

EXPLORING CONSIDERABLE FACTORS TOWARDS CHOOSING A GOOD RESEARCHABLE LEGAL TOPIC

Ahmed Abiodun Muhammed-Mikaaeel*, Shehu Kazeem Hassan** and
Kamaldeen Olaitan Salman***

Abstract

Choosing a researchable topic is an inevitable point of call for any intending researcher. It is the foundation that dictates the trends throughout the study. However, the process of choosing a good researchable topic is herculean. This is because an intending researcher cannot afford to undergo certain systematic laid-down procedures. This has made most upcoming academic researchers run away from research activities. Against this backdrop, this paper examines the process of choosing a good researchable legal topic with sole reliance on the doctrinal method of legal research. The paper finds that a good research topic has certain characteristics such as being clear, straightforward, unambiguous and easily comprehensible; being tailored towards areas of interests and competencies of the researcher; not representing a moral, spiritual or esoteric situation etc. The paper finds further that factors for choosing a good researchable legal topic include FINE techniques and FRIENDS modes, amongst others. The paper reveals that generating ideas to choose a good researchable topic could be achieved vide attending viva, conferences, literature reviews, and brainstorming to mention but a few. The paper equally finds that certain tools could assist a researcher to achieve choosing a good researchable legal topic. These tools include selecting appropriate areas of research, replica study of the past related research, studying recommendations for future research etc. The paper finds also that the significance of choosing a good researchable legal topic is deeply rooted in its uniqueness and identity from the previous research in conformity with the rule against plagiarism. The paper finally finds that a good researchable legal topic is susceptible to changes, modifications and amendments depending on the developments and trends in the course of the research. The paper recommends constant and continuous engagement in research activities for the upcoming academic researchers to attain perfection.

Keywords: Research, Legal Research, Researchable Topic, Factors, Techniques

1.0 Introduction

Many upcoming researchers shy away from research activities, especially academic research, due to its systematic nature.

¹ The systematic nature of the research makes it imperative on every researcher to consider certain laid down procedures which cannot be bypassed according to one's whims and caprices.² It is thus incumbent on every researcher to rigorously learn the systematic way of conducting academic research for optimum result.³

Legal research is principally divided into academic and non-academic legal research.⁴ The focus, therefore, in this paper is on academic legal research. It is therefore not gainsaid that given the nature of academic legal research, the processes of coming up with a good researchable topic might be daunting and frustrating, especially to upcoming researchers.⁵ This is because it is sometimes not easy to come by a good researchable legal topic, having regard to the fact that every research has to be unique and different from the previous one.⁶ Therefore, this is not something that could be achieved in the twinkling of an eye.⁷ It may take days, months or even years, depending on the seriousness of the intending researcher.

*Ph.d Scholar in Islamic Law, Department of Islamic Law, Faculty of Law, Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin, Nigeria. He is also a Barrister, Solicitor, Legal Consultant, Notary Public and a Lecturer at Department of Islamic Law, Faculty of Law, Kwara State University, Malete, Nigeria. Email: ahmed.muhammed-mikaaeel@kwasu.edu.ng Tel: +2347035064745;

**LL.B; LL.M; Phd (in view); Ag. HOD, Islami Law Department, Kwara State College of Arabic and Islamic Legal Studies (CAILS), Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria; Email: hassanshehu317@gmail.com Tel: +2348032277796;

***Ph.d Scholar in Islamic Law and a Lecturer at Department of Islamic Law, Faculty of Law, Kwara State University, Malete, Nigeria. Email: kamaldeen.salman@kwasu.edu.ng Tel: +2348034673505;

¹ M Kaweesi, 'Scholarly Conceptions of the nature of Academic research in Universities: A Literature Review' *Interdisciplinary Journal of Education* (2018) 1(2) 209-223

² *ibid*

³ Y Aboki, *Introduction to Legal Research Methodology: A Guide for Writing Long Essays, Thesis, Dissertations and Articles* (Tamaza Publishing Company Ltd, Wusasa, Zaria, 2001) 1-114

⁴ SI Ali, *et al.* 'Legal Research of Doctrinal and non-Doctrinal' *International Journal of Trend in Research and Development* (2017) 4(1) 493-494

