
The Relevance of Purposefulness in Research: An Empirical Survey of the Perception of Academic Staff and Post Graduate Students in Public Tertiary Institutions in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The study sought to assess the relevance of purposefulness in research as an empirical survey of the perception of academic staff and post graduate students in public tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The study was conducted in Akwa Ibom State using the public tertiary institutions in the state (University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State University, Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic, Akwa Ibom State College of Education and Akwa Ibom State College of Science and Technology). The population of the study comprised post graduate students from the aforementioned two universities and academic staff from the five institutions. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 80 post graduate students from University of Uyo, 40 post graduate students from Akwa Ibom State University, and 50 academic staff from each of the 5 institutions, giving a total of 370 respondents for the study. The Instrument titled “THE RELEVANCE OF PURPOSEFULNESS IN RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE (RPRQ)” was used. Face validation of the instrument was carried out by 1 expert in business, statistics and architecture while Cronbach Alpha technique was used to determine the level of reliability of the instrument. The reliability coefficient obtained was 0.93 which was proved high enough to justify the use of the instrument. The researcher subjected the data generated for this study to percentage analysis which was used to answer the research questions and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis for testing the hypothesis. The test for significance was done at 0.05 alpha levels. The study revealed that there is very high need of the application of purposefulness in research for realization of dependable solution. Several relevance of purposefulness in research were also identified, including creating a focus for the study, creating a driving force in the course of the research, ease of the study process for realization of dependable solutions. It was concluded that there is significant relationship between purposefulness in research and dependability of the results obtained. One of the recommendations was that every research should be propelled by unique purposefulness with a quest to either solve a prevalent problem at hand or to increase store of knowledge, etc. and that there should be a well-designed purpose of the study well presented at the inception of the research for proper guide and realization of the dependable solution.

KEYWORD: Purposefulness, Roles, Research, Academic Staff, Post Graduate Students, Tertiary and Institutions

Introduction

Research is an art of scientific and systematic investigation to get information about a specific topic. It can be considered as an endeavor to find an answer of intellectual and practical problems using the applicable scientific method. Burn (2004) views research as “a systematic investigation to find answers to a problem”. Some people consider research as a movement from the known to unknown. It is actually a voyage to discover something new. It has a certain prescribed idea to perform the activities. It is the pursuit of the truth with the help of study, observation, comparison, and experiment. Research gives the original contribution to the existing stock of knowledge making for its advancement. The conceptual use of research is a potentially powerful way to inform policy. When used conceptually, research serves to introduce new ideas, help people identify problems and appropriate solutions in new ways, and provide new frameworks to guide thinking and action (Farrell and Coburn, 2016). The research purpose helps the subject assess the importance of the study relative to individual values. The research should include not only the immediate purpose of the study, but also any larger, eventual purpose. The research purpose should be stated objectively or in a way that does not reflect particular bias or values of the researcher. Research must always be of high quality in order to produce knowledge that is applicable outside of the research setting (Green, Ottoson, García, & Hiatt, 2009). Research is required not just for students and academics but for all professionals and nonprofessionals alike. It is also important for budding and veteran writers, both offline and online (Zarah, 2010).

Statement of the Problem

It is sad to say that many post graduate students and most undergraduate students have neglected the usefulness of purposefulness in research when they are carrying out research. Over the years this experience has always been the case especially from undergraduate folk. There has been a great concern on student nonchalant attitude towards research. This is due to the fact that they do not appreciate the need for adoption of purposefulness in research. They do not have much consideration of purposefulness, when carrying studies. Besides, there are innumerable ways in which purposefulness is known to be relevant to research which these students are not aware of and this ignorance has contributed to their negative attitude. It is due to this fact that this research is carried out which is in order to find out the extent of the relevance of purposefulness in research in order to encourage our students and other research in this direction.

Objective of the Study

The main objective of the study was to assess the relevance of purposefulness in research. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Find out the extent of the need of purposefulness in research as perceived by academic staff and post graduate students in tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State.
2. Examine the extent to which purposefulness is considered in research conducted by students especially the under graduate students as perceived by academic staff and post graduate students in tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State.

3. Determine the relevance of purposefulness in research as perceived by academic staff and post graduate students in tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State.
4. Examine the relationship between purposefulness in research and dependability of the results.

