# SECTION I

**Introduction to Action Research**

**History and Evolution of Action Research**

**Origins and Kurt Lewin**

In the 1940s, social psychologist Kurt Lewin developed the methodology of Action Research, which initially emerged due to his work as a social psychologist.  A model combining research and action was developed by Lewin, often referred to as the "father" of Action Research.  The model aimed to solve immediate social problems by integrating research and action.  In 1947, Lewin introduced a three-step model of change: unfreezing (preparing a group for change), changing (the process of change), and refreezing (making the change permanent).  (Lewin, 1947).

The approach Lewin developed grew out of his involvement with communities and organizations seeking to resolve issues of prejudice and ethnic tension.  His approach relied heavily on the active participation of stakeholders, including those who were the subjects of the study.  When research was primarily a domain of experts who maintained strict separation from their subjects, this participatory approach was revolutionary.  Lewin believed research should be approached as a collaborative effort between the researcher and the study subjects.  He argued that research should be conducted in a way that was respectful of the people involved and that the results should be used to inform and improve their lives.  Many researchers have since adopted this approach, becoming the basis for many successful studies.

**Expansion and Diversification**

Action Research has evolved significantly since Lewin's time, and its principles have been adapted and applied in various settings.  As well as its roots in social psychology and community development, it is now utilized in various fields, including education, healthcare, community development, and organizational management.  Several modifications of Lewin's principles have been developed over the years better to meet the needs of different contexts and settings.  For example, participatory action research emphasizes collaborative work between researchers and participants, while action science focuses on problem-solving and organizational development.  As a result, action research has become a much more diverse and dynamic field.

In **education**, Action Research has become a prominent method for teachers and educators who seek to improve their practices through systematic, reflective inquiry.  By engaging in Action Research, teachers become classroom researchers, investigating how to enhance their teaching practices and students' learning experiences (Carr, 1986; Marzano et al., 2001; Marzano, 2012).  If education interests you, you will find many classroom and school-wide action research studies.

**Healthcare** professionals use Action Research to improve patient care processes and outcomes.  Medical practitioners, nurses, and other healthcare professionals can evaluate practices and implement new procedures based on their findings, fostering an environment of continuous quality improvement (Hughes, 2001; Waterman et al., 2001).  If healthcare interests you, there are numerous studies done by nurses that can guide you.

In **community development**, Action Research is employed to engage community members in identifying issues of concern and developing strategies to address them.  This form of Action Research is often highly participatory, involving community members at every stage of the research process (Greenwood & Levin, 2007).  Community action research focuses on a specific geographic community that the streets, landmarks, or other physical boundaries can define.  If your interest is in community action research, many cities and universities have programs in place.

In **organizational management**, action research is a powerful tool to delve into complex issues, foster new perspectives on problems, and enact action to improve.  It has grown increasingly prominent as more organizations acknowledge the critical necessity of effective change management strategies.  Action Research in this context is typically characterized by a collaborative approach, where organizational members work alongside researchers in a cycle of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting on an issue or a problem, aiming to solve it and improve organizational performance (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014; Burnes, 2021).

## Conclusion

Action Research has traveled a long way since its inception in the work of Kurt Lewin.  Today, it is a versatile and practical methodology, allowing practitioners across diverse fields to combine research rigor with pragmatic and context-specific actions aimed at improvement.  It has proven a powerful tool for professionals committed to reflective practice and participatory change, addressing issues from classroom instruction strategies to healthcare delivery and community development initiatives.

## What is Action Research?

**Key Characteristics of Action Research**

### 1.  Cyclical Process

Action Research is often depicted as a cycle that includes planning, acting, observing, and reflecting on solving a problem or improving a situation.  This iterative process allows for continual refinement and deepening understanding.  Each cycle feeds into the next, often leading to new questions and further investigations (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000).

### 2.  Participatory and Collaborative

Action Research is inherently democratic and participatory, often involving a team approach with active stakeholder collaboration.  These stakeholders can include practitioners (such as teachers or nurses), researchers, and the people who are the research subject (such as students or patients).  In this collaborative approach, all participants are valued for their knowledge and perspectives, and traditional hierarchies of knowledge are challenged (Reason & Bradbury, 2001).  A crucial point to remember is that "action research does not start from a desire of changing others 'out there,' although it may eventually have that result, rather it starts from an orientation of change *with* others" (Reason and Bradbury, 2001, p. 1).

### 3. Practical and Applied

Unlike some forms of research that aim to create 'pure' knowledge, Action Research aims for actionable insights directly applicable to a problem or practice, meaning that the purpose of the research is not just to understand but to effect meaningful change. The knowledge generated is intended to be of <u>practical</u> use in improving a specific situation (Carr & Kemmis, 1986).

### 4. Reflective

Reflection is a central component of Action Research. Practitioners must critically assess the actions they take, the context in which these actions occur, the data they have collected, and the results of these actions. This reflection is not merely an afterthought but an integral part of the research process that helps practitioners understand their practice more deeply and consider their work's ethical implications (Schön, 1983).

### 5. Context Specific

Action Research is always conducted within a specific context, and the results are typically most relevant to that context. The goal is not to produce universally generalizable knowledge but to generate insights, understandings, and improvements deeply rooted in and responsive to the particular setting in which the research is conducted (Stringer, 2013).

### Conclusion

Action Research is designed to be a profoundly reflective and participatory approach to problem-solving, making it unique among research methodologies. With its emphasis on collaboration, context-specific knowledge, and cycles of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting, Action Research empowers practitioners to improve their practice, using systematic inquiry as a tool for change.

## How to Conduct Action Research

### 1. Identify a Problem or Area for Improvement

Begin with a clear, focused problem statement you want to solve or an area you aim to improve. This step is often based on a practitioner's observation of a specific aspect of their practice that they believe can be enhanced (Sagor, 2000).

### 2. Plan

Develop a detailed plan that outlines the steps you will take to address the problem. This often involves reviewing existing research literature, collecting preliminary data, setting specific goals, and outlining the interventions or changes that will be made. This planning phase should also consider ethical issues related to the research (Stringer, 2013).

### 3. Act

Implement the plan. This phase is where you make the changes or interventions your research suggested. This could involve changing a teaching strategy, implementing a new patient care form, or modifying a business process (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000).

**4.  Observe**

Systematically collect data on the actions.  This may involve various data collection methods such as surveys, interviews, observations, and document analysis.  This step aims to gather evidence to evaluate the effects of the action (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014).

**5.  Reflect**

Analyze the collected data, draw conclusions, and engage in a process of reflection regarding your learning.  This involves asking critical questions such as: Were the actions successful?  What could be improved?  What did you learn?  This step allows practitioners to understand better their practice and the impact of changes (Schön, 1983).

**6.  Revise Plan and Act Again**

Based on what you learned from your reflection, revise your plan.  This might involve making minor adjustments to the action, changing the action significantly, or even defining a new problem.  Then prepare for the next cycle of action research (Zuber-Skerritt, 1992).

**7.  Share and Communicate Results**

This can involve formal reporting, such as writing an article for a professional journal, or more informal methods, such as presenting findings at a staff meeting or discussing results with stakeholders.  This step aims to share the knowledge gained and contribute to broader conversations about best practices (Reason & Bradbury, 2001).

**8.  Repeat the Cycle as Necessary**

Action Research is often ongoing, as completing one cycle can lead to new questions or areas for improvement.  The cyclical nature of Action Research allows for continuous learning and improvement (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000).

**Conclusion**

Action Research is an instrumental approach for professionals who are persistent in their commitment to systematic assessment and enhancement of their practice.  By integrating the rigor of scientific research with a pragmatic, action-focused strategy, this methodology enables the application of findings to real-world situations.  A significant aspect of Action Research is the emphasis placed on collaboration, reflection, and participation, all of which contribute to facilitating a continuous improvement process that is rich and iterative.  In this model, practitioners are ideally positioned to conduct investigations into their work due to their unique position and intimate knowledge of their practice.  Thus, they can generate insightful conclusions and implement meaningful, substantive advancements.  Thus, Action Research is a robust tool for professional development and contributes significantly to advancing practice-based knowledge and expertise.

## The Christian Scholar in Action Research

Christian Faith-Based Action Research is a distinct research approach grounded in a Christian worldview.  This research commitment is utilized in Christian ministry, education, social justice, and other service areas.  It targets not only the improvement of practice but also the enhancement of understanding and application of the Christian faith.  The researchers, being co-researchers, are engaged in a process of reflection, action, and transformation consistent with Christian principles of love, justice, and community.

### Key Characteristics

### Theological Foundation

The research process starts with a grounding in Christian theology.  Researchers begin by conducting theological reflections on issues such as justice, love, and community.  These reflections guide posts throughout the research, ensuring that every step aligns with Christian principles.  The following verses emphasize the Christian principles of justice, love, and community that can guide the process of your Christian Action Research.

- **Micah 6:8**: "He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.  And what does the Lord require of you?  To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." (NIV)
- **1 Corinthians 13:1-3**: "If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.  If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.  If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing." (NIV)
- **Galatians 6:2**: "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ." (NIV)

### Transformative Purpose

This form of Action Research transcends mere problem-solving.  It aims at the spiritual and moral transformation of individuals and communities involved, reflecting the Gospel's transformative power-the transformative nature of the Christian faith, both at the individual and communal levels.  The following verses suggest that you, as a researcher and those with whom you will work, are called to take a transformative journey that will impact everyone's character, actions, and way of living.

- 2 Corinthians 5:17: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" (NIV)
- Ephesians 4:22-24: "You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness." (NIV)
- Matthew 5:13-16: "You are the salt of the earth.  But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again?  It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.  You are the light of the world.  A town built on a hill cannot be hidden.  Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl.  Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.  In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." (NIV)

**Prayer and Discernment**

Researchers integrate prayer as a core part of the research process. They continuously seek God's guidance and wisdom through prayer and discernment, aiming to align the research with God's will and purpose. This is a critical step in your work. These verses emphasize the Christian practice of prayer as an essential, active, and continuous relationship with God and reflect the commitment of believers to seek God's guidance and wisdom through prayer. This is key in aligning one's actions with God's will and purposes, including research actions.

- *James 1:5*: "If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you." (NIV)
- *Philippians 4:6-7*: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (NIV)
- *Colossians 4:2*: "Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful." (NIV)

**Servant Leadership**

Researchers embrace a spirit of humility and service in their work, modeling the servant leadership of Christ (Greenleaf, 1977). This means actively seeking the well-being of others and placing their needs above one's own. These verses exemplify the Christian principle of servant leadership and encourage researchers to adopt a posture of humility and service in all their engagements.

- John 13:14-15: "Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you." (NIV)
- Philippians 2:3-5: "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus." (NIV)
- 1 Peter 4:10: "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms." (NIV)

**Ethical Practice**

This research is conducted with a profound commitment to Christian ethics. This includes honesty, integrity, and a concern for the dignity and well-being of all participants. It adheres strictly to ethical standards, reflecting the character of Christ in the research process (Plantinga, 2002). These verses reinforce the importance of approaching research with a heart and mind aligned with Christ-like character and principles.

- Ephesians 4:25: "Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body." (NIV)
- Philippians 2:3-4: "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others." (NIV)
- Colossians 3:17: "And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." (NIV)

**Conclusion**

In Christian Faith-Based Action Research, the pursuit of knowledge becomes a sacred endeavor, a form of worship and service that echoes the heart of Christ. This research is more than a method; it is a ministry. It begins in prayerful submission to the Word of God and is sustained by the constant guidance of the Holy Spirit. In this holy work, researchers are not mere observers but active participants in God's redemptive work. This research is not conducted for its own sake but to love God more deeply and serve His people more effectively. In various Christian contexts—whether in education, social services, or church ministry—this research seeks to improve practice and transform lives in the light of the Gospel. It moves beyond solving practical problems and aims at the heart of spiritual and moral transformation—for individuals, communities, and, ultimately, the world. Christian Faith-Based Action Research of OMEGA Graduate School holds a vibrant promise: to be a pathway through which faith and action meet, where intellectual rigor is paired with heartfelt passion, and where research becomes a powerful tool for glorifying God and advancing His Kingdom.

<div align="center">Works Cited</div>

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# SECTION II

**Problem Identification, Problem, Purpose Statements,  Significance, Research Question, And Professional Relevance**

      **I.**        **Problem Identification**

It is common for individuals to choose an appropriate problem for action research based on their desire to make a difference in the world.  Most likely, that is why you have decided on the OMEGA Graduate School DSL program.  Action research is practical and transformative, close to real-life practices.  It is not just about identifying problems but understanding them deeply. As Proverbs 4:7 reminds us, "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding." This verse highlights the importance of seeking both wisdom and understanding. What use is wisdom and understanding without action?  Applying gained wisdom and learned knowledge to real-world situations is a foundational aspect of action research. At OMEGA Graduate School, we use our wisdom and knowledge for Our Lord's greater glory. As St. Paul wrote, "Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you" (Philippians 4:9).

