



ASSESSMENT OF PROFICIENCY IN RESEARCH WRITING AMONG POST GRADUATE STUDENTS OF FACULTY OF EDUCATION, RIVERS STATE UNIVERSITY, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated proficiency in research writing among post-graduate students in the Faculty of Education, Rivers State University, Nigeria. The study was guided by two research objectives and two research questions. Descriptive survey research design was used for the study with a population of 247 PhD students in three Departments in the Faculty of Education, Rivers State University, Nigeria. A simple random sampling technique was used to pick 10 students from each of the three departments, giving a total of 30 students as sample for the study. A well-constructed instrument titled "Questionnaire for Measuring Research Writing Proficiency Skills among Post Graduate Students, (QMRWPSPGS) was used for this study and was validated by expert judgment with a reliability index of 0.76. Descriptive statistic was used to answer the research questions. Findings showed that students from the three Departments under study to a high level possess research writing information seeking proficiency but their level of possession of methodological skill was to a low level. The researcher recommended that graduate students cease solely depending on the courses offered by their colleagues if they want to become proficient in all the elements of research writing.

KEYWORDS: *Research, Graduate, Education, Proficiency, Writing.*

INTRODUCTION

Research writing is an important aspect of post graduate programmes in Universities in Nigeria especially in the faculty of education, be it post graduate diploma, master degree or doctorate degree. The project (for a Post Graduate Diploma), thesis (for a Master's Degree), or dissertation (for a Doctorate degree) explores educational modifications or advancements that are being planned in order to identify the way to improve circumstances innovation (Olibie, Agu & Uzoechina, 2015). University students at post graduate level need to improve their writing skills because it is an important part of their academic progress. In every academic discipline, writing is seen as a crucial capacity for knowledge production and transmission. It is true to say that the evaluation of students' academic achievements in academic contexts is heavily reliant on their ability to communicate their knowledge and thoughts. As asserted by Graham and Perin (2007), writing assists students in completing their assignments, developing critical thinking skills, and improving cognitive performance and functioning. In the academic world, good writing skill allows students to share their ideas in a global forum because writing abilities allows students

to communicate with individuals across time and distance. It is a genuine means of transmitting culture, information, and ideas from one generation to the next, and so it deals directly with the preservation and development of sociocultural, educational, and anthropological aspects of human life.

In other words, writing is not only a means of acquiring knowledge, but it is also a vital means of disseminating and sharing information. Because the goal of graduate school is to prepare students to take on professorial responsibilities, it is critical that they develop research skills. University education, according to Olunkwa and Nwokolo (2018), is critical in producing high-level human resources for driving the economy and assuring rapid societal transformation. It also plays a crucial role in the development of trustworthy independent scholars. In order to produce scholars that are trustworthy, they need to develop requisite problem-solving writing skill called research writing. Research writing plays a crucial role in the development of trustworthy independent scholars, this is in line with Olibie, Agu and Uzoechina (2015), assertion that the global perceptions of university education is for knowledge growth, scholarship, and invention and also provisions of a variety of opportunities,



postgraduate programmes thus serve a key role in the growth of academics in a variety of fields

In post graduate studies, writing skills of students are assessed on their ability to produce a research paper, seminar paper, dissertation and thesis through a well research writing process; conducting research is crucial for their development of research and research writing abilities. Research writing among student, is the process in which they communicate their research question's response, as well as the evidence that supports it, the sources they consulted, and their own rationale and explanation. As a result, the training provided to postgraduate students is more research-based. In addition, postgraduate students are prepared for careers in higher education, particularly in teaching and research, to replace an aging workforce. To obtain something useful out of this instruction, they must learn how to conduct research.

