RESEARCH SKILLS AND TRAITS OF FIRST YEAR SOCIAL STUDIES STUDENTS OF BATANGAS STATE UNIVERSITY- PABLO BORBON

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of the study was to determine the research skills and traits of first-year Social Studies students at the College of Teacher Education (CTE) in Batangas State University- Pablo Borbon. Further, this study also ascertained the students' description of themselves as student researchers, their assessment of their research skills relative to the formulation of the research problem, gathering literature, methodology, and interpreting the results. The researchers utilized a descriptive method of research in this study with the questionnaire as the primary data gathering instrument. Findings revealed that the students are displaying a high level of intellectual honesty and integrity. With respect to their research skills, they consider their possible respondents when conceptualizing the problem, while in terms of gathering literature, they are very much aware of the copyright and plagiarism policies; in terms of methodology, they begin by choosing the appropriate research design; and in terms of interpreting the result, they know that researchers should provide a list of realistic projects and solutions beneficial to the subject of the study. There is a significant relationship between the respondents' description and their research skills. Thus, the training program design is proposed to offer innovative ways to improve the researchers' traits and skills in conducting a study.

Keywords: research skills, research traits, research problem, methodology, result, literature

INTRODUCTION

In gaining new knowledge and understanding, conducting research is one thing that a person must learn to do. Research is defined as a deliberate examination concerning the investigation of materials and sources to build up actualities and arrive at new resolutions. The conduct of research is as vital to education as it is with other fields or sectors. Hence, it is essential for future educators to be good or at least be able to make or conduct research studies. Teacher education students who are considered future educators are expected to bring knowledge and learning to their prospective students. But imparting knowledge among students is not a very easy job; there can be obstacles and challenges along the way. The conduct of research could help teachers address these challenges; thus, future educators should be able to develop their research skills as early as possible. However, developing research skills requires an inevitable process since research is scientific, and it has several parts that need to be understood by student researchers. Analyzing the problem, going about the methodology, and interpreting results are vital areas in research where student researchers must improve in, hence this study.

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As stated in an article entitled Five Essential Skills for Every Undergraduate Researcher, the five essential skills are creativity, judgment, communication, organization, and persistence. Applying the five skills mentioned will assist students by making them researchers and learning to discover. (Showman et al., 2013) Moreover, all research involves searching for credible information that can be analyzed and used to arrive at an answer or solution. (Indeed, Editorial Team, 2020). This means that acquiring such research skills and traits helps in research and by improving one's capacity in developing and analyzing problems; utilizing this explains that acquiring the research skills and traits at an early stage plays a vital role in honing it more.

Learning is an act, a process, and an experience of acquiring and attaining knowledge or skill. Additionally, through learning, students can enhance their research skills to become competitive researchers in the future. Students nowadays are learning and improving their research skills as early as secondary education. When students escalate into the next level of education, which is the tertiary level, they are exposed to many research works, which sometimes stresses them. Thus, assessing their research skills to see what they can and cannot do will help them a lot. Moreover, students should also be aware that research skills can find, collect, analyze, interpret, and evaluate information relevant to the subject being studied. (Basturkmen, East & Bitchener, 2014)

Research papers often consist of several parts: the problem, literature review, methodology, presentation and interpretation of results, and findings, conclusions, and recommendations. During the research process, a student typically experiences mentoring from research enthusiasts, thereby enhancing his research skills. Written comments, suggestions, and recommendations on research in progress are also widely used to improve students' academic writing and research skills. First-year social studies major students at College of Teacher Education- Batangas State University are aware of the importance of acquiring research skills. Still, some of them experience difficulty in conducting research, which sometimes leads to having a negative attitude about it.