### <span style="color:red">Things to consider BEFORE you begin</span>

Action research requires assessing your financial resources, participants, technical tools, and physical infrastructure. An actionable problem should be one that can be solved within the constraints of these resources. Additionally, action research can take varying lengths depending on the problem's complexity and the interventions' effectiveness. Consider the duration of your commitment; your chosen research problem will accompany you for several months. It is vital to have a genuine passion for addressing the issue. Without such enthusiasm and determination, you may succumb to fatigue and frustration.  In light of the cyclical nature of action and reflection inherent in this methodology, aligning the research timeframe with actual availability is essential. A clear definition of the research's scope — whether it is a single classroom, a whole school, a community, or a broader organization — is also crucial. Setting and recognizing these boundaries ensures that the research is focused and feasible.

At this point, you may already have determined a problem you would like to address. If so, move on to **Section II**.  If you still need to determine a problem, the following section may help you find one for your research project.

### FINDING A PROBLEM FOR AN ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT

Here are some ways to find a problem for your action research:

### 1.  Reflect on Personal Experiences:

Introspection is a valuable tool in action research.  Starting with a deep reflection on one's experiences in a professional setting offers a direct lens into the daily challenges, anomalies, and inefficiencies that do not appear in broader studies or external evaluations.  Every profession encounters challenges and situations that recur all the time.  Exploring these recurrent problems, whether minor inconveniences or significant obstacles, is easy.  Such patterns, especially when experienced firsthand,

make understanding the problem's nuances and implications easy, so they are a great place to explore. A healthcare provider, for instance, might have a problem with patient adherence to specific treatments. An educator might see a decline in student engagement during particular lesson segments. Church professionals might have trouble implementing a new evangelism program because of congregational resistance.

Looking back and analyzing these personal and professional experiences, one is tapping into a reservoir of firsthand data. You are both the practitioner and the evaluator in this feedback loop. It is good to ask questions like "Why does this keep happening?", "What could be the root cause?" and "How does this affect the bigger picture?" It is also important to note that recurrences and obstacles can have broader consequences. Addressing these issues holds academic merit and can lead to tangible improvements in professional practice. They can affect productivity, overall effectiveness, stakeholder satisfaction, and even personal job satisfaction. Several successful DSL projects at OMEGA Graduate School have addressed such problems. Professional experiences can be a treasure trove of research questions and problems if approached with a critical and reflective mindset. Introspective action research ensures it is grounded, relevant, and relevant to real life.

**2.  Engage in Continuous Observation**:

Observation, particularly in the context of action research, is more than just passive witnessing; it is an active engagement with the environment coupled with a critical analytical lens. Regular observation provides researchers with a rich, qualitative understanding of the dynamics in their specific setting, be it a classroom, a church, a community, or any other context.

As you may recall from Organizational Dynamics, every setting has its unique rhythm and flow. Researchers can discern the underlying forces or relationships that drive behavior, outcomes, or events by observing dynamics. For instance, in a classroom setting, the dynamics between students or between students and the teacher can influence learning outcomes. The dynamics between different teams or departments can impact productivity or innovation in an organizational setting. Processes are the set ways in which tasks or activities are conducted. Observing processes can help identify bottlenecks, inefficiencies, or redundancies. For example, in a denomination, the pastors' transfer or reassignment process might reveal areas where delays consistently occur. In a school, the curriculum delivery process might highlight gaps in resource allocation or pedagogical approach. Interactions pertain to the exchanges between individuals or groups. Observing interactions can offer insights into communication patterns, collaboration quality, or potential conflict areas. In a corporate setting, the interactions during team meetings might provide clues about leadership effectiveness, team morale, or decision-making dynamics. By regularly observing these aspects, researchers can begin to discern patterns. Patterns are consistent behaviors or outcomes that recur over time. Recognizing these can help predict future outcomes or understand the foundational causes of certain behaviors.

Researchers and analysts use anomalies as beacons to draw attention to underlying issues or unique challenges, defined as deviations from normative behavior. Patterns give us a structure to understand regularities, pointing to systemic behaviors and trends, but anomalies punctuate this continuum with various irregularities. If we do not dismiss these deviations, we will learn a lot. Some challenges challenge existing assumptions, make researchers question the status quo, and reveal areas we need immediate attention. It is essential to recognize and understand these anomalies, especially in action research, where the goal is often to address real-world challenges and effect positive change. By

highlighting gaps in existing systems, processes, or frameworks, they guide researchers toward areas that can significantly improve the studied context.

**ANOMALY EXAMPLE**

> A mid-sized church's attendance and participation rate in weekly services and events is consistently high. There is likely strong community engagement, good pastoral leadership, and maybe content that resonates with the congregation since this trend happens regularly. This pattern might make the church think they are doing an excellent job of outreach and spirituality.
>
> There is, however, an anomaly with data on small group participation: young adults between 18 and 30 are underrepresented in these smaller groups compared to their participation in the larger congregation. It raises some questions about this deviation from normative behavior.
>
> A researcher decided to investigate further rather than dismissing this anomaly as an inconsequential outlier among otherwise positive engagement metrics. Surveys and discussions revealed that many in this age group feel small groups sometimes need to address their current issues. Career transitions, modern relationships, doubts, and faith questions specific to their life phase could be discussed.

This anomaly example is a good case. The study challenged the congregation's belief that spiritual outreach uniformly resonated with all age groups. The church could develop more relevant content for this age group by recognizing and addressing this gap, leading to greater engagement and spiritual growth for young adults. It emphasizes continual reflection and adaptation, even in faith-based settings.

Lastly, these observations can highlight areas of potential improvement. Instead of relying solely on theoretical knowledge or external benchmarks, firsthand observations ground the research in the realities of the specific context, ensuring that the interventions or solutions proposed are both relevant and feasible. Regular observation in action research is a proactive strategy, blending immersion with analysis. It ensures the research is contextually grounded, responsive, and geared towards meaningful and actionable insights. Enjoy the hobby of being a 'people-watcher.'

**3. Seek Stakeholder Insights**:

Engaging with participants and stakeholders is a central tenet of action research, embodying its collaborative and participatory nature. This point cannot be emphasized enough. As Reason and Bradbury (2013) observed, "Action research does not start from a desire of changing others' out there', although it may eventually have that result, rather it starts from an orientation of change with others" (p.1). The involvement of stakeholders can enrich the research process and its outcomes in multiple ways because of their diverse roles, experiences, and insights. Every stakeholder has their perspective. While teachers might focus on curriculum delivery and classroom management, students might focus on learning experiences and peer interactions in an educational context. There might be other concerns for parents or administrators. As you learned in hermeneutics, each perspective is unique, but they create a holistic world picture.

Sometimes, specific issues or challenges remain hidden until viewed from different angles. In youth ministry, for example, while church leaders might focus on designing engaging and spiritually enriching programs, the young attendees might express concerns about the relevance of topics discussed or the lack of social events to bond with their peers – aspects that the ministry's leadership might initially overlook. The involvement of stakeholders, in this case, the youth and their guardians, in

problem identification creates a sense of ownership and commitment. Individuals are more likely to support and actively participate in subsequent stages of the ministry's programs and interventions if they feel they contributed to defining its direction and focus.

Engaging with diverse stakeholders is a check and balance, ensuring that the researcher's narrow viewpoint does not skew the research. The input of stakeholders can help shape interventions that are not only effective but also sustainable and scalable. Their feedback can help refine strategies to ensure broader acceptability and applicability. Engaging stakeholders strengthens relationships, fosters trust, and builds a collaborative ethos in action research. Building relationships is as meaningful as the research process. When implementing changes and ensuring their longevity, this can be especially helpful. Stakeholders can enrich data collection by providing firsthand accounts, narratives, and experiences that enrich qualitative depth.

**4.  Review Existing Literature**:

The first step in any research endeavor, including action research, is reading the existing literature. One needs to read academic journals, reports, and related literature to contextualize the research, understand the breadth and depth of existing knowledge, and place the study within a broader academic discourse. Academic journals and reports are often peer-reviewed, rigorous, and valid. Such material provides insight into the field's established theories, methodologies, findings, and debates. One not only gains a more profound understanding but also improves the ability to analyze and evaluate sources critically. Literature reviews can shed light on challenges that scholars and practitioners acknowledge. A researcher's approach to these challenges can be guided by the data, discussions, and interventions studied over time. Reading literature provides a lot of answers, but it also raises a lot of questions. Where are the silences? What has not been explored extensively? Researchers can find a niche by pointing out these gaps, ensuring their work adds new dimensions. Our world rapidly evolves, and new trends, technologies, and challenges always emerge. Some academic journals, especially those focusing on contemporary issues, highlight these trends in advance. By identifying such trends early, researchers can immediately get on top of their implications, applications, and challenges.

Literature offers methodological guidance besides content. What tools, techniques, or frameworks have other researchers used to tackle similar problems? Knowing these can help you design your research, especially when collecting, analyzing, and validating data. Established theories or frameworks often frame the academic literature. Researchers can use these theoretical frameworks to view and interpret their findings. This theoretical framing gives the research depth, coherence, and academic robustness. Literature can provide comparative insight, especially for action researchers in localized contexts. How does your context compare with others? Are your challenges unique, or do they mirror more significant systemic issues?

It is easier to build a compelling rationale for the study with a well-informed literature review. Researchers can emphasize the relevance and significance of their work by showing how their research relates to, extends, or challenges existing literature. A deep dive into relevant academic literature is not a formality, it is a foundational step that helps situate the research within a broader academic context, sharpen the focus, and provide the tools for effective investigation and interpretation.

**5.  Attend Professional Development Events**:

A seminar, a workshop, a conference, or a professional gathering is a vital hub for intellectual exchange and community growth.  Having diverse expertise, experiences, and perspectives at these events creates a fertile ground for learning, networking, and finding new research opportunities.  These gatherings usually feature thought leaders, practitioners, and emerging voices.  Attendees get a glimpse of the current state of the art, cutting-edge research, and forward-looking visions for the field by listening to their presentations and discussions.  Workshops are incredibly interactive and hands-on so that you can get into the topic.  Immersion can highlight practical challenges, effective strategies, or novel approaches you would not find in a formal paper.

 Dialogues with peers, mentors, or experts can provide invaluable insights.  During breaks, luncheons, or evening gatherings, casual conversations can lead to discussions about common interests, shared challenges, or potential collaborations.  These interpersonal connections can spark new research ideas or provide feedback on existing ones.

Conferences often have thematic focuses addressing contemporary challenges or trends.  Panels or roundtable discussions can illuminate the multifaceted dimensions of these challenges, providing a comprehensive understanding that can guide future research inquiries.  Especially in rapidly evolving fields, there might be areas that are still relatively unexplored.  Seminars and conferences can spotlight these niches, highlighting the need for more research and exploration.

Many professional gatherings also feature exhibitions or demonstrations of new tools, technologies, or resources.  Exploring these can introduce researchers to potential methodologies, instruments, or technologies that can be leveraged in their work.  Presenting one's research or ideas at these events allows for direct feedback from peers and experts.  This feedback can be instrumental in refining research questions, methodologies, or interpretations.  OMEGA Graduate School has had several DSL students find this particularly helpful.

International conferences bring together professionals from diverse cultural and geographical backgrounds.  Engaging with these diverse perspectives can offer comparative insights, highlighting cultural nuances, regional challenges, or global trends.  Professional gatherings are more than just events; they are dynamic ecosystems of knowledge exchange.  For researchers, they offer a tapestry of insights, experiences, and opportunities that can significantly shape and enrich their academic journey.  Being proactive and engaged in these events can unlock myriad avenues of inspiration and growth.

**6.  Assess Discrepancies Between Theory and Practice**:

The chasm between theoretical knowledge and real-world practice is observed across diverse disciplines and sectors. Most of us have experienced this phenomenon and have heard the expression, "it works in theory but not in practice." This divergence, commonly called the "theory-practice gap," arises from several factors and presents research challenges and opportunities.

Factors contributing to the gap include in following:

a. Theoretical models operate under controlled assumptions, whereas real-world scenarios are complex and influenced by many unpredictable factors.  Although a treatment may be theoretically effective in healthcare, for example, its real-world effectiveness can be influenced by factors such as patient compliance, comorbidity, and socioeconomics.
b. Practitioners often make adjustments based on immediate challenges or feedback, outpacing the more deliberate progression of academic theories.
c. Sometimes, the latest theoretical advances do not reach practitioners promptly or efficiently.
d. Theoretical pursuits aim for broad generalizability and deep understanding, while practical endeavors prioritize immediate effectiveness, adaptability, and problem-solving.

