

The question, literature review, and hypothesis

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The Research Question, Literature Review and Research Hypothesis The Research Question, Literature Review and Research Hypothesis Question 1

Descriptive research questions query the what, who or the where aspects to the issue or area of study: description is the basis of the study. These questions characterize new areas of investigation, where the study focuses on describing the phenomena of study (Newton, Bower, & Williams, 2004). Examples of these studies of questions are those guiding case studies, and those centered on describing the incidence and the prevalence of certain phenomena. An example of a descriptive research question is one questioning the incidence and the prevalence of oral diseases (Richards, 2000; Theodossy, 2003). Questions of relationship on the other hand, enquire on the relationship between phenomena. For example, early enquiries on fluoridation found a connection between the presence of fluoride in water and low levels of caries. In short, these questions revolve around the study of the association between the phenomena of study (Newton, Bower, & Williams, 2004). Questions of comparison on the other hand, are those that characterize inquiries, presenting a comparison of two things or phenomena. Through such a comparison, the inquiry tries to establish the cause and effect relationship between the phenomena in question. For example, questions of comparison may revolve around a study involving the exposure of a group of subjects to one type of treatment, in comparison to another group that did not receive the particular treatment. In developing such questions, it is important to ensure that the only possible cause is the variable under manipulation (Newton, Bower, & Williams, 2004). In summary, descriptive questions offer explanation over the who, the where or the ' what' under review, while those on relationship question the

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association between different phenomena. Different from the two, questions of comparison, inquire about the cause effect relationship of phenomena in one group and not the other.

Question 2 The determination of whether prior research on an area of research is important, helps a researcher seek the findings of the study, the measures and the methods used to come up with the particular findings. The process of determining whether prior research has been done involves consulting computerized databases related to the subject of inquiry. Examples include the Cochrane library and Medline. The determination also involves consulting nation-wide electronic libraries on the matter of inquiry, checking the information from online libraries, and consulting other parties like academic departments, which research or document such studies (Newton, Bower, & Williams, 2004). The process of determination involves consulting physical resources like libraries as well as database resources and online information sources, as these will offer information on any previous studies in the area. In case the search through all these sources does not return results on similar previous studies, it shows that no prior research has been done in the area (Newton, Bower, & Williams, 2004).

Question 3 In gauging the quality of previous research, the factors to be reviewed include sampling. Under sampling, the question is whether the sample of the study is fully representative of the study population, and whether the people consulted during the study are the same ones you expect to reach during the current study. The second factor is the 'measures' applied during the study. The concern over this factor is whether the measurements used were sensible; did they measure what they were supposed to, and were the measurements valid and reliable for the study. The other factor is data analysis, where the question is whether it was

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suitable for the research question and whether the analysis answered the research question. The last factor is the conclusion derived from the inquiry, where the question is whether they justified the results drawn from the study. These factors are important in making the assessment, as they offer information on how factual and reliable the previous study was, as a reliable study can inform the current study while a non-reliable one cannot. Also, the assessment helps the researcher identify information gaps, which could be filled by the current research (Newton, Bower, & Williams, 2004). Question 4 The formulation of a research question should precede the consultation of the scholarly literature, as the research question is what guides the researcher on the scholarly literature to be contacted. Further, formulating a research question offers an opportunity for the researcher to consider the broader view of the aspect. The importance of reviewing the scholarly source after formulating the research questions is that the review informs the question, so as to refine the research questions. The review and refining of the research question will involve redirecting the questions onto more specific areas or coverage. For example, the earlier question may have been broad, but after the review based on the information from the previous study, it is refined to focus on a more specific aspect (Newton, Bower, & Williams, 2004). References Newton, J., Bower, E., & Williams, A. (2004). Research in primary dental care Part 2: Developing a research question. *British Dental Journal*, 196 (4), 605 – 608. Richards, D. (2000). Asking the right question right. *Evidence-Based Dent*, 2 (4), 20–21. Theodossy, T. (2003). A complication of tongue piercing. A case report and review of the literature. *Br Dent J.*, 194 (5), 551–552.