# 4. Introduction to Research Reports

## Overview

In unit 4 we are going to find out more information about research reports. To start, we will focus on understanding the common elements found in the introduction of research reports. We will be engaging with the research problem, the review of precedent literature, and the research purpose. Although the terms “research problem” and “research purpose” sound similar, we will see that although related, they are quite different.

### Topics

Unit 4 is divided into 4 topics:

1. What is Servant Leadership?
2. What is a Research Problem?
3. What is a Literature Review?
4. What is the Research Purpose?

### Learning Outcomes

When you have completed this unit you should be able to:

1. Compare and contrast the common elements of a quantitative research question and a qualitative research question.
2. Evaluate the quality of the research problem, literature review, and purpose statement of a research report on servant leadership.
3. Reflect on the importance of understanding the introduction section of a research report for a critical consumer of research.

### Activity Checklist

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| **Learning Activities**   * **Activity:** Watch a video, read the article by Sendjaya and Sarros (2002), “Servant leadership: Its origin, development, and application in organizations,” and reflect in your journal. * **Activity:** Read Chapters 1 through 4 of the Rosch et al. (2023) text. Evaluate the statement of the problem and the purpose statement in an article on servant leadership * **Assessment:** Contribute to the course discussions. See Assessment tab in Moodle for details. * **Assessment:** Complete Literature Review Search (Assignment #2) |

### Resources

Here are the resources you will need to complete the unit:

* Rosch, D. M., Kniffin, L. E., & Guthrie, K. L. (2023). *Introduction to research in leadership*. Information Age Publishing.
* *E-Resources:* The articles in this unit can be found through the [TWU library](https://www.twu.ca/library).

## 4.1 What is Servant Leadership?

To begin this unit, I want to provide you with a very brief overview of servant leadership because the research articles that I have selected for you to focus on for units 4, 5, 6, 7, and 9 are all focused on the topic of servant leadership. I have included articles on servant leadership from the field of education, business, non-profit and health care. Servant leadership, as a concept, has its origins tracing back to the earliest records we have in history. It is not a religious concept, however, it is a concept that you will find is supported by most of the world’s major religions. For Christians, Jesus Christ is considered the epitome of a servant-leader. In fact servant leadership is fully aligned with the teachings of Christianity. For example, read the following passage from [Mark 10:35-45](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+10%3A35-45&version=ESV) which states “But among you it will be different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant.” [Mark 10:43](https://biblia.com/bible/nrsv/Mark%2010.43) Consider the following reflection on this passage by [Mark Roberts (2014).](https://www.theologyofwork.org/the-high-calling/daily-reflection/servant-leadership) In 1970, Robert Greenleaf began writing about servant leadership in our modern day context in his seminal essay “The Servant as Leader”. He stated that “servant leadership begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve others first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is leader first…”(p.6). Several years later Larry Spears (2010) went on to write an essay that describes the [ten characteristics of a servant leader](https://www.regent.edu/acad/global/publications/jvl/vol1_iss1/Spears_Final.pdf). They are:

* Listening
* Empathy
* Healing
* Awareness
* Persuasion
* Conceptualization
* Foresight
* Stewardship
* Commitment to the Growth of People
* Building Community

According to Sendjaya and Sarros (2002) “There has been a strong tendency among leadership scholars and journalists to treat leaders as isolated heroes controlling and commanding others from within their ivory tower. In the organizational context, the word ‘leader’ has been mostly ascribed to people who hold management positions and are capable of giving orders to other members of the organization (Senge, 1990)”. The authors suggest that servant leadership may offer a better alternative.

