WITHOUT A REVIEW

The paragraph as it is usually submitted

A methodology extract from an MPhil study of maternal healthcare utilisation. Real pattern, details changed. Read it as an examiner would — the problems are the ones we see in most Chapter Threes.

> Chapter three of this research talks about the methodology that was used in gathering the data for the study. The researcher used questionnaire to collect data from respondents in the study area. A sample size of 400 respondents was selected using the simple random sampling technique because it is the best method. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics and also inferential statistics were used. The researcher also ensured that the instruments were valid and reliable before going to the field.

WHAT AN EXAMINER WRITES IN THE MARGIN

1. **Design never named.** "Methodology" is a chapter heading, not a design. Cross-sectional survey? Experimental? Case study? If the reader cannot answer that after the first sentence, every later claim is unsupported.
2. **Sample size asserted, not derived.** Where does 400 come from — a published table, a power calculation, or convenience? A number with no provenance is a guess with a decimal point.
3. **"Because it is the best method"** invites the obvious follow-up: best for what? Sampling must be justified against the sampling frame you actually had.
4. **No instrument, no period, no place.** Which questionnaire, administered how, over what months, in which communities? Three details the panel will ask for by name.
5. **"Descriptive and inferential statistics were used"** names no test and therefore supports no hypothesis. Which test, on which variables, at what significance level?
6. **"Valid and reliable"** is claimed without saying how either was established — no pilot, no reliability coefficient, no expert review.

AFTER THE REVIEW

The same study, made defensible

Same data, same researcher. What changed is that every claim now has a source, a method and a number behind it.

> This study employed a cross-sectional survey design. Data were collected with a structured, self-administered questionnaire across four communities in the Cape Coast Metropolis between March and May 2026. Following Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table, a target sample of 384 was drawn from an estimated population of 9,400 women of reproductive age; 412 valid responses were returned, a response rate of 94%.

> Households were selected by systematic random sampling from the 2022 enumeration area list, after which one eligible woman per household was chosen at random. Analysis proceeded in two stages: descriptive statistics described the sample, and binary logistic regression tested the four hypotheses at $p < 0.05$.

WHAT CHANGED, AND WHY

BEFORE	AFTER	WHY THE PANEL CARES
"the methodology that was used"	cross-sectional survey design	A design can be evaluated; a chapter heading cannot.
400 respondents	384 from Krejcie & Morgan; 412 returned	Derivation shows the number was calculated, not chosen.
"simple random sampling"	systematic random from the EA list	The technique must match the frame you actually had access to.
"descriptive and inferential"	binary logistic regression, $p < 0.05$	Each hypothesis needs a named test and a stated threshold.
"valid and reliable"	supervisor review, pilot, reliability coefficient	Validity and reliability are evidence, not adjectives.

THE HABIT UNDERNEATH

Every fix above is the same move: replace a claim with its evidence. Write "n = 384, derived from Krejcie and Morgan" instead of "a sample of 400", and the examiner stops asking and starts reading. That is why page 3 is a checklist rather than a lecture.

WHAT THIS CANNOT FIX

APPLY IT TO YOUR OWN

The checklist we work to

Ten boxes. Tick them honestly before the draft goes to your supervisor — each one is a question a panel has already asked someone else.

DESIGN

- ☐ The design is named in the first paragraph of the chapter.
- ☐ The design fits the question — not the other way round.
- ☐ The setting, population and period are stated.
- ☐ Inclusion and exclusion criteria are explicit.
- ☐ Every objective maps to a method that can answer it.

EVIDENCE

- ☐ Sample size is derived and the derivation is cited.
- ☐ The sampling technique matches the sampling frame.
- ☐ Instruments are described, piloted and attached as appendices.
- ☐ Validity and reliability are evidenced, not asserted.
- ☐ Each hypothesis names its test and its significance level.

TWO QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR SUPERVISOR THIS WEEK

1. "If a panel asked me to defend my sample size, what citation would I give?" If the answer is anything other than a table, a formula or a power calculation, that is your next piece of work.

2. "Does my Chapter Three name the design before it describes the instrument?" Design first, then instrument, then procedure, then analysis. Readers should never have to infer the design from the tools.

WHERE WE COME IN

A free 30-minute methodology review is the fastest way to find which of these ten boxes is actually open in your draft. You leave with an honest read on feasibility — whether or not you go on to work with us.

BOOK A REVIEW	cal.com/academic-sage-solutions-vgs6hi/30min
EMAIL	academicsagesolutions@gmail.com
WHATSAPP / CALL	055 670 4870 · 024 196 6456 · 050 838 7475
WHERE	Universities, nursing and teacher training colleges across Ghana — in person by appointment, remote nationwide

This diagnostic is a worked example prepared by Academic Sage Solutions. Client details have been changed and the extract shortened. Free to share with attribution.