

PhD Dissertation Template - APA Format (7th Edition)

Complete APA-formatted dissertation template. Replace bracketed text with your content.

TITLE PAGE

[Page number: i - Roman numerals]

[**TITLE OF DISSERTATION IN TITLE CASE:****
****SECOND LINE IF NEEDED**]

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of

[Department Name]

[University Name]

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

by

[Your Full Name]

[Month Year]

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APPROVAL PAGE

[Page number: iii]

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Chair of Committee

[Member Name, Title]

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Head of the [Department Name]

ABSTRACT

[Page number: iv]

Abstract

[Write 250-350 words summarizing entire dissertation: problem statement, theoretical framework, methodology, key findings, conclusions, and significance. Single paragraph, double-spaced.]

Keywords: [5-7 keywords relevant to your research]

TABLE OF CONTENTS

[Page number: v]

Table of Contents

	Page
List of Tables	viii
List of Figures	ix
Acknowledgments	x
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION	1
Background of the Problem	1
Statement of the Problem	6
Purpose of the Study	9

	Page
Research Questions	11
Theoretical Framework	13
Significance of the Study	18
Assumptions and Limitations	21
Definition of Terms	24
Organization of the Study	26
2 LITERATURE REVIEW	28
Introduction	28
Theoretical Framework	30
[Major Theme 1]	38
[Major Theme 2]	52
[Major Theme 3]	68
Summary	85
3 METHODOLOGY	88
Introduction	88
Research Design	90
Population and Sample	95
Instrumentation	100
Data Collection Procedures	106
Data Analysis	110
Ethical Considerations	115
Trustworthiness and Rigor	118
Summary	122
4 RESULTS	125
Introduction	125
Descriptive Statistics	127
Research Question 1	135
Research Question 2	148
Research Question 3	162
Summary	178
5 DISCUSSION	181
Summary of Findings	181
Interpretation of Findings	185
Implications	205
Limitations	215
Recommendations for Future Research	220
Conclusions	226
REFERENCES	230
APPENDIX	
A [TITLE]	265
B [TITLE]	275
C [TITLE]	285

LIST OF TABLES

[Page number: viii]

List of Tables

Table	Page
1. Participant Demographics	128
2. Descriptive Statistics for Variables	130
3. Reliability Coefficients for Instruments	132
4. Correlation Matrix	137
5. Multiple Regression Analysis	142
[Continue numbering consecutively]	

LIST OF FIGURES

[Page number: ix]

List of Figures

Figure	Page
1. Conceptual Framework	15
2. Research Design Model	92
3. Data Collection Timeline	107
4. Distribution of Responses	138
[Continue numbering consecutively]	

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

[Page number: x]

Acknowledgments

[Express gratitude to dissertation committee, funding sources, research participants, colleagues, family, and others who supported your doctoral journey. 1-2 pages maximum. Double-spaced.]

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

[Start Arabic numbering: Page 1]

Chapter 1: Introduction

[Opening paragraph: Introduce broad topic area and establish significance. No heading needed for first paragraph.]

Background of the Problem

[Provide comprehensive background establishing context for your research. Include historical perspective, current state of the field, and why this problem matters. 4-6 pages typically.]

The field of [discipline] has increasingly recognized [issue]. Over the past [time-frame], researchers have examined [what's been studied], revealing [key findings]. However, [what remains unclear or problematic].

Recent developments in [area] have raised questions about [topic]. Specifically, [describe the problem that motivated your research].

Statement of the Problem

[Clearly articulate the specific problem. What gap exists in knowledge? Why does this gap matter? 2-3 pages.]

Despite extensive research on [broad topic], little is known about [specific gap]. This gap is problematic because [consequences of not understanding this]. The problem is that [clear statement of the problem your dissertation addresses].

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this [qualitative/quantitative/mixed methods] study was to [action verb: examine, explore, investigate, determine] [what you studied] in order to [intended outcome].

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: [First research question - specific and researchable]

RQ2: [Second research question]

RQ3: [Third research question]

Alternatively, state hypotheses for quantitative research:

H1: [Hypothesis statement based on theory]

H0: [Null hypothesis]

Theoretical Framework

[Present the theories guiding your research. Explain key concepts and how they relate. 4-6 pages.]

This study was grounded in [Theory Name] developed by [Scholar]. This framework posits that [explanation of theory]. The theory consists of [key components or constructs].

[Theory Name] provides a lens for understanding [your phenomenon] because [connection]. Specifically, this framework helps explain [how theory applies].

