UNIT 15 : THE RESEARCH REPORT

UNIT STRUCTURE

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15.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to -

- understand the meaning of research report
- know about the contents of the research report
- identify the different steps in writing the research report
- understand the qualities of a good research report

15.2 INTRODUCTION

Research Report, though the last, but is a very important part of research work. Any research work would remain futile if its findings are not documented. In the previous units, we have learned about the meaning of research, steps in conducting research, techniques and methods of data collection, analysis and presenting of data. In this unit we shall learn about and understand the meaning and importance of research report, contents of research report, steps involved in writing a research report and also qualities of a research report.

15.3 RESEARCH REPORT: MEANING

By now we have learned about the meaning of research, techniques of data collection and also the various methods of analysing data. But Research doesn't simply end with all these. A research work becomes meaningful only when the findings of the research are systematically written/ documented and presented. Analysis of data becomes futile and unrewarding if the research report is not written. Report writing is therefore very crucial to research. Though it is the last activity in a research work, yet it is of immense significance. The research work becomes meaningful and can be popularised only when the research findings are systematically assembled and written down with a valid conclusion. Research report writing is thus the culmination of the research investigation. It is a brief statement of most significant facts that are necessary for understanding the generalisations drawn by the researcher. Research report is prepared on the basis of the findings and the arguments drawn from it by the researcher with the intention of transmitting the information gathered to the wider and interested public. Efforts are made by the researcher to convey through his/her research study the entire result of the study in sufficient detail and so arranged as to enable each reader to comprehend the date and to determine for himself/herself the validity of the conclusions. Report writing not only enables mere dissipation of knowledge but also helps in further research in similar field.

15.4 DIFFERENT STEPS IN WRITING THE REPORT

Research reports are the final outcome of a lengthy process of collecting, analysing and chronologically arranging data and then finally transforming data into views and arguments. It therefore takes a long time to assemble the data or the findings and prepare a report. Several steps are involved in the process of preparing a report- a) logical analysis of the subject matter b) preparation of the final outline c) preparation of the rough draft d) rewriting and polishing e) preparation of the final bibliography f) writing the final draft. Let us now try to understand each one of them.

- ***Logical analysis of the subject matter:*** It is the first and a time consuming step in preparing the research report. There are two ways to develop the subject matter or the report: a) Logically and b) Chronologically. In the logical development, the researcher gives all his/her effort in establishing the logical connections and links between the findings of the study. He/she tries to relate one thing with the other by means of analysis. Secondly the researcher also tries to arrange the findings chronologically i.e based on a connection or sequence in time or occurrence. For example if a researcher is conducting research on some historical event, he shall first try to connect various incidences related to the event with one another and establish a logical connection among them. Secondly he/she shall try to arrange the incidences chronologically i.e which incident first took place and what fallowed after that. Arranging the data or findings of the study in the logical and chronological sequence gives clarity to the study and also depicts the analytical ability of the researcher.
- ***Preparation of the final outline:*** The step which follows the arrangement of the research findings in logical and chronological order is preparing the outline or the structure of the report. The preparation of outline of the report depends upon the judgement of the researcher. But it is important clearly explain the problem with which he/she was concerned, the method he/she applied to gather the findings, the analysis and conclusions and the bases for his conclusion. One the basis of the outline, the researcher would write down the report. Outline is therefore very important as it delineates the themes and sub themes to be covered. They are an aid to the logical organisation of the material and a reminder of the points to be stressed in the report. Without an outline, there is a possibility that the report may get jumbled up; it may not have a logical sequence or important points may be missed by the researcher.
- ***Preparation of the rough draft:*** This follows the logical analysis of the subject and the preparation of the final outline. This is perhaps the most time consuming of all the steps as the researcher now begins to assemble his findings and thoughts from the research study and write down

the report. What he/she has done; what methodology was adopted; what were the challenges; what are the findings, his/her views, arguments, generalizations and also suggestions are to be written down systematically. Since every relevant aspect of the research has to be incorporated, it takes much time of the researcher to put his/her thoughts into words

- ***Rewriting and polishing the rough draft:*** This is also one of the most difficult tasks in report writing and takes a longer time. In fact this step requires same time as that the writing of the rough draft. After the rough draft has been prepared, the researcher has to then carefully review it. While reviewing he/she would come across the weaknesses and flaws of the rough draft which shall have to be modified. Lot of rewriting, modification, and polishing of the rough draft takes place in this step to make the report flawless. Omissions and Errors of the rough draft including mistakes in grammar, spelling, sentence construction so on and so forth are rectified to bring the report to perfection.
- ***Preparing the bibliography****:* After the report has been brushed up; polished and final shape has been given to it, the next task of the researcher is to prepare the 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. The researcher should carefully list the names of the books which he/she has consulted for the study in a proper instructed referencing style. This too is a very crucial stage because if the names of the books from which the researcher has taken ideas and materials from are left behind that he/she might have to face legal consequences of plagiarism.

