

 **Research Article**

The Importance of Academic Research Methodology for Architecture Students in Morocco

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Since the paramount significance of doing scientific research in any domain is undeniable, even if the majority of students realise it until the late stages of their educational journey, this study identifies the importance of research methodology courses for architecture students in the Moroccan architecture national schools (Ecole Nationale d'Architecture). Based on an English teaching course at the national school of architecture of Tétouan in Morocco, fifth-year/semester 9 students had a course on research methodology in relation to their domain of architecture. An online structured questionnaire was shared with architecture students in the city of Tétouan in Morocco, based on their willingness and availability from September 2024 to January 2025; 30 out of 45 students responded to the online questionnaire. The results showed that research methodology is an important aspect for architecture students' academic and professional careers. The implications of this study show that it is of paramount significance to include a course on research methodology in the ENAs of Morocco in order to urge architecture students to be productive in terms of academic research so as to boost their academic and professional profiles alike. In order to keep the spirit of sharing knowledge and expanding one's knowledge and understanding about the different aspects of the research methodology, some recommendations are necessary to take into account, so as to facilitate the task for future research researchers in the academic research domain. An open discussion about the inclusion of academic research in scientific majors in the early years is needed to improve our understanding of why the majority of students neglect this vital aspect in their academic and professional careers.

Keywords: Architectural Studies, Methods, Significance, Higher Education, Learning

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1. INTRODUCTION

Research methodology is part and parcel of any academic or professional career of people. This being the case, this study identifies the importance of research methodology in the academic and professional careers of architecture students in the national institutions of architecture (ENA) in Morocco. Relying on a course of English about research methodology in relation to the domain of architecture, semester 9 students in ENA of Tétouan, Morocco from September 2024 to January 2025 identified and learned about the importance of academic research and its multifarious aspects in relation to their major in order to entice them to boost their academic profiles and be able to share their academic rigour in and outside Morocco. All the students were able to perform presentations in relation to academic research and link them to their major by providing real situation examples and open up interactive discussions with their colleagues to benefit and learn from each other.

1.1. Problem Statement

The paramount significance of doing scientific research in any domain is undeniable, still the majority of students realise it until the late stages of their educational journey; one of the reasons is that they are more exam-oriented or simply job-oriented. Also, another problem regarding academic research is that not all students are able to benefit from grants or scholarships that encourage them to be productive academically or have academic mobility.

1.2. Research Question

This study has a major research question (RQ):

Why is it important to know and learn about research methodology in the domain of architecture?

In order to answer this question, the students provided their answers in the online structured questionnaire to highlight the (un)importance of research methodology vis-à-vis architectural studies.

The following section sheds light on the scholarly views in relation to academic research in the domain of architecture.

1.3. Literature Review

In order to provide a clear overview of some of the important scholarly viewpoints in relation to research methodology and architecture, Rendell (2004) states that “in order to fully acknowledge the wide range of methods adopted and outputs produced within architectural research, we need to engage with discussions around disciplinarity” (p.141). in other words, the domain of architectural studies should be engaged more into a debate and discussions in terms of research methodology. Similarly, Sattrup (2012) states that “Very few attempts have been made at describing a comprehensive guide to architectural research methods, possibly owing to the relatively short history of doctoral research in architecture.” (p. 4). In fact, this is a call to elaborate research methodologies related to architectural studies. Moreover, Niezabitowska (2018) suggests that “In architecture, a discipline not yet firmly established, a problem arises connected with the specification of the paradigm, the cohesion of which is still doubtful.” (p. 2); that is to say, architectural studies still lack scientific paradigms that guide and organise the domain of architectural studies within the scope of research methodology. Hence, Luck (2019) confirms that “it is less clear what architectural research’s relationship is with design research.” (p. 1); the idea is to create more space for academic debates and endeavours for the benefit of the domain of architecture in general. In the same vein, Aksamija (2021) insists on “Integrating research into practice is essential for developing new knowledge, solving design and technical problems, overcoming different types of challenges present in the contemporary profession, and improving design outcomes.” (p. III); simply put, it is time to consider the relationship between scientific theories of architecture and their practice, but this won’t be possible unless there are academic research paradigms that refer to the actual practice of each architectural design. As well, Aalto and Steinert (2024) stresses on the fact that “Architectural design practice has always relied on a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to gather and apply knowledge.” (p.1); hence, this could be the starting point on which scholars and academicians interested in the domain of architecture to elaborate on this relationship between research methodology and architecture.

