

Research Article Critique for Qualitative Research

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Research article critique helps in identifying the features and attributes that make a study usable. Usability of a qualitative study is dependent on study rigor, credibility, trustworthiness, and believability. An article critique evaluates the different components of a research including the title, authors' details, abstract, and the six chapters of a study (introduction, literature review, methods, data analysis and presentation, findings & discussion, and conclusion and recommendations). This paper presents a research article critique for the article titled "*A qualitative analysis of the bullying prevention and intervention recommendations for students in grades 5 to 8*" by Cunningham, Ratcliffe, Cunningham & Vaillancourt, 2010.

Title, Authors, and Abstract

A good research title should be precise and unambiguous for ease of audience comprehension (Creswell, 2014). These two attributes can be achieved by having a title that is not wordy (15 words and below), avoid using jargon or complex terms, and ensure the title is a complete statement (Firth, 2014). The title should also direct the reader on what to expect from the article by hinting the research design, main variables, and study population (Creswell, 2014). These attributes are well identified in Cunningham, Ratcliffe, Cunningham & Vaillancourt, 2010, study title, which is comprehensible and hints the study design (qualitative), variables (bullying prevention and intervention), and study population (students in grades 5-8). However, the words used in the title are 17 including the numbers, but this merely makes the title wordy.

The authors' details and affiliation availability help in evaluating authors' credibility, and their past studies (Creswell, 2014). The audience or reader may need to explore on the authors before using an article; thus, unavailability of the author details can hamper such

efforts. The authors Cunningham, Ratcliffe, Cunningham & Vaillancourt of the article of interest in this critique have provided their full names, and their affiliated institutions. After some little delving on the authors, it is evidenced that they have participated in the development of other publications, which support their credibility.

The abstract is supposed to offer a summary of the main sections and details of a study (Ryan, Coughlan & Cronin, 2007). The abstract may be structured (content put under main headings) or non-structured (no heading used in the abstract), with the structured type preferred to guiding the reader and ensuring details are summarized systematically (Creswell, 2014). The article by Cunningham, Ratcliffe, Cunningham & Vaillancourt, 2010, used non-structured abstract, but with some of the main areas identified in the abstract. However, the abstract lacks the purpose of the study and a background jumping directly to the methodology followed by findings and recommendation.

Introduction & Research Problem

The introduction section is supposed to offer a background of the study aimed at ensuring the audience understands the article's situation of focus (Creswell, 2014). The introduction sections should also guide the audience towards identifying the gap existing in the study, the study purpose, and the study breakdown (Ryan, Coughlan & Cronin, 2007). For their study, Cunningham, Ratcliffe, Cunningham & Vaillancourt, 2010, have introduced the concept of bullying in school, and highlighted the study purpose "this study builds on previous work by examining the bullying prevention suggestions for grade 5 to 8 students" in the introduction section. The development of the study purpose is well delineated, and the significance of the study to the education system and schooling is also hinted in the introduction system. Cunningham, Ratcliffe, Cunningham & Vaillancourt, 2010, lament the increasing bullying incidences in school, which warrants evaluation of prevention options,

draft recommendation, and explore suggestions from students on the effectiveness of existing bullying prevention approaches.

The research problem is of importance in the education system since bullying has significant implications for students' academic achievement, socialization, and psychological adjustment. Findings from Cunningham, Ratcliffe, Cunningham & Vaillancourt (2010) study can, therefore, be used by parents, teachers, and education policy makers in establishing effective working programs for eradicating bullying. According to Ryan, Coughlan & Cronin, 2007, the researcher(s) should clearly illustrate the study problem, how it will be evaluated, what are the implications, and why it is vital to evaluate the problem at that point of the time. These attributes have been covered in the introduction section in Cunningham, Ratcliffe, Cunningham, & Vaillancourt (2010) study.