⁵ D Wintersberger, and M Saunders, 'Formulating and Clarifying the Research Topic: Insights and guide for the Production Management Research Community' *Production* (2020) 30(e20200059) 1-8

⁶ A Taiwo, *Basic Concepts in Legal Research Methodology* (2nd Ed, Princeton & Associates, Ikeja, 2017) 1-50

⁷ Wintersgerber and Saunders, (n 4)

The foregoing thus informs the reason this paper shifts attention to the topical discussion of the considerable factors towards choosing a good researchable legal topic. This is with a view to adding to the existing knowledge owing to the recurrent problems being faced when it comes to choosing or arriving at researchable topic.

2.0 Understanding Legal Research

The conceptualization of research has been a subject of divergent opinions among academic scholars. This is because different scholars have accorded different connotations to research. To this end, Redman and Merry define research as “systematized efforts to gain knowledge.”⁸ Mannheim, in the same vein, viewed research “as the careful, diligent and exhaustive investigation of a specific subject matter, which has as its aim the advancement of mankind’s knowledge.”⁹ Stephenson conceptualised research as “the manipulation of things, concepts or symbols to generalise to extend, correct or verify knowledge.”¹⁰ Lundberg equally perceives research “as a method sufficiently objective and systematic to make possible classification, generalisation and verification of the data observed.”¹¹

Webster's Dictionary defines research as “a careful, critical inquiry or explanation in seeking facts or principles.”¹² The Encyclopedia Dictionary equally defines research “as an act of searching into a matter closely and carefully, inquiry directly to the discovery of truth and particular scientific investigation of the principles and facts of any subject.”¹³ Research is likened to a systematic enquiry or investigation geared towards verifying a fresh theory or confirming/supplementing previous theories by way of new knowledge contribution.¹⁴ Knowledge in this wise is an extension of the existing knowledge by the

⁸ C Soren, ‘Legal Research Methodology: An Overview’ *Journal of Emerging Technologies sand Innovative Research* (2014) 8 (10) 442-284

⁹ *ibid*

¹⁰ *ibid*

¹¹ *ibid*

¹² Merriam-Webster, ‘Research’ retrieved from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/research> accessed 23 October 2025

¹³ A Singh, ‘Meaning and Definition of Research’ <<https://www.google.com/search?q=encyclopedia+dictionary>> accessed 23 October 2025

¹⁴ M Islam, ‘The Importance of Research in the Advancement of Knowledge and Society’ *International Journal of Basic and Clinical Studies* (2023) 8(4) 1-3

previous researcher. This is because it is an undisputable fact that no research can be said to be entirely new, having regard to the previous literature. A researcher undertaking a certain study is presumed to possess much knowledge or information about it, and while conducting research, he/she proceeds onward to acquire more knowledge or information about it based on the research objectives.¹⁵ Research is therefore a scientific or systematic consideration of existing knowledge with a view to either confirming or disagreeing with it by way of new knowledge acquisition. It involves the systematic identification of a problem to find a solution to it.

In legal parlance, research is decoded as legal research as generally viewed as an original and fundamental contribution to the knowledge on the legal subject which involves a continuous process of acquiring knowledge through enquiry into existing laws to make reforms, amendments or recommendations for enactment of new laws.¹⁶ Be that as it may, legal research therefore refers to that branch of knowledge dealing with investigation regarding the principles of law and existing legal institutions.¹⁷ Legal research could thus be defined as the systematic investigation of a problem in law to find a solution to it at the end of the day.

The law aims to regulate human behaviour in present-day society.¹⁸ Legal research must be directed to the study of the relationship between the world of the law and the world that the law purports to govern. Legal researchers do systematic research into social, political and other fact conditions which give rise to individual rules, acts or codes. They also examine the socio-legal and other effects of those acts or rules. Research of this kind is called, “Fact research in law.”¹⁹ Research may be pursued to obtain better knowledge

¹⁵ *ibid*

¹⁶ P Chynoweth, ‘Legal Research’ in A Knight, and L Ruddock (Eds) *Advanced Research Methods in the Built Environment* (Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2008) 28-37

