qualitative, quantitative, literature review, method

1-INTRODUCTION

'Recerchier', the French word for research, stands for a careful or diligent search and search again. Thus, today, the search or creation of new knowledge or existing knowledge in a new and creative way to produce new concepts, systems, and understandings is called research. The research increases the store of knowledge, including knowledge of humanity, culture, and society. This gained knowledge devises new applications and implications for benefiting humankind (Easterby-Smith, Jaspersen, Thorpe, & Valizade, 2021). During the starting time, many researchers were indecisive about the start of the research paper. The paper that he will write cannot be similar to other papers, and simultaneously, it must be feasible for publication. (Ecarnot, Seronde, Chopard, Schiele & Meneveau, 2015). These days, the young researchers remain under much pressure, as there are many established researchers and many new upcoming researchers. The only qualification from any reputed university does not guarantee becoming a good researcher. Along with his degree, a good researcher should develop specific soft skills to help him throughout the research work. There are many particular problems that a novice researcher faces at the start of his career, but in time, the researcher gains experience and techniques to write a standard research paper. There are many ways to start a research paper, but the first is to select a research topic; before selecting a research topic, some certain guidelines and instructions need to be followed, especially for the new researchers (Baimyrzaeva, 2018).

However, this paper delves into the business research, which has a remarkable influence on the current and future professional business practice as captured the notion of research noted the above. Business research provides accurate and timely information on the population/consumers' needs, attitudes, and motivations of the population/consumers (Zupok, 2015). It plays a vital social role, assisting organizations, lawmakers, and business enterprises to develop services, laws, and products essential to an identified need for population/consumers (Baines, Whitehouse, Antonetti, & Rosengren, 2021). Thus, research renders future business leaders and current students an essential component of the educational and learning process (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021).

Business research is a vital need for developing a society (Norouzi et al., 2021; El-Chaarani & El-Abiad, 2021) with prosperity and economic mobility (Mohaghegh & Valipor, 2020). Business research contributes to a country's economic (Mohaghegh & Valipor, 2021) well-being by ensuring appropriate and suitably targeted organisational responses to these needs (Bapuji, Ertug, & Shaw, 2020). Relevantly, consumers of the market and its research (Zupok, 2018) or its research sites may typically include corporate business, companies, and non-government organisations - any other firms, industries, targeting consumers demographically that need to understand better the market, trends of any kind or its consumers implement or use research findings and recommendations (Frey & Stutzer, 2018).

Therefore, this article is aimed at business school students who are thinking about understanding research as part of their academic studies or intend to write a research proposal, as well as at novice researchers who intend to understand conducting business research as their primary comprehension and a handy guide to research in the concerned field. For example, a group of novice researchers in university life started working on a project where the client was highly valued (Zupok, 2017). The researchers had excellent results in their respective courses, making their positions elite in those courses. Though they were among the top students and with some experience in the research field, they found many challenges. The researchers could not understand the essential things that the client had asked for to be solved. The researchers were confused regarding their questionnaires and the data collected from different origins using the correct processes. The processes they have learned from the research guidelines or rule books have only taught them the processes' implications, which ultimately did not help them figure out the actual centre of interest. The research objective, questionnaires, and process collection did not help them. The hardship and dedication of the group to satisfy the client were ineffective. Lastly, when they delivered their final pitch in front of the client and the teacher, the results were unsatisfactory. (Baimyrzaeva, 2018). Therefore, for a better and more persuasive research paper, some specific guidelines are given in steps. The following steps present a simple and effective strategy for writing/conducting a research/paper. Depending on students (e.g., research) familiarity with the topic and challenges students encounter along the way, students may need to ponder these steps as follows.

EXPLORING A RESEARCH TOPIC	**INCORPORATING RESEARCH RATIONALE**	**DEVELOPING A PROPOSTION**
POSING RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES	**ORGANIZING THE RESARCH OUTLINE**	**WRITING LITERATURE REVIEW**
EMPLOYING APPROPRIATE RESEARCH METHOD	**PRESENTING RESULTS/FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**	**WRITING IMPLICATION AND CONCLUSION**

Figure: A simple and effective strategy for writing/conducting a research/paper.

