


Literature

Literature Review

Evaluating Existing Research



Components of a Research Study

- Title
- Abstract
- Reflective Inquiry
 - Problem statement
 - Literature review
 - Theoretical framework
 - Objectives
 - Research questions/hypotheses
- Procedures
 - Research design
 - Methodology
 - Data quality
- Findings
- Discussion
- Conclusion
- References



Review: Problem Statement

- Components of the problem statement...
 - Lead-in
 - Direction
 - Originality
 - Justification: Significance/ Value



Literature Review

- ❑ Places the **problem** in context of known knowledge: past research
- ❑ Identifies variables that previous studies found either important or unimportant
- ❑ Suggests factors to consider in setting the research design and methodology



Literature Review

- Describes
- Synthesize
- Critiques and relates
- Guide “your study”



Literature Review

- ❑ Breadth and depth
- ❑ Cover all aspects of your topic
- ❑ When literature doesn't exist- breaking into a new area.



What Is Cited?

- ❑ Key works: in classical studies, literature review is comprehensive and includes the “original” source
- ❑ Deciding which sources to cite--if many papers make the same point, which one to include: **judgment call**
- ❑ Can be colored by various factors



Some of the Reasons for Citing

- ❑ Paying homage to pioneers
- ❑ Giving credit to related work
- ❑ Identifying methodology, etc.
- ❑ Correcting a work
- ❑ Criticizing previous work
- ❑ Disputing priority claims of others
- ❑ (Taken from Weinstock, 1971)



Some Observations

- ❑ Authors often fail to cite all pertinent work
- ❑ Authors tend to cite views that support their own
- ❑ References are an expression of intellectual indebtedness
- ❑ Journals could do more to ensure standardization in citation practice



More Observations

- Referencing is one way in which the scholarly community distributes recognition
- To what extent is it reasonable to expect referees to catch oversights/omissions/errors



Inaccurate Referencing

- ❑ Misquoting
- ❑ misspellings
- ❑ wrongly cited volumes/editions
- ❑ misleading pagination and publication year
- ❑ variations in abbreviations
- ❑ Impacts retrieval of cited material
- ❑ Impacts intellectual debt
- ❑ Impacts accuracy of point made

Common Deficiencies in the Review

- ❑ Excludes landmark studies
- ❑ Largely covers outdated or dated materials
- ❑ Parochial in perspective: discipline, institutional, etc.
- ❑ Over-emphasizes description; too little relatingnot critical
- ❑ Not relating the identified material to the problem



More Deficiencies

- ❑ Poorly organized review
- ❑ Not all the material is relevant or related as relevant
- ❑ Dense writing: not meant to be widely read



Summary

- It is important to know exactly how the proposed work will depend upon and deviate from existing studies. Research tends to represent a logical extension of what is already known or available. Where there are sharp deviations, the reasons should be well explained and supported.



The research

FINDING RESEARCH ARTICLES



Finding Research Articles

- Focus on database that index scholarly literature
- Identify useful search terms
 - Is “research” a document type or subject heading?
 - What keywords might narrow your search?
- Follow citations
- Identify key authors



Finding Research Articles

- Look for key components:
 - Problem Statement
 - Literature Review
 - Methodology/ Procedures
 - Findings
- Notice terminology

Evaluating Existing Research

What makes research good?



Importance of Evaluating Research

- To determine
 - What to trust
 - What is applicable to our own situation
 - Whether something is reliable/ credible
 - What to include in our literature reviews
 - What to use as models



Evaluating Research

- Distinction between:
 - How well the research was done
 - How well the research was reported

Questions to Consider

-based on Gorman & Clayton (2005)

- Problem Definition/ Project Plan
 - Is the purpose explained and justified? Is there evidence of bias?
 - Are relevant terms defined/ conceptualized?
 - Are limitations noted/ corrected for when possible?
 - Was a thorough literature review conducted, and related to present research?
 - Is there a theoretical basis/ model?
 - Are research questions/ hypotheses/ objectives logically related to the stated purpose or problem?



Questions Cont'd

□ Methodology/ Data Collection

- Are relevant variables defined? Is author aware of intervening variables/ account for them?
- Is population defined?
- If sampling is used, is it appropriate? If random sampling is claimed, is it truly randomized?
- Is the methodology appropriate to the proposed problem/ research questions? Is it adequately explained?
- Are data collection tools appropriate? Have they been tested for reliability and validity? Are samples provided?
- Is there any triangulation of data/ mixing of methods? Esp. for qualitative research?
- Are the researchers assumptions accounted for?

Questions Cont'd: Reliability and Validity

- Reliability: when a method produces consistent results
- In qualitative research, the researcher is involved, may introduce bias. In such cases look for:
 - Detailed methodology and abundant evidence
 - Training/ qualifications of researchers
 - Pre-testing/ use of preliminary data
 - Triangulation
 - Adequate time, context, and range of activities observed

Questions Cont'd: Reliability & Validity

- Validity: the extent to which something actually measures what it purports to measure. Look for
 - Triangulation
 - Full documentation of data- chain of evidence
 - Logical connections between data and conclusions
 - Self-reflection on part of researchers to examine predispositions and bias
 - Checks on accuracy of data



Questions Cont'd


□ Data Analysis

- Are appropriate analyses conducted- relevant to the problem and questions? Are the tests appropriate for the type of data collected?
- Are the data analysis techniques clearly described?
- Are samples of data included?
- Were attempts made to verify accuracy of data?



Questions Cont'd

- Findings and Conclusions
 - How are the findings organized and presented?
 - If visuals/ graphics are included, are they appropriate and pertinent?
 - Is there any suggestion of bias? Does the presentation seem straightforward?
 - Are discussion points and conclusions drawn related to data and findings?
 - If appropriate, is there an attempt to generalize findings?
 - Do conclusions accurately reflect data as presented?
 - Are suggestions made for future research?



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How to Read a Research Paper

- ❑ A thorough literature review is important, but...
- ❑ You shouldn't waste time reading prior research.
- ❑ Engage in pre-reading, reading, and post-reading
- ❑ Pre-reading
 - Focus on title, abstract, and main headings- will this report fill in information gaps.
- ❑ Reading
 - Focus on relevant parts of a report to confirm, modify, or add to what you know.
- ❑ Post-reading
 - Make sure you have learned what you need to learn, make notes



How to Read a Research Paper

- ❑ Start with Title, Abstract, Headings
- ❑ Read Introduction- look for motivations, assumptions, relation to other work, overview
- ❑ Browse Literature Review- how does it all fit in
- ❑ Read Conclusions to find results
- ❑ If relevant, go back to body of article, perhaps skipping equations first time through.