Counselling Supervision

Lecture 11

Research Issues in Counselling Supervision

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Research issues in counselling supervision

Lecture Eleven Outline

11.1 Introduction

In this lecture, we will define the term research, discuss the steps in research process and explore research methodology in relation to counselling supervision.

11.2 Expected Learning Outcomes

By the end of this lecture, you should be able to:

a) Define the term research?
b) Discuss the steps in research process.
c) Apply research methodology to counselling supervision.

11.3 What is Research?

Cooper and Schindler (2006) research is a systematic inquiring that provides information to guide managerial decisions. "Research" means a systematic investigation, experimentation, testing, exploration, analysis, fact-finding, examination, scrutiny, and evaluation, designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge, for decision making, policy-development and practice.

Research methods comprise a systematic process of inquiry applied in such a manner as to learn something about our social world (Saylor Academy, 2012). It is important to understand that research itself is a process that is defined by the approach taken to it in the first place. While research uncovers some aspect of how the world is, it also reflects in large part how, where, and when we have asked the questions.

Aims of Research

- To gain familiarity with a phenomenon (exploratory research studies).
- To portray the characteristics of a particular individual, descriptive research studies).
- To determine the frequency with which something occurs (diagnostic research studies).
- To test a hypothesis of a causal relationship between variables (hypothesis-testing research studies). (Kothatri, 2019).

Goals of Scientific Research

- To discover new knowledge.
- To describe the phenomenon being investigated, give a detailed account.
- Explain; show causes and effects.
- To enable prediction.
- Improve or develop intervention as necessary.
- Research is the basis for decision making.

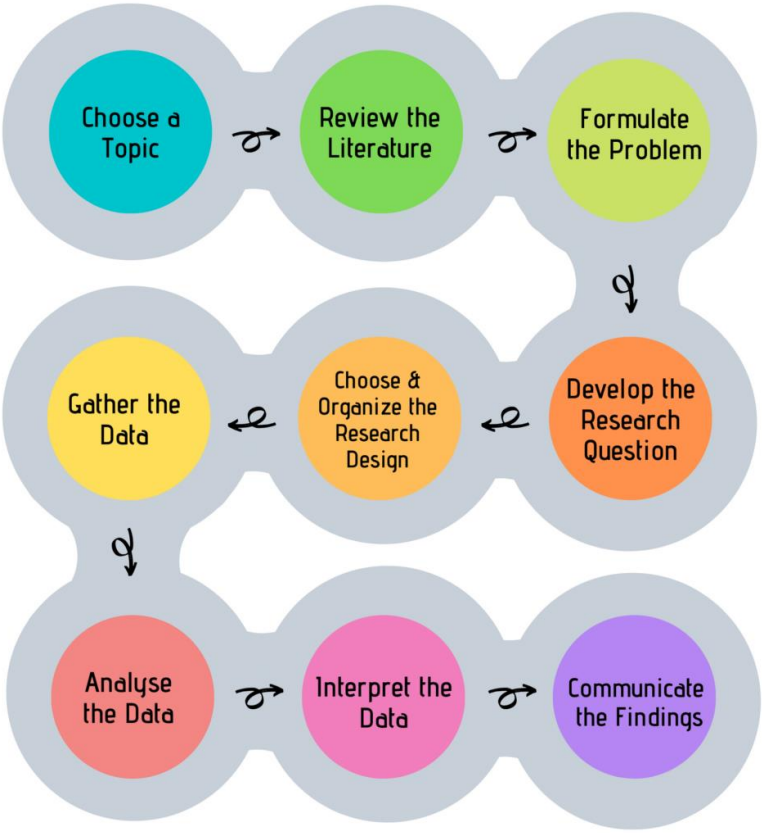
11.4 Steps in research process

Generally speaking, research is a nine process;

1. Choose a topic.
2. Review the literature (past research).
3. Formulate the problem (find the gap in past research).
4. Develop a research question.
5. Choose and organize the research design.
6. Gather the data.
7. Analyze the data.