¹⁷ *ibid*

¹⁸ PM Marzuki, ‘The Essence of Legal Research is to Resolve Legal Problems’ *Yuridika* (2022) 37(1) 37-57

¹⁹ *ibid*

and understanding of any problem of legal philosophy, legal history, comparative study of law or any system of positive law.²⁰

3.0 Characteristics of a Good Researchable Legal Topic

A good researchable legal topic has several characteristics, the list of which is inexhaustible. Nevertheless, some of the characteristics of a good researchable topic are that it should:²¹

- i. Relate to the previous theories to show areas of contribution to knowledge;
- ii. be clear, straightforward, unambiguous and easily comprehensible;
- iii. be tailored towards areas of interests and competencies of the researcher;
- iv. not represent a moral, spiritual or esoteric situation;
- v. be risk-free in terms of duration and cost;
- vi. not be tailored towards jeopardizing religious or moral values;
- vii. be verifiable for further investigations and ascertainment;
- viii. be important from a theoretical and practical point of view;
- ix. clarify the relationship between two or more variables, and
- x. be about enhancing the existing body of knowledge.

4.0 Generating Ideas for a Potential Researchable Legal Topic

According to Adhikari in his article entitled “Strategies for Selecting a Research Topic”, he identifies several useful strategies for generating useful ideas for a good researchable legal topic. The strategies include:²²

- i. Constantly attending as many viva voce as possible: The discussions during the oral defence of the thesis can spring up ideas for potential topics.
- ii. Attending conferences, workshops, and seminars to useful ideas: attending such events and paying attention to recommendations canvassed in the events can generate useful ideas for research regarding current and future research needs.

²⁰ ibid

²¹ NA Herma, ‘Basis of Selecting Research Topic: An Analytical Study’ *An International Multidisciplinary e-Journal* (2022) IV 15

²² GR Adhikari, ‘Strategies for Selecting A Research Topic’ *Mining Engineer’s Journal* (2020) 22 (1) 27

- iii. Carefully searching through the internet from secure and trustworthy websites: to this end, the intending researcher needs to be very cautious so as not to rely on unreliable information from fake websites.
- iv. Conducting a thorough literature review around the subject of interest: By doing so, the major recommendation for future research gives enough clues to an intending researcher.
- v. Organising brainstorming sessions among people who are professionals and experts in the field of interest to generate ideas for potential topics.

A good use of the foregoing strategies makes the voyage of discovery of good research seamless. What is noticeable from the above is that generating ideas towards achieving a good researchable topic is a tedious exercise which an intending researcher must contend with. The foregoing thus points irresistibly to the fact that the art of researching is a systematic process or procedure that cannot be bypassed but be perfected to have a unique research outcome.

5.0 Factors to be considered: FINER Techniques vis-à-vis FRIENDS Modes

The FINER techniques²³ and FRIENDS' modes²⁴ seek to achieve the same result. FINER techniques are interpreted as feasible, interesting, novel, ethical, and relevant. While the acronym "FRIENDS" is decoded as feasible, relevant, interesting, ethical, narrow and disciplined. The areas of difference are the "narrow" and "discipline" in FRIENDS as well as "novel" in FINER. Without much ado, an intending researcher must, as a matter of course, ensure that the proposed topic leads to a novel discovery or a new contribution to the existing body of knowledge.²⁵ Be that as it may, The FRIENDS' modes seem to encompass the FINER techniques.

²³ SM Praharaj, and S Ameen, 'How to Choose A Research Topic' *Kerala Journal of Psychiatric* (2020) 33(1) 83-84

²⁴ Adhikari (n 20)

²⁵ Praharaj, and Ameen, (n 21)

Thus, the FRIENDS' modes shall be the focus of discussion. It is important to note that the FRIENDS' modes of selecting a good researchable topic are simple. The FRIENDS' modes thus poised the intending researcher to be inquisitive about certain important aspects as the road map to his discovery of a good researchable topic. The intending researcher needs to ascertain the feasibility of the proposed topic in terms of manpower, timeframe, finance or cost implications and capability to undertake the study.²⁶ In the same vein, the intending researcher has to be sure that the proposed topic is relevant practically, socially, scientifically and even personally to him or the general public.²⁷ The intending researcher also enquires about whether the proposed topic interests him in terms of having strong curiosity, passion and motivation for the study.²⁸ Still, under the FRIENDS' modes, an intending researcher will have to ensure that the proposed topic does not offend ethical issues, whether concerning human beings or animals generally. By so doing, he eschews offending any laid-down codes of ethics.²⁹