2-EXPLORING A RESEARCH TOPIC

Exploring a business research topic can be the most challenging part of a research initiative and a time-consuming effort. The topic identification must be related to solving the problem (Azizzadeh, 2019, Azizzadeh et al., 2013; Azizzadeh et al., 2012) or establishing opportunities for benefiting the market/society as businesses in the current world operate in a volatile environment dominated by various macro-environmental factors. The problem identification will lead to the research topic. However, before that, a proper investigation is needed so that the researcher has adequate resources or tools to solve the problem, and in that way, the purpose of the research will be fulfilled. The researcher can identify a problem in various ways, such as the understanding he has acquired throughout the years, by monitoring various issues while acquiring knowledge for this research. Lastly, through the judgement and expertise that he has been practising, these are skills that he should use to identify a problem and form a research topic (Tiwari, 2020). They should constantly assess their relative position and identify the various problem areas or opportunities. They need to be worked upon to sustain themselves competitively in the market (Sheth, 2021). For instance, a topic can be: what are the problems and sustainability measures of E-commerce businesses in Bangladesh (?), or the ethical leadership qualities for an E-commerce entrepreneur (?). This is worthy of selecting a topic of

personal interest to researchers and learning more about it. The research becomes enjoyable if researchers write about something they find interesting.

Additionally, students should identify a topic for which they can find a manageable amount of information. They should offer a preliminary search of information sources to determine whether existing sources meet their needs. If they find too much information, they may need to narrow out the topic. If they find too little, they may need to broaden the topic. The students should analyze the changing dynamics of business across the business society, community, and strategies to adapt to the changes in the external environment (Young & Freytag, 2021). Whether these are problem areas or opportunities, students should identify them accurately and conveniently.

In contrast, the identification of research areas should be original. There are hundreds of research papers every year; students must identify the gaps or problems. The identified topic is yet to be attempted, needful and significant for benefiting business society, and community (Beins, 2017). In any research, the first thing a novice or a new researcher must do is to secure a research problem. To find an appropriate research problem, the researcher should have a good concept or idea regarding the research problem. In business, many areas are still untouched or unclear; therefore, to find a research problem, the researcher must go through those points first and to analyze his expertise, he should try to see which problem can be solved. After doing some brainstorming and matching the expertise with the problem's solution, a research problem can be developed. Sometimes, before exploring those unsolved areas, a researcher may encounter a topic while exploring his interests. The area of interest is massive, so the researcher should always narrow down the problem so that the research problem can be given complete focus. In the following, some general topics in business research are presented as examples:

- Past, present, and future of E-commerce in Bangladesh
- Underserved consumer experience
- Content marketing
- Business education and job markets
- Ethics and leadership for entrepreneurship
- Value co-creation in telecommunication
- Psychology of consumers in city and village
- Business success or failure: case studies
- Changes in consumer behavior.

- Business innovation

- Different trends in Negotiations

- Brand awareness

3-INCORPORATING RESEARCH RATIONALE

Once the topic or research area is identified, students must ask themselves three questions and answer them in the best possible way. These questions include why I am conducting this research (?); will I have anything new to say to benefit the market/community (?); what is the need for what I am endeavouring to explore (?); would my findings generate theoretical and practical implications for business leaders or managers for further betterment in business practice(?)? If a piece of research is worth attempting, it must have a precise determination and a specific purpose. This part of the process must answer the above questions. Students must find satisfactory and realistic answers to these basic intuitive self-questions (Nayak & Singh, 2021). The origin of the most valuable and successful research project often comes out from nagging these questions. Successful research projects are often small and simple and focus on particular problems or opportunities. Suppose that the students wish to undertake a small project. In that case, they should be realistic about what they can achieve with the resources available around their initiatives. Not all projects require a large team of researchers and take years to complete. Therefore, students must not be put off by the limited scope of their proposed research. They should keep it as simple and focused as possible (Basias & Pollalis, 2018).

4-DEVELOPING A PROPOSITION

When a researcher is sure about the research topic by proving its rationality to himself, the next part is to state the proposition. The proposition is a statement where the relationship between the variables is examined through experimental data. For example, when a researcher chooses a research problem to work on, s/he needs to develop a statement where the problem will be stated. To prove the solution to the problem, s/he must evaluate its feasibility. For instance, a hypothesis will provide a clear concept for the researcher, and it will provide a direction to research and how that should be conducted.

An example can be shared to make it more straightforward: *Fashionable clothes are more sold in Europe whereas, Asian people prefer more comfort*. Here, we can see that the problem is in the selling of fashionable clothes. Geography plays a vital role in this selling; again, the people's consumer behaviour (Javan Pakdaman et al., 2013) also affects the selling as we can see that the Europeans are more into style.

In contrast, Asian people are more concentrated on the comfortable or pleasant dress style. However, if the proposition statement was like *Fashionable clothes are sold more in Europe than in Asia.* This problem would have been more significant to solve. However, the previous statement has narrowed downed the topic. Lastly, we can say that as the topic is narrowed, the focus can be given more to the solution, which will give a significant positive outcome in the research. (Sreejesh, Mohapatra & Anusree, 2014).