Because of these observations, the researchers felt the need to assess first-year social studies major students' research skills at the College of Teacher Education in Batangas State University. The inputs from this research can serve as a basis for how the college can be of greater help to improve the students' skills in conducting research. In addition, the researchers also proposed a plan of action or activities based on the results to enhance the research skills of first-year students.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to determine the Research Skills and Research Traits of Social Studies Major Students of College of Teacher Education. Specifically, this sought to achieve the following objectives: 1) To determine how the students describe themselves as student researchers; 2) To assess the respondents in their research skills relative to the following: Formulation of research problem; Gathering Literature; Methodology; and Interpreting results; 3) To determine whether there is a significant relationship between the respondent's description and their research skills.

METHODOLOGY

This study made use of descriptive research design, anchored on the idea of Stangor (2015). The author believes that descriptive research uses more standard behavior measures, including questionnaires and systematic observation of behavior, which are designed for statistical analysis. This involves emerging questions, procedures, data typically collected in the participants' setting, and data analysis, inductively building from particular to general themes. The researchers are making interpretations from the data gathered. Participants of this study were the 32 first-year social studies major students at the College of Teacher Education-Batangas State University. No sampling technique was used since all freshmen students served as respondents. A researcher-made questionnaire was the primary data gathering instrument in this study. Statistical tools used were weighted mean and composite

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means to guide the researcher in the interpretation of results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Research Traits of Students Researchers

The findings display the research traits of student researchers from first year college of teacher education students. The composite mean score of 3.15 signifies that all respondents from the College of Teacher Education (CTE) have agreed to the given statements about the research traits.

Table 1
Research Traits of Student Researchers

Items	WM	VI
1. I display a high level of intellectual honesty and integrity.	3.29	A
2. I am objective in the sense that I allow evidence, and not personal bias, to answer the queries.	3.26	A
3. I am systematic by setting procedures and steps to follow in the research process	3.26	A
4. I have proper communication skills and can establish rapport with the respondents	3.15	A
5. I am resourceful in gathering data relevant to my study.	3.12	A
6. I am persevering by keeping my effort continued despite difficulties and challenges in the process.	3.12	A
7. I have control on our economic resources used in the research process.	3.03	A
8. I am good at time management and able to utilize my time properly in a balanced manner.	2.97	A
Composite Mean	**3.15**	**A**

The results revealed the students agreed that they have a high level of intellectual honesty and integrity, as shown in the weighted mean of 3.29. This result means that the students maintain academic integrity in their research work. The findings relate with the concept of Resnik (2001) that the principle of honesty implies a general prohibition against falsifying, fabricating, or misrepresenting data, results, or other types of information pertaining to scientific publication. Honesty applies to various aspects of research,

such as grant proposals, peer review, personnel actions, accounting and finance, expert testimony, informed consent, media relations, and public education. As mentioned previously, honesty plays a crucial role in searching for knowledge and promoting cooperation and trust among researchers.

On the other hand, being good with time management utilizing time properly in a balanced manner got the lowest weighted mean of 2.97, though agreed by the respondents. This could be why first-year students are still in a period of adjustment; hence, they cannot yet find the right way of managing their time. They also get overwhelmed by the number of tasks they need to do in their different subjects.

The findings showed that when students conduct research; they do it with honesty and integrity, indicating that they do not falsify, edit, include incorrect data and information in the study or research-related items, questionnaires, and the like. This also means that they observe ethical accuracy and ethics in doing research.

2. Formulation of Research Problem

The findings showed that as to formulating research problems, students agreed that they consider their respondents formulating research problems evident in the weighted mean of 3.56. This implies that the respondents understand that considering the target respondents in conceptualizing a research problem gives the research a practical sense. According to Baraceros (2016), making a research problem in experimental research includes selecting subjects, pre and post-tests, and the use of treatment or control groups. Among those three key aspects of experimental research, the randomized selection of participants denies its identity as an actual experiment. semi-experimental research in which the selection process takes place not by chance but by the experimenter's purpose and decision. Regardless of several contrasting characteristics of true and quasi-experimental research, both tackle research problems that require the researchers to deal with the four essential elements of experiments: (1) subjects or objects (people, places, things, events,

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etc. (2) the subject's condition before the actual experiment. (3) the treatment, intervention, or condition applied on the subject. (4) the subject's condition after the treatment (Schreiber 2012).

