

Link to my e-portfolio. https://taracasserly.github.io/ePortfolio/module_six.html

Reflection: Research Methods and Professional Practice

I will be using the Rolfe et al. model of reflection to critically analyse my learning and experiences throughout the module 'Research Methods and Professional Practice'. (Rolfe et al., 2001)

What?

With a decade of experience in business analysis, focusing on data to drive decisions, I approached this module with a blend of anticipation and excitement. My expertise lies in quantitative data and structured analysis, often involving complex datasets. This background framed my expectations that the course would solidify my existing skills, particularly around statistical analysis however I learned so much more than I imagined, and I have already brought my learnings to my day-to-day job.

The course journey began with a foundational dive into research ethics, highlighting the critical importance of integrity throughout the research lifecycle—from hypothesis formulation to data analysis and reporting. This ethical groundwork was not new to me, but it was reassuring to see it emphasised, reflecting the standards I uphold in my professional data practices.

The real surprises developed as the module progressed. I discovered methodologies I hadn't explored much before, like qualitative research techniques. I realised that qualitative data adds depth to the patterns and trends often seen in raw numbers. Although I regularly interview the business (one way to gather qualitative data) to gauge their feedback on applications, the course provided a new perspective on this practice and how it can reveal trends in the data.

So What?

In my role, I frequently collaborate with cross-functional teams to address business challenges, relying heavily on quantitative data to propose solutions and strategies. Historically, my engagement with more academically inclined research had been minimal. This course has bridged that gap, providing me with tools to better communicate with and contribute to academic research. I look forward to using these skills as I head into my final project.

The exploration of the gender pay gap in the UK technology sector was particularly meaningful with my background as a woman working in the technology sector in the UK. The research shed light on the systemic barriers that perpetuate pay discrepancies, despite legislative efforts and industry initiatives. This research really brought the course's lessons to life, showing how deeply ingrained biases and structural inequalities are reflected in data trends.

It reinforced the importance of qualitative insights in providing context to the quantitative patterns, a synergy that is essential in addressing complex issues like gender inequality in the tech industry.

Reflecting on the assignment, several critical learnings emerged that will guide my future research and writing efforts. One key takeaway is the importance of consistent citation throughout the paper. While the assignment demonstrated a solid understanding of the subject matter, the feedback highlighted areas where the support of cited sources was irregular.

The feedback on the critical analysis section showed a mix of strengths and areas for improvement. While the assignment effectively compared the pros and cons of different cultural impacts on women's financial and career advancements in IT, it leaned too heavily on descriptive content. Moving forward, maintaining a balance between description and critical evaluation, especially through continued debate and analysis, will provide a more robust examination of the research at hand.

Reflecting on my assignment "Screen Time and Self-Esteem: A Deep Dive into Social Media's Impact on Adolescents," I recognise both the strengths and areas that could be improved upon.

One of the key strengths of this assignment was the thorough understanding and knowledge of the subject matter. This is a topic that is very close to my heart, and I really enjoyed researching it.

While the assignment effectively highlighted the negative impacts of screen time on adolescent self-esteem, it became clear from the feedback that a more balanced analysis was needed. Future research should incorporate both positive and negative aspects of social media usage to provide a more comprehensive view. This balanced approach will help in understanding the full scale of social media's impact on self-esteem.

The feedback also pointed out the need for more theoretical frameworks and intrinsic knowledge. For example, considering the nuances within the female demographic, such as the different impacts of social media screen time on neurodivergent girls compared to neurotypical girls, would deepen the research. This approach avoids a blanket view of females as a gender and reflects the diversity within the demographic.

I have developed strong statistical analysis skills in my role as a business analyst, particularly in handling quantitative data. Daily, I query databases using SQL to extract and manipulate data for analysis. These skills are crucial in my role, where data-driven decision-making is essential. I enjoyed the statistical exercises in unit 8 and unit 9. I learned some new Excel skills as part of these tasks.

While confident in querying databases with SQL, statistical modelling and hypothesis testing are new to me. I enjoyed learning more about these as part of this module, but I plan to enrol in courses on statistical methods and data analysis and deepen my SQL knowledge with advanced querying and optimisation techniques.

Now What?

This module has equipped me with a more rounded view of research methodologies, which will undoubtedly enhance my professional capabilities. I am now more prepared to incorporate more qualitative insights into my analysis, enriching the data-driven narratives I craft to influence business decisions.

By addressing the feedback received, I can significantly improve the quality of my future assignments, ensuring they are well-rounded, thoroughly supported, and critically analysed. Better time management will allow for more comprehensive research and reflection, improving the overall quality of my work. My assignments highlighted the importance of balanced analysis and diverse research, reinforcing the need for thorough research and clear presentation. This is super useful feedback to receive ahead of my final project.

Looking forward, I am excited to apply these new skills in upcoming projects, particularly those involving complex stakeholder landscapes where understanding diverse perspectives can be as critical as the hard numbers.

Reference list:

Rolfe et al. (2001). Rolfe et al.'s (2001) reflective model. Retrieved from my.cumbria.ac.uk