Identification of the Problems Faced in Conceptualization of Research and Preparing Comprehensive Synopsis

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Abstract

The current study investigated the issues and difficulties confronted by research scholars during conceptualizing their research and drafting synopsis in English linguistic discipline. Doing research is a mammoth but painstaking task but can be performed well if executed systematically and logically. Students at M. Phil level of education have to undergo valid and authentic research as pre requisite of their terminal degree. However, they face many difficulties during different phases and stages of their researches; major stages of research are conceptualization and ope-rationalization. The present study identified the problems faced during conceptual phase of the research. The study was descriptive in its design and preferred to collect and analyze the data quantitatively. A representative sample of 100 students and 20 teachers was taken through applying random and convenient sampling techniques respectively. The findings obtained after analysis of the data reflect that students face a large of problems while planning their research. The nature of these problems is spread out from internally driven capacity and competency levels to externally driven interpersonal, institutional and financial components. The study concludes with strong recommendations of factual research facilitations for the research scholars at the very initial stage of their research planning. It is also suggested to provide financial and technical assistance to the prospective researchers so that they may carry out their research with ease, comfort and peace of mind.

Keywords

Research Paradigm, Conceptualization, Synopsis drafting, Researchers' difficulties

1. Introduction

Research writing in itself is a debate able topic in which a lot of research needs to be done. How to do research is also a researchable domain. Students face a lot many challenges during thinking planning and execution of the research. These challenges are interpersonal and intrapersonal with lack of valid resources and ample time and funds. This study will address all those challenges and difficulties faced by Pakistani researchers during conducting and planning any research. Yousaf (2013) conducted a study in Suburbia on identification of problems faced by English students in writing research proposals. The study threw light on the untouched but serious issue of lack of guidance and motivation among researchers to feel and behave like researchers. In Pakistan, students face many educational complicatedness and

severity in research field. These complications are present on different personal psychological financial and social grounds.

1.1 Background of the Study

Researches tackle with multifaceted challenges and difficulties during conducting research. First of all they have to think, prepare and plan the research after gaining sound knowledge about the topic. After that they need to write these plans and procedures in shape of research synopsis. Research synopsis is a written draft followed by oral demonstration of plans about the topic and its worthiness to be doable and achievable (Paul & Psych, 2012). Researchers face such problems in selecting topic and finding rational of the research. These preliminary plans are written research proposals. Many previous studies even post-graduate students with a high level of English proficiency encountered problems in writing academic discourse, including research proposals. These studies revealed that the majority of students encountered problems related to the contents of the proposal (Kikula & Quorro, 2007; REPOA, 2007; Wang & Yang, 2012; Yusuf, 2013; Pietersen, 2014; Manchishi, Ndhlovu, & Mwanza, 2015; Ahmed & Mahboob, 2016) and the linguistic aspects of the proposals (Yusuf, 2013). They reflected that students not only fail to demonstrate technical plans and procedures in their theses rather they show poor performance in using accurate and impressive language in their research drafts. Creswell (2011) states that, "Research is a process of steps used to collect and analyze information to increase our understanding of a topic or issue". It consists of three steps: (i) Pose a question, (ii) Collect data to answer the question, and (iii) Present an answer to the question. Before collecting and analysis phases, there is another important phase of making plans and establishing procedures. Trochim (2009) declares research a mean of knowledge preservation and extension of it through systematic method of inquiry.

Research involves practices but with over emphasis of theoretical layouts to be established before the realization of practical phase (Lewis et al., 1998; Wade & Neuman, 2007). According to Lewis et al. (1998), a successful research draft can only be obtained if its blueprints have been made well by the researchers. There are a lot many skills required for the planning of problem and formulation of research hypothesis. However, Wade and Neuman (2007) considered the practical approach more valuable than theoretical phase especially in the area of social work. But many researchers and educationists believe upon the need and utilization of effective planning mandatory for the field study (Best & Kahn, 2013; Creswell, 2011). According to Creswell (2011), planning stage of any research is more important than its conduction and evaluating stages. Research methodology in theory and practice has been divided in two major parts. One is to develop clearer insights about the topic and its further dimensions and this phase is known as conceptualization. On the other hand, these conceptual layouts are further put into practices during data collection and evaluation procedure. This practical phase is called operationalization (Zikmund, 2011).