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework

[Insert visual representation of your theoretical model]

Note. [Explanation of how concepts relate]

Significance of the Study

[Explain contributions to theory, practice, and policy. 2-3 pages.]

This research contributes to the field in several important ways.

Theoretical Significance. This study advances [theory] by [specific contribution]. The findings will [how theory is extended or refined].

Practical Significance. The results have implications for [practitioners] who [work context]. Specifically, [practical applications].

Methodological Significance. This research contributes methodologically by [if you're using innovative methods].

Policy Significance. The findings inform policy by [policy implications if applicable].

Assumptions and Limitations

Assumptions This study was based on the following assumptions:

1. [Assumption 1 about participants, context, or measures]
2. [Assumption 2]
3. [Assumption 3]

Limitations Several limitations constrained this research:

1. [**Limitation 1**]. [Describe limitation and potential impact]
2. [**Limitation 2**]. [Describe and explain implications]
3. [**Limitation 3**]. [Describe and address]

Delimitations The study was deliberately bounded by:

1. [What you chose to include/exclude]
2. [Scope decisions you made]

Definition of Terms

[Term 1]: [Operational definition as used in this study]

[Term 2]: [Operational definition]

[Term 3]: [Operational definition]

[Continue with all key terms and constructs]

Organization of the Study

This dissertation is organized into five chapters. Chapter 2 reviews relevant literature and elaborates the theoretical framework. Chapter 3 describes the research methodology in detail. Chapter 4 presents the study's results. Chapter 5 discusses findings, implications, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

[Overview of chapter organization and scope. 1-2 pages.]

This chapter reviews literature relevant to [topic]. The review is organized into [number] major sections: (a) theoretical framework, (b) [theme 1], (c) [theme 2], and (d) [theme 3]. The chapter concludes with a summary identifying gaps the current study addresses.

Theoretical Framework

[Elaborate on theories introduced in Chapter 1. 8-12 pages.]

[Theory Name] [Detailed explanation of theory, its development, key constructs, and empirical support]

[Scholar] (Year) developed [Theory] to explain [phenomenon]. The theory emerged from [context of development] and has become foundational in understanding [area].

Key Constructs. The theory comprises several core constructs:

[Construct 1]. [Definition and explanation]

[Construct 2]. [Definition and explanation]

[Construct 3]. [Definition and explanation]

Empirical Support. Research has consistently supported key propositions of [Theory]. For example, Author (Year) found [finding], while Author (Year) demonstrated [finding].

Critiques and Extensions. Some scholars have questioned [aspect] (Author, Year). Author (Year) extended the theory by [addition or modification].

Application to Current Study. This framework guides the current research by [specific application to your study].

[Major Theme 1]

[Review literature on first major theme. 12-18 pages per theme.]

[Organize chronologically, methodologically, or thematically. Synthesize across sources rather than summarizing source-by-source.]

Early research on [theme] focused on [historical approach] (Author, Year; Author, Year). These foundational studies established that [key findings].

More recent investigations have shifted to [contemporary focus]. Author et al. (Year) examined [what was studied], finding that [results]. This work was extended by Author (Year), who demonstrated [additional findings].

[Subtheme 1.1]

[Break major themes into subthemes for organization]

[Subtheme 1.2]

[Continue organizing literature logically]

[Major Theme 2]

[Continue with comprehensive review]

[Major Theme 3]

[Additional themes as needed]

Summary

[Synthesize literature and identify specific gap your study addresses. 3-4 pages.]

The literature reviewed in this chapter reveals [synthesis of what is known]. However, several gaps remain. First, [gap 1]. Second, [gap 2]. Third, [gap 3].

The current study addresses these gaps by [how your research fills gaps]. Specifically, this research will [contribution to literature].

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

[Overview of chapter and methodological approach. 1-2 pages.]

This chapter describes the methodology used to address the research questions. Sections include: (a) research design, (b) population and sample, (c) instrumentation, (d) data collection procedures, (e) data analysis, and (f) ethical considerations.

Research Design

This study employed a [specific design] to [purpose].

Type: [Qualitative/Quantitative/Mixed Methods]

Specific Design: [Experimental/Quasi-experimental/Survey/Case study/Ethnographic/Phenomenological/G theory/etc.]

Justification. This design was appropriate because [connection between design and research questions]. The approach allows for [what design enables].

Population and Sample

Target Population The target population for this study consisted of [describe population with specific demographic and relevant characteristics].