Table 2
Research Skills Relative to Formulation to Research Problem

Items	WM	VI
1. I consider my respondents in formulating a research problem.	3.56	SA
2. I choose a topic that is timely and practically relevant	3.53	SA
3. I have a deep interest in studying a specific problem that calls for urgent and immediate solutions and remedies.	3.29	A
4. I seek the help of a research enthusiast in formulating a good research problem	3.29	A
5. I follow inverse pyramid pattern in order to have a general to come up with an organized research problem	3.26	A
6. I assure to match the research objectives with the research problem I have interest to study.	3.26	A
7. I ensure that my independent and dependent variables will match and can easily be measured.	3.26	A
8. I do some preliminary research on the chosen general topic.	3.21	A
Composite Mean	**3.33**	**A**

However, the students agreed that they did some preliminary research on the chosen general topic, which got the lowest mean of 3.21. This implies that the students also know that they have to gain first some close-up understanding of the topic through practice since practice is often the best way to achieve any depth of true understanding (Van de Ven and Johnson, 2006). This further emphasizes that as the students formulate the research problem. They consider who will be their respondents to establish the real purpose of the research. This also means that students observe the standardized way of formulating the research problem.

3. Gathering Literature

The findings displayed the research skills related to gathering literature. The composite mean of 3.35 signifies that the respondents agreed to the given statements regarding gathering literature.

Table 3
Research skill related to gathering literature

Items	WM	VI
1. I am aware of copyrights and plagiarism policy	3.50	SA
2. I am aware that timeliness of literature that would support my research shall always be considered.	3.44	A
3. I follow the step-by-step process of collecting information.	3.41	A
4. I know how to get information from different sources.	3.35	A
5. I combine the main ideas from one source or more in order to form a new idea.	3.35	A
6. I know the difference between conceptual and operational definitions.	3.32	A
7. I use the main ideas obtained from the information researched in order to support my topic	3.24	A
8. I am capable of discerning the veracity of information through in-depth verification of sources.	3.21	A
Composite Mean	**3.35**	**A**

The research revealed that the students strongly agreed that they are aware of copyrights and plagiarism policy, as shown by the weighted mean of 3.50. This indicates that the students are careful in organizing their literature and ensure that authors or sources are properly cited. This is also because the college employs Turnitin to check on students' output, thus teaching them the value of respect for intellectual property rights. This relates to what Adiningrum (2015) and Kutiele (2011) had found that cultural background plays a significant role in the students' understanding of plagiarism. However, the respondents only agreed that they were capable of discerning the veracity of information through in-depth verification of sources which resulted in the lowest weighted mean of 3.21. This means that they should improve students' skills in giving adequate judgment to the information gathered. According to Graneheim & Lundman (2004), assessing the source's credibility includes the focus of the research, the selection of

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participants, and how the data collection methods fit with the research focus.

4. METHODOLOGY

Table 4
Research Skills Relative to Methodology

Items	WM	VI
1. I begin my research methodology section by choosing which kind of research design is appropriate in measuring my study (e.g. qualitative, quantitative design).	3.53	SA
2. I can completely describe when, where, and how data gathering procedure should be performed.	3.32	A
3. I know what kind of data gathering instrument will be suitable for the objectives of my study.	3.29	A
4. I know what proper statistical treatment to be used in the gathered data.	3.29	A
5. I know how to get the sample size needed in the study by using appropriate sampling methods.	3.26	A
6. I delimit my study only in the vicinity/locality where it is conducted.	3.26	A
Composite Mean	**3.33**	**A**

The composite mean score of 3.33 signifies that the respondents have agreed to the given statements describing their research methodology skills. The findings revealed that the students strongly agree that they begin their research methodology by choosing which kind of research design is appropriate for their study (e.g., qualitative, quantitative); this got a weighted mean of 3.53. This demonstrates that as students conduct research, they keep in mind that in selecting their methodology, they will have to decide. It involves analysis of the assumptions, principles, and procedures in a particular approach to inquiry. And it also includes the type of research, how the data are collected or selected, how to analyze the data, the tools or materials used in the research, and the rationale for choosing the methods.