5-POSING RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES

As a research topic is identified, posing a research question and refining it is paramount in any research undertaking. Ideally, the right research question seems simple and interesting to be answerable. When generating a research question, students must ask what they are studying, plan how it will be studied, and answer the best. Research questions should not be numerous. One or two broad research questions are ideal. To clarify the broad questions, students may create sub-questions. For example, (1) (broad question) what are the experiences of consumers of using X brand beauty soap (?). i) (sub-question) how do male consumers perceive beauty soap consumption (?). Students may ponder the possible expected results from the answers to the set question. Students should also ask if the expected results will be useful in finding new knowledge or practically applicable. The research question has been set well if the answer is satisfactory for all (Ragab & Arisha, 2018).

The next step is to develop research objectives. The objectives should be specific and reflect the research question that the study intends to achieve. When a research objective is identified and blueprinted, it becomes straightforward for the researcher to progress with the research and move forward. The research question will give you a compact idea about how the research will be conducted and what will it give you in conclusion. When a researcher develops his research slowly, he should always match the research advancement with the research objective so that he does not go off the rail or drift apart from his goal. The researcher should constantly check if the research objective is practical or not while writing the research paper. There are some points that the researcher should keep a tap on while focussing on the research objective. Those points are

- The researcher must be particulars about the objective, and simultaneously, the objective needs to be well written.
- The research objective must be quantifiable because the proof the researcher will use needs to meet this goal.

- The feasibility of the objective is fundamental, and a less feasible objective will make the research more confusing and incomplete state.
- Lastly, the researchers should concentrate while selecting the research objective in the time required for different levels of the research.

If a stage requires ample time, then the time for other states will be less, and the whole research paper will be jeopardised. For example, based on the above research questions, the objective can be (i) to understand consumer experience using X brand beauty soap in Dhaka, and (ii) to compare consumers' experiences based on age and gender. Different research questions and objectives may require different methodologies. Because answering some questions or achieving the posed, objectives may go suitable either in qualitative or quantitative approach (Azizzadeh & Pourranjbar, 2021). However, the more straightforward student's research objectives, the better is answering research questions (Kumar, 2018).

6-ORGANIZING THE RESEARCH OUTLINE

After the above steps are done, then the outline for the research needs to be done. It is a critical sector for any research writing. First, exploring the topic, then proving its rationality, a problem statement is required, and lastly, research questions and objectives. Once all these primary things are done, planning or a proper organisation of the outline of the fundamental research is needed. If any step is missed or step outside the research, it will make the whole research paper meaningless. It is the actual structure of the whole research paper. It gives a fixed feature of how the research will be conducted and how will the research end. The design of this process depends on the objective of the research topic, so the primary things needed to be done so that they are in them. The outline of the research there contains specific information about how the data to prove the research topic will be extracted, what type of data is needed, the literature review, and the accessibility of the data. All these points will determine how precise the research paper will be and how all the information will be staged sequentially. (Sreejesh, Mohapatra & Anusree, 2014). The research outline is the procedure that will answer the research questions and objectives. Relevant and actual data will support this outline. The research framework or the outline gives us some verdict about the research paper. It shows us how the research paper should be approached, among the designs that will be more applicable in the research paper, subject selection, and lastly, data analysis, which is how the data will be analyzed so that it helps the research paper to go through the obstacles along the way (McCombes, 2021).

7-WRITING LITERATURE REVIEW

Writing an excellent literature review may be a challenge for a beginner. A literature review is a comprehensive overview of prior research regarding the research areas as reflected in research questions and objectives. It is an observation related to literature, and it should directly connect with the proposition that the researcher is researching about. It shows an overview of the chosen topic, not all the information regarding the research proposition. The literature review should contain the essence of the introduction, topic sentence, and research outline, which will benefit the research paper. The literature review gives the research paper in-depth overview, and it also helps the researcher recognise the appropriate theories, techniques, and potential gaps (Ndille, 2020). If the research paper is the body of the research, then the literature review is the spirit of the research paper. It serves four primary purposes for the research paper that is (i) it extends the outlook of the research, (ii) it helps the researcher be sharper while writing the research paper, (iii) it also gives a proper regulation to the research paper and in the end, and (iv) it lets the researchers think less about unpredictability. If the literature review is excellent, it helps the researcher understand the impact of the elements; it also gives a good view of the solidity and unreliability of the research paper and ultimately gives a proper ending (Huck, 2012). For example, if there were a study on whether understanding consumer experience leads to the industry implement more acceleration, it would need to have an overview of experience issues in the business and the general field issues and how the experience may influence all types of customers or individuals in different fields. In contrast, a literature review also sets up the rationale or need for the investigation by debating the pros and cons of the topic. Thus, the need for the study becomes highlighted (Paul & Criado, 2020). Furthermore, a literature review in a study accomplishes three main reasons. Examples include (i) it shares with the reader the results of other studies that are closely related to the study being reported, (ii) it relates a study to the ongoing discourse in the literature about the study areas by finding the gap in prior studies, and (iii) it provides a framework for filling those identified gaps to establish the need of the study (Rewhorn, 2018).