15.5 CONTENTS OF THE REPORT

By now we know that once the research study is completed, the researcher has to write a report without doing which his/her entire research would be a meaningless effort. Now, in this section we shall learn about the contents of the research report i.e. what does the research report contain. A reader who is reading the report must be communicated about the entire research study so that he/she can judge the adequacy of its methods and

thus form an opinion of how seriously the findings are to be taken. Thus the report has to be written systematically for which a proper layout is necessary. The layout of the report means as to what the research report should contain. A comprehensive layout of the research report should contain a) Preliminary pages b) Main Body c) the Reference Section

PRELIMINARY SECTION: The preliminary section will vary according to the type of research one has undertaken. The preliminary section of the report usually comprise of the cover page indicating the Title, purpose of Research, Institutional Affiliation so on and so forth. The next page is usually the certificate page. Certificate page is usually found in dissertations and theses. It may not be required in other type of research reports. It is followed by acknowledgement page wherein the researcher offers gratitude to all those who have helped him/her to successfully complete the study. After this page there is the Content page which lists the details of contents in the report along with page numbers. The list 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.

MAIN BODY: The main body of the research is the key component of the research report wherein the entire study and its findings are written down in a systematic manner. The main body is divided into the following subsections:

- ***Introduction:*** The purpose of the introduction is to introduce the research project to the readers. In the introduction, which is the opening section of the main body of the report, the researcher must state the reasons behind taking up that particular study.. The report should clearly explain the Background of the study i.e. what the study is about and why the study is important Depending on the particular piece of research, the review of the literature is introduced. This division will show what is known already and how our research will fill a gap in knowledge or replicate earlier work. Further, the Objectives of the study, the Research Questions; Methods of data collection and analysis, and the theoretical Framework also needs to be described in the report. The researcher should give detailed elaboration of each of these so that the readers can easily comprehend about the study

and judge its merit. Further, the scope of the study should be stated and the various limitations, under which the research project was completed, must also be narrated.

- ***Statement of the findings:*** This generally comprises the main body of the report, extending over several chapters.. After introducing the study in the introductory chapter, a detailed description of the findings of the study supported by data's, tables and figures should be given. Here the main task of the researcher is to convert the raw data derived from the study into meaningful statement and arguments. All relevant findings should be incorporated in the report and it should be written down systematically following a logical sequence. The analysis of the findings must also be clearly explained. The research report must state the findings of the study in a lucid, intelligible language.
- ***Implications of the results:*** Towards the end of the main text, the researcher should again put down the results of his researcher clearly and precisely. He/She should illustrate 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.

- ***Conclusion:*** The report remains incomplete without a conclusion. Hence the researcher should conclude the study by summarising his/her entire study, its key findings also major arguments and generalisations. The researcher should also state the recommendations and suggestions if any in the conclusion. He/she also try to indicate the possibility and usefulness of future research in that particular field.

END MATTER: After completing the main text, the final task of the researcher, as we have discussed above, is to write down the bibliography. The researcher must carefully list down the books, articles, reports, government documents and all other secondary sources which he/she has referred to in the study. Apart from the bibliography, the researcher must also attach questionnaires, sample information, mathematical derivations, and the like ones. Index 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. Photographs relating to the study, if any, should also be incorporated towards the end of the report with appropriate illustrations or captions

15.6 TECHNICALITIES INVOLVED IN THE WRITING OF A RESEARCH REPORT

Apart from the contents of the report, there are several other technicalities involved in preparing the research report. There are definite and set rules which should be followed in the actual preparation of the research report or paper. The report must follow the instructions relating to Font size, Font Style, Line Spacing, Alignment, Margin, so on and so forth. Let us now try to understand some of the important technicalities that a researcher should confirm to while preparing the research report.

- **Size and Physical design:** The report should be on unruled, neat and legible paper. Equal margin must be kept on both sides of the paper. The format relating to font size, font style, line spacing, so on and so forth should be followed as per instruction.
- **Layout:** Keeping in view the objective and nature of the problem, the layout of the report should be thought of and decided and accordingly adopted.
- **Quotations:** Quotations should be placed in quotation marks and double spaced, forming an immediate part of the text. But if a quotation is of a considerable length then it should be single – spaced and indented at least half an inch to the right of the normal text margin.

