

Limitations in Research Projects

When discussing the results of your research you project, you will need to analyse the limitations of the study.

All studies and project have limitations, but all too often students think that by identifying the limitations of their work and talking about them, that it will discredit or devalue their work.

But in actual fact this is not the case and the opposite is true!

You need to be able to identify and inform the reader (and in your case the marker) that you know what the limitations of the work are.

You do not want the marker to be telling you, they need to see that you understand this and are acknowledging this in your work. This actually strengthens the value of your work and shows you are credible and transparent.

During your project, you might find it useful to keep a journal of what you find challenging, frustrating, difficult or a barrier, and then, when it comes to writing up your project, review your notes as some of these points may then help you develop your limitations section.

So, what kind of limitations might you need to discuss? What could limit the work you are doing, and the results you find?

Well firstly let's look at time. How many weeks are you undertaking your project work over? Is time a limitation? If you were doing a PHD then this would be years! Remember, word count and size and scope of projects also take into account the time.

What about access to resources and databases? Some databases and libraries are paid services, some open access and this could affect what you use to inform your work.

Think about the type of project: undertaking secondary research, maybe a literature review rather than primary research? Has this limited the kind of results you might find?

What about your own level of bias? Have you already considered researcher bias in your ethical considerations?

Limitations may vary and can be different for all of you. What is important is that you briefly acknowledge them, so readers and markers know you are very aware of what impacts upon your work. Furthermore, this shows your ability to reflect on your own performance, which is a vital skill that you will need to develop throughout your studies and your career.