On the other hand, the students agreed that they delimit the study only in the vicinity/locality conducted, as shown in the weighted mean of 3.26. This also means that students observe the study's limitations or boundaries to narrow or focus on the research topic, which helps the researchers focus on their interest topic. Ifeanyi and Fidelis (2016)

stated that the research topic must narrow the focus. The thesis should serve two purposes, and it should guide the researchers while they write and guide the readers when they read.

5. INTERPRETING RESULTS

The composite mean score of 3.35 signifies that the respondents agree with the indicators describing their research skills in interpreting results. It is further revealed that the students strongly agree that upon drawing conclusions, the researchers should provide a list of realistic projects and solutions beneficial to the subject of the study; this obtained the highest weighted mean of 3.53. This shows that the respondents so understand that the findings serve as a guide and basis for conceptualizing the output of research. They know that the end product of a study is the giving of a solution to identified problems.

Table 5
Research Skills Relative to Interpreting Results

Items	WM	VI
1. I know that upon drawing conclusions, I should provide a list of realistic projects and solutions beneficial to the subject of my study	3.53	SA
2. I keep in mind who will be reading my results and present it in a way that they will understand it	3.47	A
3. I know that when interpreting the results, I should be able to bring out the implications	3.41	A
4. I organize data in a chronological order.	3.35	A
5. I use tables and graphs as an objective representation of the measurements I made	3.32	A
6. I remain to be as factual and concise as possible in reporting my findings.	3.32	A
7. I support the results with at least 3 related literatures	3.26	A
8. I know that in qualitative research, the interpretation should begin with decoding the interviews that were triangulated to ensure data validity	3.15	A
Composite Mean	**3.35**	**A**

The students agreed that they know in qualitative research. The interpretation should begin with decoding the triangulated interviews to ensure data validity; this got, however, the lowest weighted mean of 3.15. Willig (2017) stated that

qualitative researchers assume that people's actions are always meaningful in some way. Through the process of engaging with those meanings, deeper insights into relevant social and psychological processes may be gained. Furthermore, qualitative data never speaks for itself and needs to be given meaning by the researcher. Given that qualitative research is all about meaning making.

Table 6
Relationship between Student Research Traits and their Research Skills

Variable	Computed value	p-value	Decision on H_0	Interpretation
2.1	0.572	0.000	Reject	Significant
2.2	0.674	0.000	Reject	Significant
2.3	0.643	0.000	Reject	Significant
2.4	0.757	0.000	Reject	Significant

Table 6 presents the relationship between the research skills and research traits of the respondents. In line with this, it can be seen that the computed values equivalent to .572, .674, .643, and .757 with p-values which are all .000, less than the significance of 0.05, indicating that the null hypothesis of no significant relationship is rejected. These results further reveal a significant relationship between the students' research skills and research traits. In order to come up with an effective and competent research paper, the students must acquire the research skills and traits.

CONCLUSIONS

The study showed that first year Social Science students of Batangas State University-Pablo Borbon have a high level of intellectual honesty and integrity and are very objective in accepting answers. As researchers, they are considerate of their respondents and their chosen topics in formulating research problems. They are very much aware of the policies in gathering literature and appropriate methodology that should be used in their study. They are also aware that they should provide realistic projects and beneficial solutions to the problem after interpreting the data.

More so, there is a significant relationship between the respondents' research traits and research skills. Hence, a training program is proposed to offer innovative ways to improve the researchers' traits and skills in conducting a study.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the results and findings, this study sets forth the following recommendations: Programs, seminars, and webinars should be organized to guide and provide information about the importance of research skills and traits as educators and professionals. A thorough study about the research skills and traits of the students must be conducted using other groups of respondents or a large number of populations in Batangas State University Main Campus to validate the findings of the study.

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