Discrepancies can be identified as follows:

a. Professionals should regularly assess their practices against prevailing theories.  Where do they align?  Where do they diverge?  What justifies any deviations?
b. Peers can offer alternative perspectives or share their practical adaptations when practice differs from theory.

Action Research as a means of addressing the gap:

a. To perform a contextual inquiry, it is important to understand the specific context deeply.  Why is it that a particular theoretical model might not apply seamlessly?  Are there unique challenges, stakeholder preferences, or systemic factors at play?
b. Engage theorists and practitioners in the research process to ensure a balanced perspective that integrates theory with pragmatism.
c. Iterative Exploration: Action research is well suited to bridge the gap between theory and practice due to its cyclical nature.  Implement a theoretical approach, observe its outcomes, refine it based on feedback, and re-implement.  In this iterative process, the theory may be more contextually relevant.

Once a practical solution or adaptation has been identified, disseminate the findings.  This will not only be beneficial to other practitioners, but it will also provide information to theoreticians, resulting in a more holistic evolution of the theory.  The gap between theory and practice is a fertile ground for innovation, exploration, and mutual growth, although it is incredibly challenging.  In the context of action researchers, addressing this gap is not just an academic pursuit; it is a pursuit that can lead to tangible improvements in professions so theory and practice can move forward together.

**7.  Use Data and Feedback**:

Research and practice based on evidence depend on data analysis.  Action research focuses on bringing about meaningful change in real-world settings, so data is the basis for making decisions and designing interventions.

Data types:

a. Using surveys to get a large group's feedback, opinions, or perceptions can be a treasure trove of insights.  The results can reveal trends, common concerns, or areas of excellence.  They can capture stakeholder experiences, satisfaction levels, or needs assessments.

b. Evaluations are structured assessments that measure the effectiveness or impact of programs, courses, or interventions.  It is possible to get quantitative results (like scores or completion rates) and qualitative insights (like testimonials or feedback) from evaluations.

c. Performance metrics refer to measures that assess efficiency, effectiveness, or productivity.  In an educational context, they might be test scores or graduation rates, in a corporate setting, they might be sales figures or customer satisfaction scores.  This includes interviews, focus groups, observational notes, or open-ended feedback.  Qualitative data offers depth and nuance, capturing stakeholder experiences, feelings, or perceptions.

Analyzing Data to Pinpoint Areas of Concern:

a. Check for trends.  Are test scores declining consistently?  Are customer satisfaction levels dropping?  Identifying patterns can highlight systemic issues.

b. Benchmarking: Check your data against industry standards, peer institutions, or best practices.  If there is a big difference, you might want to look into it.

c. Data segmentation can reveal disparities or specific groups facing unique challenges by dividing it by demographics, departments, or other relevant categories

d. Especially useful with qualitative data, thematic analysis identifies common themes or patterns in narratives, feedback, or testimonials.  What are recurring concerns or praises?

Gap Analysis: Find out if there is a discrepancy between expected and actual outcomes.  For example, something is wrong if a new teaching method is supposed to improve engagement, but the data shows increased absenteeism.  Share analyzed data with stakeholders and get their feedback.  Sometimes, they can explain observed patterns or provide context.

Another area worth noting is Clinical Data Mining (CDM), which has become an indispensable tool for action research, especially for identifying problems. Processing and analyzing large datasets provides a comprehensive picture of patterns, trends, and anomalies, facilitating evidence-based decision-making based on empirical data. With this capability, decisions are based on assumptions and factual data. Moreover, the multidimensionality of clinical data, spanning patient demographics to treatment outcomes, allows for a comprehensive perspective, facilitating a holistic understanding of potential issues (Epstein, 2010). As a result of this multifaceted analysis, interdisciplinary collaboration can be facilitated, further deepening the insights gained.

Since CDM eliminates the need for manual labor and time constraints of traditional methods, it is an economical choice for large-scale studies (Han, 2011). Additionally, its predictive algorithms provide the ability to anticipate future challenges, giving it a proactive edge. Once interventions have been implemented, CDM's continuous monitoring and feedback mechanisms are crucial to ensuring they are practical and making timely adjustments. The validity and credibility of the research are also enhanced by the transparency and replicability inherent in well-documented CDM processes. Clinical Data Mining offers action researchers a robust, up-to-date, and nuanced tool for identifying and addressing issues in a specific way.

**Data-Driven Inquiry Benefits:**

    a. By basing decisions on empirical data, you will ensure they are grounded in reality, increasing your chances of success.

    b. Sharing data fosters transparency, builds trust, and ensures stakeholders are informed participants.

    c. As changes are implemented, new data can be analyzed to assess their impact, leading to further improvement.

    d. Data provide an objective measure of performance, ensuring accountability.

In essence, data analysis, whether quantitative or qualitative, offers a lens through which practices can be analyzed critically and systematically. Understanding the current landscape, identifying problems, and charting a course for meaningful change takes a data-driven approach for action researchers and practitioners alike.

## 8.  Identify Broader Societal or Systemic Challenges:

Challenges are rarely isolated from society or the system because specific settings are interconnected. It is common for micro-level problems to have roots in or be influenced by macro-level problems. Recognizing and understanding these broader connections is crucial if you will solve problems holistically. Where do challenges come from? Understanding the historical trajectory of an issue can give you insights into its persistence, evolution, or intensity. Many challenges have a historical underpinning. Some historical events or policies might be behind racial or ethnic disparities in certain regions. For example, a recession, a technological shift, or a trade policy can affect a specific setting. Schools in economically depressed areas might have trouble allocating resources, helping students, or engaging the community. Historical schisms or theological debates can shape congregational dynamics, denominational divides, or liturgical practices in the Christian church. Understanding early church councils, the Reformation, or the spread of Christianity in different cultural contexts can shed light on present-day theological differences and practices. Culture and social norms are essential factors in shaping challenges. For example, gender norms can influence workplace dynamics, leadership representation, or pay disparities. Changing healthcare policies can affect hospital operations, patient care, and medical research. Legislative and policy changes can have a spillover effect.

**Identifying manifestations in specific contexts:**

It is crucial to determine if specific problems are standalone or symptoms of broader societal problems. A low turnout in a community election may mean people are disenfranchised or disillusioned with politics. Similarly, decreasing church attendance might indicate a broader shift in societal values, spiritual beliefs, or a response to church-related controversies. A rise in youth unemployment in a town could be symptomatic of broader economic downturns, outdated education systems, or a mismatch between industry needs and skill sets. Closing local businesses might result from economic factors and a reflection of changing consumer habits, online competition, or societal shifts towards urban centers. Finally, an uptick in public health issues, such as obesity or mental health disorders, could be tied to societal factors like changes in dietary habits, increased stressors in modern life, or a lack of community support systems. Recognizing these broader connections helps craft solutions that address the root causes rather than merely alleviating the symptoms.

For a complete understanding of how broader societal issues affect a specific context, a detailed understanding of stakeholders' narratives and their lived experiences is crucial. Their stories often illuminate the intricacies of how macro-level trends manifest at the micro-level. By comparing the challenges faced in one's immediate setting with those in analogous environments elsewhere, commonalities may emerge, potentially signaling more extensive systemic problems. As a critical strategy for addressing these challenges, collaboration is pivotal when considering trends that reflect these broader societal patterns. In light of the systemic nature of many of these issues, the effectiveness of intervention efforts can be multiplied by forging partnerships with other organizations, communities, or stakeholder groups. Furthermore, advocacy and policy engagement can initiate systemic shifts that resonate positively within specific contexts. As a result of increasing awareness of these overarching societal challenges and their specific manifestations, communities, and organizations are armed with the knowledge necessary to address these problems. Engaging in continuous reflection and reassessing challenges and strategies is important to ensure that strategies remain relevant and practical as societal and systemic trends evolve.

The key to effective problem-solving is understanding the interplay between specific settings and broader societal systems.  It is hard to solve problems independently, but understanding their broader context gives you a comprehensive framework for tackling them that is both impactful and sustainable.

# SECTION III

**Problem And Purpose Statements**

**Paragraphs (1 each)**

**The problem is…**
**The purpose of this action research project is to address the problem of…**

*Instructions for Responding to the Prompts*:

A. To write the problem statement, begin with the prompt: **The problem is…** It is essential to articulate the **Problem Statement** with clarity and concise terms. Be <u>specific</u> and <u>localized</u>, detailing how it manifests in your particular context. Highlight the current gap or need, and explain the adverse effects or implications of not addressing this problem. Note that you should have approximately 1 paragraph for this. Start the paragraph with the prompt, then explain in more detail.

> *Example A*:

> The problem is that despite its proactive measures to incorporate and benefit from digital tools in the curriculum, Meridian High School has yet to witness the anticipated improvement in students' engagement and academic performance in mathematics. Even with the integration of technology, backed by contemporary educational paradigms advocating for enhanced learning experiences, the students continue to underperform. Their engagement levels and academic achievements in mathematics consistently fall below the district's average benchmarks. This situation calls into question the efficacy of the current teaching methodologies, the benefits of the digital tools deployed, and other potential challenges that may hinder student success in this pivotal subject.

> *Example B*:

> The problem is that the community of Willowbrook, even with its array of after-school programs and recreational offerings aimed at engaging and benefiting its young residents, has observed an unsettling trend. Negative social behaviors among teenagers have been on the rise, manifesting in forms like frequent altercations and a marked decline in participation in communal events. Despite the numerous activities and resources put in place, this uptick in undesirable behaviors underscores a potential disconnect between the programs offered and the actual needs or challenges the youth faces. It also raises pressing concerns about the social dynamics, peer influences, and the overall environment these teenagers are growing, pointing to an urgent need for assessment and intervention.

B. Next, you will need to explain the action research project's purpose. Begin with the prompt: **The purpose of this action research project is to address the problem of…**

This should flow naturally from the problem statement, describing the research's primary aim concerning the identified problem. Begin with a general intent. What do you hope to achieve? Focus on

the action. Since this is action research, what change or intervention are you considering?  Highlight the desired outcome or understanding you wish to achieve.

*Purpose Statement for Example A*

> The purpose of this action research project is to address the problem of the persistent underperformance in mathematics at Meridian High School despite the school's strategic integration of digital tools into the curriculum. By investigating the factors hindering students' engagement and performance, this research aims to identify gaps in the current teaching methodologies, assess the utility of digital tools, and uncover any additional challenges that could impact student outcomes. With a focus on actionable insights, the ultimate goal is to develop and implement interventions that bridge these gaps, enhancing student engagement and academic achievements in mathematics to align with or surpass district benchmarks.

*Purpose Statement for Example B*

> The purpose of this action research project is to address the problem of the rising negative social behaviors among teenagers in the Willowbrook community despite the presence of multiple recreational and after-school programs designed for their benefit. The research will delve into the root causes of these behaviors through a collaborative approach, seeking insights from the teenagers in question, their guardians, and key community leaders. Grounded in these insights, the project aims to collaboratively design and implement community-centric interventions to curb these negative behaviors. Ultimately, the objective is to restore and strengthen the fabric of the Willowbrook community, promoting healthier social interactions among its young residents and reinvigorating their active and positive engagement in community-based activities and events.

Things to look for:

- <u>Ensure that the problem and purpose statements are aligned</u>. The purpose should directly address the problem, offering a potential solution or understanding that can lead to a solution.
- Given the collaborative nature of action research, sharing your problem and purpose statements with peers, mentors, or stakeholders is beneficial. Their feedback can refine and strengthen your statements.
- Action research is iterative. As you proceed, continuously reflect on your problem and purpose statements. Are they still relevant? Do they need refining based on new insights or changing circumstances?

# SECTION IV

**Significance of the Problem**

**1 Page**

**The problem is significant because…**

*Instructions for Responding to the Prompt:*

Start with the prompt provided, then explain in detail why the problem is significant. This should be 1 page in length.

PROMPT: The problem is significant because...

*Example A*

> The problem is significant because mathematics is a foundational discipline, influences students' critical thinking, problem-solving abilities, and future academic and career opportunities. Persistently low engagement and performance hinder individual student growth and may also affect the school's reputation, funding opportunities, and overall community trust. Ensuring that students are proficient in mathematics, especially in an age dominated by technology and data, is essential for preparing them for higher education and a rapidly evolving job market…. (*This would continue for one page*).

