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Reporting Your Research

Chapter Summary

The research process consists of a series of activities that are completed and then reported. The research report communicates your research to others. In order to communicate your research, it is necessary to specify clearly what has been done and how, why it was done, the findings, and the findings' conclusions. Research reports are highly variable in their content and organization, and are usually tailored to the audience (e.g., peer reviewed journals, academia, government, funders, stakeholders, etc.). You also want to ask yourself some important questions: What is worth reporting? What should go into the report? How much is worth telling?

The research report takes the following general outline:

1. Statement of problem
2. Review of relevant literature
3. Statement of hypothesis or research question
4. Selection and operationalization of variables
5. Description of research design
6. Description of sample selection procedure
7. Description of how the data were collected
8. Data presented and summarized in words
9. Conclusion, limitations, and implications
10. Bibliography or references
11. Appendix or appendices

The length and depth of the report is also highly variable. The research report summarizes the activities so that they are clear to the reader and so that the reader could repeat the research. Research can also be reported via presentations and/or reported on websites.

Key Terms

Appendix/appendices Items relevant to a research report that cannot be placed within the body of the report. These supplementary items (ethics approval, questionnaires, interview data, etc.) are attached to the end of the report following the bibliography. (pp. 288–289)

Study Questions

Scroll down for answers.

1. What information should be covered in a research report?
2. What are the basic differences between the “description and presentation of data” and “conclusion and discussion” sections of a report?
3. What does “the human problem” mean?
4. What is the length of the research report dependent on?
5. What is some advice for students to gain more research experience?

Video Resources

In this Ted Talk, sociologist Brené Brown discusses her research on shame, vulnerability, and other emotions that are difficult to “measure,” in the conventional sense. In this context, she elucidates the connections between her research question, methods, and findings, while also pulling in her personal story and reflecting on questions of positionality. The video is highlighted on the *Sociological Cinema* website as an incredibly informative resource for classroom use.

Brené Brown (2010). *The Power of Vulnerability*.

https://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_on_vulnerability

Answers to Study Questions

1. The following information should be covered in a research report:
 - statement of the problem
 - review of literature
 - statement of hypothesis/research objective
 - operationalization of variables
 - the research design
 - description of the sample and the sampling technique
 - description of the data collection method, presentation of data,
 - conclusions
 - bibliography
 - appendices (pp. 285–286)
2. “Description and presenting the data” involves the question of how the data were collected in terms of their direct relevance to the research question and hypothesis. In the “conclusion and discussion” section, the researcher discusses the implications of the research to broader social issues (including policy implications) as well as offering an appraisal for future research as well as the limitations of the research project. (pp. 287–288)
3. “The human problem” means the research problem. It consists of the ordinary, daily, policy, or intellectual issues that inspired the researcher in the first place. The human problem is essentially the social problem on which the researcher’s project focuses. (p. 286)
4. The professor or journal may have a set word limit. Master’s and doctoral theses have typically book length word limits. Funding organizations or stakeholders may have specific requirements. (p. 289)
5. Take as many courses in social science quantitative and qualitative research methods and statistics as possible. And practise your skills! (p. 286)