

TD: Practicing the Formulation of Research Aims, Objectives, and Questions

1. Introduction

This TD session aims to reinforce students' understanding of research aims, objectives, and research questions through examples and guided practice. It complements the lecture by offering applied activities that help students identify, classify, and formulate these core components of research design.

2. Key Concepts

COMMONLY USED TERMS RELATED TO RESEARCH AIMS (Thomas & Hodges, 2010, p. 39)

Term	Definition
Research aim	A statement indicating the general aim or purpose of a research project. Usually a research project will have only one broad aim.
Research objectives	Specific statements indicating the key issues to be focused on in a research project. Usually a research project will have several specific research objectives.
Research questions	An alternative to research objectives, where the key issues to be focused on in a research project are stated in the form of questions.
Research hypotheses	A prediction of a relationship between two or more variables, usually predicting the effect of an independent variable on a dependent variable. The independent variable is the variable assumed to have causal influence on the outcome of interest, which is the dependent variable.

3. Examples

Example 1-

1- Aim: To investigate factors associated with partner violence.

Research Objectives

Objective 1: To investigate whether alcohol consumption contributes to higher rates of partner violence.

Objective 2: To determine whether labour force status (employment, unemployment, or being outside the labour force) influences the likelihood of partner violence.

Objective 3: To compare couples with a long-term history of partner violence to those with only a recent, short-term history, in order to identify differences between the two groups.

Research Questions

Question 1: Does alcohol consumption increase the risk of partner violence?

Question 2: How does labour force status (employed, unemployed, or not in the labour force) relate to variations in partner violence?

Question 3: What differences exist between couples with a long-standing history of partner violence and couples with only a brief, recent history?

Example -2

Topic : Exploring student experiences with online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic

Research Aim : To understand how students perceive and adapt to online learning environments during the pandemic.

Objectives

1. To explore students' perceptions of online learning
2. To identify key challenges and benefits as reported by students
3. To analyze how students adapt their learning strategies

Research Questions

1. How do students describe their experiences with online learning?
2. What challenges and benefits do students identify in online learning?

Example 3

Topic : Teachers' perspectives on inclusive education in mainstream schools

Research Aim : To explore teachers' attitudes and experiences regarding inclusive education practices

Objectives

1. To describe teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education
2. To identify perceived barriers and supports in implementing inclusive practices

Research Questions

1. How do teachers perceive the implementation of inclusive education?
2. What barriers and supports do teachers encounter?

Example 4- This Australian study explored the contextual factors that shape clinical decision-making among nurses. The **aim** of the research was to examine how occupational orientation, educational background, professional experience, area of practice, level of appointment, and age relate to nurses' clinical decision-making processes.

Based on this aim, the researchers formulated four **specific research questions**:

1. **To what degree do nurses take part in clinical decision-making, and how willing are they to engage in this process?**
2. **What types of occupational orientations (role-related values) are held by nurses working in an acute-care environment?**
3. **Are there significant associations between nurses' occupational orientation, education level, years of experience, age, level of appointment, and area of practice, and their frequency of engaging in clinical decision-making?**
4. **Which of these variables serve as the strongest predictors of clinical decision-making behaviour?**

This study explored the decision-making processes among nurses, aiming to identify the factors that influence their choices. Researchers employed multiple regression analysis to construct a model and assess the relative impact of various elements. Out of 174 distributed questionnaires, 96 were returned, resulting in a response rate of 58 percent (Hoffman et al., 2004).

Example 5

Example Structure	
Element	Example
Research Aim	To assess the potential influence of social media on political participation among university students.

Element	Example
Research Objective	To determine how social media affects the political engagement of students in selected universities.
Research Question	How does social media influence the political engagement of students in selected South African universities?

4. Tasks (TD Activities)

1- Given the research topic below, formulate the Research Aim, Research Objectives, Research Questions, and identify the main Variables (independent and dependent).

Topic one : “The impact of digital storytelling on EFL learners’ speaking fluency”

Topic 2 “The effectiveness of peer assessment in improving writing accuracy among university EFL students”

Topic 3 “The role of mobile learning apps in enhancing vocabulary acquisition among EFL beginners”

Topic 4. English Language Teachers' Perceptions and Implementation of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in Monolingual Classrooms.

2- Group Work

In small groups, develop a mini research design including a topic, aim, objectives, and research questions.

Conclusion

This session provides students with hands-on practice in distinguishing and formulating research aims, objectives, and questions. Through guided examples and activities, students enhance their ability to construct coherent and methodologically sound components of research design.

6. References

Thomas, D. R., & Hodges, I. D. (2010). *Designing and Managing Your Research Project: Core Skills for Social and Health Research*. SAGE.

Moule, P., Goodman, M. (2009). *Nursing Research: An Introduction*. Royaume-Uni: SAGE Publications.