*Example B*

> The problem is significant because healthy social behaviors during teenage years are crucial for personal development, fostering good mental health, and establishing positive interpersonal relationships. The rise in negative social behaviors can lead to long-term repercussions for the individuals involved and fragment the community, eroding trust and safety. Moreover, if teenagers disengage from communal events, they miss out on experiences contributing to a sense of belonging and civic responsibility. Addressing these behaviors ensures not only the well-being of the current generation of teenagers but also the cohesive and harmonious future of the Willowbrook community. …. (*This would continue for one page*).

**HOW TO WRITE ONE PAGE ABOUT SIGNIFICANCE**:

Consider the broader context of your research problem before you start understanding its significance. How has the issue evolved historically, and what immediate consequences does it have? If left unaddressed, consider the long-term consequences and compare them to similar problems in other contexts to gain insight. In addition to gauging the concerns of key stakeholders, their perspectives can give you a better idea of what's going on. Consider its systemic repercussions and how it might ripple into related fields or disciplines. Moreover, addressing a problem is not just about identifying it, it is also about understanding its depth, breadth, and urgency. Your connection to the issue or relevance to your institution can help emphasize its importance.

# SECTION V

**Research Question**

**1 Paragraph**

**How does (intervention) affect (problem) in a (site/ organization/ community)?**

*Instructions for Responding to the Prompt*:

Begin with the Provided Prompt by always starting your paragraph with "How does (intervention)..."

A. Specify the intervention by clearly identifying the action, strategy, or change you are introducing or examining. For example: Is it a new teaching method, a digital tool, community outreach, etc.?

**How does (intervention) affect (problem) in a (site/ organization/ community)?**

B. Then, state the problem, specific issue or challenge this intervention aims to address:

**How does (intervention) affect (problem) in a (site/ organization/ community)?**

C. Fonally, state the Site/Organization/Community where the intervention will occur:

**How does (intervention) affect (problem) in a (site/ organization/ community)?**

Once you have written that sentence, continue your paragraph by stating the importance of understanding the relationship.  Finally, conclude by emphasizing why it is crucial to understand how the intervention affects the problem in that specific context. This could be to improve outcomes, understand efficacy, inform future decisions, and so forth. Elaborate briefly on the magnitude or implications of the problem, making it clear why an intervention is needed.  Explain the characteristics or unique aspects of the site/organization/community where the intervention occurs. This could involve size, demographic details, history, or other factors influencing the outcome.  The following are examples.

*Research Question for Example A*

How does the integration of enhanced pedagogical methodologies (intervention) affect students' engagement and performance in mathematics (problem) at Meridian High School (site)? Despite numerous attempts to boost students' mathematical capabilities at Meridian High School, consistent underperformance in this discipline has been evident. With its commitment to academic excellence and a diverse student body, this institution has recently focused on experimenting with innovative teaching strategies. The hope is that by integrating enhanced pedagogical methodologies, the school can foster greater student enthusiasm and improve outcomes in mathematics. Discerning the impact of these methodologies is crucial not only for the immediate benefit of the students but also for informing the school's broader educational strategies and ensuring that Meridian High remains at the forefront of academic innovation.

Research Question for Example B

How does the implementation of targeted community-based interventions (intervention) affect negative social behaviors among teenagers (problem) in the Willowbrook community (site)? In the Willowbrook community, there has been a growing concern regarding negative social behaviors exhibited by teenagers, from increased altercations to declining participation in communal events. Willowbrook, known for its rich communal bonds and a history of collaborative initiatives, believes the answer might lie in introducing specific, community-centric interventions. These targeted efforts aim to rectify these adverse behaviors, fostering an environment where teenagers can personally and socially thrive. Evaluating the effect of these community-based interventions is essential, ensuring that the strategies deployed resonate with the youth and lead to a more harmonious and cohesive Willowbrook.

# SECTION VI

**Professional Relevance**

**1-2 Pages**

**This problem is relevant to my professional context because...**

*Instructions for Responding to the Prompt:*

To effectively articulate the relevance of the research problem to your professional context, start by pinpointing how the issue directly intersects with your daily tasks and responsibilities. Consider its ramifications on the broader professional community or discipline you are part of, and recognize if peers or related institutions encounter similar hurdles. Your unique skill set, training, and expertise can offer a distinct perspective on the issue, so delve into how your professional background brings a nuanced understanding. Align the problem with your professional aspirations and your institution's goals, considering its influence on stakeholder interactions and its potential to inhibit or catalyze professional growth. Personal experiences can be influential illustrators; reflect on instances where the problem has tangibly impacted your professional journey. In essence, weaving the problem into the fabric of your professional narrative underscores its pertinence and demands attention.

*PROMPT*: This problem is relevant to my professional context because...

**Example A: Problem Statement**

"Despite implementing digital tools in Meridian High School, students' engagement and performance in mathematics remain consistently below the district average."

*Relevance to Professional Context for Example A*

> This problem is relevant to my professional context because, as an educator and curriculum developer at Meridian High School, I am intrinsically invested in our students' academic success and holistic development. As a cornerstone discipline, mathematics plays a vital role in shaping students' analytical thinking, problem-solving capabilities, and preparedness for diverse academic and career trajectories. Persistent underperformance in this subject reflects potential gaps in our pedagogical approach and poses questions about our broader educational philosophy and technology integration in our classrooms.
>
> Moreover, in a rapidly evolving educational landscape where digital tools are lauded for their potential to enhance learning experiences, the apparent disconnect between their implementation and desired outcomes at our school warrants introspection. If Meridian High School is to maintain its reputation and commitment to delivering top-tier education, addressing this disparity becomes paramount. Furthermore, the implications of this problem extend beyond academic performance. Consistent underachievement can significantly impact students' confidence, self-efficacy, and attitudes toward learning, which can have cascading effects on other subjects and their broader school experience…. (This would continue for one page).

*Example B: Problem Statement*

"In the community of Willowbrook, despite various after-school programs and recreational activities available, there has been a noticeable rise in negative social behaviors among teenagers, such as frequent altercations and decreased participation in communal events."

*Relevance to Professional Context for Example B*

This problem is relevant to my professional context because, as a community organizer and youth mentor in Willowbrook, I am deeply committed to fostering a nurturing, inclusive, and positive environment for our young residents. The observed escalation in negative social behaviors threatens our community's harmony and cohesiveness and raises concerns about our teenagers' well-being, safety, and prospects.

Engaging young individuals in constructive, communal activities is foundational to building a strong sense of community identity, promoting mutual respect, and shaping responsible future citizens. If these activities fail to resonate or are not effectively addressing underlying behavioral challenges, it signifies potential gaps in our outreach strategies or the alignment of our programs with the evolving needs of our youth. Additionally, as someone responsible for guiding and mentoring these teenagers, understanding and addressing the root causes of these behaviors becomes critical. It is about community harmony and ensuring these young individuals have the right social tools, emotional intelligence, and resilience to navigate life's challenges…. (This would continue for one page)

**HOW TO WRITE ONE PAGE ABOUT PROFESSIONAL RELEVANCE**:

Begin with the prompt: "This problem is relevant to my professional context because..."

Then, briefly introduce your professional role, setting, or field by discussing the problem's direct impact on you professionally or as a community member. How does the problem affect your daily professional tasks, responsibilities, or interactions? Are there specific challenges you face due to this problem?  You could examine the broader professional or personal impact.  How might this problem affect your larger professional community or field?  Are colleagues or peer institutions facing similar challenges? Relate the problem to your skills, training, or expertise.  How does your professional background position you uniquely to address or understand this issue?  Discuss any personal or professional goals or institutional objectives that intersect with this problem. Does addressing the problem help in achieving specific milestones or targets?  Describe how this problem impacts your interactions with key stakeholders in your profession. Consider clients, colleagues, superiors, or any other relevant parties.  Discuss how addressing this problem might open professional growth, innovation, or development avenues. Could solving or better understanding this problem lead to new opportunities or advancements in your field?  Share personal or professional anecdotes or experiences that highlight the problem's relevance. How have you or your colleagues been personally touched or challenged by this issue?  Be sure to emphasize the alignment between the problem and your professional context.

Works Cited

Epstein, I. (2010). *Clinical data-mining : integrating practice and research*. Oxford University
       Press.

Han, J., Pei, J., & Kamber, M. (2011). *Data mining: concepts and techniques*. Elsevier.

# SECTION VII

**Formulating and Writing a Literature Review for Action Research**

Action research is inherently practical, aiming to address and solve real-world problems, and is an iterative data collection and analysis process focusing on the practical application of the findings. Therefore, it aims to identify areas of improvement and then implement solutions to address the issue. The literature review bridges the academic discourse with the theoretical background essential for understanding the practical implications of action research in this context. It gives the researchers an understanding of the existing research on the topic, allowing them to understand the problem better and develop more effective solutions. Also, it ensures that any action taken is grounded in existing knowledge and contributes to the broader discourse.

**According to the OMEGA Graduate School SR 890 syllabus, the researcher must compose a 5–7-page robust review of the literature relevant to the problem based on the developmental readings and other works. This section is devoted to the literature review's selection, organization, and writing to assist you.**

The number of sources cited for a doctoral action research project can vary considerably depending on the research topic, the scope of the review, and the density of available literature. The following considerations should be taken to determine a reasonable number of sources for your five- to seven-page literature review:

- Literature reviews help position the research inquiry within the broader academic discourse and lay the groundwork for the study.
- A narrower topic might require fewer sources, while a broader topic might require a larger number of sources to cover all relevant literature.
- Rather than just counting sources, consider **quality, relevance**, and **significance**.
- Including primary studies, foundational theoretical contributions, and notable field reviews are necessary.
- A peer-reviewed article, scholarly book, or conference paper tends to be more credible.
- It is common for scholars to cite multiple references in a single paragraph, especially when highlighting diverse perspectives or delineating the progression of an idea. Discussing an essential or foundational source or concept might also take a while.

**Therefore, a reasonable number of sources for an action research literature review spanning five to seven pages might be between 20 and 40 sources.**

Determining, organizing, and controlling a literature review involves several essential points. These points are examined in detail in this document. You are urged to read this thoroughly.

**1. Define the Research Problem:**

A distinct, clearly stated research question or problem statement is crucial to academic research, serving as a guiding principle. By ensuring that the research is anchored, avoiding aimless meandering into unrelated territory, and streamlining the literature review process, this clarity ensures that the research remains focused. A sharp focus allows researchers to concentrate on relevant topics, ensuring

efficiency and depth.  A clear understanding of the research design, highlighting key variables, and guiding the collection and analysis of data also have direct methodological implications.  Additionally, a well-defined question emphasizes the research's contribution to its field, identifying gaps in existing knowledge and positioning the study to fill them or build on previous work.  When articulating and defending the research, a lucid problem statement becomes invaluable, as it provides a clear rationale and facilitates effective communication with your research committee and others.  <u>A well-articulated research question is not just a starting point but a fundamental pillar, determining the trajectory, relevance, and success of the entire research endeavor.</u>

## 2.  Avoid Diversions:

Recalling the tale of Odysseus and the Sirens in Homer's classic The Odyssey (2007), researchers often face a similar temptation of the Siren's song, drawing them away from their primary focus.  Heed this warning!  Stay anchored to the main question and avoid the Siren's call to stray into unexplored yet enticing areas.  A researcher can waste time and energy by being diverted.  Affix yourself to your research question!  Do not stray!  Tools like a literature matrix or conceptual map can visually represent the literature, aiding in staying on course.

Researchers often develop personal methods for maintaining records.  Some use 3x5 cards, and others use programs such as Zotero to maintain their bibliographies.  It is a case of whatever works best for you.  Regardless of what you use, keep it organized and up-to-date.  Some researchers employ a literature matrix and a conceptual map to organize and synthesize the vast amount of literature they encounter.  Such tools help visually represent relationships, themes, and gaps in the literature, facilitating a more structured and comprehensive understanding.

### a.  Literature Matrix:

A literature matrix, or a synthesis matrix, is typically tabular in format.  It organizes and compares studies based on key themes, methodologies, findings, or other relevant criteria.  Using such a matrix, researchers can quickly identify patterns, overlaps, or gaps in the literature.  It is a visual aid that provides an at-a-glance summary of multiple articles or sources (See Figure 1).

**Figure 1**

*Literature Matrix Sample*

| Author/Year | Methodology | Key Themes/Findings | Population/Context | Theoretical Framework | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Smith, 2020 | Survey | Theme 1, Theme 2 | Adolescents | Constructivism | ... |
| Doe, 2019 | Case Study | Theme 3, Theme 4 | College Students | Behaviorism | ... |
| ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... |

**b. Conceptual Map:**

A conceptual map, on the other hand, is more graphical. It represents concepts or ideas as nodes and their relationships as connecting lines or arrows. These maps help visualize the interplay between different ideas and themes in the literature. You may know these as brain maps, thought maps, or any number of other terms. They help visualize the ideas (See Figure 2).