8. Interpret the data.

9. Communicate the findings.



Nine–Step research Process ©JIBC 2019

Identification of Research Topic: The following questions are critical when formulating a research topic;

- Is there personal interest in the topic in order to sustain attention?
- Is the topic researchable, given time, resources, and availability of data?
- Will the results of the study be of interest to others?
- Is the topic likely to be publishable in a scholarly journal?
- Does the study fill a void, replicate, extend or develop new ideas in the scholarly literature?
- Will the topic contribute to your career goals?

Research topic should be; be concise and stimulate readers' interest.

- Should define the what, who, where
- 12-20 words but not more than 30 words
- Break with : if too long
- If a quantitative study, include the independent and dependent variables.
- Ensure that the title blends well with the research design.

Introduction/ Background; A concise, engaging, and well-written introduction will start your readers off thinking highly of your analytical skills, your writing style, and your research approach. Background information identifies and describes the history and nature of a well-defined research problem with reference to the existing literature. Background information in your introduction should indicate:

- The root of the problem being studied.
- Its scope.
- The extent to which previous studies have successfully investigated the problem.
- Noting where gaps exist that your study attempts to address.
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Research Gap: A research gap is defined as a topic or area for which missing or insufficient information limits the ability to reach a conclusion for a question. A research need is defined as a gap that limits the ability of decision-makers from making decisions. Literature review is the standard for evaluating the current state of scientific knowledge regarding a specific issue or research question. Identification of research gap enables the researcher to ascertain the research problem and scope of the study which in turn is the key to success in a research project. To identify the research gap; focus on the introduction section where the authors explain the importance of their research topic and the gaps they have identified. Look at the directions or suggestions for further research that the authors have given.

Research question; A research question is a clear, focused, concise, complex and arguable question around which you center your research. Research question is a question that can be answered directly through the analysis of data. It should be measurable (quantifiable/testable), well-defined (no ambiguous language), useful in decision-making and encompass the full scope of the problem. The investigator must make sure that:

- The question is clear and specific.
- It reflects the objectives of the study.
- It has no answer by common sense.
- Finding an answer to the question will solve problem.

Research problem; A research problem is a statement about an area of concern, a condition to be improved, a difficulty to be eliminated, or a troubling question that exists in scholarly literature, in theory, or in practice that points to the need for meaningful understanding and deliberate investigation.

Statement of the problem: The following questions should guide;

- What is the issue or the problem?
- What is the magnitude of the problem or the issue?
- What will go wrong if it is not resolved?
- Where is the evidence that the problem exists? – Journal articles, reports.
- What is the research gap/knowledge gap? How will your research help to fill this gap?

Research objectives:

- The research objectives should be:
- Closely related to the research question.
- Covering all aspects of the problem.
- Very specific.
- Ordered in a logical sequence.
- A research problem is a statement about an area of concern, a condition to be improved, a difficulty to be eliminated, or a troubling question that exists in scholarly literature, in

theory, or in practice that points to the need for meaningful understanding and deliberate investigation.

Significance of the study:

- What is the importance of the study?
- Identify key stakeholders such as government, practitioners, policy makers, community and scholars and say how the study will benefit each of them?
- What will be improved or changed as a result of the study?
- What are the ways that the study will add to the scholarly literature in the field?
- How does the study improve practice?
- How might the study improve policy?

11.5 Literature Review

A literature review is a survey of everything that has been written about a particular topic, theory, or research question. The word "literature" means "sources of information". The literature will inform you about the research that has already been conducted on your chosen subject. This is important because we do not want to repeat research that has already been done unless there is a good reason for doing so (i.e., examining a new development in this area or testing a theory with a new population, or even just seeing if the research can be reproduced). A literature review usually serves as a background for a larger work (e.g., as part of a research proposal), or it may stand on its own. Much more than a simple list of sources, an effective literature review analyzes and synthesizes information about key themes or issues.