One of the three basic mandates of university education around the world is research. It is a vital aspect of the University system, in addition to teaching responsibilities (knowledge transfer). Because it is vested, it is the backbone of Universities' main functions, research writing has the responsibility for knowledge creation, there will be no knowledge generated, no knowledge transmission (teaching) or application of knowledge (community service) without it. In higher education teaching profession, research writing is required in order to meet the demands of this profession. According to Murray as cited Hameed (2016), writing is a skill that is useful in universities as well as in other activities or contacts after graduation in a complicated and changing society. More people who can write, order, and communicate are required in today's society. Khazaal (2019) Pointed out that majority of students require writing skills in their fields of study because writing is an important component of their academic careers. Students that have a strong script with no grammatical or spelling problems will almost certainly succeed in any written task, such as essays, research papers, and reports.

Research writing ability at postgraduate level is the precondition to promote and extend research work in all Nigerian universities. While the majority of postgraduate students will have gained research and writing abilities throughout their undergraduate studies, many may still find it difficult to satisfy the high expectations of independent research and thesis writing. Students that are engaged in research are actively seeking out fresh information., thus conducting research is crucial for the development of research abilities. Writing that employs evidence (from journals, books, magazines, the Internet, experts, and so on) to persuade or inform an audience about a particular subject is known as research writing. The emphasis in academic research writing is on bringing individual insights and outcomes together. It is a collection of investigations, comparisons, and contrasts of many topics, material and scenarios that will allow you to gain new perspectives on current issues in your study. research writing in academic differs from other types of research writing tasks.

Research writing is quite different from other writing skills, it requires different writing skills such as critical thinking, organizing ideas, a sense of direction, information gathering, sorting information, information and communication skill, reading skills, writing research reports, methodological knowledge, analytical skills, time management ability, and oral presentation/communication skills, students are expected to acquaint themselves with these skills in order to attain proficiency.

In Nigeria, especially among post graduate students in Universities in Rivers state, research writing proficiency is a critical prerequisite, writing a thesis or dissertation allows students to practice scientific problem-solving skills. Santi, Nanik, Qonita, Marida, Savitri, and Wijayanti (2020) emphasized that the thesis or dissertation writing process gives students the opportunity to express themselves, to learn on their own, use their knowledge in research, and improve communication and presentation skills and ability to solve problems. project, thesis/dissertation plays an important role because it displays the student's work. Research writing according to Anderson and MacLaughlin cited in Divsar, (2018), promote students' academic understanding and capacity to manipulate and elaborate new ideas, as well as their ability to communicate effectively, write academically and correctly. Ellis and Levy (2010) stressed that while attempting to add any meaningful study to the existing body of knowledge that can be considered as an original academic inquiry, postgraduate students face various hurdles. This is in line with Ellis and Levy (2008), observation that student researcher is burdened with several works and technical duties, which include identifying a significant problem. Olibie, Agu, and Uzoechina (2015) contended that students at the post graduate level are faced with a wide range of challenges with thesis/dissertation writing and information retrieval skills, coupled with personal characteristics. Ho, Wong, and Wong (2010) pointed out that personal attributes of the student-supervisor, as well as a lack of comprehension of the thesis writing process, could be a problem to student.

Proficiency in research writing among student is measured by the student's ability to effectively put their thoughts into proper research report based on the topic of their thesis or dissertation. This process entails the ability to write chapter one to chapter five effectively that is introduction, literature review, methodology, data presentation and analysis, and summary, conclusion and to propose recommendations. Pritchard in Ali, Ishaq, Hassan, Ishaq & Ahmed (2022) contended that writing an academic paper is a complex, dynamic process that incorporates the specific details and principles of a certain discipline (Pritchard, 2008). Most student find it difficult to present a good background to their study and this equally affect their statement of the problem. The literature review section is one of the most significant aspects of postgraduate theses, according to Kuang and Maya (2015). Students will be unable to comprehend their thesis topic, keywords, and related works in that area without a