Based on these empirical and scholarly studies in relation to architecture methods, the next part addresses the research gap of this study from the researcher’s perspective.

1.4. Research Gap

The previously mentioned scholarly studies relied mainly on Western studies while neglecting other international contexts; this study, therefore, relates this topic of research methodology in the domain of architecture within the Moroccan context as an example for the MENA region context. More than that, teaching the English course in the Moroccan ENAs should not be limited to teaching language and communication skills; hence, this study provides another alternative that can be of added value to architecture students and professors alike.

The coming part sheds light on the implemented methodology in this study, so as to get results based on students' answers in the online structured questionnaire.

2. METHODOLOGY

In order to understand the results of this study, this section foreshadows the methodology used to collect and identify responses from the students; the research instrument, population, and setting, as well as the data collection procedure, are all highlighted in this section.

2.1. Research Instrument

This study relied on quantitative data to collect data from the respondents. By sharing an online structured questionnaire, respondents answered multiple-choice and Likert scale questions to assess their knowledge and awareness of the importance of research methodology in the domain of architecture, as part of a descriptive study. The data collection period was from September 2024 to January 2025.

2.2. Population and Setting

The targeted population is architecture institutions' semester 9 students belonging to École Nationale d'Architecture (ENA) in Tétouan, Morocco. The class was made up of 45 students, and based on convenience sampling, 30 students responded to the online questionnaire based on their willingness and availability.

2.3. Data Collection Procedure

During their semester 9 English course sessions, the students identified and performed presentations related to the different aspects of research methodology, such as the literature review section, methodology section, or discussion and conclusion sections, alongside practical examples and exercises done during the session or as homework. As well, the students worked on finding key elements between research methodology and implementing it in their domain of architecture. By the end of the course, students were asked to share their impressions concerning what they had studied in class in the shared online structured questionnaire.

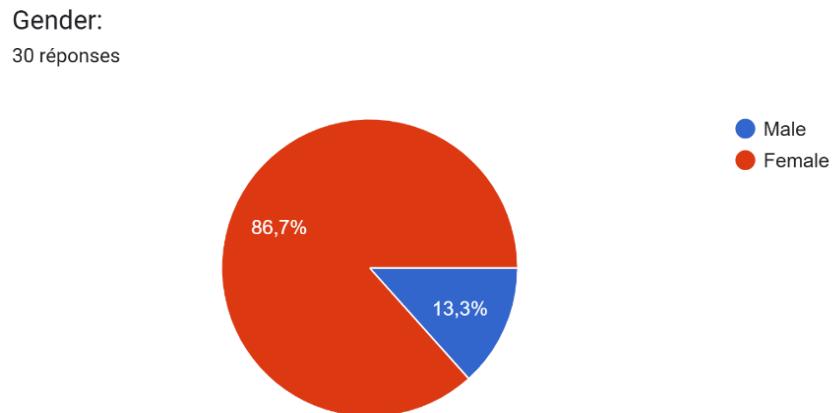
The next section highlights the findings collected from the online structured questionnaire and the researcher's interpretation of each result.

3. FINDINGS

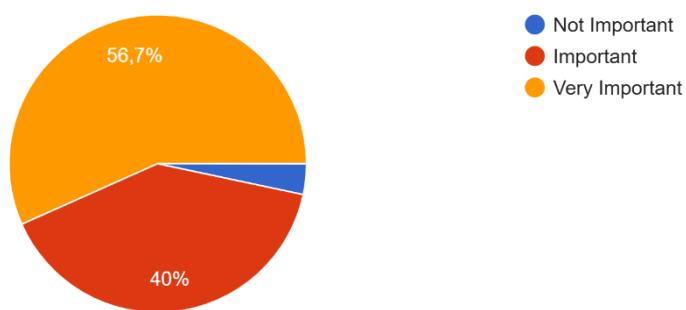
Based on the literature review and the methodology previously mentioned, this section sheds light on the results collected from the online structured questionnaire; each figure is thoroughly explained by the researcher for a better understanding of each item.

Figure 1 represents the gender of the students as respondents of the online structured questionnaire. The results show that out of 30 students, 86.7% of respondents are female while only 13.3% are male. This could be justified by the fact that the majority of the class were female students.