1.1.1 Conceptualization of Research

The conceptual phase of the research belongs to the planning, selection and formulation of research related hypothetical frameworks. After careful examination of various research textbooks and models (Best & Kahn, 2013; Creswell, 2011; Zikmund, 2011; Trochim, 2009); researchers have divided the planning part of research in four subdivisions (see Figure 1).
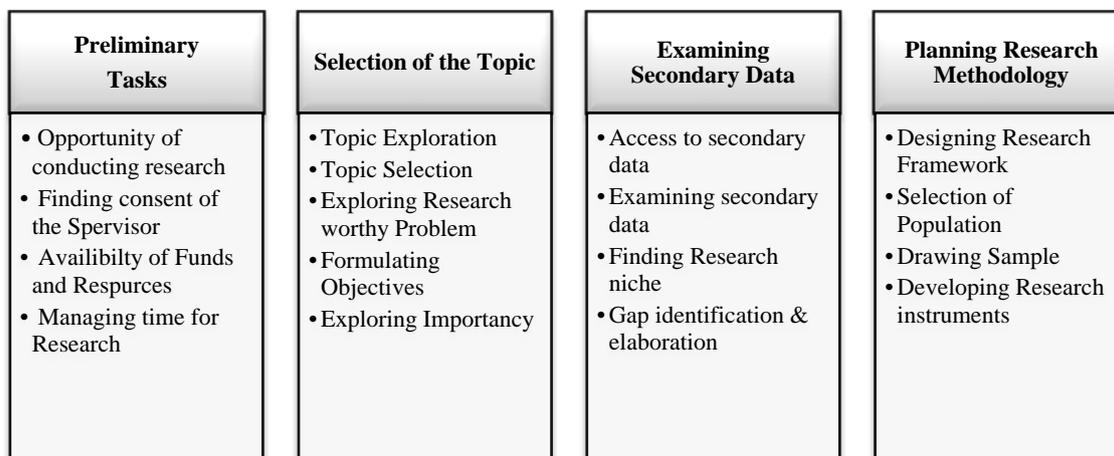
Preliminary Tasks	**Selection of the Topic**	**Examining Secondary Data**	**Planning Research Methodology**
• Opportunity of conducting research • Finding consent of the Spervisor • Availibilty of Funds and Respurces • Managing time for Research	• Topic Exploration • Topic Selection • Exploring Research worthy Problem • Formulating Objectives • Exploring Importance	• Access to secondary data • Examining secondary data • Finding Research niche • Gap identification & elaboration	• Designing Research Framework • Selection of Population • Drawing Sample • Developing Research instruments

Figure 1. Conceptualization of Research.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The prosperity and literacy of any society is linked up with the culture it prevails in regards to education and research. Pakistan having many other educational problems, also encounters the issue of unappealing research environment. The researchers and research are not welcomed by the literate class and as a result they confront many problems in planning and conducting research. Similar issues are present when research is conducted in the discipline of English language, linguistics and literature. Researchers confront many problems and difficulties while conducting research at master, Mphil and PhD level. This study has focused and explored the difficulties and problems faced by M. Phil researchers during conceptualization phase in the area of linguistics. Most of the researchers are not habitual of conducting research at earlier level and they get stuck and even anxious when they are suddenly exposed to enter into the new field of research. In this study, researcher has made efforts to identify and explore the difficulties faced by researchers in perspectives of conceptualization and drafting good research proposal in the field of English linguistics.

1.3 Research Questions

1) What kinds of problems researchers face in selecting research worthy topics and building rationale in the field of linguistics at conceptual phase?
2) Whether researchers face challenges while evaluating secondary data for their research at conceptual phase?
3) What types of difficulties are faced by researchers to design good research framework for any study?
4) What type of challenges researchers come across during the write up of research proposals in linguistics discipline?

1.4 Significance of the Study

The study is innovative in sense that no particular research has been conducted related to the topic in the field of English linguistics. Though few studies have been conducted to analyze research articles and research theses, but survey based study has not been conducted yet to assess learners' difficulties regarding planning good research. The findings of this study will be helpful and benefitting for students and teachers. Moreover, future researchers will also get educational support in the light of the results of my study. The difficulties once highlighted will pave new ways for the policy makers and textbook writers to write appropriate guidelines for the future researchers in the field of linguistics.

2. Review of the related Literature

Research is a transparent method of enquiry and reaching upon the substantial findings by adopting accurate and appropriate ways of gathering and examining information. Formulation of research worthy problem is the initial starting point of any research and ultimate resolution of the raised problem is the end point of any research. Between this starting and end point there is long list of systematic stages to be ascertained by the researcher to make this journey of enquiry as much transparent and objective as it could be. Dahlia and Gregg (2010) laid much emphasizes upon the preparatory and preliminary phases of research than the implementation phase of researches. Lawrence (2011) rated different purposes of a valid and good research. Research is carried through to create new knowledge through systematic way of enquiry. Besides creating new knowledge and information, research may be carried out to add more in depth or contradicting knowledge to the already existing set of information. Furthermore, research is also conducted to examine and evaluate the veracity and validity of the existing knowledge. By all means, the primary focus of the research is to undergo new insights of information and knowledge and consequently offer empirical and concrete outcomes to be practiced or implemented by the followers.

2.1 Problems faced in doing research

Ndhlovu and Mwanza (2015) investigated the errors and challenges that graduate students face in school of education. About 100 participants participated in the study, including 80 students and 20 professors from the University of Zambia. The study explored that student errors in writing proposals include broad and unclear topics, flaws in methodology, research terminologies, and problems in reporting literature review. More importantly, the challenges students faced when writing research proposals were the absence of a standard format, the lack of knowledge to identify a clearly relevant literature review, the lack of good, comprehensive and regular feedback from supervisors, lack of materials related to the selected topics and, finally, the time allocated to write the proposals was not enough. In addition, an interesting case study was conducted to analyze the problems of ESL graduate students and the self-initiated strategies that they improved to meet the challenges at the University of Hong Kong. Data were collected from 150 graduate students for the study by questionnaire and interview. The study findings explored that the challenges faced by the participants are pri-

marily related to linguistic, cultural, institutional and disciplinary issues. The two most dominant challenges were (a) difficulty expressing ideas in L2 and (b) participants were unable to develop confidence in the transmission of the academic voice (Yiu, 2009). M. Al-Khairy (2013) investigated the main academic writing problems that Saudi students do in English as L2 at Taif University in Saudi Arabia. He found several problems in academic writing at the sentence level or maximum paragraph level and gave many suggestions for developing the writing of college students. The main reasons for low proficiency in writing EFL / ESL contexts are due to several factors such as grammatical weakness, less practice, lack of motivation, educational background, weaknesses in the use of appropriate lexical elements (Javid & Umer, 2014; Widagdo, 2017).

