



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

Webinar Information



Webinar: 60 minutes



Webinar will be recorded



Audience is muted –
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in the chatbox



Introduce yourself
using the chatbox



Questions &
comments to
chat/Q&A

Agenda



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

Characters


- 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 Brief

PROJECT BACKGROUND: THE PROJECT BACKGROUND MUST CLEARLY OUTLINE WHAT IS ALREADY KNOWN ABOUT THE RESEARCH TOPIC AND JUSTIFY THE NEED FOR THE STUDY. IT MUST PROVIDE THE FOUNDATION OF YOUR STUDY, OFFERING INSIGHT INTO THE BROADER AREA OF RESEARCH, SUMMARIZING EXISTING LITERATURE, SHOWING HOW YOUR STUDY WILL ADDRESS A RESEARCH GAP. (6500 CHARACTERS).



INNOVATION AND CONTRIBUTION: WHAT IS PARTICULARLY INNOVATIVE ABOUT THIS PROJECT? WHAT WILL BE ITS CONTRIBUTION TO BUILDING THE EVIDENCE FOR GBV PREVENTION AND RESPONSE IN LOW AND MIDDLE INCOME COUNTRIES? WHAT ARE THE LIMITATIONS AND STRENGTHS OF YOUR STUDY? (3000 CHARACTERS).

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?

Paragraph 6 : concluding paragraph

- 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

Background –
max. 2 pages
A4

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 will 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?



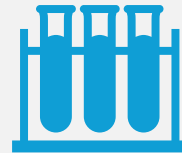
Intervention research contribution



If an intervention is to be developed, tested or researched, the theory of change of the intervention must be given here



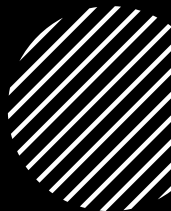
You can use a diagram



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

If possible



One sentence
summary of
objectives of the
study

Only if they
add extra
much
information to
the statement
of goals

What will you do

What methods will be used? – qual? survey?
Evaluation? economics etc

Where? – country, area within country?

How many people will be interviewed?


Who will they be – type of person?

How will they be recruited?



What will they be asked?

How often will they be interviewed?

How will you analyse the data?



What will you do with the results



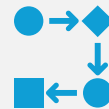
Present at SVRI Forum?
Publish in a peer reviewed
journal?

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?