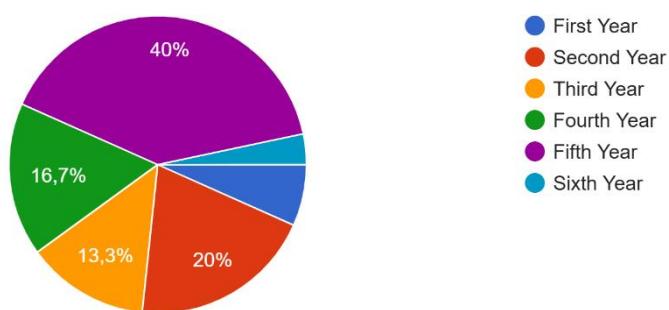
The researcher asked the respondents how important is learning about academic research methodology in their studies of architecture (Figure 2). The findings show that 56.7% of the respondents see it as very important and 40% consider it as important, while less than 4% consider academic research methodology as not important.

**Figure 1.** Gender

How important is learning about academic research methodology in your studies of architecture?
30 réponses

**Figure 2.** Importance of Academic Research Methodology in the Domain of Architecture

When do you see it appropriate to have a course of academic research methodology?
30 réponses

**Figure 3.** Appropriate Year for the Course of Academic Research Methodology

Because architecture studies are six academic years in Morocco, the researcher asked the respondents when they see it appropriate to have a course on academic research methodology. The results show that 40% think it is appropriate to start learning about research methodology during the fifth year, and 20% said it's appropriate in the second year (Figure 3). In the same vein, 16.7% of respondents chose the fourth year

and 13.3% selected the third year. While less than 10% of respondents chose the first and sixth year as the best choice.

Which section of the research methodology was less challenging?

30 réponses

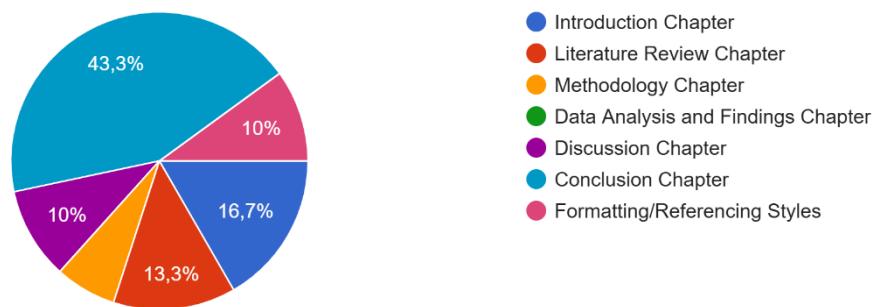


Figure 4. The Least Challenging Section in the Research Methodology

In order to know which section of research methodology was less challenging, 43.3% of students chose the conclusion chapter, 16.7% chose the introduction chapter, 13.3% chose the literature review chapter, and 10% selected equally the discussion chapter and formatting/referencing styles, while the methodology chapter was the least selected in this item (Figure 4).

Which section of the research methodology was more challenging?

30 réponses

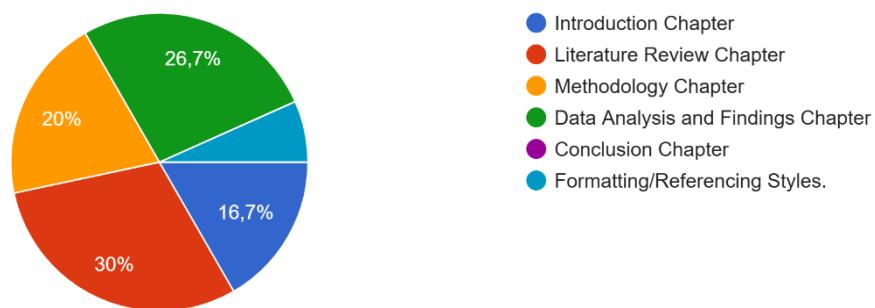


Figure 5. The Most Challenging Section in the Research Methodology

On the other hand, the literature review chapter was the most challenging research methodology section for students, with 30% of responses, while 26.7% of responses were for the data analysis and findings chapter (Figure 5). In the same regard, 20% of responses showed that the methodology chapter was challenging for them, and 16.7% of responses were given to the introduction chapter. Also, less than 7% of responses were given to formatting/referencing styles, while no response was given to the conclusion chapter.

