

2022

HOW TO READ RESEARCH

A Guide for Developing
Literature Reviews

Arianna C. Stokes, Ph.D.
Cohort XV, Fall 2020 Graduate
Chair: Dr. Walter Brown
Email: dracstokes@gmail.com



Understanding this Document

"How to Read Research" is a resource document for scholars collecting data and analyzing widespread phenomena. The document identifies significant components often found in scholarly writing that capture the general scope of research. This tool is intended to assist scholars in their understanding of research material and ultimately support the development of prospectus and dissertation papers.

Introduction

The **introduction** establishes the context of the phenomena and informs the reader of the purpose of the study. Often, the introduction to the research article includes background information specific to the subject matter or research problem. After reading the introduction, scholars should be able to recognize the research problem, identify issues associated with the phenomena, and understand the pursuit of the study.

Literature Review

The **literature review** serves as a repository of data from scholars that have conducted research relevant to a topic. Articles, theories, books, and other reference tools are included in a literature review. After reading a literature review, scholars should be able to identify prior studies that have influenced a research topic or added to the body of knowledge. The studies that appear consistently may be considered foundational studies.

Methodology

The **methodology** refers to the research methods employed by the researcher to collect and analyze data. Three common methodologies are Qualitative (Interviews), Quantitative (Statistical Analysis), and Mixed Methods (a combination of qualitative and quantitative). Sometimes, the methodology will reference a theoretical or conceptual framework. After reading the methodology, scholars should be able to identify the necessary steps taken by the researcher. For future reference, these steps may need to be replicated or revised.

Population and Sample

The **population** refers to the overall group of participants that may be represented in a study. The **sample** refers to a portion of the overall population that has been identified as study participants. Both the population and sample can be used to identify specific characteristics of subjects in the study. These characteristics include but are not limited to demographics, habits, and attitudes. After reading the population and sample, scholars should be able to determine if representation or saturation is either lacking or evident in an area of study.

Location

The **location** refers to the place of data collection. It includes but is not limited to the Country, Region, State, and the institution where data was obtained. After reading about the study's location, scholars should be able to identify if the location has impacted the findings or if a specific location needs increased or decreased attention in research.

Data and Findings

The **data** refers to the collection of artifacts that support a research study. Data can exist in written, visual, and audio formats. **Findings** refer to a study's outcomes. Quantitative studies reveal either descriptive or inferential statistics and Qualitative studies reveal responses from open-ended questionnaires or interviews. Data and findings should remain confidential to protect the identities of participants and participating institutions or agencies. After reading the data and findings, scholars should be able to determine what other researchers in the field have found as it relates to a specific topic.

Limitations

The **limitations** refer to the shortcomings of a research study. Studies can be limited by sample size, location, time frame, availability of participants, lack of resources, and other factors. These limitations may impact the generalizability of the data obtained. After reading the limitations, scholars should be able to determine what factors may impact research progress or if methods should be changed in a future study to yield different results.

Recommendations

The **recommendations** refer to suggestions made by the researcher(s) for future studies, policy, and practical changes. These recommendations can be used to guide the next steps in a field of study. After reading a study's recommendations, scholars should be able to determine if further research is needed in an area or if a gap in the literature is present.

The Gap

The **gap** in the literature refers to insufficient data in a subject area. Where a research gap is present, there is likely room to pursue a study in that area. Research gaps can only be determined after an article has been read in its totality and compared to similar research studies. Identifying the gap will assist scholars in determining the next steps in their document development process.

Conclusion

The purpose of this guide is to assist scholars in their understanding of research material and ultimately support the development of prospectus and dissertation papers. This guide identifies relevant components of research material to better prepare scholars to read, understand, and review research literature. The elements in this document are commonly found in peer-reviewed research articles and provide the scope for most research studies. As scholars conduct literature reviews, this guide can serve as a template for what to include and how the information should be viewed.

References

Creswell, J. W. (2002). Educational Research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research. Upper Saddle River, NJ. Merrill Prentice Hall.

Galvan, J. L 2017. Writing literature reviews: A guide for students of social and behavioral sciences. 7th Edition. Routledge Publishing: New York.