Purpose of a literature review

The literature review involves an extensive study of research publications, books and other documents related to the defined problem. The study is important because it advises you, as a researcher, whether or not the problem you identified has already been solved by other researchers. It also confirms the status of the problem, techniques that have been used by other researchers to investigate the problem, and other related details.

A literature review goes beyond the search for information; it includes the identification and articulation of relationships between existing literature and your field of research. The literature review enables the researcher to discover what material exists about a topic and to understand the

relationship between the various contributions. This will enable the researcher to determine the contributions of each source (books, articles, etc.) to the topic. A literature review also enables the researcher to identify and (if possible) resolve contradictions, and determine research gaps and/or unanswered questions.

Even though the nature of the literature review may vary with different types of studies, the basic purposes remain constant and could be summarized as follows:

- Provide a context for your research.
- Justify the research you are proposing.
- Ensure that your proposed research has not been carried out by another person (and if you find it has, then your literature review should specify why replication is necessary).
- Show where your proposed research fits into the existing body of knowledge.
- Enable the researcher to learn from previous theories on the subject.
- Illustrate how the subject has been studied previously.
- Highlight flaws in previous research.
- Outline gaps in previous research.
- Show how your proposed research can add to the understanding and knowledge of the field.
- Help refine, refocus, or even move the topic in a new direction

The first step in undertaking a literature review is to conduct a library search of academic research that has been done on your topic. This can be done electronically, or if you are close to a library, you can go in and use their computers to find electronic and print holdings. You can also use Google Scholar for your search. In some cases, research conducted outside academia can serve as an important research source for your literature review. Indeed, such research can have important practical implications, as opposed to academic research which usually (although not always) tends toward theoretical applications.

However, it is important to understand who funded the research you review, in addition to the perspective and the purpose of the research. This is becoming an issue in Canada as universities and colleges increasingly turn to industry for research funding grants https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ edmonton/transalta-coal-report-1.4752314.

As part of this first step there are a few more some things to be thinking about as you review the literature:

Who are the various researchers who have studied this topic? Who are the most prolific researchers/writers on this topic? Has a specific researcher or team of researchers been identified as pioneers or leaders in this field of study?

How have the various researchers defined key terms that are relevant to your topic? Have the definitions of any of the key terms evolved over time?

What are the different theories that have been examined and applied to this topic? How, if at all, have the various theories applied to this topic evolved over time?

What methodologies have been used to study this topic? Have the methodologies evolved over time?

In addition to thinking about these questions, you should be taking notes during this process. It can be helpful to keep these notes in an Excel file, e.g., your notes should include the following information:

If the article is empirical, write down the results of the research study in one or two sentences of your own words, e.g., "people who are between ages 18 – 35 are more likely to own a smart phone than those in an age range above or below." It is also a good idea to take note of the methods, research design, number of participants, and details of the sample used in the study. Sometimes, you may even want to write down the names of the statistical procedures used to analyze the data or even some of the statistics, depending on your assignment.

If the article is a review of previous research, look for the main points. It may be helpful to read or skim the whole article, look away, and ask yourself what you felt was the main idea.

Write down any limitations or gaps you notice, anything that seems to contradict something you read elsewhere, or just anything that you think is important or interesting.

To help you frame and write your literature review, think about these five c's (Callahan, 2014):

Five Cs of writing literature

Cite the material you have referred to and used to help you define the research problem that you will study.

Compare the various arguments, theories, methods, and findings expressed in the literature. For example, describe where the various researchers agree and where they disagree. Describe the similarities and dissimilarities in approaches to studying related research problems.

Contrast the various arguments, themes, methods, approaches, and controversies apparent and/or described in the literature. For example, describe what major areas are contested, controversial and/or still in debate.

Critique the literature. Describe which arguments you find more persuasive and explain why. Explain which approaches, findings, and methods seem most reliable, valid, appropriate, and/or most popular and why. Pay attention to the verbs you use to describe what previous researchers have stated (e.g., asserts, demonstrates, argues, clarifies, etc.).