Research Questions

1. What is the extent of the need of purposefulness in research as perceived by academic staff and post graduate students in tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State?
2. To what extent is purposefulness considered in research conducted by students especially the under graduate students as perceived by academic staff and post graduate students in tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State?
3. What is the relevance of purposefulness in research as perceived by academic staff and post graduate students in tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State?
4. What is the relationship between purposefulness in research and dependability of the results?

Hypothesis

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between purposefulness in research and dependability of the results.

Conceptual Review

Concept of Research

Research is a "creative and systematic work undertaken to increase the stock of knowledge" (OECD, 2015). It involves the collection, organization, and analysis of information to increase understanding of a topic or issue. According to Creswell, (2008) "research is a process of steps used to collect and analyze information to increase our understanding of a topic or issue". It consists of three steps: pose a question, collect data to answer the question, and present an answer to the question. The Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (2018) defines research as "studious inquiry or examination; especially: investigation or experimentation aimed at the discovery and interpretation of facts, revision of accepted theories or laws in the light of new facts, or practical application of such new or revised theories or laws". The primary purposes of basic research (as opposed to applied research) are documentation, discovery, interpretation, and the research and development (R&D) of methods and systems for the advancement of human knowledge (Wikipedia, 2020). Approaches to research depend on epistemologies, which vary considerably both within and between humanities and sciences. There are several forms of research: scientific, humanities, artistic, economic, social, business, marketing, practitioner research, life, technological, etc. The scientific study of research practices is known as meta-research. Research involves inductive and deductive methods (Wimmer, & Dominick, 2011). According to Wimmer, & Dominick (2011), inductive research methods are used to analyze an observed event. Deductive methods are used to verify the observed event. Inductive approaches are associated with qualitative research and deductive methods are more commonly associated with quantitative research.

Concept of Purpose

According to Fahlman, Mercer, Gaskovski, Eastwood & Eastwood (2009) purpose has most commonly been investigated through surveys. Surveys of purpose have been administered on their own and along with interviews and case studies. While definitions of purpose have varied in the past, more recently a consensus has emerged: a purpose in life represents a stable and generalized intention to accomplish something that is at once personally meaningful and at the same time leads to productive engagement with some aspect of the world beyond the self (Damon, Menon, & Bronk, 2003). One obstacle to a thorough understanding of the nature of purpose is the present lack of coordination between the various sciences (Warren, 2006). A thoroughgoing analysis of purpose is one of the prime needs of empirical science to-day. Genetically, the notion of purpose arose from a certain definite type of human experience. Series of studies concluded that even just inducing a temporary purpose-mindset improved academic outcomes, including self-regulation, college persistence, grade point average, and the amount of time students were willing to spend studying for tests and completing homework (Yeager, Henderson, Paunesku, Walton, Spitzer, & Duckworth, 2014). Damon (2008) argued that people who know why they are working hard are less likely to feel stressed and more likely to feel excited by the effort; consequently, they are more likely to excel academically.

Concept of Purposefulness in Research

When it comes to purposefulness, it deals with determination. But in research it goes beyond this. It also shows a well-defined purpose with zeal to obtain a dependable result. When an activity has a purpose, it does have an aim (Vocabulary Dictionary, 2018). Research is concerned with increasing understanding of the purpose of study. Research provides the information and knowledge needed for problem solving and making decisions (Bryman, 2012). The purposefulness of research is to inform action, gather evidence for theories, and contribute to developing knowledge in a field of study. The research purpose is a statement of "why" the study is being conducted, or the goal of the study. The goal of a study might be to identify or describe a concept or to explain or predict a situation or solution to a situation that indicates the type of study to be conducted. The purpose of research is really an ongoing process of correcting and refining hypotheses, which should lead to the acceptance of certain scientific truths. Pant (2009) views that the purpose of research is 'to find out about a particular subject that has significance for the researcher'. The researcher undertakes research to discover a new subject or to verify the existing one. The purposefulness of research is to generate new knowledge. The other purposes of research are to explore the reality, to describe the phenomenon under investigation, to study the phenomena, and provide an explanation for them (Kothari and Garg, 2014).