**Figure 2**

*Conceptual Map sample*
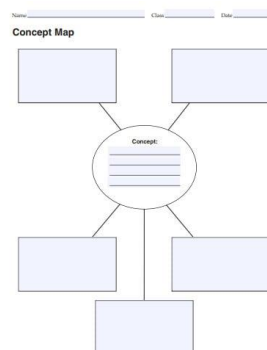
Example Features of a conceptual map include:

Nodes: Represent key concepts or themes from the literature.

Lines/Arrows: Show relationships between nodes. Arrows might indicate a directional relationship, whereas simple lines may show connections or associations.

Colors/Shapes: Different colors or shapes can represent different categories, methodologies, or levels of evidence.

The strength of a conceptual map is in its ability to capture complex relationships visually, making it easier to grasp the breadth and depth of a field or topic.

Both tools—literature matrices and conceptual maps—are instrumental in aiding researchers to see the "big picture" of their literature landscape, ensuring that their review is comprehensive, structured, and well-informed.

## 3. Purpose and Scope:

A significant action research component is identifying tangible, real-world issues to develop effective interventions. Therefore, the literature review plays a vital role in this process. It provides a contextual understanding of the problem while highlighting how it has been historically approached, the solutions posited, and the outcomes of these efforts. Any potential intervention is based on this framework, both theoretically and empirically.

In addition, the review facilitates the identification of gaps in areas where interventions have yet to be explored or existing solutions have proved ineffective. As a result, the research question can be refined to be more relevant and targeted. Additionally, the literature review ensures that practical solutions are accompanied by solid theoretical frameworks, creating a bridge between theory and application. It enhances the credibility and sustainability of the proposed solutions and ensures they are relevant to stakeholders. Ultimately, the literature review in action research sets the stage for future research endeavors by pinpointing and evaluating these practical gaps and solutions, ensuring they are both informed and impactful.

## 4. Identification of Relevant Literature:

Identifying pertinent literature is a meticulous process that forms the foundation for the entire review.

### a. Databases:

It is possible to search relevant literature systematically and comprehensively with databases as they offer organized collections of academic articles, journals, and other scholarly works. Databases are beneficial for researchers looking for specific topics or types of information. They allow researchers to find the necessary information to conduct their research quickly. ERIC is a primary source of educational research, whereas PubMed may cater to health sciences, while PsycINFO might cater to psychology and related fields. Choosing the appropriate database should correspond to the research topic and expected sources. It is often beneficial to have a comprehensive search, involving multiple databases, to ensure a wide net is cast, capturing the multifaceted nature of many research topics.

**b. Keywords:**

Database searches rely on keywords.  Their proper selection can have a significant impact on the results.  Keywords should be derived from the research question or problem statement.  They should also be specific and not overgeneralized.  Additionally, keywords should be tested to ensure the results are not too narrow or too broad.  Consider synonyms, related terms, and phrases that capture the topic's essence.  In order to refine your search, use Boolean Operators such as AND, OR, and NOT.  For example, "action research" AND "classroom management" would return articles that contain both terms**.**

**c. Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria:**

The amount of literature available makes it essential to have criteria to sort through and select only the most relevant sources.  The internet is both a blessing and a curse in this regard.  To ensure relevance and currency, one might prefer to focus on recent studies, such as those published within the last five to ten years.  However, seminal works are relevant regardless of age and should be included.  Certain studies may require a particular methodology.  For example, studies employing qualitative methods may be prioritized if one is particularly interested in qualitative insights.  Articles should be related directly to the research question.  For example, if the research is focused on a topic such as "action research in secondary education," articles on "action research in higher education" could be excluded unless they provide insights that can be transferred to secondary education.  Again, keep your research question at the forefront of your research.

**5.  Organizing the Literature:**

Timeliness is essential in academic research because it affects the pertinence and applicability of findings.  The review remains at the forefront of current academic discourse by prioritizing recent literature, especially those from the last 5-10 years.  This is especially important as new methodologies, technologies, or theories are developed in rapidly evolving fields, such as health care.  These recent studies are more likely to reflect the field's current state regarding advancements and prevailing challenges.

Despite this, foundational theories and seminal works should not be overshadowed by this emphasis on the contemporary.  These cornerstones often lay the theoretical foundation upon which current research stands.  These documents provide historical context, providing information on the evolution of thought and practice throughout history.  A narrow-minded understanding can result from ignoring these details, resulting in a lack of depth and richness.

The organization of the literature review further reinforces its utility and coherence.  Grouping articles by themes ensures that similar ideas or findings are clustered, resulting in a more streamlined narrative.  Sorting by methodology provides an opportunity to compare research approaches, providing insight into the strengths and limitations of each.  By contrast, arranging by context can provide insight into how findings vary across different settings or populations.  Throughout this structured presentation, readers can easily follow the evolution of thought, discern patterns and gaps in the literature, and appreciate the diversity of perspectives, all while remaining anchored to the central research question.  Organizing the review process in this manner facilitates clarity, facilitates comprehension and emphasizes the thoroughness of the review.

**6. Analysis and Synthesis:**

As part of the review process, it is critical to recognize recurring themes or trends in the literature.  It has been found that these patterns, whether they are reflected in repeated findings across multiple studies or as shared theoretical viewpoints, often indicate consensus within academia.  To ensure that future research is anchored in established paradigms, commonly accepted knowledge forms the foundation for new inquiries.

Although patterns provide a sense of coherence and continuity, it is equally important to acknowledge the divergences within the literature.  Disagreements in findings, methodologies, or interpretations contribute to the quality of academic discourse by enriching it (Hart, 2006).  As a result of these differences, a holistic and balanced overview of the subject can be gained; on the other hand, methodological nuances and evolving theoretical positions can be revealed.  Within these differences, the dynamic nature of academic research often emerges, revealing shifts, debates, and new insights.

Identifying gaps in the literature is of heightened importance in the context of action research, which places a high value on real-world solutions and impact.  These unexplored or overlooked areas may inform and guide future research endeavors.  Furthermore, they can assist in refining the objectives and scope of the current study, ensuring that it introduces novel insights or addresses unmet needs.  Especially in action research, such gaps often reflect real-world challenges, underscoring the importance and relevance of the research to stakeholders, from local communities to large organizations.

A comprehensive literature review aims beyond merely cataloging existing works to facilitate understanding the established, appreciating the contested, and imagining the unexplored.  This will enable meaningful and grounded research to be conducted in the future.

**7. Connect Literature to Your Study:**

Action research is intrinsically linked to real-world challenges, aiming to produce tangible and meaningful change.  Therefore, the findings from existing literature that align with the study's focus are essential.  By emphasizing practical implications, these findings ensure that the proposed interventions are well-informed, likely effective, and serve as a bridge that connects theoretical constructs with actionable steps in concrete scenarios.  Moreover, demonstrating the potential real-world benefits or transformations the research aims to achieve can enhance stakeholder engagement.

At the same time, the theoretical foundations of a study are crucial, acting as the foundation upon which the entire research enterprise is built.  The extensive literature, rich in established academic paradigms, shapes this theoretical framework.  As a result of situating the research within these known constructs, the inquiry is directed, methodology choices are informed, and results are interpreted within the context of a larger academic community.  As a result, this framework ensures coherence in the research narrative, and the researcher can contribute to, refine, or challenge existing theoretical discourses based on their findings.

The delicate balance between them defines research encompassing both practical and theoretical elements.  By synchronizing these facets, the research is anchored in real-world relevance and academic rigor, making it valuable for practitioners and academics.

**8. Uphold Academic Standards:**

Integral academic research components are <u>proper citation, unbiased presentation, and formal tone</u>. Each element, while distinct, works collaboratively to ensure the research has credibility, transparency, and scholarly rigor, thus enhancing its credibility and impact.

a        Citations are the connective tissue between a researcher's work and the broader academic audience, ensuring transparency, credibility, and acknowledgment.  Proper citation is a mark of academic integrity, giving due credit to scholars whose works have informed the research.  It allows readers, peers, or reviewers to trace the origins of information, arguments, or data, facilitating a deeper exploration or verification of claims made.  Adhering to a specific citation style ensures uniformity throughout the document.  This enhances the document's readability and aligns with the standards set by academic institutions or journals.  OMEGA Graduate School uses the APA format.  Here are some samples.  Please note where punctuation is placed, indentation, and what is capitalized.

1.  Book:

Author, A. A. (Year of Publication).  Title of work: Capital letter also for subtitle.  Publisher.

*Example*:

Smith, J. A. (2020).  Understanding why we study APA: Perspectives and applications.  Academic Press.

2.  Journal Article:

Author, A. A., & Author, B. B. (Year of Publication).  Title of article.  Title of Journal, volume number(issue number), page range.  DOI or URL (if available)

*Example*:

Doe, J. D., & White, A. B. (2019). Games in modern education: A review.  Journal of Fun Education Studies, 25(3), 45-60.  https://doi.org/xx.xxxxx

3.  U.S. Government Website:

Name of Government Agency or Author.  (Year of Publication).  Title of document.  URL

*Example*:

U.S. Department of Education.  (2018).  Annual report on gum-chewing in the classroom.  https://www.ed.gov/reports/gumchewing-2018

Providing a balanced review representing a variety of viewpoints, even those that oppose the researcher's views or conclusions, is fundamental to producing credible academic work.  This is where variant sources hold value. The commitment to objectivity reinforces the research's validity and credibility by enriching the review's depth and emphasizing a thorough understanding of the entire topic spectrum.  By refraining from selectively highlighting data or studies that exclusively align with one's stance, the research exudes thoroughness and a genuine commitment to holistic inquiry.  Moreover, a

thorough and unbiased presentation is invaluable to readers and stakeholders.  It gives them a panoramic view of the subject, facilitating a more informed and grounded decision-making process.

Throughout academic writing, stylistic tones distinguish it from other forms of communication.  In addition to signaling adherence to the rigorous standards and conventions typifying scholarly writing, an academic and objective tone symbolizes the research's professionalism.  Clarity and precision are often intertwined with formality, ensuring that the arguments and findings presented are precise and clear of ambiguity.  Additionally, a formal and clear tone transcends regional or cultural boundaries, making the research understandable and resonant to many researchers worldwide.  Here are examples:

1) **Informal**: The data was kind of scattered, so it was tough to draw any real conclusions.

   **Academic Tone**: There was substantial variability in the data, making it difficult to draw definitive conclusions from it.

2) **Informal**: We saw a big spike in the numbers last month, which was super unexpected.

   **Academic Tone**: There was a significant increase in the figures last month, a development that was not anticipated based on prior trends.

3) **Informal:** A lot of experts reckon that climate change is a major issue.

   **Academic Tone**: Numerous scholars assert that climate change represents a pressing concern.

4) **Informal**: The book was a pretty boring read but had some good info.

   **Academic Tone**: While the book's narrative may not engage all readers, it provides comprehensive information.

5) **Informal**: This method didn't really work out, so maybe we should try something else.

   **Academic Tone**: The current methodology did not yield the anticipated results, suggesting an alternative approach is needed.

Academic tone is marked by clarity, precision, avoiding colloquialisms or slang, and a focus on evidence-based assertions.  It aims to convey information in a structured, objective, and formal manner.

**9. Conclusion and Forward Momentum:**

   a. Summarizing the Review's Main Points:

Distilling this information into a coherent summary is crucial once you have delved deep into the literature and synthesized various themes, findings, and arguments.  This does not merely involve recounting every detail; it requires you to differentiate and present the most significant and relevant points.  This summarization provides a consolidated snapshot of the current state of knowledge in the field, making it accessible and comprehensible for readers.

   b.  Emphasizing Areas Your Action Research Will Address:

Within the vast landscape of literature, there will invariably be gaps, controversies, or areas of nascent exploration.  It is here that your action research can carve its niche.  By emphasizing these areas

in your review, you highlight the relevance and significance of your research and provide a rationale for your study.  It is essential to explicitly outline how your research intends to address these gaps or contribute to the existing body of knowledge.  This focus links the broader academic discourse and your research objectives.

    c.    Proposing Potential Areas for Future Exploration:

No research endeavor, irrespective of its depth and rigor, can claim to be exhaustive.  The dynamic nature of academic fields ensures that there are always new horizons.  After summarizing and emphasizing your research focus in your literature review, it is valuable to gaze ahead and propose potential areas for future studies.  These could be extensions of your research, tangential areas that emerged during your review, or new avenues that hold promise.  Doing so showcases a forward-looking perspective and provides a roadmap for future scholars, signaling areas ripe for exploration. A brief sentence or two in your literature review will suffice.  While grounded in the present, a well-crafted literature review also looks backward and forward.  It acknowledges the foundation laid by previous scholars, situates current research endeavors within this framework and casts a vision for future academic pursuits.