Al-Qaderi (2016) also examined the challenges students at Ibb University in Yemen face when writing their final research projects. English in Yemen is taught as a foreign language (FL) and it is found that the main problems faced by students in general were: (1) the poor level of schooling of students or English as a teaching and research medium or specialization; (2) the lack of a good equipped library with open access to e. Resources and websites; and (3) the difficult circumstances faced by students and their negative attitudes towards research projects. Kikula and Quorro (2007), Kombo and Tromp (2011), and Repoa (2007) agree that while writing their research proposals in Tanzania, they must identify many critical issues facing students. Some common mistakes are writing long headlines with no clear, focused content in the introduction. Issues were not clearly identified to guide readers, and the authors were unable to identify the correct research techniques. The literature searches were inadequate and the research methodology, including research questions, was not well formulated. It is shown that the results were not presented well. Ahmed and Mahboob (2016) presented an indispensable contribution to the analysis of the research proposals and challenges faced by 32 PhD students in the Department of Medicine of Lady Reading Hospital in Pakistan. In this study, they encountered many challenges including: research methodology, formulating research questions and hypotheses, setting up the background and introductory section, gathering and gathering information, objectives, and reference citations. In this study, the quantitative soil theory approach was implemented. The study concluded that a high rate of PhD students had difficulty preparing research proposals, particularly the lack of adequate guidance and supervision, and suggests several points to strengthen supervisory and advisory skills.

2.2 Role of Research worthy problem at conceptual stage

Problem identification and demarcation are necessary components of every research. The identification of problem is not an easy task in the true scope of any valid study. However if researchers know the nature and kinds of problems, they can well identify or formulate appropriate research problem to make a good start (see Table 1).

2.3 Planning Research

Planning phase is the most important part of research methodology. A journey without proper planning and scheduling cannot reach at destination, similarly research without appropriate planning and proper scheduling goes wasted away regarding its findings and implementation. Yusaf (2013) highlighted number of problems students face at the stage of planning good research. Students face a large number of difficulties in meeting financial needs. Selecting topics, devising research worthy problems, finding material, writing literature review and drafting research proposals according to the authentic guidelines issued by concerned universities or mentioned in APA and MLA citation formats.

According to Abbot (2004), students most often find problem of being engrossed in a situation where they have nothing to say. Despite having plenty of information and knowledge, innovative and original ideas of topic don't click in their mind. They lack expression of expanding and condensing the topics related to their field of study. Pietersen (2014) emphasized well upon the gravity and importance of research problems and issues in doing and writing research. Here again, researchers come across the refined thoughts after reading the findings and recommendations of previously conducted researches as well as evaluating the components of research methods in expert manner ranging from process to product and procedures.

Access to relevant material is important factor of in the planning good research. Researchers have to rely on the previous data for developing clear understanding about the topic. The data present in the shape of theses, articles, reports, books, archived information and any other information present in any shape are very important for the students to comprehend and cite in their research (Deutsch, 2017).

Wade and Neuman (2007) emphasized the role of uncontrolled traffic on internet regarding finding relevant reading material and assessing their authenticity. Researchers go through the painstaking evaluation of the material collected for the purpose of writing and conducting research. The evaluation is done to sift the necessary and unnecessary information in relevance to the selected topic.

Table 1. Kinds of Research worthy problems

No	Kinds of Problems	Details
1	Conceptual	• Addressing different interpretations of any key concept or theory.
2	Epistemological / logical	• Assessing arguments and claims • Analysis of the validity of arguments • Investigation of contradicting in thin king
3	Exegetical	• Semantic studies • Evaluating translational studies • Literary analysis
4	Social or political	• Decision making • Community involvement • Economic issues • Political role and impacts
5	Ethical	• Appropriate action plans • Moral stances • Policy drives
6	Legal or Policy specific	• Legal tracts • Policy implementation • Assessment of legal and policy frameworks
7	Theoretical	• Compare and Contrast theories • Evaluation of arguments in text and context • Examining the veracity of any theory
8	Historical	• Investigating gaps in historical narratives • Development of particular issues • Preparing history sheets of phenomenon
9	Empirical	• Conducting surveys • Making Fieldworks about any phenomenon • Doing experiments to test hypothetical assumptions