### 4.1.1 Learning Actiivty: Watch, Read and Reflect

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| 📖 Read the article by Eva et al., (2019) [Servant leadership: A systematic review and call for future research](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2018.07.004) to familiarize yourself with the current state of research on servant leadership.  ✏️ After reading the article, complete the questions for this learning activity in your reflective learning journal.   * What is already known and not known about servant leadership? * Why do you think servant leadership should be of interest researchers in the leadership field?   *Note that your journal is not graded, but will help you in your assessment for this unit.* |

### 4.1.2 What is a Research Problem?

All good research begins with a good research problem. Plano-Clark and Creswell (2015) suggest that research problems “are the issues, controversies or concerns that demand study” (p. 80). They assert that these are often real problems that must be addressed. Gall, Gall and Borg (2007) suggest that in identifying the research problem, the researcher should consider personal interest, the potential benefits to the researcher’s professional growth, and potential contribution of the research study to research knowledge. They suggest that all three criteria should be considered, with emphasis on the first and third. Somewhat reflexively, a thorough review of literature on a topic that interests you informs the identification of a good research problem. Gall, Gall and Borg (2007, p. 43) suggest that through the process of the literature review, researchers ask themselves the following kinds of questions.

* Has research on this problem been done before?
* What has been learned?
* What more can I contribute?
* How do my methods compare to those employed by other researchers?
* Are there more compelling research problems to be addressed?

All of these contribute to answering the ultimate question for any research: “So what?” As a consumer of research, these sorts of questions can help you identify a good research problem to focus your personal research interest. This narrowing of research interest, or research problem, is a process that is refined as you read over a variety of different sources of literature.

### 4.1.3 Learning Activity: Watch, Read, and Reflect!

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| 📺 To begin this learning activity, watch the following three videos.   1. [*Watch: Starting a Systematic Review*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bWJpRUN6iSM) 2. [*Watch: An Introduction to Writing a Systematic Review - Laurie Theeke – Sept 2017*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a2TDymxmLW4) 3. [*Watch: Finding Studies for Systematic Reviews*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=icJtJFYyrQk)   📖 Re-read chapter 2, “Beginning the process of research in leadership,” in the Rosch, Kniffin, and Guthrie (2023) text to help you understand what the statement of the problem is and what to look for in a high-quality article.  ✏️ In your reflective learning journal, practice evaluating the quality of a study’s statement of the problem of the Eva et al., article.   * In your learning journal, identify what your overall quality rating is of this section and list three pieces of evidence to support your rating.   *Note that your journal is not graded, but will help you in your assessment for this unit.* |

## 4.2 What is a Literature Review?

The research problem establishes why a particular research study is worth doing. The review of the literature supports this by establishing what is already known about the problem and summarizes what scholarship has already established regarding the research problem. This has many facets that go beyond merely establishing the research purpose. As we will see, a literature review affects every aspect of a research study and its final report. For that reason, one of the most important preliminary steps in the process of scholarly inquiry is doing a thorough review of the precedent academic literature on a given topic. A precedent literature review is the process of locating, obtaining, reading and evaluating the research and theoretical literature in your area of interest. Bordens and Abbott (2005) outline several important reasons for a researcher to conduct a precedent literature review:

1. **To avoid needless duplication of effort.** By becoming familiar with an area of study through a review of the literature, the researcher can avoid “re-inventing the wheel.” The researcher’s specific question or topic may already have been thoroughly addressed and answered. In the case of research designed for application, a review of literature provides a rich resource of information upon which to draw and apply to the chosen context.
2. **To clarify the design of research.** Designing a study involves decisions regarding which concepts or variables are most germane and how to define, measure, or describe them. The published literature provides the researcher with a rich resource of information about each of these dimensions. The researcher may also find established procedures or existing materials (e.g., a survey tool) that would inform their research.
3. **To update the researcher on the current state of knowledge in a particular field**. Researchers must be up to date on current empirical or theoretical advances and controversies in a particular area.

Gall, Gall & Borg (2007, pp. 96-97) provide a similar but expanded list of reasons for the researcher to conduct a thorough review of precedent literature:

1. **Delimiting the research problem.** Generally, it is advantageous to the researcher to investigate a limited problem in depth as opposed to doing a superficial study over a broad area. Review of precedent research will give you insight into how other researchers have focused their inquiry within a broad field.
2. **Seeking new lines of inquiry.** A thorough review of precedent literature will not only reveal what has been done in a given area of interest, but will also, perhaps more importantly, reveal what has been overlooked. This is valuable information for a potential researcher and is a major driver of new research.
3. **Avoiding fruitless approaches.** The cause of scholarship is not advanced by the multiplication of research studies based on the same methodological paradigm that continues to report no significant effect, and the researcher who adds to such a litany clearly demonstrates that he or she has not done an adequate review of precedent literature. As a wise and discerning consumer of research, you want to avoid wasting your time with fruitless approaches.
4. **Gaining methodological insights.** Researchers can find important ideas as to how they can design their research to be more fruitful. As a wise consumer of research, you may consider looking for reports using a variety of research methods.
5. **Identifying recommendations for further research.** For both the researcher and the discerning consumer of research, the section of research reports that makes recommendations for further research can be a gold mine.