Accessible Population The accessible population was [subset you could actually reach].

Sample

Sample Size The sample included $N =$ [number] [participants/cases]. This sample size was determined by [power analysis/saturation/purposive selection].

For quantitative studies: A power analysis using *GPower* indicated that [N] participants would provide adequate power ($\alpha = .80$) to detect [effect size] at $\alpha = .05$.

For qualitative studies: The sample size of [N] was determined based on [information power/saturation principles].

Sampling Method [Describe strategy in detail]

Sampling Strategy: [Probability: Random, stratified, cluster / Non-probability: Purposive, convenience, snowball]

Rationale: [Why this sampling method was appropriate]

Sampling Procedures: [Step-by-step description of how sample was obtained]

Inclusion Criteria Participants qualified for inclusion if they met the following criteria:

1. [Criterion 1]
2. [Criterion 2]
3. [Criterion 3]
4. [Continue]

Exclusion Criteria Participants were excluded if they [criteria].

Sample Characteristics [Describe sample demographics, relevant characteristics - can include preliminary demographics if already collected]

Instrumentation

[Describe each instrument in detail. 2-3 pages per instrument.]

[Instrument Name] Description. The [Instrument] (Author, Year) measures [construct]. The instrument consists of [number] items using a [type of scale]. Response options range from [scale]. Sample items include “[example]” and “[example].”

Scoring. Scores are calculated by [scoring procedure]. Total scores range from [min] to [max], with higher scores indicating [interpretation].

Reliability. [Instrument] has demonstrated strong internal consistency. The original validation study reported Cronbach's α = [value] (Author, Year). Subsequent studies have reported reliability coefficients ranging from [range] (Author, Year; Author, Year).

Validity. Construct validity was established through [methods]. Factor analysis confirmed [factor structure] (Author, Year). Convergent validity was demonstrated through correlations with [related measures] (r = [value], Author, Year). Discriminant validity was shown through [method] (Author, Year).

Pilot Testing. [If conducted] A pilot test with [N] participants yielded Cronbach's α = [value], confirming reliability for the current study.

[Additional Instruments] [Repeat format for each instrument]

Researcher-Developed Instruments [If applicable] [Instrument] was developed specifically for this study because [rationale].

Development Process: [Steps taken to create instrument]

Content Validity: [Expert review process]

Pilot Testing: [Results from pilot]

Data Collection Procedures

[Detailed, step-by-step procedures. Someone should be able to replicate your study.]

Data collection occurred between [dates] and followed these procedures:

1. [Step 1: e.g., IRB approval]. [Detailed description]
2. [Step 2: e.g., Participant recruitment]. [Specific procedures]
3. [Step 3: e.g., Informed consent]. [Process]
4. [Step 4: e.g., Data collection]. [Exact procedures]
5. [Continue with all steps]

Timeline. Data collection followed this schedule:

- [Phase 1]: [Dates and activities]
- [Phase 2]: [Dates and activities]
- [Phase 3]: [Dates and activities]

Data Analysis

[Describe analysis procedures aligned with each research question.]

Data Preparation Data were screened for [missing values, outliers, normality assumptions].

Missing Data. [How missing data were handled]

Outliers. [Detection and handling procedures]

Assumptions. [Tests conducted to verify statistical assumptions]

Quantitative Analysis Data were analyzed using [Software, Version].

Descriptive Statistics. Means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages were calculated for all variables.

Inferential Statistics.

RQ1 Analysis: [Specific statistical test] was conducted to [purpose]. This test was appropriate because [justification]. Statistical significance was set at $p < .05$.

RQ2 Analysis: [Specific test and justification]

RQ3 Analysis: [Specific test and justification]

Qualitative Analysis [If applicable] Qualitative data were analyzed using [specific approach: thematic analysis, grounded theory, phenomenological analysis, content analysis].

Analysis Process:

1. **Transcription.** All [interviews/focus groups] were transcribed verbatim.
2. **Initial Coding.** Data were coded inductively using [software].
3. **Focused Coding.** Initial codes were refined and grouped into categories.
4. **Theme Development.** Categories were analyzed to identify overarching themes.
5. **Validation.** Themes were validated through [member checking/peer debriefing/triangulation].

Ethical Considerations

[Comprehensive discussion of ethical protections.]

IRB Approval This study received approval from the [University] Institutional Review Board (Protocol #[number], approved [date]).

Informed Consent All participants provided informed consent after receiving detailed information about [study purpose, procedures, risks, benefits, voluntary nature, right to withdraw].

