

UNIT VI - Using and Sharing Research Results

SWK 3300
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Chapter 13 in the textbook gives a great “play by play” of research writing - be sure to be familiar with the chapter.

(Your notes for Unit VI are some additional thoughts on the research writing process.)

In the writing process:

- tailor discussion for your intended audience
- be clear, accurate and organized
- write to inform, not to advocate a position or entertain
- check and recheck information, review literature for additional insights
- avoid plagiarism - give credit

Quantitative vs. Qualitative

follow the same basic format - addressing expected areas (some sections may be combined for convenience)

Title

- should reflect the main purpose of the study (may include a subtitle with more information for potential consumers)

Abstract

- issue or problem under investigation
- information about the participants
- research methods, intervention(s) and outcome measures
- summary of the results
- conclusions and application to practice

Introduction

- historical background of the study and origin of researcher's interest noted
- specification of the research problem - description of scope and significance
- Qualitative reports have a briefer introduction section as less is generally known about the area of study

Review of literature

- summary and synthesis of literature relevant to the research question
- summarize what is already known and identify how the current research study will expand knowledge
- Qualitative reports have a shorter literature review and may be less thorough

Research questions and hypothesis

- related to the purpose of the study and following the logic given in the literature review
- operational definitions of key terms may be given here
- Qualitative reports state questions but very rarely have a hypothesis

Methodology

- detailed description of the research design
- details on what was done, to whom or what, and by what method(s)
- Qualitative reports are less detailed as a study is less likely to be replicated - but gives details about tasks and sequence of events (grounded theory)

Results

- findings derived from the research
- outcomes of statistical analyses are summarized and interpreted
- Qualitative reports have long results sections often including case vignettes or narrative descriptions from participants

Discussion

- findings are discussed in relation to the questions and/or hypothesis
- if applicable, evidence of support or nonsupport for hypothesis is presented
- Qualitative reports give numerous references to literature connecting what was learned to what was known previously...may present ideas for further study

Limitations

- discussion of methodological shortcomings
- discussion of nature and scope of limitation and why limitation was unavoidable
- speculation on impact of limitation and what could be done better in the future
- Qualitative reports rarely list limitations as there is no claim to be objective, representative, or controlling of variables

Conclusions and recommendations

- description of how the study is believed to have expanded knowledge
- identify needs for further research
- implications for professional practice
- Qualitative reports give suggestions on how knowledge may inform practice

References

- placed immediately after the body of the report
- list all references cited in report
- use appropriate formatting style

Appendices

- copies of data collection instruments used
- copies of materials developed for use in description and evaluation of a program

In the book “Writing Empirical Research Reports” authors Pyrczak and Bruce propose five questions to use to test a research report.

I. What is the point?

2. Can I find the general research question?

3. Can I get a picture of the subjects of this study?

4. Is the research being driven by its questions rather than the statistics?

5. Would George Orwell approve?

Social work as a profession is focusing on the participants in a study having access to the information. Therefore, it is important to give back and share with the research participants.

Sharing the results would involve oral reports (given at all levels of practice), internal reports within agencies, and publicly publishing the results.

How does social work use research results in practice?

- Forming partnerships
- Articulating challenges (practice settings, populations....)
- Defining directions (practice settings, helping client systems....)
- Identifying strengths

- Testing interventions
- Analyzing resource capabilities
- Framing solutions
- Expanding opportunities
- Recognizing success and integrating gains