Purposefulness is the quality of having a definite purpose, sense of purpose, meaningfulness and the quality of having great value or significance. This can be seen as the absence of purposefulness or aimlessness. This means that for the realisation of reliable results in research, there is need to develop sense of purpose. With a well-defined purposefulness, every research like any other project can record a huge success. Purposefulness of every action in research is seen to be intentional because it manifests a purpose and determination (Kothari and Garg, 2014). The purposefulness has become a very useful motivator to researchers who wants to achieve good research findings that is free from bias and errors. In this case the researcher employs various skills to achieve this, including purposeful communication.

Roles of Purpose of Study in Research

It is interesting that purposefulness helps the researcher to draw achievable purpose of the study. The purpose of the study is a guide on the action to be taken by the researcher. Hence Akpan (2020) in his study states that for a result oriented studies to be conducted, the researcher needs to:

1. Clearly define the study as quantitative or qualitative as the case may be.
2. Clearly state variables out of many that will be selected specifically for the use.
3. Use words to clarify than intent like “explore” or “compare.”
4. Clearly define how the research will take place.
5. Discuss what will be researched on.
6. Clearly define the likely category or people to be studied (population).
7. Clarify where the research will take place.

When you’re doing a research, it is important to define your purpose. Whether you’re testing genes or looking at behavior, you need to clearly define the aim of your research. In a way you need to spell out your purpose statement. In each research paper, a purpose statement tells you what the purpose of the research will be. In a sentence or two, it clearly defines the direction, reason or goals for the research being conducted. A purpose statement will clearly define what is being explored or studied, how it is being explored and where it is being explored. You will typically see quantitative research purpose statements, which focus on comparing measurable variables, or qualitative research purpose statements, which explore a central phenomenon.

The Roles of Research

Knowledge about the universe is divided into some broad categories or disciplines, science, education, technology, etc. although research in these areas differ contextually, the role of research is common to all. This is because there exists problem in every area of study. There are controversies land many unanswered question. Research is particularly geared toward solving existing problem in an area. It is a scientific way of settling dispute and it helps to dispel rumours. It serves as a “decision court” for rival hypotheses. In advanced countries where democracy is rightly practiced, public decisions and government programmes are based on research finding. According to Zarah, (2010) conducting research doesn’t just arm us with knowledge but it helps teach us how to think. Some several roles of research include the following:

It’s a Tool for Building Knowledge and Facilitating Learning: Research is required not just for students and academics but for all professionals and nonprofessionals alike. It is also important for budding and veteran writers, both offline and online (Zarah, 2010). For nonprofessionals who value learning, doing research equips them with knowledge about the world and skills to help them survive and improve their lives. Among professionals and scribes, on the other hand, finding an interesting topic to discuss and/or to write about should go beyond personal experience. Determining either what the general public may want to know or what researchers want others to realize or to think about can serve as a reason to do research. Thus, research is an essential component in generating knowledge and vice-versa.

It Helps Us Succeed in Business: Research benefits business. Many successful companies, such as those producing consumer goods or mass-market items, invest in research and development, or R and D. Different industries that involve science and engineering processes (like agriculture,

food and beverage, manufacturing, healthcare and pharmaceuticals, computer software, semiconductor, information and communication technology, construction, robotics, aerospace, aviation, and energy) have high R and D expenses because it is critical to the creation and improvement of their products and services. Research can also help a company maintain a positive commercial image, retain existing customers, and attract new customers through targeted marketing.

It Is a Means to Find, Gauge, and Seize Opportunities: Research helps people nurture their potential and achieve goals by taking advantage of various opportunities. This can mean securing employment, being awarded scholarships or grants, securing project funding, initiating a business collaboration and finding budget travel opportunities. Seizing opportunities can broaden one's social network, raise one's awareness, or secure the support one direly needs to start a project or a business. Indeed, research contributes to a person's ability to make life-changing decisions. It encourages self-growth, participation in worthwhile causes, and productive living.

It Promotes Love of Reading, Writing, Analyzing, and Sharing Valuable Information: Research entails both reading and writing. These two literacy functions help maintain critical thinking and comprehension. Without these skills, research is far more difficult. Reading opens the mind to a vast reservoir of knowledge, while writing helps us express our own perspectives and transform our thoughts into more concrete ideas in a way others can understand (Zarah, 2010). Apart from reading and writing, listening and speaking are also integral to conducting research. Conducting interviews, attending knowledge-generating events, and participating in casual talks can help us gather information and formulate research topics. With the wide array of ideas floating around and the interconnectedness of people and places through the internet, scholars and non-scholars involved in research are able to share information with a larger audience.