Literature Review

The literature review section is may be given a distinct section of its own in a study or merged with the introduction section (Creswell, 2014). In most cases, merging the literature review with the introduction offers a detailed background on the study and what have already been investigated (Firth, 2014). Ideally, the literature review aims at consolidating findings from past studies. Ryan, Coughlan & Cronin, 2007, emphasizes that a literature review should be objective, meet philosophical underpinning of the study, and be relevant to the study. Cunningham, Ratcliffe, Cunningham, & Vaillancourt (2010) study has a poorly identified literature review, which leaves the audience concluding it was merged with the rather short introduction section. Although there are accounts of the past studies from past studies such are those from “Arseneault, Bowes, & Shakoor 2009; Farrington & Ttofi, 2009; Merrell, Gueldner, Ross, & Isava, 2008; and Varjas et al., 2008” among others, the content and scope of literature review is unconvincing and unsatisfactory.

Methods

The methods section should account for the study design, sample size, sampling method, data collection tool, and data collection procedure (Ryan, Coughlan & Cronin, 2007). This section should justify the choices made for the methods selected. Cunningham, Ratcliffe, Cunningham, & Vaillancourt (2010) study has a methods section that is well outlined with subheadings for the main paragraphs. The method section starts by describing the participants, which according to Firth, 2014, is an error since the method should start by describing the study design/approach justifying the decision. In this case, Cunningham, Ratcliffe, Cunningham, & Vaillancourt, 2010, ought to have started by accounting the selection of the qualitative approach and the qualitative design adopted for this study. Ethical grounds were met through appraisal from Research Ethic Board, permission from the study site for all the schools involved, and consent to participate obtained from the parents.

The target population was 505,000 students, eight schools were conveniently selected, and 62 students selected randomly to participate. There is no justification as to why the random sampling, the sample size used, or the site used were selected Cunningham, Ratcliffe, Cunningham, & Vaillancourt, 2010; and omissions that Firth, 2014, argues reduces the quality of the study. The data was collected using interview guides with respondents organized into focused groups. The interview guide enhanced harmony in data collected and reduced going out of the subject. The reliability of the tool is given as scoring over 95%, which assures study tool validity and reliability. There is no justification as to why interviews and focused group options were selected, but there is a good account of the procedure.

Data Analysis

In most cases, data analysis for qualitative studies entails thematic analysis (Firth, 2014). The researcher (s) must explain how rigor, which is the equivalent of validity in

quantitative studies (Firth, 2014), was achieved in the study. Cunningham, Ratcliffe, Cunningham, & Vaillancourt, 2010, took solid measures to ensure bias, instrumentation errors, and internal threats to validity were reduced in the study. At first, the data collected was reviewed by the investigator, research assistant, and social worker from the school was evaluated and key themes identified. This was followed by data analysis was done by several investigators, which reduced interpretation bias. Also, both genders (male and female) were represented in the investigators team for the purpose of avoiding gender bias. Disparities in data analysis were addressed through consensus. The analyzed data was then represented in a table and narrative for ease of interpretation. Cunningham, Ratcliffe, Cunningham, & Vaillancourt, 2010, account for the data analysis procedure is convincing and detailed. The reader is left satisfied with the key issues that need to be addressed in the research article.

Discussion, Summary & Conclusion

The discussion section is supposed to draw connection and argument from the results obtained and compared to the existing literature findings (Firth, 2014). Any disparities are supposed to be explained with justifiable reasons for their existence. Ryan, Coughlan & Cronin (2007) explains that the discussion section should bring out the main themes identified and related to the study topic. Arguments made in the discussion should all be connected to the purpose of the study, seeking to answer the research questions or address the research hypothesis (Creswell, 2014). Despite the fact that the article of interest rated poorly in meeting literature review requirements, the study's discussion is informative and seeks to address the study purpose. The findings are well merged or compared to those from the existing literature presented in the introduction section.

Cunningham, Ratcliffe, Cunningham, & Vaillancourt, 2010 recommendation is in-line with meta-analysis reported in the study, which advocated for more comprehensive programs

in prevention of bullying. Both the recommendation and the conclusions offered by Cunningham, Ratcliffe, Cunningham, & Vaillancourt, 2010, addresses the study question with the take home message emphasizing the need for more investment in administrative support, staffing, and training for any comprehensive bullying prevention programs meet the expectations.

In conclusion, Cunningham, Ratcliffe, Cunningham, & Vaillancourt, 2010, the study is found to be credible and reliable with a high degree of believability and trustworthiness. Despite the noted weaknesses and omissions, the study usability cannot be questioned.

References

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