A precedent literature review that is useful and instructive exhibits the following features:

* the writer’s clarity of purpose and focus of the research question
* the thoroughness of the writer’s search
* the quality and reliability of the writer’s sources
* the degree to which the writer provides synthesis (i.e., relates research studies to one another and to the paper’s thesis and purpose in meaningful ways)
* the objectivity of the writer in selecting, interpreting, organizing and summarizing the research he or she has reviewed.

### 4.2.1 Learning Activity: Watch, Read, and Reflect!

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| 📺 In this learning activity, begin by watching the following videos:   1. [*Watch: Conducting a Systematic Literature Review*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bWJpRUN6iSM)   <https://www.youtube-nocookie.com/embed/bWJpRUN6iSM?si=NwqM7AUqoix_IAit>   1. [*Watch: What are Systematic Reviews and Literature Reviews*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a2TDymxmLW4)   <https://www.youtube-nocookie.com/embed/a2TDymxmLW4?si=VXOMrbgVboZdm8Ad>  📖 Next, read chapter 4 “Conducting a literature review” in the Rosch, Kniffin, and Guthrie (2023) text.  ✏️ Practice evaluating the quality of a study’s literature review, using the Eva et al., article. Use the quality criteria discussed in the Rosch, Kniffin, and Guthrie (2023) text to evaluate the quality of the literature review.  ✏️ Finally, in your reflective learning journal, identify what your overall quality rating is of this section and list three pieces of evidence to support your rating. Make some notes about what you would look for in a high quality “Literature Review”.  *Note that your journal is not graded, but will help you in your assessment for this unit.* |

## 4.3 What is the Research Purpose?

The research problem establishes why a particular research study is worth doing or why it matters, the review of precedent literature establishes what is already known about the problem, and the research purpose establishes what the research specifically intends to do. Typically, the research purpose is further refined into a limited number of research questions or predictions (hypotheses) that the researcher will address. Taken together, these three common elements in introductions to research reports combine in such a way as to “pose significant questions that can be answered empirically” (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007, p. 35). As a consumer of research, you are vitally interested in the answers research reports offer to your significant questions. Identification of the research problem and review of precedent literature leads directly to specifying the purpose of the study. The purpose will then provide direction for selection of the research design, data collection, analysis of data in determining findings or results and finally in the interpretation and evaluation of the research.

### 4.3.1 Learning Activity: Watch, Read and Reflect!

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| ✏️ Practice evaluating the quality of a study’s purpose statement/research question, using the Eva et al., article. Use the criteria discussed in the Rosch, Kniffin, and Guthrie (2023) text to evaluate the quality of the research question/purpose statement.  ✏️ Finally, in your reflective learning journal, identify what your overall quality rating is of this section and list three pieces of evidence to support your rating. Make some notes about what you would look for in a high quality “Purpose Statement and/or Research Question”.  *Note that your journal is not graded, but will help you in your assessment for this unit.* |

## 4.4 Summary

In this unit you have learned about the origin and development of servant leadership and the common elements found in the introduction of research reports. You have learned about the research problem, the review of precedent literature, and the research purpose and the similarities and differences among qualitative and quantitative research reports. Although theses terms are similar, they are quite different and serve different functions in the introduction of a research report.

### Checking Your Learning

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| Now that you have completed the learning activities and assignments for this unit, check the list below to see if you can do the following:   1. Can you evaluate the quality of the research problem, literature review, and purpose statement of a research report on servant leadership. 2. Can you discuss the importance of understanding the introduction section of a research report for critical research.   *Feel free to review topics more in depth or continue on to the next unit.* |