

Structural Adoption of Research Introduction in International Relations

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Abstract

This study undertook a precise discussion on the nature and character of general doctoral research in International Relations with specific reference to the structural frame of chapter one. The importance of this discussion stems from the very crucial position occupied by chapter one – seeing that a defective chapter one inexorably dissuades the reader from continuing reading the piece. Once a research chapter one is poorly written, everything would eventually collapse like a blighted shrub because they would not be able to hold themselves together; it amounts to a house without a foundation. The research adopted the realist theory and qualitative research design to operationalize its subject-matter. At the end, it established that research do not need to be ~~laborious and boring as is often painted, but can be interesting and exciting. It then puts forward certain recommendations that will make this feasible. Some of these are: that students should always choose topics they have great interest in; the passion will be a major asset in the course of the research, especially when discouraging factors/moments set in; students should work on topics for which they have enough academic reference materials to undertake; and that students should choose topics that are not endless in scope, but are precise, succinct and direct.~~

Keywords: Research Introduction; Structural Adoption; Research Method; Research Problem; Research Background

Introduction

The field of international relations is always in a state of flux, ever changing to the end that new things always emerge as they relate to power contestation, diplomacy, wars and ceasefires, trade disputes and negotiations, statehood of self-proclaimed territories and unification agenda (Sreekumar, 2025). There is hardly a dull moment in the international arena. This is why investigative research must be a thing of constant reality, to determine cause and effect, victims and victimizers, to the issues that border on what Samuel Huntington calls the *Clash of Civilizations*, representing the new faultiness of modern conflicts and wars (Huntington, 1996).

Conducting research therefore is amenable to the tides of the international system, and would naturally conduce to its betterment, improvement and the resolution of all manner of territorial altercations (Biereenu-Nnabugwu, 2006). A typical thesis research for post-graduate studies usually begins with an introductory chapter which is chapter one. The task of this paper is to

show the structural frame and explanatory significance of this chapter. First, we try to interrogate the concept of research, its meaning, importance and types in the field of international relations.

Literature Review

In the field of International Relations (IR) research entails a conscious, logical and systematic investigation into the interactions of global or international actors with a view to garner new knowledge and understand complex phenomena in an ever-changing world. Research is often a re-examination, re-enquiry and revisit to either a previous study, or an exploration into a completely novel area so as to be able to explain events, shape policy, and manage global challenges (Biereenu-Nnabugwu, 2006).

The nature of research in International Relations is such that it is structured, scientific, systematic and inquisitive aimed at understanding and explaining political activities and other interactions across state boundaries. Research is a process thing, it often involves rigorous, tasking and data-driven procedure which takes time, requires dedication and needs money (Izu, 2024). Research provides the international relations expert the latitude or benefit of the following:

- i. Systematic Investigation: Involving an orderly collection, organization, and analysis of evidence to gain knowledge.
- ii. Knowledge Creation: Generating new concepts, methodologies, and understandings, or using existing knowledge in creative ways.
- iii. Focus on Global Actors: Studying the relations of states with each other, and with international organizations, multinational corporations, and subnational entities.
- iv. Problem Solving: Finding solutions to pressing practical problems or contributing to a broader understanding of the international system.

To this end, research is very important to the IR expert, as its benefits cut across several multifaceted and essential lenses which create the platform to better understand, deconstruct and navigate complex, dynamic and interdependent world happenings and scenarios where friends today can become enemies tomorrow, and vice versa (Biereenu-Nnabugwu, 2006). Some of the key areas where research becomes important to the IR expert are stated below:

- a. Deconstructing Global Events: It helps to describe, explain, and even predict international occurrences, such as causes of wars, cooperation among nations, and the behaviour of international organizations.
- b. Ready tools for Policy and Decision-Making: Research provides evidence-based insights that are vital for policymakers in formulating foreign policies, managing security threats, and negotiating international agreements.
- c. Extending the Frontiers of Knowledge: It continuously expands our understanding of the international system, reducing the domain of ignorance and contributing to the general body of scientific knowledge in the social sciences.
- d. Resolving Global Challenges: Research addresses critical issue areas such as international security, political economy, human rights, the environment, health, globalization, and conflict management.
- e. Making the expert a better expert: The process equips students and practitioners with the critical analytical tools necessary to assess information and evaluate different theoretical frameworks in a dynamic global environment (Sreekumar, 2025).

Having discussed the meaning and elaborate benefits of research to the International Relations expert, what is now left for us to do is to succinctly examine the various types of research available to the student of International Relations. These types are explained below:

Applied Research vs. Fundamental Research: applied research aims to find an immediate solution to a specific practical problem confronting a society or organization (e.g., a specific foreign policy challenge or conflict resolution strategy), while fundamental (pure) research is concerned with generalizations and the formulation of theory, undertaken primarily for the sake of generating knowledge and understanding human behaviour in general.

Descriptive Research vs. Analytical Research: descriptive research aims to describe the state of affairs as they exist, often through surveys or fact-finding inquiries, reporting what is happening or has happened, while Analytical Research has to do with relying on available information for critical analysis, interpretation, and evaluation of a material or issue.

