THE ART OF WRITING EFFECTIVE ABSTRACTS AND CONDUCTING REVIEWS OF THE LITERATURE
Webinar Information

Webinar: 60 minutes

Webinar will be recorded

Audience is muted – please add comments in the chatbox

Introduce yourself using the chatbox

Questions & comments to chat/Q&A
Welcome

SVRI Research Grant Overview

Writing Effective Research Abstracts and Conducting Reviews of the Literature

Q & A
SVRI Research Grant 2024-25

- Action-oriented, policy relevant research that will serve to improve and expand evidence on VAW, VAC, child sexual violence and intersections between VAW/VAC and other forms of GBV prevention and response efforts in LMICs.
- SVRI supports research, researchers and institutions based in LMIC.
  - World Bank classification
- Consortia applications with North-South/ South-South partnerships are welcome.
- Grant application guidelines are available on: SVRI Research Grant 2025
- Applications must be made via the Proposal Central online system at: https://proposalcentral.altum.com/.
- Deadline for application 9th July 2024 mid-night 11:59 pm South African Time
Expert Speaker

Professor Rachel Jewkes
Executive Scientist for Research Strategy at the SAMRC
Founding Member of the SVRI
Writing Effective Research Abstracts and Conducting Reviews of the Literature

Rachel Jewkes,
South African Medical Research Council
General tips for SVRI proposal writing – in your proposal you must demonstrate that:

- You have knowledge of and sensitivity towards VAW or VAC and you have some track record in research or programming.
- You have research skills – you can review literature, synthesise the findings and reflect on the implications, design a study and write a proposal.
- You have innovative and relevant ideas for research and, where relevant, understanding interventions.
- You can present a convincing argument for why your study should be funded.
Presentation of the proposal is important

You should use a readable font – 11 or 12 point

You should use sub-headings, and where relevant diagrams, so the reviewer can easily navigate the proposal

Do not repeat things in the proposal

You do not need to write the full number of characters for each section

You must check your spelling and grammar – use a tool such as Grammarly (available for download, free)
Draft a provisional title first and finalise it last

NOTE THAT YOU HAVE TO PUT IN A TITLE BEFORE ACCESSING DOCUMENTATION

IF THAT IS DONE, PLEASE MAKE IT A PROVISIONAL TITLE AND ADJUST THE TITLE TO FIT BEST WITH THE STUDY
The character limits for pages are *with spaces*

You are not allowed to go over the number of characters.

**Rough guide:**

- 3000 characters = (almost) 1 A4 page = 500 words
- 6500 characters = 2 A4 pages (almost) = 1000 words
Which means:

- Abstract – 1 page
- Background section – 2 pages
- Innovation, contribution, strengths and weaknesses – 1 page
- Aim and Objectives – 1 page
- Research Plan – 2.5 pages
- Ethics – 2 pages
- Capacity statement – 1 page

Background section

- 6500 characters
- This is about 1.5 A4 pages with 11 point font
- It is about 6 paragraphs
Formula for background section:

Paragraph 1

- A clear statement of the overarching problem to be addressed in the research
- E.g. Sexual violence experiences have been reported by 1 in 3 students in schools in Eastern DRC

- A statement of the policy/service context of the research showing that the research is linked in some way
- E.g. Despite sexual conduct between teachers and students being prohibited in law for 20 years, sexual harassment of female students remains a very common occurrence.

- Include the location of the research and area of work that the research will contribute to
- E.g. this proposal describes a qualitative study that will focus on understanding sexual violence against adolescents in Eastern DRC

- Why the study?
  - Understanding more about the context in which sexual harassment occurs is essential for developing prevention interventions and strengthen policy implementation.
Paragraph 2 - 4:
Specific background to the problem

• What is known about the problem to be researched?
  • Definitions – (where appropriate) – e.g., what is referred to by ‘sexual violence’ experienced by adolescents
  • Prevalence in the country
  • Risk factors – who is most at risk?
  • Drivers / contributing factors – what are the key drivers in the context, how do they work?
  • Consequences

• Complexities – what are the factors that make this complicated and more important to study?

• If your team has conducted some of the research into this already, this should be highlighted
How to review the literature

- Work out what you want to know – review against a plan of your paragraphs in the background section
- Identify the search engines that you will use to find the relevant articles and reports
  - PubMed – has a very wide range of journals publishing on VAW and VAC, not just medical journals, and gives abstracts and many open-access papers
  - Google Scholar – generally very comprehensive and has links to many abstracts
- There are many others, but the number of additional papers found through other search engines will be few and they may be unavailable due to the paywall
- If you want to access other reports you can use Google but you may have to be careful about your key words to avoid being swamped
Use chosen search teams

• Make sure they are specific, so you do not have too many papers
  • E.g. sexual violence prevalence adolescents Rwanda

• Search with keywords – you do not need full sentences

• You do not need to read and reference everything – one reference per point is sufficient, but read more than one paper as you want to be sure that you are citing something generally accepted

• When using Google Scholar, look for more highly cited work when supporting general points, as generally these are more authoritative
Paragraph 5: Where else has the problem been recognised? What has been found and done?