Confidentiality and Anonymity Participant confidentiality was maintained through multiple measures:

- Data were stored [storage security measures]
- Participants were assigned [codes/pseudonyms]
- Identifying information was [how kept separate]
- Data will be retained for [timeframe], then destroyed

Risks and Benefits **Potential Risks:** [Minimal risks and mitigation strategies]

Benefits: [How participants or society benefits]

Trustworthiness and Rigor

[For qualitative] / [Validity and Reliability for quantitative]

Credibility. [How accuracy was ensured]

Transferability. [How findings can apply to other contexts]

Dependability. [How consistency was maintained]

Confirmability. [How objectivity was pursued]

Summary

[Brief recap of methodology and transition to results]

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

[Restate purpose and research questions. Overview of chapter.]

This chapter presents the results of the study. Research questions are addressed sequentially, with supporting tables and figures.

Descriptive Statistics

Sample Characteristics [Comprehensive description of final sample]

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Characteristic	<i>n</i>	%	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Gender				
Male	[n]	[%]		
Female	[n]	[%]		
Age (years)			[M]	[SD]
[Continue with all relevant demographics]				

Note. *N* = [total sample size].

Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for All Variables

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range	Skewness	Kurtosis
[Variable 1]	[M]	[SD]	[min-max]	[value]	[value]
[Variable 2]	[M]	[SD]	[min-max]	[value]	[value]

Research Question 1

RQ1: [Restate the question]

[Present results objectively. Report all relevant statistics.]

[For quantitative]

A [statistical test] was conducted to examine [what]. Results indicated that [finding]. Specifically, [Group 1] ($M = [\text{value}]$, $SD = [\text{value}]$) scored significantly [higher/lower] than [Group 2] ($M = [\text{value}]$, $SD = [\text{value}]$), $t(df) = [\text{value}]$, $p = [\text{value}]$, $d = [\text{effect size}]$.

Table 3

[Title Describing Results]

[Present detailed results in table format]

Figure 2

[Visual representation of key finding]

[Insert graph]

Note. [Explanation if needed]

[For qualitative]

Analysis revealed [number] major themes related to RQ1: (a) [Theme 1], (b) [Theme 2], and (c) [Theme 3].

Theme 1: [Name]. [Description with supporting quotes]

Participants consistently described [pattern]. As one participant stated, “[direct quote]” (Participant 7). This sentiment was echoed by [number/percentage] who [described similar experience].

Research Question 2

RQ2: [Restate the question]

[Continue with comprehensive presentation of results]

Research Question 3

RQ3: [Restate the question]

[Continue]

Summary

[Brief synthesis of key findings. Transition to discussion.]

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Chapter 5: Discussion

Summary of Findings

[Concise overview of major results. 2-3 pages.]

This study examined [purpose]. Three research questions guided the investigation. The major findings were:

1. [Finding 1 related to RQ1]
2. [Finding 2 related to RQ2]
3. [Finding 3 related to RQ3]

Interpretation of Findings

[Detailed interpretation connecting findings to literature. 15-20 pages.]

Finding 1: [Brief Description] [Interpret meaning within theoretical framework and prior research]

This finding aligns with [Theory] which predicts that [theoretical prediction] (Scholar, Year). The result extends previous research by [how it advances knowledge].

Specifically, the finding that [result] supports Author's (Year) work demonstrating [similar finding]. However, this contradicts Author's (Year) conclusion that [different finding]. This discrepancy may be explained by [methodological differences/population differences/contextual factors].

The theoretical implications are significant. [Finding] suggests that [theoretical contribution]. This challenges the assumption that [previous assumption] and indicates instead that [new understanding].

Finding 2: [Brief Description] [Interpretation and theoretical connections]

Finding 3: [Brief Description] [Interpretation and theoretical connections]

Implications

[Detailed discussion of implications. 8-12 pages.]

Theoretical Implications This research makes several theoretical contributions to [field].

First, the findings advance [Theory] by demonstrating that [contribution]. This suggests that [how theory should be refined or extended].

Second, the results reveal [new understanding] which has implications for how scholars conceptualize [concept].

Third, [additional theoretical contribution].

Practical Implications The findings have important practical implications for [practitioners/educators/clinicians/leaders].

For [Practitioners], these results suggest [recommendation]. Specifically, [concrete application].

For [Organizations], the findings indicate [practical application].

For [Policy], [policy implications if applicable].

