



# Dissertation Chapter Outline

A Complete Framework for All Five Chapters

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

*Sets the foundation and rationale for your entire study.*

Section	Purpose / What to Include
1.1 Background of the Study	Contextualize the research problem within the broader field.
1.2 Statement of the Problem	Articulate the specific gap or issue your study addresses.
1.3 Purpose of the Study	State the research aim clearly in one focused sentence.
1.4 Research Questions	List the central question and 2–4 guiding sub-questions.
1.5 Significance of the Study	Explain theoretical and practical contributions.
1.6 Theoretical Framework	Introduce the lens or lenses guiding your analysis.
1.7 Definitions of Key Terms	Define specialized terms central to your study.
1.8 Assumptions, Limitations & Delimitations	Be transparent about scope and constraints.
1.9 Organization of the Study	Briefly preview all five chapters.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

*Situates your study within existing scholarship.*

Section	Purpose / What to Include
2.1 Introduction to the Review	State the purpose and scope of the literature reviewed.
2.2 Theme 1	First major thematic grouping of literature.
2.3 Theme 2	Second major thematic grouping.
2.4 Theme 3 (if applicable)	Third thematic grouping.

Section	Purpose / What to Include
2.5 Theoretical Framework (expanded)	Deep engagement with guiding theory or theories.
2.6 Gaps in the Literature	What existing research has not addressed.
2.7 Chapter Summary	Synthesize key themes and transition to methodology.

### Chapter 3: Methodology

*Explains how you conducted the study.*

Section	Purpose / What to Include
3.1 Introduction	Restate the research purpose and overview the methodology.
3.2 Research Design	Name and justify your chosen design.
3.3 Research Site / Context	Describe where the study took place.
3.4 Participants / Sample	Who was studied and how they were selected.
3.5 Instrumentation / Data Sources	Tools and materials used to collect data.
3.6 Data Collection Procedures	Step-by-step description of data collection.
3.7 Data Analysis Procedures	How you analyzed the data – specific strategies named.
3.8 Trustworthiness / Validity	How rigor was established.
3.9 Ethical Considerations	IRB, consent, confidentiality, and risk mitigation.
3.10 Chapter Summary	Transition to the findings chapter.

### Chapter 4: Results / Findings

*Presents what you found – without interpretation.*

Section	Purpose / What to Include
4.1 Introduction	Restate research questions and explain how findings are organized.
4.2 Participant / Data Overview	Descriptive summary of participants or dataset.

Section	Purpose / What to Include
4.3 Findings by Research Question	Present findings organized by each research question.
4.4 Tables and Figures	Clearly labeled visual presentations of data.
4.5 Chapter Summary	Summarize key findings and transition to discussion.

## Chapter 5: Discussion & Conclusion

*Interprets findings and brings the study to a close.*

Section	Purpose / What to Include
5.1 Introduction	Restate the purpose and summarize the chapter's structure.
5.2 Discussion of Findings	Interpret findings in relation to each research question.
5.3 Connections to Literature	Show how findings confirm, challenge, or extend prior research.
5.4 Theoretical Implications	What do findings mean for the theoretical framework?
5.5 Practical Implications	Real-world applications for practitioners, policymakers, etc.
5.6 Limitations of the Study	Honest acknowledgment of constraints.
5.7 Recommendations for Future Research	What should scholars explore next?
5.8 Conclusion	Final synthesis – bring the study full circle.

## General Writing Tips

Each chapter should begin with a brief introduction and end with a transition summary. Chapters 1 and 3 are written in future tense in the proposal; switch to past tense after your defense.

Every claim in Chapters 1 and 2 must be supported by a citation.

Chapter 4 presents findings only – save all interpretation for Chapter 5.

Maintain consistent terminology and formatting throughout all five chapters.