## 10.  Iterative Writing and Refinement:

Writing itself serves more than just as a means to an end when conducting academic research, especially when using methodologies such as action research, which are iterative and reflective.  Thinking, understanding, and refining one's inquiry through writing is essential.  It is possible that writing can act as a catalyst for crystallizing and refining our understanding.  The nebulous ideas we float around become tangible when we write down our thoughts.  Precision is forced when we use the written word, forcing us to identify ambiguities or gaps in our understanding that would otherwise go unnoticed.

Developing drafts of the literature review iteratively is critical.  Action research requires a constant return to the literature rather than a linear research process in which the literature review is written once, and then the study is conducted.  The initial drafts lay the foundation by describing the foundational theories and studies relevant to the research.  However, as the research progresses and additional insights are gathered, these drafts must be revised.  Through this ongoing dialogue between the literature and emerging findings, the research remains grounded while also being informed by the latest developments in the field.

Academic fields are constantly in flux.  The topic you selected for your research is, no doubt, relevant.  Others are also researching and writing on the same topic with the same excitement as you.  New research findings emerge, paradigms shift, and new perspectives arise.  Therefore, it is not only beneficial but imperative to review the literature periodically.  A cutting-edge study at the beginning of your research may become mainstream or even outdated after a long-term research project.  Keeping abreast of these shifts ensures that research remains relevant and contributes meaningfully to the academic discourse.  Remember that the literature review is a living document, particularly in action research.  It grows, evolves, and refines with the research it supports, ensuring that the inquiry informs and contributes to the broader academic discourse.

# HOW TO WRITE YOUR LITERATURE REVIEW

Like most writers, you may experience 'writers' block'.  Here are some ways to get started.

First, your first sentence should be your problem statement.  That is a must! Then,

Second, ensure you have systematically read the relevant literature before attempting to write. As you read, take notes and highlight key ideas, methodologies, findings, and theoretical frameworks. This initial groundwork often aids in clarifying your thoughts. Using prompts drawn from those tools is an excellent idea. Ask yourself guiding questions to stimulate thinking. For instance: "What methodologies are predominant in this field?", "How has the understanding of this topic evolved?" or "Where do scholars tend to disagree?"

Third, developing a detailed outline can provide a roadmap for your literature review. Use your conceptual map or matrix to assist you.  Decide on the thematic or methodological divisions that will structure your review, and list the key studies or theories under each.

Fourth, allow yourself to write without the pressure of perfection. Recognize that the first draft is just that – <u>a draft</u>. It is more important to get your ideas down initially. Refinement and restructuring can occur in subsequent drafts.  Freewriting can help to generate initial ideas and connections between different pieces of literature. This draft will not be your final version but can be a starting point.  Writing is a process, so do not get bogged down with trying to make your first draft error-free.  While it is essential to be thorough, attempting to incorporate every piece of relevant literature can be overwhelming. Know when you have a representative sample and when to start writing. You will have time to revise and refine.  Remember, too, that your chair and DSL committee members will help you! Do not wait until your review is complete to share your initial drafts or sections with peers or mentors to get feedback. This can provide direction and motivation to continue. Discussing your thoughts and findings with colleagues or peers can offer fresh perspectives. They might point out angles or connections you had not considered.

Fifth, set specific goals by breaking down the task into manageable segments. Instead of aiming to write the entire review in one go, set goals like "Today, I will summarize and analyze five articles." Reading other literature reviews on similar or adjacent topics can provide insights into structure, style, and content.  The best way to learn is sometimes by imitation.  Establish a routine by setting aside dedicated time for writing can train your brain to be prepared for the task. Find a conducive environment, free from distractions, and maintain consistency in your writing routine. Ensure you get enough rest, engage in physical activity, and take breaks. A refreshed mind is often more productive.

## CITED AND RELATED WORKS

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# SECTION VIII

## Action Plan

## The research-based intervention utilized to address the problem in this action research project is...

NOTE: This should be 1 paragraph; however, the instrument you will use will be in Appendix C of your project.

*Instructions for Responding to the Prompt:*

There are many functions for the prompt "The research-based intervention used in this action research project is..." in scholarly discourse, especially in action research. First, the prompt requires a clear identification of the intervention being used, giving your committee a focused lens through which they can examine the entire research process. The explicit identification ensures that the reader, or any evaluator, understands the theoretical or empirical basis of the action research project.

It is also important to note that specifying a research-based intervention signals that the research is grounded in existing scholarly work, a key criterion for academic integrity. Action research is susceptible to the context in which it is conducted; however, its findings are more compelling and generalizable when the methods and interventions are based on previously validated research. The foundational basis makes the research methodologically sound and theoretically substantiated, leading to a nuanced understanding of the problem.

Last but not least, the prompt implicitly asks for a justification of the intervention, which invites reflection on its suitability and effectiveness in the given research setting. As a key part of action research's iterative process, it opens up the possibility of discussing modifications needed to adapt the intervention to the specific context of the research. Therefore, the prompt is an essential starting point for both the researcher and the readers, establishing the framework for the action research project.

<u>State the intervention clearly and be prepared to defend it during your proposal defense</u>.

Example:

> The research-based intervention utilized to address the problem in this action research project is peer mentoring. This method, grounded in educational models championing collaborative learning and community support, has proven effective in enhancing student engagement and retention in various institutions. Notable researchers, such as Tinto (1993), have highlighted the significance of peer-driven initiatives in cultivating a sense of community and academic accomplishment among students. The decision to employ peer mentoring at Meridian Community College is rooted in its proven capacity to bridge the student support gap, guiding peers who have navigated analogous challenges. In terms of execution, seasoned students will be assigned to mentor freshmen or students identified as at-risk. They will conduct regular check-ins, offering both academic guidance and socio-emotional backing. I anticipate enhancements in-class participation, academic scores, and sustained college enrollment. Foreseeable challenges encompass the initial training phase for mentors and ensuring continuous interaction between mentors and their mentees. I plan to conduct mentorship

training sessions and periodic review engagements to mitigate these. By integrating this peer mentoring initiative, I aspire to augment the academic environment at Meridian Community College, potentially offering valuable insights for similar institutions aiming to fortify student involvement.

## HOW TO WRITE A PARAGRAPH ABOUT THE INTERVENTION

Set the stage for a comprehensive understanding of the research-based intervention you are implementing by naming it or describing it precisely. Give a brief explanation of the intervention's origins. It is good to mention notable scholars, institutions, and research studies who have endorsed or validated this intervention, giving your research more weight. Check if this intervention has been used before in similar settings or for similar problems, as such precedent could bolster its applicability.

You must explain why this intervention is relevant to your research problem. Let me know what makes it so apt for resolving the problem. Delineate how you will operationalize this intervention within your research setting or context. If you tailor the intervention to your target group or situation, clarify that. Discuss anticipated outcomes, grounding your expectations in existing research or your own hypotheses as you outline what you expect to see. At the same time, think about how you will mitigate potential challenges you might face during the deployment of the intervention. Summarize the main points and offer reflective insights, encapsulating your chosen intervention's rationale, methodology, and expected outcomes.

# SECTION IX

**Sociological Implications**

**The sociological theory best suited to address this problem and the proposed intervention is…because…**

(1 1/2 pages TOTAL)

NOTE: This section and the next discuss both requirements (Sociological and Theological) for ease of completion.

*Instructions for Responding to the Prompt:*

A comprehensive understanding of relevant theories is crucial to align an intervention with the most fitting sociological theory. In order to understand each theory, you have to dive into its foundational texts; for example, Durkheim's seminal works offer a deep understanding of Structural Functionalism, whereas Marx's writings explain Conflict Theory. Check out academic journals to supplement your foundational knowledge. Platforms like JSTOR or Google Scholar can be helpful in this phase because they present refinements and critiques of established theories and case studies that show how they are applied today. A theory's practical utility is often revealed by examining its real-world applications, so finding research articles that use it in real-world contexts is essential. Join scholarly forums or academic platforms that discuss these theories to learn dynamically. You can gain new insights by directly engaging with diverse perspectives or watching debates. You can also interact with experts in your field by attending lectures, seminars, or workshops, whether they are in person or online. You need to connect the theoretical knowledge to the research problem you are working on during this immersion process. Taking notes, synthesizing, and reflecting regularly will deepen your understanding and help you pick the proper sociological framework.

Once you have identified the sociological theory that best explains, predicts, or provides insights into the problem under study, consider how this theory illuminates aspects of the problem that other theories might overlook. You will need to ensure the intervention aligns with the foundational principles and assumptions of the theory.

Since the page requirement for the sociological AND Theological Implications totals 3 pages, you must write one and a half pages for each.

On the next page, you will find a chart delineating the major sociological theories (See Figure 3).

**Figure 3**

*Major Sociological Theories and Action Research Interventions*

| Sociological Theory | Main Concerns | Relevant Interventions |
|---|---|---|
| Structural Functionalism | How societal structures maintain stability, order, and equilibrium. | Reinforcing or restoring social order, highlighting positive functions of institutions, and addressing dysfunctions. |
| Conflict Theory | Power imbalances, class struggles, societal conflicts, competition. | Addressing systemic inequalities, rectifying power disparities, and advocating for marginalized groups. |
| Symbolic Interactionism | Daily interactions, creation of meaning through symbols, and individual perceptions. | Changing perceptions at the micro-level, modifying daily interactions, and reshaping societal symbols and meanings. |
| Feminist Theory | Gender inequalities, patriarchy, women's rights. | Addressing gender disparities, advocating for women's rights, and reshaping gendered norms and roles. |
| Postmodern Theory | Skepticism about grand narratives, fluidity of truth, multiplicity of realities. | Challenging dominant narratives, highlighting the plurality of experiences, and addressing issues in a tech-driven world. |

HOW TO WRITE YOUR RESPONSE FOR SOCIOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS:

Begin with the phrase: "The sociological theory best suited to address this problem is [Name of the Theory] because..."

Recall your classes at OMEGA Graduate School, where sociological theories were discussed, and summarize the theory's core tenets and relevance to the problem in a concise manner. Describe the proposed interventions and their expected outcomes. Next, elaborate on the reasons for selecting this specific theory and intervention. You can do this by answering questions such as: Why is this theory more suitable than others? What is the relationship between the proposed intervention and the theory's understanding of social dynamics? Whenever possible, bolster your argument with specifics. In the provided example, introducing "student-focused discussion groups and workshops" was a concrete intervention aligned with Symbolic Interactionism. Confirm that each part of the paragraph flows logically from the previous section. The sequence should take the reader from problem identification through theory selection, proposed intervention, and, finally, the rationale. Conclude by articulating the alignment between the theory, intervention, and the problem's resolution. Be sure to cite key texts and scholars associated with your chosen theory and any supporting evidence for your proposed intervention!

*Example Statement:*

The sociological theory best suited to address the problem of declining student engagement at Meridian Community College is Symbolic Interactionism because it emphasizes the subjective meaning and shared understandings that individuals derive from their experiences. According to Symbolic Interactionism, individuals' actions are intricately connected to the symbolic meanings they associate with people, objects, and events, based on the foundational works of Mead (1934) and Blumer (1969). In light of this, Meridian Community College may have seen a decline in student engagement due to students' changing perceptions about what a college education is about, the dynamics of the classroom environment, or their perceived roles within the academic community.

As a result of this theoretical perspective, student-centric discussion groups and workshops could be established. The platforms would allow students to articulate and critically examine their perceptions of college education, define their goals, and discuss their challenges. Through these interactive sessions, faculty and administrators will gain valuable insight into student experiences, allowing them to tailor educational experiences to meet students' needs.

This proposed intervention is deeply aligned with Symbolic Interactionism. It operates on the understanding that changes in shared symbols and interpretations can catalyze behavioral changes. Meridian Community College can, therefore, increase its student engagement and motivation by exploring and possibly recalibrating the symbolic and symbolic meanings they attach to their college journey.

# SECTION X

**Theological Implications**

**(1 1/2 pages TOTAL)**

**From a Christian perspective, this problem is…and the proposed intervention is…because…**

NOTE: This section is a continuation of the previous section on Sociological Theories for ease of completion.