Methodological Implications [If your study contributes methodologically]

This research demonstrates the utility of [methodological approach] for studying [phenomenon]. The findings suggest that [methodological insight].

Limitations

[Honest, detailed discussion. 4-6 pages.]

While this study provides valuable insights, several limitations should be acknowledged.

Design Limitations **First**, the [design characteristic] limits [what you can claim]. [Explain specific limitation and impact on interpretation].

Second, [limitation 2 and implications].

Sample Limitations The sample, while adequate for [purpose], has limitations. [Describe limitations related to size, representativeness, or characteristics].

Measurement Limitations [Any limitations in instruments or measurement]

Contextual Limitations [Limitations related to setting, timing, or context]

Implications of Limitations. These limitations suggest caution in [what should be limited in interpretation]. However, they do not invalidate [what can still be claimed].

Recommendations for Future Research

[Specific, detailed recommendations. 4-6 pages.]

Based on the findings and limitations, several avenues for future research are recommended.

First, future studies should examine [specific recommendation] using [methodological suggestion]. This would address [current limitation] and advance understanding of [aspect].

Second, researchers might investigate [specific question raised by your findings] in [different population/context]. This would determine whether [finding] is [generalizable/context-specific].

Third, longitudinal research is needed to examine [how phenomenon changes over time].

Fourth, [additional recommendations].

Conclusions

[Final synthesis. 3-4 pages.]

This dissertation examined [topic] through the lens of theoretical framework. The research addressed a significant gap in the literature by [contribution].

The findings demonstrate that [key takeaway]. This has important implications for understanding [phenomenon] and for [practical application].

While [acknowledge limitations], this research makes significant contributions to [field] by [specific contributions]. The work advances [Theory] and provides a foundation for future research on [topic].

Ultimately, this study reveals that [final insight]. As [relevant scholar] argued, “[relevant quote]” (Author, Year, p. [page]). The current findings support and extend this perspective by [connection].

[Closing paragraph with forward-looking statement about the significance and future of this line of research]

REFERENCES

References

[Hanging indent, alphabetical by author, double-spaced]

Author, A. A., & Author, B. B. (Year). Title of article. *Title of Periodical*, volume(issue), page range. <https://doi.org/xxxxx>

Author, C. C. (Year). *Title of book* (edition). Publisher Name. <https://doi.org/xxxxx>

Author, D. D., Author, E. E., & Author, F. F. (Year). Title of chapter. In E. E. Editor & F. F. Editor (Eds.), *Title of book* (pp. xxx-xxx). Publisher.

[Continue with all sources cited in dissertation—typically 100-300+ sources for PhD]

APPENDIX A: [TITLE]

Appendix A

[Title of Appendix]

[Survey instruments, interview protocols, consent forms, IRB approval letters, additional tables, supplementary analyses, etc.]

APPENDIX B: [TITLE]

Appendix B

[Title of Appendix]

[Additional materials]

APPENDIX C: [TITLE]

Appendix C

[Title of Appendix]

[Additional materials]

FORMATTING CHECKLIST

General Format

- ☐ 12-pt Times New Roman font
- ☐ Double-spacing throughout (except table titles/notes)
- ☐ 1-inch margins all sides
- ☐ Page numbers in header, top right

Pagination

- ☐ Roman numerals (i, ii, iii) for front matter
- ☐ Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3) from Chapter 1

- ☐ Continuous numbering through references and appendices

Front Matter

- ☐ All required pages included
- ☐ Table of contents matches document
- ☐ Lists of tables/figures accurate
- ☐ Abstract within 250-350 words

Chapters

- ☐ Five-level heading hierarchy used correctly
- ☐ Each chapter starts on new page
- ☐ Consistent formatting throughout
- ☐ Paragraphs indented 0.5 inches

Citations & References

- ☐ All in-text citations in References
- ☐ All References cited in text
- ☐ APA 7th edition format throughout
- ☐ 100+ sources typical for PhD dissertation

Tables & Figures

- ☐ Numbered consecutively throughout dissertation
- ☐ Proper APA formatting
- ☐ All referenced in text before appearing

TYPICAL LENGTH

PhD Dissertation: 150-300 pages

Chapter breakdown: - Chapter 1: 25-35 pages - Chapter 2: 50-80 pages (most substantial) - Chapter 3: 25-40 pages - Chapter 4: 30-50 pages - Chapter 5: 30-50 pages

Varies by field and university requirements

Template Complete. Good luck with your doctoral research!