2.4 Drafting and approval of Synopsis

Jha (2014) considered synopsis format more crucial than the thesis itself. Synopsis is drafted before the start of the research, whereas thesis is written after the conclusion of any research. The former devises the procedures and process; and the later documents the product. According to Shuttle worth (2008), synopsis should be drafted with the expected assumptions regarding forthcoming results and findings. The research synopses are sent to the research directorates or Institutional Review Boards of every university. The research committees or Institutional Review Boards are comprised of educational specialists and technical experts. The panel evaluate the significance and do-ability of the research proposed in research synopsis. Based upon the information given in drafts, synopses are accepted, rejected or modified with suggestions. Yusaf (2013) advised future researchers to follow each and every guideline given by IRBs in order to escape from the rejection of the draft (see Figure 2).
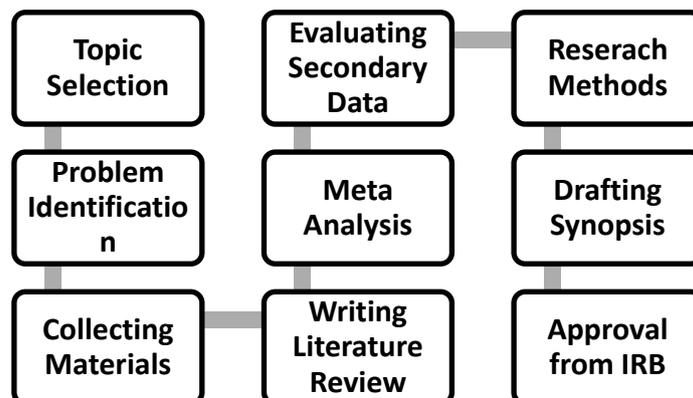
Figure 2. Stages of Synopsis Approval.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

For the current study, researchers had to rely upon the information collected quantitatively. So, the design was adopted in cogent with the nature of data. This research was a descriptive study having quality of quantitative data collection techniques. Descriptive design was adopted to examine the information, facts, and details already present about certain phenomenon. The data were collected quantitatively and interpreted qualitatively. Descriptive research designs are used to measure, ascertain or determine the factual information through careful enquiry of observation, survey or investigation.

3.2 Participants of the Study

The students enrolled in M. Phil linguistics in public and private universities of Southern Punjab contained the population for this study. In addition, teachers teaching at M. Phil level in such universities were also considered the population framework of the current research venture. Researcher very carefully determined the sample size and sampling strategy from the target population. 20 Teachers and 100 students were selected from 05 universities of Southern Punjab with equal proportion of male and female genders. The universities were selected from both private and public sector with the objective of getting representation of whole area.

Both teachers and students were selected in equal proportion from linguistic field. Teachers were selected via convenient sampling technique and students were selected through random sampling criteria. Randomization is important requirement of quantitative framework of the research. So researcher selected the M. Phil scholars randomly. However, it was difficult for the researchers to apply randomization technique to select university teachers due the accessibility and consent related matters, so teachers were taken as respondents by utilizing convenient sampling strategy.

3.3 Instrumentation

Instrumentation is as important as the selection of the participants. No particular instrument could be found which could be used in the educational settings of the universities of Southern Punjab. So, data was collected by the development of two data collection tools. Two different types of Questionnaires were developed to collect data from students and teachers.

Researchers developed questionnaire to collect all related information from the students. Before implementation questionnaire was standardized in pilot testing. Participants' response was taken on 5 point nominal scale ranging from lower to higher intensity level. Questionnaire consisted of 63 items under 09 major sections pertaining to conceptualization phase of research. The description of questionnaire items is given as under (see Figure 3).
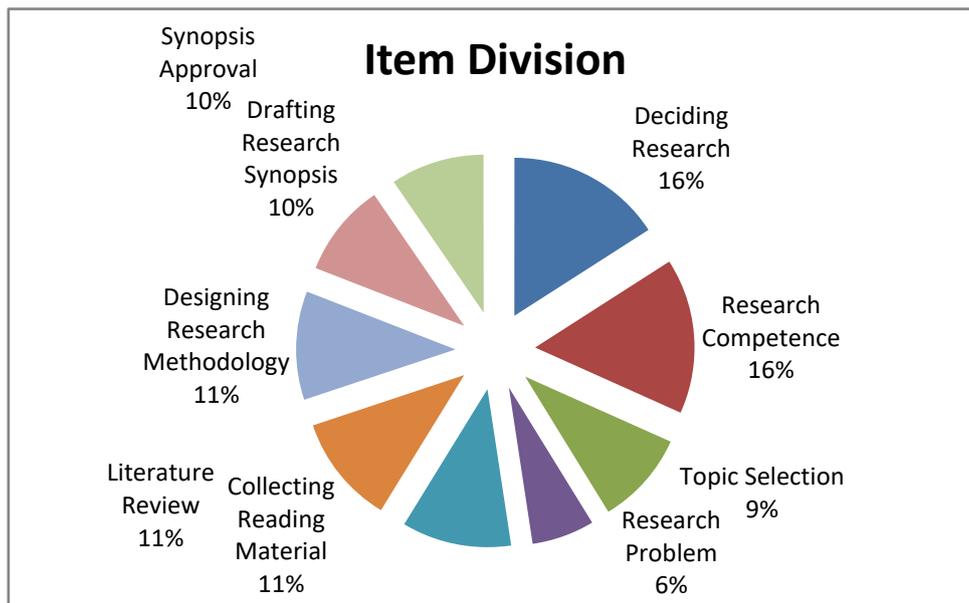

Figure 3. Description of Questionnaire items.