It Provides Nourishment and Exercise for the Mind: Curiosity may kill the cat, but it also fuels the mind to seek answers. Johnson, (2011) noted that research in particular "helps students develop critical reasoning skills. . . helpful for any field of higher education . . ." The acts of searching for information and thinking critically serve as food for the brain, allowing our inherent creativity and logic to remain active. Keeping the mind active may also help prevent certain mental illnesses like *Alzheimer's* (Zarah, 2010). Several studies have shown that mentally stimulating activities like doing research can contribute to brain health.

Method

Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The study was conducted in Akwa Ibom State using the five public tertiary institutions in the state (University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State University, Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic, Akwa Ibom State College of Education Afaha Nsit, and Akwa Ibom State College of Science and Technology). The population of the study comprised post graduate students in the two universities as well as academic staff from the five institutions. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 80 post graduate students from University of Uyo, 40 post graduate students from Akwa Ibom State University, and 50 academic staff from each of the 5 institutions, giving a total of 370 respondents used for the study. The Instrument titled "The Relevance of Purposefulness in Research Questionnaire (RPRQ)" was used. Face validation of the instrument was carried out by 1 expert in business administration and 1 expert in statistics while Cronbach Alpha technique was used to determine

the level of reliability of the instrument. The reliability coefficient obtained was 0.93 which was proved high enough to justify the use of the instrument. The researcher subjected the data generated for this study to percentage analysis which was used to answer the research questions while Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis was used to test the hypothesis. The test for significance was done at 0.05 alpha levels.

Result and Discussion

Research Questions 1: The research question sought to find out the extent of the need of purposefulness in research as perceived by academic staff and post graduate students in tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State. To answer the research percentage analysis was performed on the data, (see table 1).

Table 1: Percentage analysis of the extent of the need of purposefulness in research as perceived by academic staff and post graduate students in tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State

EXTENTS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
VERY HIGH EXTENT	321	86.76**
HIGH EXTENT	49	13.24*
TOTAL	370	100%

** The highest percentage frequency

* The least percentage frequency

SOURCE: Field survey

The above table 1 presents the percentage analysis of the extent of the need of purposefulness in research as perceived by academic staff and post graduate students in tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State. From the result of the data analysis, it was observed that the highest percentage (86.76%) of the respondents affirmed that the extent of the need of purposefulness in research is very high, while the least percentage (13.24%) of the respondents stated that the extent of the need of purposefulness in research as perceived by academic staff and post graduate students in tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State is high.

Research Questions 2: The research question sought to find out the extent to which purposefulness is considered in research conducted by students especially the under graduate students as perceived by academic staff and post graduate students in tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State. To answer the research percentage analysis was performed on the data, (see table 2).

Table 2: Percentage analysis of the extent of purposefulness consideration in research conducted by students especially the under graduate students as perceived by academic staff and post graduate students in tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State

CONSIDERATION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
VERY HIGH CONSIDERATION	12	3.24*
HIGH CONSIDERATION	48	12.97
LOW CONSIDERATION	126	34.05
VERY LOW CONSIDERATION	184	49.73**
TOTAL	370	100%

** The highest percentage frequency

* The least percentage frequency

SOURCE: Field survey

The above table 2 presents the percentage analysis of the extent to which purposefulness is considered in research conducted by students especially the under graduate students as perceived by academic staff and post graduate students in tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State. From the result of the data analysis, it was observed that the highest percentage (49.73%) of the respondents affirmed that the extent of purposefulness consideration in research conducted by under graduate students is very low, while the least percentage (3.24%) of the respondents stated that the extent to which purposefulness is considered in research conducted by students especially the under graduate students as perceived by academic staff and post graduate students in tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State is very high.

Research Questions 3: The research question sought to find out the relevance of purposefulness in research as perceived by academic staff and post graduate students in tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State. To answer the research percentage analysis was performed on the data, (see table 3).