Based on your course of English in Semester 9, the relationship between architectural studies and academic research methodology is:

30 réponses

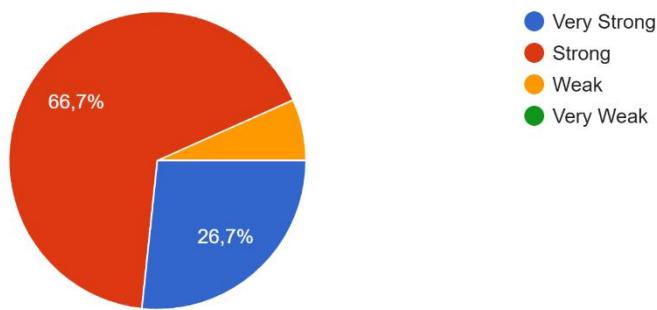


Figure 6. The Connection between Architectural Studies and Academic Research Methodology

To understand if there is or there isn't any relationship between architectural studies and academic research methodology, 66.7% of the respondents see that this relationship is strong, and 26.7% see that it is very strong (Figure 6). Still, less than 7% of responses show that it is weak, and no answer for a very weak relationship.

How much are you satisfied with learning about research methodology in relation to your domain of architecture?

30 réponses

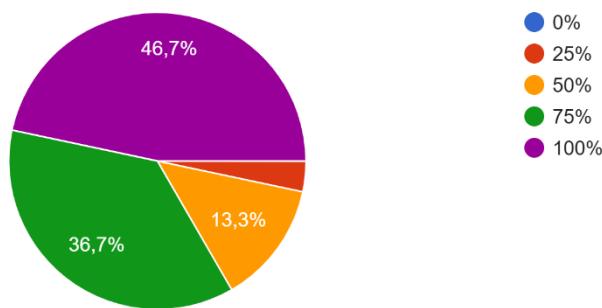


Figure 7. Architecture Students' Satisfaction of the Course about Academic Research Methodology

The final result is about the satisfaction of students with their course about research methodology in relation to their domain of architecture. 46.7% of students were 100% satisfied and 36.7% were 75% satisfied, and only 13.3% were 50% satisfied (Figure 7). Finally, less than 4% had 25% satisfaction, while none of the students showed their unsatisfaction with the course.

4. DISCUSSION

Following the results shared in this article, a clear understanding of each finding is of paramount importance. The seven figures shed light on some aspects of academic research methodology in relation to architecture; students in this course showed great satisfaction in terms of their learning outcomes. As well, based on the RQ of this study “Why is it important to know and learn about research methodology in the domain of architecture?” and the empirical and scholarly views already mentioned, the researcher sees that

it is of paramount significance to include a course on research methodology in the ENAs of Morocco in order to urge architecture students to be productive in terms of academic research so as to boost their academic and their professional profiles alike.

The next part concludes this study by stating the research limitations and the recommendations for further studies.

5. CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS

As far as research methodology is part and parcel of each research, each study contains obstacles that hinder the process of research. This section, therefore, provides some limitations the researcher encountered during the study as well as some recommendations for future academic endeavours for future researchers.

One of the limitations that this study encountered is the willingness of some of the respondents to answer the online structured questionnaire; this might be explained that some students found the course of academic research methodology as challenging and/or they do not have academic interests in research for the time being. Also, another obstacle the researcher encountered is that the time allotted for the English course is one session per week (2h), and only for fifth-year architecture students; therefore, it was quite hard to provide enough time for the practice of each chapter in the research methodology course.

The following part provides suggestions that might help future researchers in their academic endeavours in architectural research methods.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

In order to keep the spirit of sharing knowledge and expanding one's knowledge and understanding about the different aspects of the research methodology, some recommendations are necessary to take into account so as to facilitate the task for future research researchers in the academic research domain. One of the recommendations the researcher sees as important is encouraging all stakeholders in any domain to include academic research within the educational and professional contexts; students and/or employees still need to know more about academic research and feel encouraged to actively participate in research to be productive academically and professionally. Therefore, an open discussion about the inclusion of academic research in scientific majors in the early years is needed to improve our understanding of why the majority of students neglect this vital aspect in their academic and professional careers.

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Research Ethics. Authors confirm that all procedures were conducted in accordance with applicable laws and institutional regulations, with approval from the relevant institutional committee(s).

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Conflicts of Interest. The authors affirm that there is no conflict of interest with the data generated in this article.

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