Data were collected through semi structured interviews from teachers. Researcher made notes from the responses obtained from teachers. The data collected from this instrument was quantitative in nature. The responses of the teachers were recorded in the instrument on ordinal scale. This questionnaire consisted 27 structured items. The arrangement of the questions was similar to the categories used for students' questionnaire. The responses were recorded on 5 point scale i.e. always, very often, often, rarely and never. The coding criterion of the teachers' questionnaire is given below:

3.4 Instruments Validation

The questionnaires and interview protocol were validated during pilot testing phase. The tools were piloted among 14 researchers to check the language, validity, consistency and authentication of information present in them. The language and arrangements of the items used in the instruments were improved and refined during pilot testing process.

3.5 Limitations of the Study

Researchers had to face many difficulties in having access and approach to the participants due to the unforeseen lockdown of the institutions due to corona threats. So, they had to rely upon conducting virtual meetings with few respondents on Zoom and filling questionnaires virtually through email, whats app or Google docs.

4. Analysis and Discussion

The information was gathered on closed ended items from students and teachers in survey oriented procedure by administering two different kinds of questionnaires. The raw data tabulated in SPSS sheets was processed under statistical formula of descriptive statistic technique. The value of the responses of the participants has been calculated in terms of frequency distribution, valid percentage, over all mean value and standard deviation. The statistical interpretation of mean value is given as under (see Table 2):

Table 2. Interpretation of Mean Score

No	Responses	Mean Value	Responses	Mean Value
1	Strongly Agree	05	Always	05
2	Agree	04	Very Often	04
3	Neutral	03	Often	03
4	Disagree	02	Rarely	02
5	Strongly Disagree	01	Never	01

4.1 Findings obtained from Students' Questionnaire

The overall mean value 3.18 demonstrates that majority of the respondents were found neutral regarding the statement "I have keen interest in doing valuable research". Data shows wide variety of responses as 22% were 'strongly agree' and 'agree'; whereas 68% respondents were 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' with 10% remained neutral regarding availability of funding opportunities for conducting research.

The overall mean value 2.70 demonstrates that majority of the respondents were found disagree regarding time management of their research. The overall mean value 4.14 demonstrates that majority of the respondents were found strongly agree regarding the statement "I had easy and efficient access to internet for doing research". Data shows wide variety of responses as 37% were 'strongly agree' and 'agree'; whereas 55% respondents were 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' with 08% remained neutral about the accessibility of laptops and computers. Data shows wide variety of responses as 07% were 'strongly agree' and 'agree'; whereas 93% respondents were 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' regarding "I attended proper research workshops before starting my research". The overall mean value 2.23 demonstrates that majority of the respondents were found disagree regarding the statement "I have good training about APA citations style".

Data shows wide variety of responses as 16% were 'strongly agree' and 'agree'; whereas 74% respondents were 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' with 10% remained neutral about statement "I have been taught about famous research repositories in linguistics field". The overall mean value 2.85 demonstrates that majority of the respondents were found disagree regarding the statement "I have access to national and international e-libraries". The overall mean value 2.81 demonstrates that majority of the respondents were found slightly disagree regarding the statement My competencies as a Researcher are sufficient". The overall mean value 3.18 demonstrates that majority of the respondents were found slightly agree regarding the statement "I have good command over critical thinking & brain storming skills". Da-

ta further shows wide variety of responses as 80% were 'strongly agree' and 'agree'; whereas 17% respondents were 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' with 03% remained neutral about "I have good command over English Reading Skills". The overall mean value 3.93 demonstrates that majority of the respondents were found agree regarding the statement "I have good command over English Writing Skills".

Data also shows wide variety of responses as 77% were 'strongly agree' and 'agree'; whereas 13% respondents were 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' with 10% remained neutral about I have good command on using MS Office programs". The overall mean value 3.36 demonstrates that majority of the respondents were found agree regarding the statement "I have good command on web browsing and internet skills". Data shows wide variety of responses as 84% were 'strongly agree' and 'agree'; whereas 12% respondents were 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' with 04% remained neutral about "Selecting topic for thesis is very crucial stage of doing research". The overall mean value 4.04 demonstrates that majority of the respondents were found agree regarding the statement "Researchers face many problems in selecting valid topic".

The overall mean value 2.73 demonstrates that majority of the respondents were found disagree regarding the statement "Selecting topic for my research was very easy for me". Data shows wide variety of responses as 50% were 'strongly agree' and 'agree'; whereas 29% respondents were 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' with 21% remained neutral regarding "I selected my topic with the help of my supervisor". Data also shows wide variety of responses as 79% were 'strongly agree' and 'agree'; whereas 15% respondents were 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' with 06% remained neutral about statement "Finding research problem is important stage of conceptualization". Furthermore, the overall mean value 3.72 demonstrates that majority of the respondents were found agree regarding the statement "Researchers face difficulty in identification of research worthy problems". The overall mean value 3.48 demonstrates that majority of the respondents were found slightly agree regarding identification of the rational of the research.

The overall mean value 4.13 demonstrates that majority of the respondents were found strongly agree that they find difficulty in formulation of research problems. Findings reveal that 52% were 'strongly agree' and 'agree'; whereas 40% respondents were 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' with 08% remained neutral in response to the statement "Researchers face difficulties in collecting reading materials". Findings also reveal that 10% respondents were 'strongly agree' and 'agree'; whereas 82% respondents were 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' with 08% remained neutral about "I have free access to many restricted access journals". The overall mean value 2.77 demonstrates that majority of the respondents were found disagree regarding the statement "University library furnishes researchers' needs to provide reading material".