- International literature:
  - Where else is this a problem?
  - What has been learned from that research?
  - What are the implications of this for research proposed in the current research – has this shown global gaps? Has it shown that policies can be implemented with good effect?
Summarise what has been written above and conclude with a statement describing the need for the research, taking into account what is already known about the issue.
Present

Present your arguments in a clear and logical sequence

Use

Use sub-headings for sections - Make it easy for a review to read

Reference

Reference everything you say, but put the references in a document to be uploaded as an attachment
Innovation and contribution

How will your work strengthen policy and practice or enhance methodology within the field?

3000 ch = about 3 paragraphs

Approach differs for observation and intervention research
Qualitative or epidemiological observational research contribution

• What have been the responses so far in the country of the research?
  • From the State sector, community sector etc

• What are the limitations of these responses

• How could research findings be used to strengthen them?
Intervention research - contribution

Is an intervention to be developed and tested? Or an existing one evaluated? Or one that has been evaluated, or further evaluated?

Have you done preliminary research – what did you do? find? where is it published?

How is it expected that the knowledge about the intervention will contribute to solving a problem?
If an intervention is to be developed, tested or researched, the theory of change of the intervention must be given here. You can use a diagram. You must show that the intervention will be theory-based (development), or has been best on theory (testing and research).
How to present a theory of change for an intervention

- Statement of intervention success
- Expected consequences (outputs)
- Elements of the intervention and how they map onto the drivers (input and activities)
- What should be done to address the modifiable RFs (and assumptions)
- Barriers to problem-solving & sources of risk
- Problem statement to be addressed by the intervention
Research Aim and Objectives:

• Clearly articulate clear, specific research aim and objectives. (3000 characters). (Up to maximum of 4 objectives)
What is expected

• A clear statement of the aim/goal of the study
• A clear statement of up to 4 objectives

• These should all be one sentence each

• Since SVRI allows about half a page of text, there is room for one paragraph before the aims which summarises the need for the research – that is, restates the VAW/VAC knowledge gap and shows how the research will fill it
Writing the abstract

• Please provide an overall description of the entire study. It should include a brief statement of the need or problem being addressed, the need for the study, the methodology(s) to be employed in accomplishing the tasks outlined, research goals or expected outcomes, the time duration, and the approximate cost. Not to exceed 3000 characters, including spaces. Text only.
Abstract

Write your abstract last as a good abstract will greatly help you get funding.

You have roughly 500 words, that’s a little longer than your average peer-reviewed journal article abstract, but not much longer.
Where does the study come from

• This section is about 3-4 sentences and it needs to tell your reviewer how you established the need for the study

• Every sentence needs to be chosen with care and you must tell your reader what they don’t know, not what they will, obviously, know

• **Do:**
  
  • Tell the reader why you found from reviewing the literature that the study was important – would fill a knowledge gap
  
  • And – if possible – what you know from talking to survivors or practice-based knowledge from the field that leads you to feel that having the knowledge will be useful for the field

• **Do not:**
  
  • Explain that VAW is a public health issue
  
  • That VAW occurs in all countries in the world etc
What gap will it fill

- This is really your 4-5 sentence elevator pitch about why it is important that your study be funded by the SVRI
  - The gap must be explained in terms of violence research – what’s known and thus where next?
  - The gap explanation should also leave the reader with an understanding, already, of the methodology that is likely to be used in the study
  - The gap must follow from the background statements
What are the goals

One sentence summary of the main aim of the study

One sentence summary of objectives of the study

If possible

Only if they add extra much information to the statement of goals
## What will you do

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What methods will be used? – qual? survey? Evaluation? economics etc</td>
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<tr>
<td>Where? – country, area within country?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How many people will be interviewed?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Who will they be – type of person?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How will they be recruited?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What will they be asked?</td>
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<td>How often will they be interviewed?</td>
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<td>How will you analyse the data?</td>
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What will you do with the results?

Present at SVRI Forum? Publish in a peer reviewed journal?
We expect everyone to do these so don’t waste a lot of space telling us that you will do so too, mention it briefly.

Disseminate to local and/or national stakeholders – who?, on what occasions?
Worthy of more words

Use the results to help you build an intervention? A bigger research project?

This is really “where next” – will your research be seen as something foundational for the future?