When approaching a research problem from a Christian perspective, you must engage profoundly and authentically with Christian viewpoints, ensuring a harmony between faith and academic rigor. This commitment goes beyond merely appending Christian concepts; the Christian foundation should be integrated into the research fabric, exemplifying a genuine fusion of spiritual values and scholarly exploration.

Initiating this process involves framing the identified research problem in light of Christian values and teachings. You should assess how the problem aligns or conflicts with Christian principles. An essential part of this endeavor is drawing from biblical teachings. Here, you must be mindful of the difference between exegesis and eisegesis. Exegesis involves interpreting a text, especially scripture, based on its original context and intent. In contrast, eisegesis is reading one's interpretations or biases into a text. For an authentic Christian perspective, <u>exegesis is pivotal</u>, ensuring interpretations are rooted in the intended meaning of the scripture.  Recall what was taught in your hermeneutics course at OMEGA Graduate School.

Building on this foundation, students can then transition to formulating interventions. These solutions should be conceptualized to resonate with Christian values, teachings, or biblical narratives. Drawing inspiration from essential Christian tenets like love, service, and community can provide direction. Once an intervention is identified, its rationale should be articulated, emphasizing its congruence with Christian doctrines. This alignment can be strengthened by referencing relevant scriptures or teachings, but always with a commitment to exegetical accuracy.

Lastly, throughout the research trajectory, consistency is vital. Every phase, from problem articulation to intervention proposal, should maintain and reflect a clear Christian perspective, ensuring the research remains theologically sound and academically robust.

Example Statement:

From a Christian perspective, the problem of declining student engagement at Meridian Community College can be seen as a weakening of the sense of community and purpose among students. The Apostle Paul, in his letter to the Corinthians, speaks of the diverse parts of a body working together in unity (1 Corinthians 12:12-27). This biblical teaching underscores the value of every individual and the importance of unity and purpose within a community.

The proposed intervention is to organize regular faith-based community gatherings or fellowship groups where students can find academic and spiritual support. Students might become more engaged with their academic pursuits by fostering a sense of belonging and purpose rooted in Christian values. This intervention aligns with Christ's teachings on the importance of community, mutual support, and nurturing spiritual and intellectual growth. By cultivating a supportive, faith-based community at Meridian Community College, we can address the issue of declining engagement through the lens of Christian love and unity.

HOW TO COMPOSE THE RESPONSE

You need to understand the problem in depth. Grasp its causes, implications, and broader contexts. Then, relate the problem to Christian beliefs, principles and ethics. Examine the issue in light of Christian teachings and values. Does it conflict with Christian virtues such as love, justice, mercy, or service? Consult the Scriptures and Biblical narratives, and seek wisdom from the Bible. Are there verses, stories, or teachings that resonate with the problem? For example, the parable of the Good Samaritan might provide insights into helping and understanding others from varied backgrounds. Remember to prioritize exegesis to grasp the scripture's intended message. When proposing solutions, think of their alignment with Christian virtues. How might the intervention reflect values like love, justice, or service? If the solution addresses educational disparities, it could be tied to the Christian emphasis on justice.

Christianity underscores the value of community (the body of Christ) and interconnectedness. These teachings can be pivotal if the intervention focuses on enhancing community bonds or improving relationships. Additionally, consider Christ's teachings on love, service, and sacrifice. If the intervention embodies altruism or prioritizes others' needs, highlight these themes. Christianity champions themes of redemption and hope, and interventions promoting positive change or renewal can be related to this aspect. Engage with Christian scholarship by diving into the works of Christian scholars or theologians who have discussed similar themes or problems and reference their insights to ground the intervention in established Christian thought.

To justify an intervention, you have to show that it adheres to Christian principles. Through meticulous referencing of Scripture, Christian teachings, and seminal works by esteemed theologians, you can do this. It is also important to think about whether or not the intervention will be accepted or applied within Christian communities. Examine whether the intervention aligns with their values and promotes their mission. Finally, it is crucial to present a coherent narrative that seamlessly integrates the identification of the problem with the proposed intervention, all while keeping a lucid Christian perspective throughout the discussion.

# SECTION XI

**Site Permission, Protection of Participants, and Data Collection**

Permission to conduct the action research intervention will be secured by….evidence of permission is in the form of a letter (see Appendix A).

There are ethical considerations, and permission ensures that research is conducted ethically, respecting participants' rights, privacy, and well-being. In addition, having official permission lends credibility and legitimacy to the research process and findings. It ensures compliance with institutional policies, legal requirements, and research guidelines. Securing permission can lead to better stakeholder support and collaboration, making the research process smoother.

In action research, various ethical challenges can arise that researchers must navigate with diligence. Nothing is more critical than ensuring participants understand the research's aims, methods, risks, and rewards. Maintaining confidentiality and guarding against coercion is vital so participants do not feel forced to participate. Keeping the research goals and outcomes completely transparent is also crucial. As action researchers often work in the community or organization under study, conflicts of interest and power dynamics can arise and must be dealt with carefully. Besides these, the research should not cause harm, whether mental, emotional, or physical, and any interventions or changes proposed should be sustainable and beneficial in the long run.

Consider this scenario:

> Ms. Richardson informed participants that the study was about "community activities and well-being," deliberately downplaying the emphasis on church attendance to attract more participants.  During the data collection phase, she subtly conveyed that participants attending church services more frequently might receive special blessings or divine favor. This insinuation pressured some individuals to attend more church services, even if they were not initially inclined. In reporting her findings, Ms. Richardson selectively quoted scriptures that extolled the virtues of regular worship without adequately addressing verses emphasizing a personal relationship with God over ritualistic practices.  She found that while many regular church attendees reported improved mental well-being, some did not notice any change, and a few even reported feeling more stressed due to increased social interactions. However, she chose to omit this data, presenting a biased positive correlation.  Ms. Richardson is an elder at the local church and stands to benefit from increased attendance due to potential rises in offerings and tithes. She did not disclose this potential conflict of interest to participants or in his published findings.  For non-Christian participants who reported no change or negative feelings, Ms. Richardson advised them to read specific Christian books and attend Bible study sessions, asserting that these actions would "truly" benefit their well-being, thereby imposing her personal beliefs onto them.

In the above scenario, the unethical behaviors exhibited include a lack of full disclosure, coercion, selective Scripture interpretation (eisegesis), ignoring contradictory data, impartiality and conflicts of interest, and overstepping with non-Christian participants.  Such issues were addressed in your courses at Omega Graduate School, especially in the Ethics in a Global Society course.

In Christian action research, you must respect participants' deeply held beliefs. Misinterpretation or selective use of scripture can introduce bias, so it is vital to do genuine exegesis, a sincere attempt to understand the scriptural intent. Since Christianity has many denominations and beliefs, research should

be inclusive, without denominational favoritism. Balancing faith with scholarly rigor is essential, especially when it comes to Christian elements like prayer. You should not just present them as empirical solutions. Understanding the nuanced dynamics within religious communities is essential so that Christian practices or teachings are not unduly imposed on non-believers when both Christian and non-Christian participants are involved. Obtaining permission to conduct action research, particularly in institutional settings, is paramount.

Sample from Meridian Community College Context:

> Permission to conduct the action research intervention at Meridian Community College, focused on evaluating online learning modules, has been secured from the College's Research Oversight Committee. The evidence of permission is in the form of an official approval letter signed by the committee chair, Dr. Jane Doe, dated September 20, 2023.

For individual participants, the following example:

> Permission to conduct the action research intervention on mental health has been secured individually from each participant within the Grace Haven Christian Congregation. Before obtaining consent, every participant was provided with a detailed overview of the research objectives, methods, potential benefits, and confidentiality measures. I emphasized the voluntary nature of their participation and their right to withdraw at any point without consequence. Their queries were addressed, ensuring they made an informed decision. The evidence of permission is in the form of signed consent forms from each participant, which were collected prior to the commencement of the research. These forms have been stored securely to maintain participant confidentiality, consistent with our commitment to uphold the dignity, rights, and well-being of all participants in line with Christian teachings and ethical research practices

## HOW TO WRITE A RESPONSE TO THE PROMPT

Permission to conduct the action research intervention will be secured by….evidence of permission is in the form of a letter (see Appendix A)

Completing this prompt is straightforward; however, you must explain how the permission requests were obtained.  For example:

**Permission to conduct the action research intervention will be secured by email. Evidence of permission is in the form of a letter. (see Appendix A)**

NOTE: Each of these is important and may be lengthy. Contact the DSL Director for guidance if necessary.

**SAMPLE LETTER**

[OMEGA Graduate School Letterhead]

[Date]

Dear [Participant's Name],

Subject: Request for Participation in Action Research Study

I invite you to participate in an action research study conducted by [Researcher's Name], a student at OMEGA Graduate School. The study aims to [briefly describe the purpose, e.g., "examine the impact of online collaborative tools on graduate students' engagement in remote learning environments"].

Study Overview:

During this study, participants will [provide a brief description of participation, e.g., "engage in online collaborative sessions over six weeks and provide feedback through weekly online surveys"].

Confidentiality:

Please be assured that all information you provide will remain confidential. Your personal details will not be disclosed, and all data will be anonymized in any reports, publications, or presentations resulting from this research.

Voluntary Participation:

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any time without any consequences.

Benefits:

While there is no direct compensation for participating, I believe that the insights garnered from this research can [mention potential benefits].

Contact:

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the study, please feel free to contact [Researcher's Name] at [Researcher's Email] or [Researcher's Phone Number].

Consent:

If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign below as an indication of your informed consent.

I have read and understood the above information and agree to participate in this action research study conducted by OMEGA Graduate School.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

I sincerely hope you will consider participating in this study, and I appreciate your time and consideration in this endeavor.

Warm regards,

[Researcher's Full Name]

[Position, e.g., "Doctoral Candidate"]

OMEGA Graduate School

**Location and Duration**

**The location of the intervention will be… The duration of the intervention will be…**

This prompt appears to be simple; however, there are several important factors you should consider. During your proposal defense, the committee will ask you several essential questions. Be prepared to respond to them.

The first part of the prompt requires detailing the location of the intervention. It is essential to specify the location of your research, whether it is a classroom, a community center, or an institution. However, if the intervention is online, you must mention the platform or medium used, like Zoom or a specific learning platform. You will want to give a brief explanation, too. If you have chosen a school library, explain why its environment is conducive to the reading intervention.

As for the duration, it is vital to be precise. Let the committee know if there is a set start and end date. In the next step, describe the total length of your intervention, such as "12 weeks." If you are doing multiple sessions, specify how often they will happen and how long each will be. If you have two sessions every week that last 90 minutes, that is what you should say explicitly.

Providing a brief justification for the duration is also helpful. For example, if you chose eight weeks, explain why, maybe citing past research or the intervention's specific goals. You should also mention any built-in flexibility. Whenever there is a possibility of extending the intervention based on feedback or conditions, mention it. Depending on the results or participant feedback, an additional 2-week period might be considered after ten weeks.

Finally, it would be best if you prioritized clarity and precision in their responses. Ambiguity can cause misunderstandings or misinterpretations about the research logistics. You want to ensure the response aligns with the intervention plans and is cogent before submitting it.

# SECTION XII

**Data Collection Tools**

**The data collection tool consists of…**

**Data Collection and Analysis Procedures Data will be collected for a period of…**

**An open-ended questionnaire (see Appendix D) will be used to collect data prior to and following the intervention**.

YOUR TWO OPTIONS ABOUT DATA:

You have two main options for data collection in your action research project. First, your survey instrument can be based on your research objectives and questions. You can explore specific topics this way but must thoroughly validate your questions. The Chair and committee members are willing to guide you through this process.  Or you can use a survey that aligns with your research focus that is already validated. You have a better chance of reliability and validity using a pre-existing questionnaire since it is grounded in previous research. Again, the Chair and committee members are willing to assist you. Numerous books are available that list measurements in the social sciences.  Below is a list of works that might help you. You should pick one that aligns with your action research project's scope, objectives, and methodological considerations. Each option has its advantages and disadvantages. No matter what you do, make sure your survey instrument is ethical and methodologically sound.

*Works listing surveys, instruments, and measurements*

Cooper, H., Hedges, L. V., & Valentine, J. C. (Eds.). (2019). *The handbook of research synthesis and meta-analysis* (3rd ed.). Russell Sage Foundation.

Davis, C. M., Yarber, W. L., Bauserman, R., Schreer, G., & Davis, S. L. (Eds.). (1998). *Handbook of sexuality-related measures*. Routledge.

DeVellis, R. F. (2016). *Scale development: Theory and applications* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.

Fields, D. L. (2013). *Taking the measure of work: A guide to validated scales for organizational research and diagnosis*. Charlotte, N.C. Iap.