Findings indicate that 73% students were 'strongly agree' and 'agree'; whereas 25% respondents were 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' with 02% remained neutral regarding "It is hard to differentiate between the relevant and irrelevant reading materials". Data shows wide variety of responses as 74% were 'strongly agree' and 'agree'; whereas 10% respondents were 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' with 16% remained neutral about "Researchers face many problems in writing literature review of their theses". The overall mean value 2.96 demonstrates that majority of the respondents were found somewhat disagree regarding the statement "I understand well the concept of 'review of the related literature". The overall mean value 2.65 demonstrates that majority of the respondents were found disagree regarding the statement "I can evaluate the Secondary data efficiently". Data shows wide variety of responses as 15% were 'strongly agree' and 'agree'; whereas 79% respondents were 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' with 06% remained neutral regarding statement "I understand and well execute the technique of Meta Analysis".

The overall mean value 3.39 demonstrates that majority of the respondents were found agree regarding the statement "I get stuck in putting accurate citations in literature review". The overall mean value 3.78 demonstrates that majority of the respondents were found agree regarding the statement "Students face difficulty in designing Methodology during conceptualization". Data shows wide variety of responses as 31% were 'strongly agree' and 'agree'; whereas 41% respondents were 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' with 28% remained neutral regarding "I have firm knowledge of different research designs to write in synopsis". Data shows wide variety of responses as 38% were 'strongly agree' and 'agree'; whereas 55% respondents were 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' with 07% remained neutral about "I know to draw correct population framework in synopsis". The overall mean value 2.25 demonstrates that majority of the respondents were found disagree regarding the statement "I am well aware of sampling and sampling strategies". Furthermore, overall mean value 3 demonstrates that majority of the respondents were found neutral regarding the statement as they gave mixed opinions regarding awareness of the tools.

Data shows wide variety of responses as 28% were 'strongly agree' and 'agree'; whereas 42% respondents were 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' with 30% remained neutral regarding statement "I know well how to pilot the data collection instruments". It was also found that 24% respondents were 'strongly agree' and 'agree'; whereas 57% respondents were 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' with 19% remained neutral about "I am aware to determine the data

analysis technique of any study in linguistics". The overall mean value 3.42 demonstrates that majority of the respondents were found agree regarding the statement "Students face difficulties in the write up of synopsis". The overall mean value 2.11 demonstrates that majority of the respondents were found disagree regarding the statement "Format of research synopsis was taught me well". Data shows wide variety of responses as 62% were 'strongly agree' and 'agree'; whereas 28% respondents were 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' with 10% remained neutral regarding statement "My supervisor helped me in the write up of my research synopsis". The overall mean value 1.99 demonstrates that majority of the respondents were found disagree regarding the statement "Researchers have to defend their topic in defense".

The overall mean value 1.99 demonstrates that majority of the respondents were found disagree regarding the statement "I know the process of synopsis approval very well". Data shows wide variety of responses as 59% were 'strongly agree' and 'agree'; whereas 31% respondents were 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' with 10% remained neutral regarding "There is functional and well developed IRB in English department". Data further shows wide variety of responses as 54% were 'strongly agree' and 'agree'; whereas 39% respondents were 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' with 07% remained neutral about statement "I have been taught to follow Ethical Standards during planning research". The overall mean value 3.42 demonstrates that majority of the respondents were found agree regarding the statement "Students confront problems from supervisors during synopsis approval".

4.2 Findings obtained from Teachers' Questionnaire

Data shows that majority of the teachers opined that their students don't take keen interest in research projects and students are not much aware of the research expertise they ought to have. It was also evidently found that students have rare access to the e-libraries for getting help in research projects. Data also shows that teachers rarely found their students using brainstorming and critical thinking skills as the calculated mean score was 2.45. Majority of the teachers affirmed that they teach citation and reference styles to their students as the mean score was 3.75. However, they demonstrated that researchers rarely attend research conferences and research workshops.

It has been found that teachers confirmed that students have to face many problems in selecting valid topics for their researches. They gave mixed responses regarding students' satisfaction about their research topics as the calculated mean score of this statement was 3. It is also found that teachers most often help their students in selecting good research topics in different fields. Data shows that teachers consider problem identification stage as very important stage of conceptualization. They also told that their students find many difficulties during identification and formulation of research worthy problems specific to their research domains. However few teachers (30%) considered this stage of conceptualization not difficult for their students.

It was found that students have ample access to reading materials and they don't face much difficulty in collecting reading material. For this purpose role of university libraries was important as students often visit them to gather relevant reading material during planning their research. On the contrary, teachers told that they don't have good accessibility to free research journals as the mean score was 2.0 regarding this statement.

Data shows that according to teachers' perspectives researchers face many problems while writing literature review during planning their research. Teachers were not agreed with the statement that students can write literature review very well. They further demonstrated that students confront problems while putting correct citations and references in literature review as the calculated mean value for this statement was 3.90. Data shows that teachers confirmed the low performance of their students in writing research methodology during planning their research. The mean value 3.80 shows that students most often face difficulty in designing Methodology during conceptualization; Mean 2.85 affirms that Students are rarely aware of data collection techniques in research; whereas mean 2.30 confirms that Students are rarely aware to determine the data analysis techniques in research.