Moreover, an intending researcher seeking to arrive at a good researchable legal topic must narrow down the proposed topic so that it is neither too narrow nor too broad but must have a sufficiently specific focus.³⁰ Discipline is another important area to be ascertained by an intending researcher seeking to frame a researchable topic. With respect to discipline, he ensures which area of discipline his topic of interest falls. Is it within his core discipline or a related discipline, and whether there exist any specifications and standards for the focused area?³¹ And finally, the availability of a supervisor for the proposed topic is part of the considerations under the FRIENDS' modes. The intending researcher must ensure that to come up with a good researchable legal topic, he must take into consideration whether there is the availability of a

²⁶ Adhikari (n 20)

²⁷ *ibid*

²⁸ *ibid*

²⁹ *ibid*

³⁰ *ibid*

³¹ *ibid*

supervisor with adequate knowledge in the subject area who will show commitment, honesty and interest in the proposed topic.³²

According to Bolaji Abdulkadir,³³ certain inevitable factors to be considered in choosing a good researchable legal topic are summarised thus:

- Conducting background information or checking on the intended area of research;
- Choosing a reasonable topic in a familiar area;
- Sourcing for material to prosecute the research;
- Choosing researchable topics in areas of interest;
- Considering available funds to prosecute the research to completion; and
- Narrowing down the topic to a focused and manageable area.

6.0 Tools for Choosing a Good Researchable Legal Topic

Tools for selecting a good researchable topic are numerous. Some of the tools are discussed below.³⁴

6.1 Selecting Area of Research

For an intending researcher to come up with a good researchable legal topic, one of the tools for achieving that is selecting areas of research.³⁵ Research areas are wide depending on the interested discipline. Even within a discipline, there could be a sub-area of research for convenience.³⁶ Doing this will enable the researcher to be able to narrow down when selecting or choosing a researchable topic. This shows that every researchable topic is tied to a particular area.³⁷ Selecting and identifying a particular area of research goes a long way in achieving a smooth voyage towards coming up with a good researchable topic.

³² *ibid*

³³ AB Abdulkadir 'Lecture Note on Legal Research Methodology' (Lecture delivered in First Semester, 2023/2024 Session at Faculty of Law, Al-Hikmah University, 2024) 1-10

³⁴ Herma, (n 19)

³⁵ BK Passi, 'Selecting Research Areas and Research Design Approaches in Distance Education: Process issues' <<https://www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/view/203/285>> accessed 26 April 2024

³⁶ *ibid*

³⁷ *ibid*

6.2 Comprehensive Reading in the Selected Area of Research

Having selected an interesting and relevant area of research, an intending researcher would find thorough reading in the selected area inevitable.³⁸ The comprehensive reading will expose the researcher to broad knowledge in the selected area to be able to discover areas of the gap to pick interest to fill the gap in the existing literature.³⁹ Thus, in the course of the comprehensive reading in the selected area, several topics would be calling for the attention of the intending researcher, thereby leading him to a good researchable legal topic.

6.3 A Replica Study of Past Related Research

To come up with a good researchable legal topic, the study of the related previous research is a useful tool.⁴⁰ This will enable the researcher to be able to distinguish between the previous study and the intention to improve on the previous research.⁴¹ It is important to note that subsequent research should tilt towards reviewing the existing studies for better discovery of new knowledge.⁴² This is therefore what should inform framing a researchable topic. This is in line with trends in the recent research, which frowns at descriptive research, but rather prefers analytical research that exposes the weakness in the previous studies by preferring pragmatic recommendations.