Quantitative Research vs. Qualitative Research: quantitative research is based on the measurement of quantity or amount, using statistical analysis and numerical data to show relationships between variables and outcomes, while qualitative research is concerned with quality and understanding motives for human behaviour, using methods like in-depth interviews, content analysis, and discourse analysis to gain rich, non-numerical insights.

Conceptual Research vs. Empirical Research: conceptual research relates to some abstract idea(s) or theory, used by thinkers to develop new concepts or reinterpret existing ones, while empirical research relies on experience, observation, and verification using the five senses, gathering firsthand, data-based evidence that can be tested by observation or experiment (Biereen-Nnabugwu, 2006).

Theoretical Framework

In this kind of study it is clear that all the known research in the field of International Relations can serve as the theoretical frameworks for this study as all of them are concerned with researching into the international system from different perspectives. Realism, idealism, liberalism, constructivism, feminism, the English School, Marxism, institutionalism, regionalism, and so on, are some of these theories. But for the sake of this study, we narrow down on the realist theory. Realism as a theory looks at the international system as anarchic, war-mongering and unmoral, requiring all actors to strive for their own self-interest and nothing more. To this end, to the realists research is an instrumental tool for gathering empirical data to inform rational, self-interested decision-making. This often involves data-driven analysis of military capabilities, power dynamics, and potential threats to ensure national survival, often leading to specific, policy-relevant analysis. Earliest scholars like Aristotle who devoted their time and energy to the realist theory studied the constitutional documents of about 158 city-states of his time, attempting to understand their forms of government, how differences in forms of government affect the relations between or among city-states. Other scholars like Nicolo Machiavelli and Hans Morgenthau have further built on this original practice.

Methodology

This current research relies largely on secondary sources of data collection as it is qualitative in nature. In this regard, it relies on books, periodicals, and other literatures for data collection. Its

data analysis is based on content analysis, which entails the care examination of these sources and extraction of relevant contents from them for the operationalization of the subject-matter of the research.

Findings and Discussion

Research in International Relations is well-framed, properly structured for logicality, systematicity and flow (Biereenu-Nnabugwu, 2006; Sreekumar, 2025). While undergraduate and master's project come in five chapters, a doctoral thesis usually come in six or seven chapters. All of them however begin with the same frame which is chapter one, the introduction. In this section, we will spell out how a typical chapter one looks like, its components and their explanations.

It should be made lucid that a typical thesis Chapter One, often titled "Introduction," sets the stage by presenting the Background & Context, defining the Problem Statement, outlining Research Questions/Objectives/propositions, explaining the Significance, setting Scope & Limitations, defining Key Terms, and briefly describing the overall Thesis Organization, all while introducing relevant theoretical/conceptual frameworks to guide the reader through the study's purpose and justification.

Structural Components Adopted in Chapter One

1.1 Background to the Study

This gives a general direction to the intent, rationale and justification for carrying out a research on the chosen topic and situating the contextual, empirical and policy ramifications for it. In this light, it hooks the reader, provides general context, and introduces the broad topic briefly summarizing the research area, its importance, and the current state of knowledge, highlighting the gap your study addresses.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

This section clearly articulates the specific issue or gap your research will investigate, using few paragraphs to capture and explain what is unknown, controversial, or needs addressing, often supported by preliminary evidence.

1.3 Research Questions

This section projects some answerable questions that are woven around the research topic. The questions are structured to capture what precisely the study targets. For a doctoral research, they are usually five questions.

1.4 Research Objectives

These are specific, achievable targets that the research aims to accomplish. They are stated in clear and precise terms that could also be measurable.

1.5 Research Propositions

These are tentative answers to the research questions and objectives. It is important to note that if the research questions are five, both the research objectives and propositions will also be five. In other words, there must be a concurrence of the three.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This has to do with the researcher trying to establish the relevance or usefulness of the research outcome. It is stated clearly those to whom the research findings will be of help to, especially to policy and decision makers, politicians, diplomats, bureaucrats and academics. It discusses the theoretical, practical, policy and professional uses of the research findings.

1.7 Scope and Limitations

This section is very important because it define the boundaries of the research and acknowledge potential weaknesses, specifying what the study covers (scope/delimitations) and what it does not, and identify constraints (limitations) like time, resources, or sample size.

1.8 Operational Definition of Terms

This section is very personal because key terms or words used in the body of the work are given definitions that are amenable to the current research. So, the terms are defined in line with the aspirations or position of the researcher, not general or lexical understanding of the terms.

1.9 Organization of the Study

This section is usually the last section in a typical chapter one. It clearly provides a roadmap or compass for the entire document, meaning that it gives a brief description of what each chapter, chapters one to six, will cover or treat.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to do a general but easy-to-approach treatment of doctoral research structural frame with a view to spelling out what research entails and how chapter one is constituted. With this guide, any student would be able to undertake his research with little or no worries. This paper has also shown the meaning and types of research, defining their areas of differences.

Recommendations

Since students are always jittery about research, the following points are put forward to guide the students:

- i. Students should always choose topics they have great interest in; the passion will be a major asset in the course of the research, especially when discouraging factors/moments set in;
- ii. Students should work on topics for which they have enough academic reference materials to undertake;
- iii. Students should choose topics that are not endless in scope, but are precise, succinct and direct.

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