Data shows that teachers very often teach their students about draft of research synopsis. They teach them how to draft research synopsis and help them attain specific research jargon and vocabulary too. Even then, they told that their students face problems while writing good and accurate research synopsis as the mean score regarding this statement was 3.90. Majority of the respondents opined that there is no proper institutional review board functional at their department as the calculated mean score was 2.55. With similar mean they negated the statement that students confront problems from supervisors during synopsis approval. On the other hand, students face comparatively more problems from other teachers and administration while getting approval for their research topics and research synopses.

5. Justification of the Research Questions

After the statistical interpretation of the analyzed data and logical discussions upon the findings obtained, the research questions can be addressed very clearly and vividly. The justified answers of the research questions have been given in the light of the findings of this study.

5.1 What kinds of problems researchers face in selecting research worthy topics and building rationale in the field of linguistics at conceptual phase?

The findings acquired from the study provide significant traces of the various natured problems that researchers come across during topic selection and identification of the rational of the study. Though the intensity and magnitude of the problems differed among male and female researchers, but difficulties and challenges were found common among them. Findings taken from the data analysis justify that researchers lack basic technical support and academic skills which facilitate the research procedures. Students don't have efficient and affordable web access to collect secondary data from the internet. Similarly they don't possess any past research based experience. Being novice in the field, they get stuck with the preliminary and foundational problems of technical support and professional expertise.

It has been explored that selecting topic of research is not an easy process and willful choices for many researchers. They are much less aware of the previously done researches in the linguistic discipline, neither are they sentient about the required research domains in local and global settings. Majority of the researchers rely upon the wishes and commands of the supervisors in matter of selecting appropriate research topics. In addition, findings authenticate that students are not much expert in drawing specific rational of their research topics. Both male and female respondents told that identification or formulation of research problem was challenging and painstaking task for them. It has also been found that they get lower level of guidance and support from the teachers to refine their aptitude and expertise in this specific area. Findings obtained from teachers indicate that researchers lack basic aptitude and positive attitude of research, creativity, critical thinking and logical propensity. They don't get facilities of attending research workshops and participating in research conferences. Due to this reason, they face difficulties in making good decision and execute proper planning for their research. Data points toward the financial, personal, academic and aptitude challenges which are faced by the male and female researchers to undergo and build conceptual frameworks. They confront problems in topic selection and narrating accurate rational of their study. Previous studies (Rumsey, 2008; Conradie, 2000; Afzal, 2017) show that difficulties and problems faced at these initial stages heighten at the later stages of research and outcome is not appropriate as a result.

5.2 Whether researchers face challenges while evaluating secondary data for their research at conceptual phase?

Provision and access to secondary data was once a very difficult task as researchers had to read thousands of books and visit distant educational institutions and libraries. However, rapid revolution in the internet and web technology has made the accessibility of secondary data very easy. This accessibility has become so much over repellent and voluptuous that it becomes difficult to differentiate between the fact and fake, relevant and irrelevant and, ordinary and important. Findings of this study validate that researchers confront problems while dealing with the secondary data. These problems are of various natures. At first they find it difficult to collect relevant and latest information about their topics. Secondly, the authenticity of the information is a big issue. At times they meet up with the information that has no valid crediting sources. Thirdly, the information is so much in magnitude that researchers get distracted from one source to other without making decision in what is important and what not. Furthermore, researchers lack evaluating and paraphrasing skills while dealing and writing about secondary data. Findings show that researchers consider write up of secondary data very difficult and challenging task. Literature review concept and purpose behind writing is vague and unclear to them. Findings also reveal that students feel difficulty in using proper and appropriate citation and reference styles during write up of the secondary data.

The problems related to evaluation and write up of secondary data was found common among male and female students. However, the frequency and magnitude of the difficulties was more common among female students than their male counterparts. The findings obtained in this study correlate with the many findings obtained in other studies regarding difficulties faced by the researchers in addressing issues related to literature review (Ahmad & Mehboob, 2016; Al-Khairay, 2013; Rumsey, 2008). According to Yusaf (2018), researchers should be properly taught and trained about how to write well with clear distinction of analytical and convincing writings. It is also obvious that teachers and supervisors also considered that their students are not well perfect in evaluating the secondary data and later in the write up of the review of the related literature.

5.3 What types of difficulties are faced by researchers to design good research framework for any study?

Best and Khan (2013) in their book 'Research in Education' advocate that there should be well planned and comprehensive information present in the minds of the researchers about research methodology. There is great need to do valid

and authentic research in the field 'how to do research'. Data affirmed that male and female research students of linguistics discipline hold knowledge of research methods with their subject perspectives. However, they are not habitual of the proper application of that knowledge in the conceptual and operational fields. Both male and female teachers opined that they are well taught the subject and components of research methodology. However, they lack practical exposure of evaluating and using research techniques in their home institutions. Findings reveal that students have less exposure of research workshops and symposium. Similarly, they have less exposure of attending research conferences which may enhance their research expertise and skills. It was also obvious from the findings that students feel difficulty in understanding quantitative terms and most specifically the statistical applications of the data in Excel or SPSS programs. The findings obtained from teachers through interviews also indicate similar problems faced by the research students. They practice to teach qualitative and quantitative methods to the students of linguistics discipline. However, the duration of the research subject teaching is not that much to train students well about the technique and use of research methodology in their studies.

