Rationale

A rationale is a set of reasons or logical basis that explains to your reader why your research question or study is needed to contribute to the relevant field of study. There are three groups of limitations that you can use to critique existing literature:

1. **Methodological limitations of previous research**
- Did it fail to measure the phenomena in question?
- Did it base its measures on incorrect conceptualization of the key problem or variables?
- Did it do a bad job in operationalizing the key concepts?
- Did it use a problematic research design?

2. **Contextual limitations of previous research**
- Do recent changes in the actual phenomena require new measures? In other words are previous studies still relevant?
- Is the previous research acceptable, but does not examine the phenomena in a particular context? If this is the case you must also show why we cannot simply assume theories developed in one place are not applicable in another

3. **Conceptual limitations of previous research**
- Are the previous findings too bound up in a specific ideology or theoretical framework?

The fact that something has never been done before is a poor rationale by itself and is never useful for research. Convince your reader that your study is much needed by engaging critically with the existing literature and identifying the research gaps adequately. Your rationale should be written towards the end of your introduction leading into the aims and objectives of your research study.

Example: Reproduced from a Masters thesis

Currently, miRNAs have been suggested as serum biomarkers (Di Leva et al., 2014) for predicting prognosis and diagnosis in cancer. Additionally, the development of novel and more targeted anti-cancer therapies by exploiting the involvement of miRNAs in cancer is also promising. Two possible scenarios can be forecasted in the near future where miRNAs can be used as treatment to target oncogenes or drugs can be developed to target those miRNAs which affect tumour suppressor genes.

As mentioned earlier, recent evidence suggests that HIV proteins and miRNAs mayhave a direct role in the development of HIV-associated malignancies such as DLBCL and BL. In light of the findings linking HIV-1 and cellular miRNA modulation, it is predicted that one of the mechanisms of lymphoma development and/or progression in HIV positive individuals is via the modulation of miRNAs in B–lymphocytes. This hypothesis will be tested in the current study and are described in the sections which follow.

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