Analysing Journal Articles

Definition

Scholarly articles are written by researchers and are published in research or academic journals. They have good credibility as they've have been through a rigorous system of review by other experts in the author’s research field before publication is permitted (peer review). Scientific research articles are highly structured to make information easy to find. The research article often has the following sections: Title Page, Abstract, Introduction, Method, Results, Discussion, References, and Tables / Figures. Your goal should be to read and understand the article, and analyse the findings as they related to your own work. If you’re undertaking a critical review of a specific article, you will need to summarize, evaluate, and offer critical comment on the ideas and information presented in the article.

Reading the Article: Look for the following:

- the research question (usually stated in the Abstract and Introduction)
- the hypothesis(es) (usually in the Introduction)
- related published research (usually discussed in the Literature Review)
- the test of the hypothesis (in the Methodology and Methods)
- the findings (in the Results/Data Analysis, including tables and figures)
- how the findings were interpreted (in the Discussion)

➢ Read the article again analytically and make notes of the main ideas and main topic.

Now ask yourself these questions:

- What immediately stands out or is interesting about this information?
- How does the author(s) support the hypothesis or research question?
- What is the main aim of the article? Is the argument convincing?
- Is the article timely, relevant, current, citing current research?
- What are the controls for each experiment if it’s a scientific article?
- What is the methodology? Is it appropriate? Any weaknesses?
- Are the results and data analysis convincing? Is it comprehensive and thorough?
- What questions remain unanswered? Anything omitted or glaringly obvious?
- Could the data be interpreted in another way? What software was used?
How does the article contribute to the field? Does it add to or build on existing knowledge?
How does the article relate to your course or your research (or does it?)?

Linking to other Related Information

- Has the article been cited by any other researcher since it was written: see Cited By in databases such as Scopus or Web of Science. Or citation trackers such as Altmetrics.
- What citations or datasets does the author(s) use in their References?

Writing the Critical Article Review: You may need to evaluate a number of journal articles on your research question for a literature review or you may be required to write a critique of just one article for a shorter assignment.

Introduction

- Give the title of the article and name of the author(s) and provide a full citation of the article.
  Identify the writer by profession or affiliation. Identify the purpose of the article.
- Outline what the research question is and explain why it is interesting and important.
- It is important that the introductory paragraph include a thesis statement which identifies the main points you will be discussing in the body (analysis) of the review.

Body (Analysis)

- Briefly describe the methods, design of the study, how many subjects were involved, what they did, the variables, what was measured, and where the research was conducted.
- Describe the results / what was found and any other questions for future research.
- Write a summary of the main findings, arguments, or conclusions
- Discuss the strengths and also the limitations, or problems of the article / study.
- Discuss what you learned from the article and if you’d recommend it to other students.
- Support your analysis with quotations and/or specific examples throughout.

Conclusion

- Summarize the previous discussion and make a final judgement on the article’s value
- State what you learned from the article and comment on any implications of the research.