6.3 Studying Recommendations for Future Research

One of the tools towards coming up with a good researchable legal topic is through the study of recommendations for future research.⁴³ It is a fact that some researcher at the end of their discovery usually exposes the limitations in the outcome of their study and provide recommendations for future research. Therefore, an intending researcher can have useful clues to a good researchable topic through the cautious study of such

³⁸ RAQ Alava, *et al.* 'Importance of Comprehensive Reading: Its Value in Basic' *International Research Journal of Engineering, IT & Scientific Research* (2020) 6(3) 1-8

³⁹ C Muller-Bloch, and J Kranz, 'A Framework for Rigorously Identifying Research Gaps in Qualitative Literature Review' (paper presented in the International Conference on Information Systems, 2015) 1-19

⁴⁰ M Marabelli, and E Vaast, 'Unveiling the Relevance of academic Research: A Practice-Base View' <<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1471772720300385>> accessed 26 April 2024.

⁴¹ *ibid*

⁴² *ibid*

⁴³ LM Connelly, 'Recommendations for Future Research' *Medsurg Nursing* (2023) 32(1) 62-64

recommendations for future research. The rationale behind this is that it is practically impossible to solve all related problems vide particular research.⁴⁴ Other researchers will thread the same path to solve yet unresolved problems suggested in the recommendations for future research.

6.4 Observing and Reviewing the Latest Trends in Research.

Observing the latest trends in research can assist an intending researcher in the discovery of a good researchable topic.⁴⁵ During the era of COVID-19, most researchers tried to have their bite of the trends to gain relevance and currency in the current topical issues. So, observation of the current trends in research could suggest good researchable research to an intending researcher.⁴⁶

6.5 Meeting with Previous Researchers in the Selected Area of Research

A good starting point or a good first point of call for an intending researcher struggling to come up with a good researchable topic is to meet with experts in his or her chosen field for consultation and robust discussions surrounding his areas of interest. Public academic gatherings such as conferences, seminars, workshops, etc. could afford this opportunity.⁴⁷ This will enable the researcher to identify areas of problem and where to focus their research. This exercise will no doubt assist in coming up with a good researchable topic in the narrowed subject area.

6.6 Identification of Flaws in the Previous Research

Identifying flaws in the previous research is a good way to lead to the voyage of discovery of a good researchable topic. This is because the purpose of subsequent research is to improve on the flaws discoverable from the previous research. An intending researcher should be mindful of the fact that his or her proposal should be purposeful.

⁴⁴ JN Buonincontro, and R Anderson, 'A Review of Articles Using Observation Method to Study Creativity in Education (1980-2018)' *Journal of Creative Behaviour* (2018) 0(0) 1-17

⁴⁵ *ibid*

⁴⁶ Herma (n 19)

⁴⁷ S Subramanian, 'The Importance of Conferences and Networking in PhD and Postdoctoral Training' *Current Protocols Essential Laboratory Techniques* (2020) 21(44) 1-8

One of the purposes of this is to review, critique and analyse the previous studies.⁴⁸ Having this at the back of his mind, spotting any noticeable flaws in the previous research constitutes a source of inspiration for coming up with a good researchable topic.

It is important to note that the above tools for choosing a good research topic are some of the tools an intending researcher can utilise to choose a good researchable topic. The lists are endless, depending on the level of exposure of the intending researcher. Bolaji Abdulkadir⁴⁹ added that brainstorming, identifying key issues in the selected areas of research and due consultations with experts also constitute useful tools for choosing a good researchable topic.

7.0 Significance of Choosing a Good Researchable Legal Topic

The significance of choosing a good researchable topic cannot be over-emphasized. The reason is that it is highly important to ensure choosing a good researchable topic for uniqueness and identity. A good researchable legal topic is unique and different from previous related studies. Therefore, it is better to tread cautiously while choosing a researchable topic. As a matter of practice, a good researchable topic is one that which could be differentiated from the previously related work both in form and in substance. The reason is that the rule against plagiarism equally applies to choosing researchable topics.⁵⁰

It could be an exercise in futility when a researcher reaches an advanced stage of result reporting, just for him to discover that another researcher has undertaken virtually similar research in the past. This becomes very painful and traumatic at this stage. That is why it is better to go through the rigour of selecting a good researchable topic than to suffer failure at an advanced stage. It is imperative to note that by conventional rule, no

