

Addressing research challenges: making headway for developing researchers

E.R. Mathipa and M.T. Gumbo (Editors)

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The book, *Addressing research challenges: making headway for developing researchers*, edited by E.R. Mathipa and M.T. Gumbo, is a rich, intellectual, authoritative and comprehensive piece of scholarly work that fills a lacuna in research methods from the African perspective.

The book is aimed at developing researchers, especially postgraduate students, whom the authors recognise struggle in undertaking academic research. Scholars and academics who are generally involved in supervising and examining postgraduate theses/dissertations and teaching research methodology courses will find the book useful, illuminating and provocative.

Addressing research challenges has a definite place in an African research methodology space, where the majority of texts used are founded on western epistemologies, and will most likely appeal to an audience in a wide range of disciplines. The chapters in the book are written by experts in their respective academic fields who have immense hands-on experience in teaching and/or managing research, accumulated over several years and across different disciplines such as education, management, governance, records management, research ethics, research methods, sociology, psychology, history, philosophy, and others.

The book is simple to read and compact to carry around. It comprises eleven chapters covering pertinent subjects such as the postgraduate research journey; academic writing; generic components of a research proposal; conceptual and theoretical frameworks (and their utility in quantitative and qualitative research); review of literature in research; ethics and research; quantitative and qualitative data analysis; mixed methods research; writing a dissertation or thesis; and referencing in research projects. Within these broad themes, the authors have addressed key issues that are of common concern to postgraduate students in their research journey, especially at Master's and PhD levels. The chapters in the book are logically ordered and each chapter starts with an introduction and ends with a conclusion and references, thus enhancing the coherence of the content presented in the book.

The authors have greatly simplified and demystified aspects of the research process that many new researchers find challenging, such as using statistics to analyse, interpret and present both descriptive and inferential data; the use of theory to develop research questions, analyse data and interpret findings; the distinction between and application of conceptual and theoretical frameworks in research; and philosophical underpinning of research problems. The authors have also aptly addressed the often-neglected subjects in most research methods books, such as supervisor-supervisee relationship, time management and language issues.

The book is well-illustrated and impressive in its layout, structure, organisation and clarity. The index of words, along with a comprehensive table of contents, makes it easier for the reader to find each piece of information in the text.

This book is no doubt a highly intellectual piece of scholarly work. Nevertheless, further illumination on the level of expectation as far as depth and rigor in undertaking a Master's and PhD research project would have further benefitted the target audience. Future revisions of the book may also need to consider providing a list of definitions of key concepts that most postgraduate students often misinterpret and misrepresent in writing their research projects, such as 'paradigm', 'research perspectives', 'epistemology', 'axiology' and more. In addition, future revisions should address editorial omissions and commissions that have gone undetected in this text.

The release of this book is timely for postgraduate students and academics involved in research activities in the African tertiary education environment and the broader developing country contexts. The book is likely to elicit robust debate and engagement among researchers. The strengths of the book are founded on the fact that it is authored by highly cross-disciplinary intellectual experts; it addresses research issues that are pertinent to postgraduate research supervision, examination and management; authors have drawn on practical examples and illustrations from across the world giving the book an international appeal; and the book is written in language that is simple to read and understand.

The book therefore occupies and fills a unique gap on the shelves of research methodology books, especially from the African perspective. This is a book any budding researcher and postgraduate student will want to read.

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