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Writing a Quantitative Master Thesis at the Department of HRM & Organization: Structure, Contents and Checklist

Make sure to define all relevant terms when these are mentioned the first time. Think of what an average fellow student who is not familiar with your topic knows. If you have good reason to doubt that an average fellow student does know the respective term, define it. Do not "discuss" different definitions, but rather **pick a suitable definition from the literature, cite the respective source and proceed!**

1. Introduction

- Start with a "grabber", i.e. with something that attracts the **interest** of the reader.
- Following the grabber, you motivate (and define) your variables of interest and based on that derive the research question and **convince the reader of its relevance.**
- **Formulate your research question explicitly and with a question mark!** Your research question should refer to a **link between an explanatory and a dependent variable.** In addition, you might want to focus on a potential **mediator** or **moderator** of the link, which should then also be explicitly reflected in the research question.
- The **last paragraph** in your introduction is devoted to describing how you will **proceed**. Refer to the respective chapters (e.g., by writing „in chapter 2, I derive/argue/discuss…"). Comment on all the relevant steps you will take to answer your research question. Deciding on how to structure your argument is an essential task of your Master Thesis. So, take all the efforts it needs to make clear how your argument is developed!

2. Theory

- **Each Quantitative Master Thesis at our Department does include a theory chapter.**
- **The theory you use already exists.** A Master thesis is not the place to "invent" a new theory.
- In a Quantitative Master thesis, the main function of the theory chapter is **to derive your hypotheses.** Your hypotheses give an answer to your research question from a theory perspective.
- **Derive your hypotheses in a stringent manner based on your theory!** Do not use empirical findings to derive your hypotheses but solely base them on theory.
- **In most cases, you only need one theory.** Name the theory and refer to the seminal paper that first developed the theory. Theories might be „old"; that's not a problem! If you use more than one theory, you need to have good reasons to do so. Focus on **those parts** of the theory **that are needed** to derive your hypotheses. Being parsimonious is a virtue.

3. Empirics

- **Each Master Thesis at our Department does have an empirical part.**
- In the empirical chapter of your Quantitative Master Thesis, you **present** (not discuss) empirical results that allow you to test your hypotheses.
- **If you do not find any significant effects, this is not a problem at all.** It is not your aim to find significant effects, but rather to test whether your hypotheses are supported or not. If they are not supported, this is relevant information.
- There are **two different types of empirical work** that can be conducted in a Quantitative Master Thesis:

Own data (i.e., experiment or survey)	**Secondary data (e.g., SOEP)**
▪ Clearly describe how your data was collected and how participants were recruited. ▪ Provide a detailed description of your study design. If applicable, explain how participants were randomized and what the different treatments were. ▪ Clearly define dependent, main explanatory and control variables. ▪ All measurement instruments must be properly documented. State the source for your scales. ▪ Provide descriptive statistics (e.g., mean, minimum, maximum) for all relevant variables and report correlations. ▪ Make sure your estimation models are valid and appropriate to test your hypotheses. ▪ Present your regression results in tables. ▪ Apply – if possible – relevant robustness checks.	▪ Clearly describe the dataset that you use and its origin. ▪ If you collect the data via web scraping (e.g. data from sports or game shows), explain how the data was obtained and constructed. ▪ Clearly define dependent, main explanatory and control variables. ▪ Provide descriptive statistics (e.g., mean, minimum, maximum) for all relevant variables and report correlations. ▪ Make sure your estimation models are valid and appropriate to test your hypotheses. ▪ Present your regression results in tables. ▪ Apply – if possible – relevant robustness checks.

- If we do not have it already, you need to provide us with the **complete data file** that your Master Thesis is based on. In any case, we need the **Do-file that produces the results of your Master Thesis**. Make sure that the Do-file works and produces the Tables that are presented in your Master Thesis (and no other Tables) in the exact order they appear in the Thesis and numbered accordingly.

4. Discussion

- **Your Master Thesis must include a discussion of your results.** This is an important **contribution** on your own.
- Discuss your findings **in the context of the existing literature**. What have other studies found? Are your results in line with or contradicting previous findings? Provide possible explanations.
- Based on **your** results, derive implications for research and practice.
- Critically reflect on the **limitations** of your study.
- Based on these limitations, derive a **future research agenda**.

5. Conclusion

- Sum up the **main results** of your thesis in a way that is generally understandable.
- Do not describe how you proceeded when you wrote the thesis (First, … then …). Rather concentrate on your **results** and what can be learnt from them.

References

- **Stick to our binding** Formal Guidelines
- Make sure that **all** sources mentioned in the running text are listed in the reference list and vice versa!

Checklist

Intro-duction		Motivated research question?	
		Defined and motivated all relevant variables?	
		Formulated research question as a question?	
		Described proceedings with chapter references?	
Theory		Mentioned theory and quoted the seminal paper?	
		Described all aspects of theory that are relevant for the research question?	
		Applied theory to research question?	
		Derived hypotheses from theory in an understandable and stringent way?	
		Hypotheses formulated in a testable manner?	
Empirics		**Own data (i.e., experiment or survey)**	**Secondary data (e.g., SOEP)**
		Data collection and participant recruitment described?	Dataset and its origin clearly described?
		Study design described (incl. randomization and treatments, if applicable)?	Data collection process explained (especially for web scraping)?
		Dependent, main explanatory, and control variables defined?	Dependent, main explanatory, and control variables defined?
		Measurement instruments documented; sources of scales provided?	
		Descriptive statistics (mean, min, max) and correlations reported?	Descriptive statistics (mean, min, max) and correlations reported?
		Estimation models appropriate and valid?	Estimation models appropriate and valid?
		Regression results presented in tables?	Regression results presented in tables?
		Robustness checks (if possible) conducted?	Robustness checks (if possible) conducted?
		Data file provided?	Data file provided (if not already available)?
		Do-file provided, working, and fully reproducible?	Do-file provided, working, and fully reproducible?
Discus-sion		Own findings linked to existing literature (comparison with prior studies)?	
		Implications for research & practice derived?	Own findings linked to existing literature (comparison with prior studies)?
		Limitations of own study discussed?	
		Future research agenda derived from these limitations	
		Compactly summarized the findings?	
Conclu-sion		Answered research question?	
		Abided formal guidelines for scientific writing? (see Formal Guidelines)	
General		Avoided plagiarism? (see Plagiarism guidelines)	
		Marked direct and indirect quotes?	
		Used action titles (where possible and appropriate)?	
		Paid attention to flow of text (appropriate transitions)?	
		Used terms consistently?	
		Documented use of AI? (see Statutory Declaration)	
		Statutory declaration signed and included?	