Connect the various research studies you reviewed. Describe how your work utilizes, draws upon, departs from, synthesizes, adds to or extends previous research studies (Callahan, 2014).

11.6 Research Methods

- Indicate how the approach fits the overall research design. Your methods should have a clear connection with your research problem. In other words, make sure that your methods will actually address the problem.
- Describe the population, sample size, sampling techniques justifying the selection and appropriateness.
- Describe the specific methods of data collection you are going to use, such as, surveys, interviews, questionnaires, observation.
- Explain how you intend to analyze your results. Will you use statistical analysis? Will you use specific theoretical perspectives to help you analyze a text? Which statistics will you use and for what?

- E.g. Student t test for comparing means, correlation for testing associations, multiple regression for making predictions etc. For qualitative data, themes and key words and phrases.
- Provide background and rationale for methodologies that are unfamiliar for your readers. Very often in the social sciences, research problems and the methods for investigating them require more explanation/rationale.
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Research Design

Exploratory Design: An exploratory design is conducted about a research problem when there are few or no earlier studies to refer to.

- Usually flexible on sample size, geographical coverage etc.
- Useful in determining feasibility of a study.
- For formulation of new research questions.
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- Provide background and rationale for methodologies that are unfamiliar for your readers. Very often in the social sciences, research problems and the methods for investigating them require more explanation/rationale.
- Limited value in decision making.

Causal Design:

This type of research is used to measure what impact a specific change will have on existing norms and assumptions. Variation in one phenomenon, an independent variable, leads to or results, in variation in another phenomenon, the dependent variable. A valid conclusion is based on finding an association between the independent variable and the dependent variable.

Experimental Design:

The classic experimental design specifies an experimental group and a control group. The independent variable is administered to the experimental group and not to the control group, and both groups are measured on the same dependent variable.

Case Study: In-depth study of a particular research problem rather than a sweeping statistical survey. The case can be an individual, company, NGO etc. Useful design when not much is known about a phenomenon. Design can provide detailed descriptions of specific and rare cases.

Action Research: Design focuses on pragmatic and solution-driven research rather than testing theories. Intervention is carried out (the action) during which time, pertinent observations are collected in various forms. The new interventional strategies are carried out and the cyclic process is repeated till a solution is achieved.

Counselling Supervision Research Publications;

Falender CA, Shafranske EP. Supervision essentials for the practice of competency-based supervision. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association; 2017.

Goodyear RK, Lichtenberg J, Hutman H, Overland E, Bedi R, Christiani K, et al. A global portrait of counselling psychologists' characteristics, perspectives, and professional behaviors. Couns Psychol Q. 2016;29 (2):115–38.

Kühne, F., Maas, J., Wiesenthal, S. et al. Empirical research in clinical supervision: a systematic review and suggestions for future studies. BMC Psychol 7, 54 (2019). https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-019-0327-7.

Reviewed the current status of supervision interventions (e.g., setting, session frequency, therapeutic background). Second to provide suggestions for future supervision research.

11.7 Summary

In this lecture, we have defined the term research, explored the aims and purpose of research. We have discussed the steps in research process.

11.8 Further Reading

Babbie, E. (2010). The practice of social research (12th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Callahan JL. Writing Literature Reviews: A Reprise and Update. Human Resource Development Review. 2014;13(3):271-275. doi:10.1177/1534484314536705.

Choo, Garro, Ranney, Meisel, and Guthrie (2015): Qualitative Research in Emergency Care Part I: Research Principles and Common Applications.

Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions (2018), published by the British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy (BACP), UK

Hawkins, P., & Shohet, R. (2000). Supervision in the Helping Professions. (2nd Ed). Philadelphia: Open University Press.

Kothari, C. (2019). Research Methodology: Methods and Techniques. 4th Edition, New Age International Publishers, New Delhi.