Table 3: Percentage analysis of the relevance of purposefulness in research as perceived by academic staff and post graduate students in tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State

RELEVANCE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Creating a focus in the study	78	21.08
Creating a driving force in the course of the research	114	30.81
Ease of the study process	56	15.14*
Success realization	122	32.97**
TOTAL	370	100%

** The highest percentage frequency

* The least percentage frequency

SOURCE: Field survey

The above table 3 presents the percentage analysis of the relevance of purposefulness in research as perceived by academic staff and post graduate students in tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State. From the result of the data analysis, it was observed that the tagged “success realization” (32.97%) rated the highest percentage of the relevance of purposefulness in research affirmed by the respondents, while the “ease of the study process” (15.14%) rated the least percentage affirmed by the respondents of the relevance of purposefulness in research as perceived by academic staff and post graduate students in tertiary institutions in Akwa Ibom State is high.

Research Questions 4: The research question sought to find out the relationship between purposefulness in research and dependability of the results. In order to answer the research question, descriptive analysis was performed on the data collected as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Descriptive statistics of the relationship between purposefulness in research and dependability of the results

Variable	N	Arithmetic mean	Expected mean	r	Remarks
Purposefulness in research	370	16.00	12.5	0.90*	*Strong to perfect Relationship
Dependability of the results		17.56	12.5		

Source: Field Survey

Table 4 presents the result of the descriptive analysis of the relationship between purposefulness in research and dependability of the results. The two variables were observed to have strong to perfect relationship at 87%. The arithmetic mean for purposefulness in research (16.00) was observed to be greater than the expected mean score of 12.5. In addition to that, the arithmetic mean as regards dependability of the results (17.56) was observed to be higher than the expected mean score of 12.5. The result therefore means that there is remarkable relationship between purposefulness in research and dependability of the results.

Hypothesis One

The null hypothesis states that there is no significant relationship between purposefulness in research and dependability of the results. In order to answer the hypothesis, Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis was used to analyze the data (see table 5).

TABLE 5: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the relationship between purposefulness in research and dependability of the results.

Variable	$\sum x$	$\sum x^2$	$\sum y$	$\sum y^2$	$\sum xy$	r
Purposefulness in research (x)	5920	96524			105371	0.90*
Dependability of the results (y)	6496	115452				

***Significant at 0.05 level; df =368; N =370; critical r-value = 0.113**

Table 5 presents the obtained r-value as (0.90). This value was tested for significance by comparing it with the critical r-value (0.113) at 0.05 levels with 368 degree of freedom. The obtained r-value (0.90) was greater than the critical r-value (0.113). Hence, the result was significant. The result therefore means that there is significant relationship between purposefulness in research and dependability of the results. The result is cognate to the research findings of O’Leary, (2005) argue that purposefulness of research is to inform action, gather evidence for theories, and contribute to developing knowledge in a field of study. The purpose of research is really an ongoing process of correcting and refining hypotheses, which should lead to the acceptance of certain scientific truths. Also, purposes of research are to explore the reality, to describe the phenomenon under investigation, to study the phenomena, and provide an explanation for them (Kothari and Garg, 2014). The significance of the result caused the null hypothesis to be rejected while the alternative one was accepted.

Conclusion

Research is a systematic and organized effort to investigate a specific problem that needs a solution. Research is not only undertaken to solve the existing problem of but also contribute to the formation of knowledge. Thus it is a knowledge building process. It can be undertaken to fulfill different purposes. The study affirmed that there is high need of the application of purposefulness for realization of dependable solution. Several relevance of purposefulness in research were also identified, including creation of focus for the study, creating ease of the study process and creation of driving force in the course of the research. Therefore, the study concluded that there is significant relationship between purposefulness in research and dependability of the results.

Recommendations

1. Institutions of higher learning and Ministry of Education at the federal and state level should create awareness on the dangers of absence of purposefulness in research, which can lead to failure in research. This is in order to change attitude of students, academic staff and other researchers towards quest for commitment and activation of brainpower when carrying out the research.
2. Undergraduate students need to undergo research orientation as soon they gain admission in year one and repeat in other years. This will prepare them for the final year rigorous research work.
3. Institution of higher learning and government should create a special purse and use it to encourage undergraduate and post graduate students as a reward for a well-organized research work. This will help them being purposeful and serious in their research work.
4. Researchers needs to consider the means of being purposeful when conducting a research, as this will help eliminate ambiguity.

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