Research Design and Methodology III

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**Assignment #4 – Course Learning Journal**

The journal is a written reflection of your learning journey while working in each course. The

Learning Journal integrates the essential elements of the course within your professional field of

interest. The objective of the course journal is to produce a degree of acculturation, integrating

new ideas into your existing knowledge of each course. This is also an opportunity to

communicate with your professor insights gained as a result of the course. The course

learning journal should be 3-5 pages in length and should include the following sections:

1. Introduction –Summarize the intent of the course, how it fits into the graduate

program as a whole, and the relevance of its position in the curricular sequence.

1. Personal Growth - Describe your personal growth–how the course stretched or

challenged you– and your progress in mastery of course content and skills during

the week and through subsequent readings – what new insights or skills you gained.

1. Reflective Entry - Add a reflective entry that describes the contextualization (or

adaptation and relevant application) of new learning in your professional field.

What questions or concerns have surfaced about your professional field as a result

of your study?

1. Conclusion – Evaluate the effectiveness of the course in meeting your professional,

religious, and educational goals.

**Introduction** –

Research Design and Methodology III is an essential course of study for learning how to manoeuvre through a wide body of literature and process it to solve relevant problems. The purpose of the course is to prepare the student with tools to development an appropriate research design and to follow that process to achieving research objectives.

The course was intended to highlight different options for approaching a dissertation, gathering data, and processing said data in a manner that is useful for interpretation and application. The course prepares the researcher to articulate the chosen research design, and then be prepared to defend it to both internal and external assessment bodies. The researcher is thus able to create a reference for justification of findings so that the study can survive scrutiny and be positioned as a positive contributor to the broader social sector.

The course fits centrally in the graduate program, providing an operational framework for application of theory and other learnings in the curriculum. It itemizes a valid pathway needed to apply questions and assumptions generated by the student when progressing through subject-matter in other courses. Its position in the curricular sequence is purposeful as it follows major thematic courses on leadership and social change. It then sets the operational framework for preparation and execution of the dissertation, including the prospectus and proposal.

**Personal Growth** -

The course gave me a better appreciation of the value of preparing a detailed design process. This proved useful, not only for the construction of my dissertation approach but also applicable in the broader sense of achievement of life-goals and objectives. The progression of assignments from #1, Essential Elements, through to #3, Essay writing helped me to build on my confidence as new content and learnings were added at each phase.

The syllabus steered me into the vast body of research through developmental readings. This assignment (#2) allowed me to post additive and variant perspectives on published works. This exercise was important in building my confidence since most of my previous educational institutions placed the external, peer reviewed research as the authority, which should not be questioned or challenged by the student.

The course also challenged my previously constrained understanding of the research approach and pushed me to assess and consider other research designs besides the few I had used in the past. It forced me to think through and articulate every step of the process which proved useful in exposing certain risks and roadblocks that I did not see or consider beforehand.

I am also left more informed about the importance of ethical procedures, as course content demonstrated that ethics are not only for the sake of participants but also for indirect beneficiaries including the surrounding community. Ethical guidelines were also shown to protect the researcher as he/she engaged volatile environments.

Because the population of interest for my dissertation is large and the target group considered difficult to access, proper selection of sampling techniques was a key element introduced and expounded on in the coursework. The developmental readings, for example, highlighted information that was new to me as it related to online/e-registration processes and consent forms.

The course also increased my appreciation for constructing a thorough and logical literature review utilizing foundational theories as key references in designing the research process and building on the topic for discussion.

New learnings also included the importance of cleaning data before proceeding to statistical analysis. Some of these include identifying consecutive responses, and identifying cases with contradictory responses (Arevalo et al., 2022). I now appreciate data cleaning as an essential step because many times researchers receive, what they consider, an adequate amount of completedsurveys from participants, believing that they had reached the required amount of responses, only to find out that not all inputs were useful and many had to be discarded.

**Reflective Entry** -

My social research area of interest is the study of vulnerable and volatile inner-city communities. Lessons learned from the course proved valuable for application to my target group. Shanks and Paulson (2022) confirmed the varied challenges that I would expect when working in areas subjected to social fragility, insecurity, or violent conflicts, and so showed the importance of a reputable and approved research design. We should always endeavour to add new knowledge, especially with groups that are hypersensitive to outside engagement.

Developing a sound literature review was seen as important because research in my field is usually considered high-risk. I would, therefore, not want to duplicate a study or try to solve a problem that has already been solved. The time I spend developing a sound literature review will also prove resourceful in establishing my research questions and hypotheses.

A concern emerging from the course was the high probability that other researchers in my field might overuse the convenience approach to sampling. Makwana et al. (2023) stated that this type of sampling is used when the researcher requires accessing of data that is readily available and when carrying out pilot testing where participants are chosen based on ease of recruitment. Convenience sampling has the potential to be abused if not used appropriately as the researcher may not have connected with a true representative sample. It leads me to question the proliferation of sampling options, and how much flexibility is deemed beneficial to the production of truly valid findings.

**Conclusion** –

The course has proved effective in positively supporting my professional goals. It has increased my understanding of the research process and improved my confidence in approaching my dissertation topic and selecting my research design. Exposure to varying research designs has also opened my appetite for future research that might be secondary or additive to my current area of focus.

Learnings have also strengthened my Christian worldview in providing sound references of ethical procedures. Valid scientific references to ethical guidelines, like the Belmont Report, allow me to not only rely only on Biblical references. As much as I have personally used the Bible to justify my own actions and beliefs, more is needed to maintain dialogue and debate in the social systems of this world.

When a social scientist chooses to focus on human subjects, he/she is concurrently choosing to take on an additional level of responsibility for the welfare of people. The power imbalance that exists between the data collector and the participant, as cited by Creswell & Creswell (2018), should always be remembered, and special care taken in the selection of design processes and the application of ethical procedures.

WORKS CITED

Arevalo, M., Brownstein, N. C., Whiting, J., Meade, C. D., Gwede, C. K., Vadaparampil, S. T., Tillery, K. J., Islam, J. Y., Giuliano, A. R., & Christy, S. M. (2022). Strategies and lessons learned during cleaning of data from research panel participants: Cross-sectional web-based health behavior survey study. *JMIR Formative Research, 6*(6). <https://doi.org/10.2196/35797>

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