qualified literature review. A detailed literature review is also required to support and explain the debate, which may have an impact on the study's outcome. Kuang and Maya (2015) asserted that based on the importance of writing the literature review part, that the majority of postgraduates are unable to write it. In fact, a relationship between current issues and prior results in the same area is what makes a literature review helpful. Other research back up the premise that creating a literature review should be concise and thorough. It should be critically prepared and ordered in order to compare and contrast various views and concepts. To summarize, in order to critically write a thesis literature review, researchers must evaluate a number of things, including recognizing similarities and differences among diverse findings, identifying gaps in the study, and comparing and contrasting the obtained results in various studies (Denney & Tewksbury, 2013). A good literature review part should be comparable to the study's findings (Bert & Banister, 2016; Musa & Khamis, 2015). Proficiency in research writing is also measured on student ability to adopt appropriate methodology for their research work. According to Toncich in Ali, Ishaq, Hassan, Ishaq & Ahmed (2022), the purpose of postgraduate research should be to teach graduate students how to undertake methodical investigations, drawing on their peers' earlier work and then adding to what is already known. Jozsef, (2001), also observed that when learning a new language, the ability to write correctly is both challenging and crucial. Design concept development, mental presentations of knowledge, and topic practice are all part of the curriculum. Research proficiency writing skills according to Meerah, Osman., Effendi., Krish, Lian & Mahmud (2012) include statistical/quantitative analysis skills, information seeking skills, problem solving skills, communication skills and research methodology.

Statistical/Quantitative Analysis Skills: Statistical/Quantitative Analysis Skill is the ability to carry out data collection procedures involving planning and selecting appropriate data collecting tools or instruments, identify an appropriate method (quantitative and qualitative) for interpreting and manipulating data and applying appropriate statistical tools for test of significance besides understanding. The limitations of analysis techniques (for example, understanding the assumptions behind a statistical analysis, and examining whether your data fit these assumptions) and drawing and interpreting appropriate conclusion from results of analysis.

Information Seeking Skills: Information seeking skill is the awareness various sources of information that are available. It is the ability to search, use, and evaluate information.

Problem Solving Skills: Finding, defining, and analyzing problems, coming up with solutions, assessing those solutions, and selecting the best one for a given situation are all aspects of problem solving. To come up with fresh approaches to problems,

one needs creative and innovative thinking, analytical abilities to look at potential outcomes, and reasoning abilities to compare various solutions. The foundational abilities of imagination and creativity, logic and reasoning, data collection, conceptual thinking, reflection and feedback, and scientific experimentation are all necessary for problem resolution.

Communication Skills: Aspects of issue solving include locating, defining, and analyzing problems as well as developing, evaluating, and choosing the best solutions for each situation. One needs creative and imaginative thinking, analytical skills to consider possible outcomes, and reasoning skills to weigh alternative answers in order to provide novel solutions to issues. Problem-solving requires the fundamental skills of imagination and creativity, logic and reasoning, data collection, conceptual thinking, reflection and feedback, and scientific experimentation.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: It requires knowledge of the constraints and scope of study design, as well as the ability to identify and create acceptable research processes. (for example, sample sizes and data type).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

For all students, especially those pursuing post graduate degrees, research is a significant outcome. The necessity for developing research writing proficiency skills for post graduate student is vital especially if they are engaged in research or working in a professional context. Developing research skills proficiency is not an easy undertaking, it entails the development of different research competency skills such as information seeking skills, communicating (and submitting and writing skills), methodological skills, and analytical (skills in using appropriate analysis and statistics). In most cases, graduate students are faced with severe hurdles as a result of poorly defined research skills from their under graduate level, and this contribute to them having tough time writing theses and dissertations, and as a result, they are unable to complete their postgraduate programmes on time. These negative consequences have highlighted the importance of investigating the research proficiency skill of postgraduate students in the universities in Rivers State by measuring their proficiency in research competency skills based on information seeking skills, communicating (and submitting and writing skills), methodological skills, and analytical (skills in using appropriate analysis and statistics). To ascertain the proficiency in research writing among post graduate students of Faculty of Education, Rivers State University, Nigeria is the problem of this study.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to investigate proficiency in research writing among post graduate students of Faculty of Education, Rivers State University, Nigeria. Specifically, the study will seek to:



1. Examine the level of information seeking proficiency skills in research writing among students in post graduate programmes in the Department of Vocational and Technical Education, Educational Foundations and Adult and Community Education, Rivers State University, Nigeria.
2. Examine the level of methodological skills proficiency in research writing among students in post graduate programmes in Rivers State in post graduate programmes of Department of Vocational and Technical Education, Educational Foundations and Adult and Community Education, Rivers State University, Nigeria.

which provides us with information collected from individual's respond to the question given. This research allows the researcher to design the data to be collected and conclusions to be drawn to the initial questions of the study. The population of this study is 247 Ph.D students in Faculty of Education, Rivers State University, Nigeria. The number of students were divided into 3 departments master degree students, the Department of Technical and Vocational Education (65), Educational Foundations (146) and Adult and Community Education (36) respectively. However, on consideration of efficiency, it was impossible to use all the population as the sample of this research. The sampling technique used for this study since all the three department students have the same characteristics, from each department, the researcher randomly picked 10 students, which gave a total sample of 30 students. The instrument used for the study was validated by expert judgment. The instrument was constructed by the researcher titled "Questionnaire for Measuring Research Writing Proficiency Skills among Post Graduate Students" (QMRWSPGS). The internal consistency approach was used to test the reliability and the instrument was found to have a high reliability index of 0.76. Instrument was administered to a sample of students who have concluded their master degree programme, and came for Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D) interview. Data collected were analysed with mean and standard deviation.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. To what level is information seeking proficiency skills in research writing among students in post graduate programme of Department of Vocational and Technical Education, Educational Foundations and Adult and Community Education, Rivers State University, Nigeria?
2. To what level is methodological skills proficiency in research writing among students in post graduate programme of Department of Vocational and Technical Education, Educational Foundations and Adult and Community Education, Rivers State University, Nigeria?

RESULTS

Research Question 1: To what level is information seeking proficiency skills in research writing among students in post graduate programme of Department of Vocational and Technical Education, Educational Foundations and Adult and Community Education, Rivers State University, Nigeria?

METHODOLOGY

This research used descriptive survey study type of research. Descriptive survey research is the type of research

Table 1: Mean Analysis of Level of Information Seeking Proficiency Skills in Research Writing Among Students in Post Graduate Programme

R Q I	Level of Information Seeking Proficiency Skills Among Students in Post Graduate Programme									
		Dept of Voc. Tech Edu.			Dept of Edu. Foundations			Dept of Adult & Comm. Dev		
S/ N	Statements	X	SD	Remark	X	SD	Remark	X	SD	Remark
1	You possess information literacy competency needed for identifying a researchable topic	2.57	0.77	High Level	2.82	0.85	High Level	2.97	0.99	High Level
2	You possess the information proficiency to differentiate a seminar topic from a research article topic and researchable thesis or dissertation topic	2.95	0.88	High Level	2.82	0.76	High Level	3.0	0.77	High Level
3	You possess the information skill on how to carry out comprehensive literature	2.85	0.94	High Level	2.88	0.88	High Level	2.83	0.99	High Level



	review, seminal studies, and peer-reviewed as prospective expert in the field.									
4	You are familiar with the relevant databases for use in education	2.95	0.87	High Level	2.87	0.81	High Level	3.21	0.70	High Level
5	You possess the proficiency to search for more advance tools such as the thesaurus (where the descriptors are indexed), grade-level delimiters, document-type delimiters, and other features designed to help a researcher narrow or expand a search	2.82	0.89	High Level	2.81	0.85	High Level	2.97	0.97	High Level
6	As a graduate student you are aware that you can initiate an interlibrary loan request to obtain a scanned copy of a dissertation indexed in this database	2.92	0.96	High Level	2.90	0.86	High Level	3.12	0.78	High Level
7	As dissertation writer you are skilled at making informed distinctions among the many different types of education resources	2.77	0.85	High Level	2.95	0.86	High Level	3.08	0.63	High Level
8	As dissertation writer you possess the information literacy proficiency to discern which materials have been submitted by practitioners and which are published journal articles in scholarly periodicals.	2.82	0.89	High Level	2.86	0.92	High Level	2.97	0.97	High Level
9	You are familiar with how to use the Cited Reference Search feature of ISI Web of Science	2.73	0.82	High Level	2.67	0.73	High Level	2.89	0.62	High Level
10	As a graduate student, you understand the differences between access to free and fee-based information and the rules of quoting and paraphrasing, which are further addressed by the writing centre faculty member	2.73	0.82	High Level	2.65	0.75	High Level	2.93	0.82	High Level

