Simplifying Social Science Research
Proposal and Methods

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Preface

Research methods is a long life, social science course. It holds a special place for students of social sciences. Understanding the imperative nature of this course is often underestimated. This is partly as the course is rushed through or as I understand it a ‘crash programme’ for students of social sciences. In many instances, about 60% to 80% students go through the course with little or no thorough understanding of the subject matters of social science research methods. In addition, the abstract nature of the course, coupled with lots of concepts and specific descriptions makes it hard for students to follow or comprehend. Thus, topics covered in this book, simplify these concepts, and enhance students’ understanding of social science research methods.

In order to understand what it means to conduct a successful social science research, students must develop both a foundation of communication skills and an understanding of the key elements critical to achieving objective and value-free conclusion. I wrote this book to provide a framework for learning these necessary skills in a way that emphasizes the uniqueness of doing a social science research. Thus, understanding of the synergies of research proposal, data collection and analysis are vital for students to successfully comprehend the course social sciences research methods and apply such understanding to their research. This book provides a means for students of social sciences to gain the needed experience in doing research. Until students acquire this experience, it is up to their lecturers to provide
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It would be impossible to acknowledge adequately all who have contributed or influenced the production of this book. Thus, this book is dedicated to all the students that have learned a thing or two from me, and those I have learned a thing or two too.
Chapter 1

Simplifying Social Science Research Proposal and Methods

Introduction  The social science research and its methods

Being professional imposes, among other requirements, the responsibility of keeping up to date with professional developments, extending knowledge and improving skills in one’s chosen craft. Conscientious application to the lessons of relevant research is an essential part of that process (Utting 1989: vii cited in Everitt et al 1992, p.3).

What is Social Science Research (SSR) and its Methods? Response to this question varies, and may depend on who is responding to it. There is a high probability that if you are not a social scientist, you may end up confused by the answer. Responses to this question vary according to whether they are from an individual or an institutional viewpoint. For most scholars of SSR, it is best understood on the premises of delineation rather than definitions. This is because definitions are often too narrow and may not reflect the contemporary nature of the subjects within this area of study.

Furthermore, delineation as SSR is not static, but both dynamic and ever-evolving. In this book, SSR is taken to mean or be understood as an empirical knowledge search that focuses on human action, interaction, behaviours, or
relationship within a given society, environment, culture, time and space. This knowledge search employs specific, systematic and organized bodies of knowledge inquiry that have been acquired using scientific methods. To arrive at, or achieve this form of knowledge of human behaviour, interactions, thoughts, actions or activities, SSR advocates and practises systematic, rigorous, evidence-based steps as it aims to generalise the findings, replicate them, and use them to address fundamental human issues and affairs. As Kerlinger (1986) states, “social science research is, more specifically, a truth-seeking activity aimed at contributing to existing knowledge, generating new knowledge, or for application to some specific problem related to human action and interaction (p.9)”. Kerlinger (1986) stresses further by arguing:

**Truth seeking is the search or investigation of or for a body of real things, events, or facts. In the social sciences truth seeking is normally the process of applying a scientific method to social inquiry. A scientific method is the set of principles and procedures used by social scientists for investigating phenomena, acquiring new knowledge, or correcting and integrating previous knowledge. In many instances, this process involves formulating or testing a specific theory or hypothesis, in the broadest sense, where theory is defined as… a set of interrelated constructs, definitions, and propositions that present a systematic view of phenomena by specifying relations among variables, with the purpose of explaining and predicting phenomena (p. 9).**

**The philosophy of social science research method**

According to Alexander Rosenberg (1988), the biology’s contention that questions about human nature, can now be answered scientifically. Alexander Rosenberg points that some theologians, social scientists, humanists, and even some biologists reject this claim. He thus, however, maintains that the debate about whether these questions can be answered by any one science, or even all of them, is a characteristically philosophical one. Rosenberg notes that individual(s) who denies it in effect tell us there are limits to what scientific inquiry can discover. He argues that;
Working on this book was very tasking, but that is because I want to simplify the act of writing or designing the social science research methods and proposal for students and researchers alike. Thus, it came in a very small package for easy reading and comprehension. A research proposal explicitly explains what the researcher will investigate, why it's important, and how you will do the research. Although, the format of a research proposal varies between fields, there are some common headings. This book discussed, illustrate and provide local examples on how to write these common headings. Hence, this book provides clarification on.

What is social science research methods and why it is absolutely essential? How to write research aims?

- What is problem statement and how to write a concise one?
- How is a research objective generated from research question?
- What is the role of research objective in research?
- How to enter the field and collect quality data?
- How to exist the field and objectively analyze one’s data?

I strongly believed in doing research is an act, but requires dedication and adequate know-how to successfully accomplish the task within a specified time. In sum, this book will assist students to judiciously manage their time and produce quality research.

The Author

Nwanesi Peter Karubi is ever passionate about research methods and proposal. As he observed papers and scholarly works over the years, he realised the struggles faced by students navigating through crowded path of research methods or even drafting a proposal. The keen observation has enthused the publication of this book which is written with a ten-year experience of guiding both the undergraduate and postgraduate students.