- **The Footnotes :** Footnotes are placed at the bottom of the page on which the reference or quotation which they identify or supplement ends. Footnotes are customarily separated from the textual material by a space of half an inch and a line about one and a half inches long. Footnotes should be numbered consecutively, usually beginning with 1 in each chapter separately. The number should be put slightly above the line, say at the end of a quotation. At the foot of the page, again, the footnote number should be used to correlate the reference in the text with its corresponding note at the bottom of the page, except in case of statistical tables and other numerical material, where symbols such as the asterisk (*) or the like one may be used to prevent confusion.
- Footnotes are always typed in single space though they are divided from one another by double space.
- Subsections must be clearly highlighted.
- In-text Citations should be properly given.
- Bibliography should be written in alphabetical order and must follow the instructed referencing style like APA etc..



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1: What is meant by a research report?

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Q2: What is Bibliography?

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Q3: True or False:

a) Report writing is the first step in research

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b) Acknowledgment page comprise of the lists of contents of the research report.

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15.7 QUALITIES OF A GOOD RESEARCH REPORT

The research report is indispensible if the research is to be meaningful. There is a great temptation to rush into writing because this gives a feeling of something accomplished and indeed it is true that certain sections of the report can sometimes be written in draft before the research is complete. But an illegible and confusing report gives a very bad impression about the researcher and his/her research study. Therefore the researcher should very cautiously write the research report incorporating all the relevant findings of his study in a systematic manner. He/she should use simple, uncomplicated language while writing the report. The report should be easily understandable and should represent the knowledge and wisdom of the researcher. Elaborations and illustrations must be provided wherever necessary. To be acknowledged and appreciated as a good research report, a report must have the following basic and essential qualities.

- **Make it easy to follow:** The report must be written in a way that it becomes easily understandable. Long paragraphs should be avoided and the paragraphs should focus only on one particular point or theme.. Trying to incorporate multiple points, ideas or themes in one particular paragraph may make it confusing and difficult to understand. The findings must be incorporated systematically and the paragraphs must follow a logical sequence.
- **Make it clear:** Clarity in writing is a quality of communication. A good research report must have clarity. The researcher must be able to clearly communicate his ideas and thoughts to the readers. Further accuracy is also an essential quality in research report.
- **Use of Simple Sentences:** Sentences should be simple and short. It is better to use simple and precise sentences rather than long and confusing statements. The sentences should proceed methodically and should be effortlessly comprehensible.
- **Use of Non-technical language:** Avoid the use of technical terms; aim the report at the experience level of the common reader. . If it is necessary to use technical terms, a brief description or explanation should be included in the report.

- **Make it brief:** The report should be long enough to cover the objects of the study. Highlight major points by stressing the big issues and taking them up first.
- **Stress Practical actions:** Use analysis, specific examples, or compare drawn from experiences familiar to the reader. These show that the researcher has taken a realistic point of view.



15.8 LET US SUM UP

- A research work becomes meaningful only when the findings of the research are systematically written/documented and presented.
- Research report writing is the culmination of the research investigation. It is a brief statement of most significant facts that are necessary for understanding the generalisations drawn by the researcher.
- Research reports are the final outcome of a lengthy process of collecting, analysing and chronologically arranging data and then finally transforming data into views and arguments.
- Several steps are involved in the process of preparing a report- a) logical analysis of the subject matter b) preparation of the final outline c) preparation of the rough draft d) rewriting and polishing e) preparation of the final bibliography f) writing the final draft
- A comprehensive research report should contain a) Preliminary pages b) Main Body c) the Reference Section
- Apart from the contents of the report, there are several other technicalities involved in preparing the research report. The researcher must follow certain rules and instructions relating to the layout, citation style, and font style so on and so forth while preparing the research report.
- There are several qualities of a good research report. Some of the important qualities are: clarity, accuracy, preciseness, use of simple sentences, so on and so forth.

15.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answer to Q No.1: Research report writing is the culmination of the research investigation. It is a brief statement of most significant facts that are necessary for understanding the generalisations drawn by the researcher

Answer to Q No.2: Bibliography is the lists of books, articles, reports, government documents, and all other secondary sources that the researcher has consuted and reffered to in his/her study.

Answer to Q No.3: **a) False** **b) False**

15.10 FURTHER READINGS

1) Guthrie, Gerard.(2010). *Basic Research Methods: An Entry to Social Science Research*. New Delhi: Sage publication. India.

2) Kothari, C. R. (2004). *Research Methodology – Methods and Techniques*, New Age International (P) Ltd, New Delhi.

15.11 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) **Short Questions** (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q1: Briefly explain the different technicalities involved in writing the research report.

Q2 : Discuss the Qualities of a good research report.

B) **Long Questions** (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q1 : Discuss the different steps involved in writing a research report

Q2 : Explain the main components of a research report

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