Table 1 shows that students' responses in the department of vocational and technical education gave mean scores that ranges from 2.57-2.92 with corresponding standard deviations (SDs) 0.82-0.96 respectively. The mean scores are all greater than the

criterion mean of 2.5 and implies a positive response rate. For students in Department of Educational Foundation, their responses gave mean scores that ranges from 2.65-2.88 with standard deviations scores that ranges from 0.73-0.92; while



students in the department of Adult and Community Education responses gave mean scores of that ranges from 2.93-3.21 with corresponding standard deviations that also ranges from 0.62-0.99 respectively. The mean scores from student responses from the three Departments are all greater than 2.5 which is the criterion mean. This implies that students from the three

Departments under study to a high level possess research writing information seeking proficiency.

Research Question 2: To what level is methodological skills proficiency in research writing among students in post graduate programme of Department of Vocational and Technical Education, Educational Foundations and Adult and Community Education, Rivers State University, Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean Analysis of Level of Methodological Proficiency Skills in Research Writing among Students in Post Graduate Programme

RQ2	To what level is methodological skills proficiency in research writing among students in post graduate programme of Department of Vocational and Technical Education, Educational Foundations and Adult and Community Education, Rivers State University, Nigeria?	Dept of Voc. Tech Edu.			Dept of Edu. Foundations			Dept of Adult & Comm. Dev		
		X	SD	Remark	X	SD	Remark	X	SD	Remark
11	You can identify a research design suited for any particular research topic	2.34	0.68	Low Level	2.33	0.92	Low Level	2.01	0.99	Low Level
12	You can identify appropriate research procedures	2.17	0.77	Low Level	2.45	0.82	Low Level	2.05	0.77	Low Level
13	You can design appropriate research procedures	2.40	0.75	Low Level	2.37	0.92	Low Level	2.40	0.83	Low Level
14	You understand the limitations of research design	2.34	0.80	Low Level	2.44	0.89	Low Level	2.13	0.60	Low Level
15	You understand scope of any research design	2.51	0.88	Low Level	2.38	0.88	Low Level	2.46	0.89	Low Level
16	You can identify appropriate population for any type of research	2.20	0.78	Low Level	2.52	0.92	Low Level	2.02	0.68	Low Level
17	You are familiar with how to identify appropriate sample from population of the study	2.28	0.71	Low Level	2.42	0.80	Low Level	2.02	0.52	Low Level
18	You are familiar with how to choose appropriate sampling technique	2.47	0.79	Low Level	2.40	0.88	Low Level	2.50	0.89	Low Level
19	You can design a good questionnaire	2.57	0.72	High Level	2.50	0.63	High Level	2.52	0.50	High Level
20	You are familiar with different methods of carrying out reliability of instrument	2.50	0.71	High Level	2.58	0.67	High Level	2.58	0.74	High Level

Table 2 shows that students' responses on items 11-18 in department of vocational and technical education gave mean scores that ranges from 2.17-2.47 with corresponding standard deviations (SDs) 0.66-0.88 respectively. The mean scores are all

less than the criterion mean of 2.5 and implies a negative response rate. For students in Department of Educational Foundation, their responses gave mean scores that ranges from 2.33-2.44 on items 11-18 with standard deviations scores that



ranges from 0.82-0.92; while students in Department of Adult and Community Education responses gave mean scores of that ranges from 2.01-46 with corresponding standard deviations that also ranges from 0.60-0.89, on items 11-21 respectively. The mean scores from student responses from the three Departments on items 11-21 are all lesser than 2.5 which is the criterion mean. This implies that research methodological skill among students from the three Departments under study was to a low level. The table also show that students in the three department to a high level possess research writing proficiency skill of how to design a good questionnaire and carrying out reliability of the instrument with their responses scores of 2.57-2.58 respectively.

DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

Findings of this study show that students in the faculty of education in Rivers State university, Nigeria research writing information seeking proficiency level is high because they possess information literacy competency needed for identifying a researchable topic, they can differentiate a seminar topic from a research article topic and researchable thesis or dissertation topic. The students to a high level are familiar with the relevant databases for use in education and can search for more advance tools such as the thesaurus (where the descriptors are indexed), grade-level delimiters, document-type delimiters, and other features designed to help a researcher narrow or expand a search. This is in line with Badke (2012) observation that acquisition of research writing skill as a graduate student include understanding the nature of the information resources available in their discipline, stating research problems clearly and concisely, Knowledge of research databases e.g. google and capabilities for critical thinking to be honed in realistic research situations. The study also showed that research writing information seeking proficiency possessed by the graduate student in the faculty of education in Rivers State University, Nigeria include ability to initiate an interlibrary loan request to obtain a scanned copy of a dissertation indexed in this database; making informed distinctions among the many different types of education resources, understanding the differences between access to free and fee-based information and the rules of quoting and paraphrasing, which are further addressed by the writing center faculty member; and that they are familiar with how to use the cited reference search feature. To Gilmore and Feldon's (2010) reported that graduate students specific research skills experience growth across an academic year is mostly in oral communication and information gathering. Akuegwu, and Nwi-ue, (2018) also established that student in Universities in Cross River State acquire the highest skills in reading, oral presentation/communication and information gathering. The finding showed that research writing methodological skill proficiency among students under study was to a low level, that the students in the three department, they:

1. are not proficient in identifying a research design suited for a particular research topic,

2. cannot design appropriate research procedures
3. don't understand the limitations and scope of research design
4. find it difficult to identify appropriate population and sample/sampling technique for their research.

Proficiency in research methodological skill according to Akuegwu and Nwi-ue (2018) is having a clear understanding of the road map leading to the conclusion of research work such as the design to adopt, target population, technique for selecting sample size, instrument(s) for data collection and statistical tools. Analytical skill has to do with the ability to use statistical tools to analyze correctly the data collected for the study and interpreting the results accurately. Students need to be acquainted with research methodological skill in other for them to perfect the research writing proficiency. Finding relevant resources or information, putting them together, and then checking them to see if they meet the criteria for the subject under inquiry is information collecting. Sorting information entails distinguishing pertinent information from extraneous information and organizing that information for appropriate use during the research process. Information and communication skills are the capacity to locate information, organize it for use, and manage it for efficiency using computers and other digital devices but for proficiency in research writing methodological skill is very relevant. Lack of understanding of the research approach is one of the reasons for the delay in finishing their thesis. Dyrhaug (2014), observed that giving students the courses in research methodology, which is a complicated field with different perspectives, methods, and definitions, is particularly difficult. In view of this, Lehti and Lehtinen cited in Yusof, Md Supie and Ismail (2021), contended that the development of research methodology knowledge is connected to prior information or experiences.

CONCLUSION

Proficiency in research writing skills among graduate students is a core mandate of graduate students and this cut across all facet of research writing which include information seeking proficiency, methodological skill proficiency and research statistical/quantitative proficiency. Students' possession of any of the three skills without possession of others as established in this study is incomplete package and required proper institutional input.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that educational institutions offer rigorous and varied courses to postgraduate research students, ranging from introductory to advanced research technique courses, to accommodate the variety of student backgrounds. Additionally, postgraduate students are urged to use their initiative to become more resourceful and to stop relying entirely on the courses that are provided by their universities in other for



them to master all the components of research writing proficiency skills.

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