There is full and sound command of research methods needed to produce effective and productive research studies. However current study confirmed that students lack sufficient skills and knowledge of different components of research. They face difficulty in designing appropriate research methodology and drawing samples of their research. They have less awareness of devising appropriate instruments to gather data for their studies. Quite similarly, they lack substantial skills to undergo validation of their research tools and procedures. The most difficult task for them is the use of statistical measures for the analysis of the data. Besides quantitative data analysis problems, students feel difficulty in drawing qualitative analysis of the data. Majority of the respondents emphasized upon the dire need of research workshops and trainings to be arranged for the researchers in linguistics discipline.

5.4 What type of challenges researchers come across during the write up of research proposals in linguistics discipline?

Findings of this study show that researchers confront many problems in choosing correct format of the synopsis, drafting synopsis and in the approval of their research synopsis. The universities understudy adopts different pattern of research proposals and different means of topic and synopsis approval. Though all universities recommend APA manual to follow while doing and drafting research, but in regards to research proposal none of the university in the sample recommend synopsis format in liaison with APA guidelines. Similarly their approval strategy also varies. There are certain universities that recommend proper viva and defense of the research synopsis by the students, while some universities don't consider viva or defense mandatory. They approve the topics and synopsis in their internally conducted board of studies chaired by panel and supervisors in the absence of concerned students.

The respondents expressed that they face many technical and ethical problems in the way to get their topics and synopsis approved from the board of studies and universities. On the other hand, data taken from the interviews show that according to teachers' viewpoint students take less interest in accurate drafting and write up of their research synopsis. The main reason behind this is the no or minimum credit of synopsis in the results of the students. So students don't take interest in drafting their synopsis in appropriate format. Besides, there is no proper evaluation of research synopses being observed in the universities. Findings also describe that students face difficulties in the logical write up of their claims and arguments. Their skills and expertise in academic writing skills need to be refined and polished with practical tasks.

Ahmad and Mehboob (2016) postulated the importance of background research knowledge and skills among the students doing research at advanced level of their academic career. Novice researchers find difficulties in reception and perception of theories and concepts in linguistics discipline. Findings demonstrate that researchers were not decisive in formulating their conceptual frameworks and later in the write up of research synopses. For thesis write up they can get previously written theses in the department or university library, but they have rare or no access to the previously written and approved synopses in libraries. There is no specified section available in library which could document and preserve the synopses of the students. Quite apparently, synopses are the provisional plans and not confirmed a document, that's why this stage is handled half heartedly by the teachers and the institutions. Consequently, students at first confront difficulties and later they also complete the write up of synopsis with lack of determination and proper goals. A wide majority of researchers told that their research topics were approved by their respective supervisors and departments without getting write up them from the students. This academic challenge and deficiency can be later seen in the poor or immature works in their theses which leads to other kinds of problems. Findings obtained from teachers affirm that teachers do not recommend perfection and skill from students at the stage of their synopsis write ups.

6. Conclusion

The current study was a promising effort to identify, assess and document all those difficulties and challenges that are met with the researchers in English linguistics discipline. The study focused and limited its scope to the conceptualization stage of the research only. This conceptualization was further extended to the drafting and writing of the research proposals. Apparently, the focused areas seem matter of little or no importance for the students and academicians while dealing with the thesis writing components. However, many previous studies conducted in the similar directions consider the conceptualization and synopsis writing stages more important than the actual phases of practical research and thesis write-up. Ahmad and Mehboob, (2016), Al-Khairay (2013), Rumsey (2008), and Best and Khan (2013) are the fewer among many the researchers who highlighted the importance and problems of the conceptualization of research; and later they recommended the decisive need of focus and attention of the students and the teachers at the initial stages of research and writing up of accurate synopses. Current study has also highlighted the similar issue with perspectives to Pakistani students in the field of linguistics. The findings provide substantiate challenges which are met with the researchers to develop refined and logical conceptual framework. The results of the current study have also highlighted the problems that students face during writing up of their research synopses and finally getting approval from the board of advanced studies.

7. Recommendations

1) The findings of the study are credibly supported for the policy makers and implementers in the educational institutions. It is suggested to consider the problems and challenges for the researchers. Concrete and doable measures should be taken to meet the challenges and resolve problems.

2) There is increasing need of the written manual based upon research guidelines for the students of linguistics discipline. All related information should be written in that manual and issue should be addressed.

3) The current study was conducted with perspectives to the problems faced by students of linguistic discipline. Similar researches should be conducted for the issues and challenges of literature discipline.

4) It is recommended to pursue similar studies for the research being conducted in other subjects. Researchers of other subjects face similar and different problems while doing conceptual and operational researches in their specific domain.

5) The future studies may be conducted to identify the issues and challenges that come across at the operationalization stage of research.

6) The teachers and supervisors play important role in students' academic growth and performance. It is suggested that teachers should prepare their students for the research by providing authentic and need based guidance and training.

7) The institutions and universities should provide valid and authentic guidelines to the students through materials, internet provision. Financial assistance, research workshops and conferences.

8) There should be research synopses repository section developed in every department. The approved synopses of previous students must be kept their so that the future researchers may take help from that repository to develop and refine their concepts.

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