Fink, A. (2003). *The survey kit* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications.

Fischer, J., & Corcoran, K. (2020). *Measures for clinical practice and research: A sourcebook* (6th ed.). Oxford University Press.

Gregory John Boyle, Saklofske, D. H., & Matthews, G. (2015). *Measures of personality and social psychological constructs* (pp. 752–776). Academic Press, An Imprint Of Elsevier.

Groth-Marnat, G. (2016). *Handbook of psychological assessment* (6th ed.). Wiley.

Guion, R. M. (2011). *Assessment, measurement, and prediction for personnel decisions* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Hopkins, K. D. (1998). *Educational and psychological measurement and evaluation* (9th ed.). Allyn & Bacon.

Lester, P. E., Inman, D., & Bishop, L. K. (2014). *Handbook of tests and measurement in education and the social sciences.* Rowman & Littlefield.

Martin, P., & Bateson, P. (2007). *Measuring behaviour: An introductory guide* (3rd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

Miles, J., & Gilbert, P. (Eds.). (2005). *A handbook of research methods for clinical and health psychology.* Oxford University Press.

A robust data collection method, such as questionnaires and surveys, is at the core of any research project. It is essential to lay the conceptual groundwork before drafting or locating these instruments. Precisely, a well-defined theoretical framework should guide the development of survey questions. A framework like this gives the questionnaire academic rigor and enhances the interpretation of the results.  In a perfect world, a pilot test would be done if you are creating your instrument. A pilot test with a subset of the intended population allows researchers to see if there are any ambiguities, redundancies, or gaps. It is vital to achieve content validity at this juncture since action research often affords the flexibility to customize the survey instrument to specific research needs. You should formulate each question to address one or more research objectives directly. A thorough literature review and consultation with subject experts can be beneficial.  Researchers usually use test-retest, parallel forms, or internal consistency methods to evaluate the questionnaire's reliability. One widely used statistic that measures internal consistency is Cronbach's Alpha. Also, the questionnaire should be clear and straightforward, with no jargon, double negatives, or convoluted sentence structures that could confuse respondents.

Many things can influence the length of an action research survey, including the research objectives, topic complexity, and respondents' time constraints. A focused study might need between 10 and 30 questions, while a more expansive study might require more. The nature of questions, whether open-ended or closed-ended, impacts the length and complexity of the survey. Following ethical guidelines like informed consent and confidentiality or anonymity is important.

Ideally, the respondents should have a 15-minute commitment to the survey unless there are compelling reasons to extend it. Surveys that are too long or complicated usually have a high dropout rate. With its cyclical nature, action research allows for shorter surveys at various research phases, refining the instrument based on the data gathered. Focus on achieving content validity regarding the number of questions, meaning the questions should cover the research scope without being too long. Data analysis must align with research objectives and hypotheses before the survey is launched. Finally, the survey design process should ideally be iterative, incorporating feedback from peers, faculty, and, where possible, from the target population. As a result, the survey instrument gets a lot better. Again, if you decide to create your instrument, please obtain help from the chair of committee members.

Returning to the prompt in question.  Like the previous prompt, these prompts appear simple; however, you should consider several important factors.  <u>During your proposal defense, the committee will ask you several essential questions.  Be prepared to respond to them</u>.

Make sure you specify the data collection tool when you are outlining it. Clarity is key, whether it is a questionnaire, an interview script, an observation checklist, or something else. Go deeper by talking about the instrument's main sections or components. When it comes to a questionnaire, for example, it is good to outline the types of questions it contains — multiple choice, Likert scale, or open-ended — and the primary topics or themes it is trying to explore. The reason for choosing this tool is not just about the details. Explain, for example, <u>why</u> a focus group's in-depth discussions may be better for capturing complex or sensitive opinions than a survey's fixed responses.

The process of collecting and subsequently analyzing the data necessitates its detailed description. Start by pinpointing the <u>exact timeframe</u> for the data collection, whether it spans days, weeks, or even months. Next, make sure you emphasize how often you will collect data. Similarly, if you

are using surveys, tell us when they will go out. You should also clarify the settings and conditions of data collection, like noting that behavior observations will occur during standard class hours.

It is also essential to know how you are analyzing the data. Are you using statistical methods for the quantitative data, or are you employing thematic analysis or grounded theory for the qualitative data? Talk about ways to ensure your data is reliable and valid, like pilot testing tools and triangulating with different data sources. The integrity of the study can be strengthened by emphasizing participant confidentiality or secure data storage at the end of this section.

Across all these details, a few overarching principles stand out. Clarity remains paramount — any jargon should be kept to a minimum or clearly defined to ensure the information stays accessible. Lastly, ensure the chosen methods remain consistent with the broader research design, and every element discussed should relate to the research's primary objectives. The alignment between the methodology's qualitative or quantitative nature and the research questions fortifies the research's overall coherence and logic. Your committee will be looking at this carefully!

### Approximately participants are expected…

When addressing the prompt "Approximately participants are expected…", beginning with a precise enumeration is pivotal. For instance, one might state, "Approximately 50 participants are expected to partake in the study."

Beyond the mere number, it is instrumental to offer context. Your committee will want to know this. The rationale for the anticipated number of participants should be expounded upon. This could stem from the research design's requirements, constraints on budget, or logistical considerations. For example, the target of 50 participants is set to ensure that the sample is diverse and manageable. Such a number allows for a mix of experiences and perspectives while also facilitating in-depth qualitative analyses.

Given the term "approximately," it is prudent to anticipate some variability in the final count. Things happen during the research process. Acknowledging this nuance, you could state during your proposal defense,"Though the aim is to secure participation from around 50 individuals, recruitment dynamics and potential dropouts mean the final count could range between 45 and 55."

On the topic of recruitment, shedding light on how the chosen number might influence the study's outcomes can add depth to your response. You could mention, "By targeting a group close to 50 participants, the research strives to balance breadth and depth in data collection." A quick nod to the recruitment strategy can clarify sourcing these participants: "The recruitment plan encompasses reaching out to the church's congregation through online platforms and physical notices."

### Results of the pre-intervention and post-intervention data will be evaluated for patterns and themes…

Before embarking on any form of data analysis, you must grasp the study's overarching purpose and the intervention's anticipated outcomes. This foundation aids in effectively zeroing in on crucial patterns and themes in the subsequent stages of analysis.

Delineating pre-intervention data is extremely vital! The analysis should begin by establishing the baseline mapping of the landscape prior to the intervention. This involves examining the initial patterns or themes that were prevalent. If dealing with quantitative data, you should employ descriptive

statistics, such as mean, median, and standard deviation, to provide a lucid snapshot of the pre-intervention scenario. Concurrently, content or thematic analysis can be pivotal in discerning qualitative data's dominant themes or sentiments.

Scrutinizing Post-Intervention Data will provide you with your results.  Did your intervention work?  Post-intervention, the primary objective is to spotlight changes or shifts from the baseline data. Quantitatively, this could involve identifying statistically significant changes using appropriate tests. For instance, contrasting the means of pre and post-intervention data might necessitate a paired t-test. On the qualitative front, the emphasis should be on pinpointing novel themes or recognizing shifts in the weightage of existing themes. Categorizing responses methodically will elucidate any changes in perceptions or attitudes post-intervention.

Engaging in comparative analysis provides you with the significance of your results.  A side-by-side data comparison from both phases—before and after the intervention—is paramount. This juxtaposition helps to underscore the tangible impacts of the intervention. Questions to guide this comparative process might include: Did established patterns amplify or diminish? Were there emergent themes post-intervention that were previously non-existent?

A few additional steps can be beneficial to enhance the robustness of the analysis.  They are worthy of your consideration, especially regarding quantitative data. Incorporating multiple analysts, especially for qualitative data, can offer a multi-faceted interpretation, mitigating individual biases. Visualization tools like graphs and tables can enhance clarity, mainly when showcasing changes or contrasting data points. Lastly, while every pattern and theme holds value, you should prioritize those that align closely with the research objectives and bear the most significant implications for the broader study.

# SECTION XII

**Expected Outcomes**

If the problem is adequately addressed by the intervention, data should indicate…

*Instructions for responding to the prompt*

Here is where you state what you hope for.   First and foremost, you must clearly understand the problem your research is attempting to address. This includes recognizing the issue and identifying the specific attributes or manifestations of the problem. You must also ascertain the ideal outcomes or changes you expect from the intervention. This dual clarity is foundational in predicting what data post-intervention should manifest.

Indicators of Success:

When you understand the problem and its manifestations, developing a set of metrics is important to help you measure your intervention's success. When choosing these indicators, you want to be able to tell if the intervention is working. Ideally, the post-intervention data should show significant improvement in specific engagement-related areas in an educational setting if you deal with a decline in student engagement. If students attend more classes, submit more assignments, or participate more actively in class discussions, you will want to watch for that. Besides validating the effectiveness of your intervention, these quantifiable and qualifiable indicators give you a more nuanced look at how the intervention worked. To evaluate your action research intervention accurately and insightfully, it is essential to pick and measure these success indicators carefully.

Quantitative and Qualitative Indicators of Success:

For a well-rounded assessment, you should consider both quantitative and qualitative indicators:

Quantitative Indicators are measurable and are expressed in numbers. For instance, if the problem is related to poor test scores, an adequate intervention might result in an X% increase in average test scores.  Qualitative Indicators provide depth and insights into participants' experiences, feelings, and perceptions. Using the previous example, while test scores might rise, qualitative indicators could include students expressing increased confidence in the subject or teachers observing heightened enthusiasm during lessons.

Unanticipated data patterns occur frequently and are worth noting.  While the primary focus should be on anticipated indicators of success, you should also remain open to unanticipated data patterns. Sometimes, an intervention may have secondary effects that were not part of the initial problem definition but are valuable nonetheless. For example, in a Christian congregation, the action research project aims to improve spiritual well-being among youth by doing Bible studies every week. Attendance rates and a measurable boost in spiritual well-being may be success metrics. When we analyze the data, we find an unanticipated pattern: the youth report increased spiritual well-being, improved interpersonal relationships within the group, and fewer conflicts.  Even though the project was not meant to improve interpersonal relationships or reduce conflicts, these unexpected outcomes are worth noticing. These secondary effects might open up new avenues for future research or even change the focus of the ongoing intervention. In action research, it is crucial to be open to emergent patterns

and to have a systematic and flexible approach to data collection and analysis. In addition to tracking anticipated outcomes, you should look for emerging secondary patterns, evaluating them for their practical significance and alignment with the ethical and spiritual framework underpinning them. With this comprehensive approach, action research captures the nuance and complexity of real-world interventions.

An essential aspect of assessing an intervention's impact is comparing post-intervention data with baseline or pre-intervention data. This comparative analysis will elucidate the degree of change and whether it aligns with the desired outcomes.  Lastly, while data is a robust indicator of success, it is also vital to contextualize it. External factors, seasonal changes, or other interventions might influence the outcomes. Hence, you should analyze the data while being aware of any external influences that might have affected it.  An explanation of this follows and is worth considering.

It is essential to be cautious when interpreting metrics that ostensibly indicate an intervention's success. Quantifiable indicators like increased attendance or assignment submission rates are great, but outside forces can misinterpret or influence them. A research design that ignores significant qualitative changes and improvements in specific metrics might be caused by external variables that were not accounted for. Moreover, in a Christian academic context, ethical considerations are paramount; an undue emphasis on 'success' can inadvertently cultivate utilitarian perspectives that may compromise ethical or Christian principles. This is a cross that Christian sociologists bear.  The measurement of success should, therefore, be nuanced, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data, considering ethical implications, and keeping an eye on external factors.

Let us look at a stress management workshop as an action research project intervention to improve mental health among older members of a Christian congregation. It is easy to think that any improvement in reported stress levels and church involvement is evidence of the intervention's success if the primary metrics are reduced reported stress levels and increased participation in church activities is observed.  However, it is possible that these metrics could be influenced by external factors, like seasonal mood changes, economics, or increased feelings of well-being from other outside factors. Additionally, focusing solely on these quantitative measures might neglect the spiritual or emotional well-being of the participants. These aspects are not easily quantified but are crucial in a Christian ethical context.  If an intervention reduces stress, it might also encourage spiritual escapism, which does not align with Christian teachings. If this happened, the project would be deemed 'successful' from a metric perspective, but it could be ethically or spiritually problematic later.

Therefore, choosing metrics that align with the research objectives and the ethical or spiritual principles underpinning the project is crucial. You should consider multiple types of evidence, including qualitative data like participant interviews or testimonials, to paint a more complete and ethically nuanced picture of an intervention's impact.