8-EMPLOYING APPROPRIATE RESEARCH METHODS

In a research paper, there are many research methods from which the researcher can choose; numerous techniques are used in a research paper. To understand which method is to be taken, proper knowledge regarding different types of methods is needed for the researcher to know. For example, if the researcher decides to find some differences among the definite groups in the research, he can use specific examinations to get the answers. When researchers find the

connection between variables, they can use the correlation method. If s/he wants to forecast something, s/he can use the linear, multiple, or logistics regression methods. A researcher may face a problem while choosing an appropriate method for his research. However, the researchers can solve this problem by clearly understanding the methods and applying them through barnstorming (Sekaran, 2006). A research method includes collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and reporting data in studies. This is the overall strategy for connecting the conceptual research problems with the related empirical research. In other words, the research method sets the procedure for the required data, the methods to be applied to collect and analyze this data - how all of this will achieve research objectives. The research method, whether qualitative (e.g., interviews), quantitative (e.g., statistical questionnaire), or mixed of both (e.g., interviews and statistical questionnaire), is chosen based on meeting the objectives of the study. However, a research method is a strategic framework for action that serves as a bridge between research objectives (answering the research questions as well) and the execution of the research strategy. It also involves principles and procedures in a particular approach to inquiry (Bell, Bryman, & Harley, 2018). For students' better understanding of qualitative and quantitative research, clear lines of both methods are presented below:

Table 1.

Highlights of the qualitative and quantitative research

Qualitative research	Quantitative research
Focuses on exploring human ideas, opinions, context, experiences, perceptions and formulating a theory or model	Focuses on testing theories and proving or proposing hypotheses
Data are mainly presented in words, diagrams	Data are mainly presented in numbers, graphs, and tables
Analyzed by summarizing, categorizing, and interpreting words recorded from participants	Analyzed through mathematics and different statistical tools
Open-ended questions and recorded for transcription	Closed (multiple choice/Likert scale) questionnaire
Requires (in general) 15-30 respondents until saturation	Requires ideally 400+/- respondents

Keywords: subjectivity, complexity, context understanding, explorations, ethnography	Keywords: objectivity, replicability, testing, experiment, measurement, exploration

Source: Sekaran and Bougie (2019)

9-PRESENTING RESULTS/FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Results/findings and discussion are the last step in the research paper. It gives an overall idea of the fundamental research by focussing on the significant points. This section of the research paper showcases the data with correct reasoning to support the research paper. The new researcher must highlight the data obtained during the research in this section. This will set them apart from the other researchers (Huck, 2012). In writing a business research paper, presenting the results and findings throughout the research paper is essential. In business, results play a vital role; if the problem is not solved fully, then the purpose of the business research paper is meaningless (Sekaran, 2006). The results/findings section contains a description of the main findings of the research. In contrast, the discussion section interprets the results for readers and provides the significance of the findings. Students should outline their thoughts with logical explanations to defend their research in the discussion section. Discussions should emphasise the result's significance and its argumentation and discourse (Cassell, Cunliffe, & Grandy, 2017). Overall, the discussion section is probably the most creative section of the research in terms of telling a story about the results/findings of the study. Students should logically and creatively defend their research questions and create arguments to support their conclusions. Precisely, students must organise results and discussions based on the following checklist, for example:

- What are the results?
- What do the results signify and mean?
- What are the most important results from this research?
- Have research questions been answered through the found results?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the findings?
- Does previous research (e.g., published works) support the results/findings?
- Does previous research (e.g., published works) contradict the results/findings?
- Has the study filled the gap of knowledge for which research is needed? (Saunders & Lewis, 2017)

10- WRITING IMPLICATION AND CONCLUSION

The conclusion section summarises the results and discussion, but it should be more than a summary. It must include both theoretical and practical implications followed by the study's limitations. Theoretical implications include how the study based on the findings contributes to the current literature, while practical implication includes how the industry managers or stakeholders may use the findings for business benefits (Azizzadeh, 2014) and sustainable market management. Limitations may include what is impossible to explore the different factors, or unavailable results might help the industry differently. Future respondents of a specific culture, gender, or small size of respondents may impact the results. The goal of the limitation is to provide a future perspective on the work or a roadmap for future work (Bell, Bryman, & Harley, 2018).

The conclusion section should allow for opportunistic reading. There will be introduced no new things or issues. The conclusion includes concise messages that students wish to convey in the research endeavour. It should not repeat the arguments made in the results and discussion, only the final and most general conclusions (Patten & Newhart, 2017).

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