⁴⁸ H Snyder, 'Literature Review as a Research Methodology: An Overview and Guidelines' *Journal of Business Research* (2019) (104) 333-339

⁴⁹ AB Abdulkadir 'Lecture Note on Legal Research Methodology' (Lecture delivered in First Semester, 2023/2024 Session at Faculty of Law, Al-Hikmah University, 2024) 1-10

⁵⁰ ST Green, 'Plagiarism, Norms, and the Limits of Theft Law: Some Observations on the Use of Criminal Sanctions in Enforcing Intellectual Property Rights' *Hastings Law Journal* (2002) (54) 167-242

virtually identical or similar researchable topic is allowed. Even, when a researcher intends to review a particular previous study, he should carefully frame a researchable topic to achieve that purpose and not by adopting the same previous topic.

8.0 A Good Researchable Legal Topic and Susceptibility to Changes

It is important to note that the process of choosing a good researchable topic could be tedious. This is because the researcher must ensure that he is coming up with new ideas, and to showcase that, it is not lazy work. Careful consideration of the FINER techniques and FRIENDS' modes is inevitable. More so, the processes of generating ideas for discovering a good researchable topic are also herculean tasks to contend with. In a similar vein, an intending researcher cannot afford not to make use of useful tools recommended towards selecting a good researchable topic. After passing through these rigours, the pertinent question is, does the chosen researchable topic attain permanent status or unchangeable status? The answer to this poser is both in the affirmative and negative.⁵¹

The fact is that as research progresses, even after discovering a good researchable topic, it is still susceptible to changes due to the trend in research.⁵² This may be a result of new developments in the law during the research. The changes may also be a result of a shift in the predetermined research focus. Where a researchable topic is fine-tuned purposely to analyse certain weaknesses in a particular legislation and the weaknesses are cured by amendment by the legislature before the research is finalized, this occurrence may foist a situation of changes in the already settled researchable topic to blend with the new development.

In another vein, where a researcher in a focused-based research topic slips away to a different focus during his research, the result may suggest changing the already settled researchable topic to blend with the real focus of his research. This is to show that changes can still be effected to a researchable topic in the middle of the research or at the

⁵¹ A Sahay, 'Choosing A Research Topic' <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/35395515> accessed 23 April 2024

⁵² *ibid*

advanced stage, depending on the objective(s) intended to be achieved through the research. It is thus important to note that where there is a reason for such changes, such a modified topic should not offend the conventional rule of research topic modification.⁵³

9.0 Conclusion

Choosing a good researchable topic becomes easier by acquaintances with the skills and tools laid for such as well as the factors that must be considered to achieve that purpose.⁵⁴ It is thus important to state that acquaintances with the skills, tools and considerable factors are not an end but a means to an end. Simply because it is not only the researchers' acquaintances with all the skills for choosing a good researchable topic that is required but mastery of the practical utilization of the skills and tools as well as the considerable factors.

This paper showcased FINE techniques⁵⁵ and FRIENDS Modes,⁵⁶ among others, as the important factors to be considered for choosing a good researchable topic. The paper also gave credence to some useful tools such as brainstorming, identifying key issues in the selected areas of research and due consultations with experts among others as important for choosing a good researchable topic.⁵⁷

Choosing a good researchable topic is not an easy task but a product of serious efforts on the part of the intended researcher. The efforts do not even stop at the discovery of a good researchable topic. It continues till the completion of the study. That is why the already settled research topic is susceptible to changes at any time before the research is completed.⁵⁸

While some experts pride themselves on the mastery of the practical skills for choosing a good researchable topic as a result of their long years of experience in the field of

⁵³ That is, the topic should be modified in such a way that it does not virtually adopt a similar or previously related research topic.

⁵⁴ J Topalov, and BR Bojanic, 'Academic Research Skills of University Students' *Romanian Journal of English Studies* (2013) 10(1) 145-152

⁵⁵ Praharaj and Ameen, (n 21)

⁵⁶ Adhikari, (n 20)

⁵⁷ Herma, (n 19)

⁵⁸ Sahay, (n 49)

academic research, it is thus recommended that upcoming researchers should not despair but continue to constantly engage in research activities to attain mastery and perfection needed as it is said that practice makes perfection.