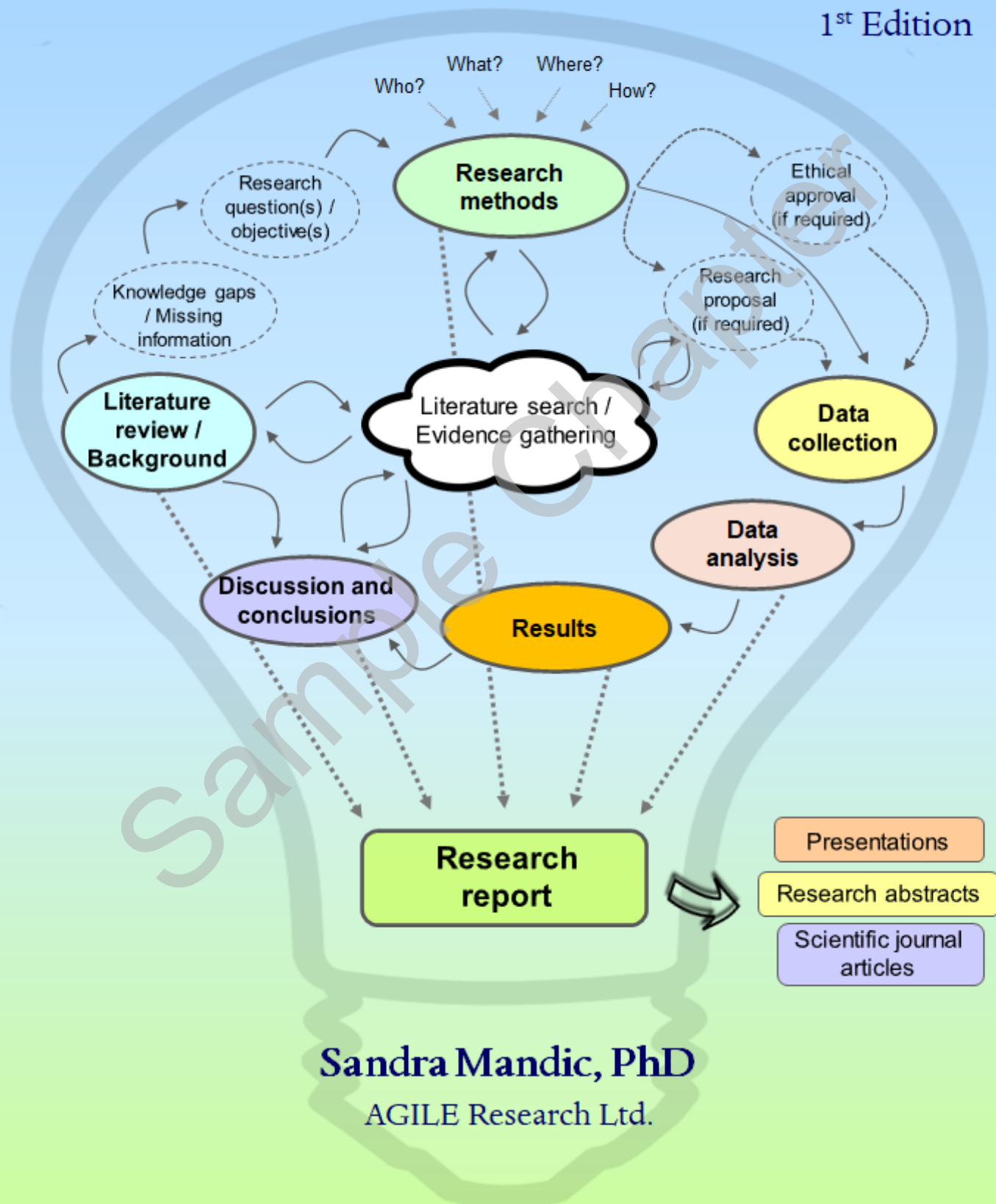


How to Navigate a Research Process: Compass Guide for Beginners

1st Edition



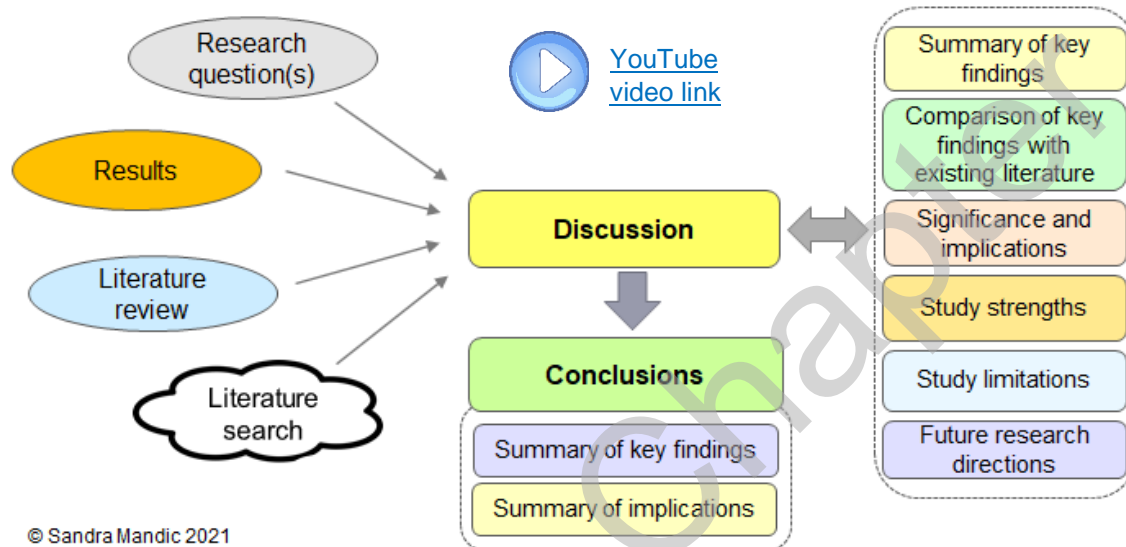
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How to Write Discussion and Conclusions

The discussion section of the research report summarises key study findings and compares and contrasts those findings with the existing literature on a particular topic. This section also allows researchers to emphasise new and novel aspects of the research and offer possible explanations for their findings. The discussion section should identify study strengths and limitations and outline the implications of study findings for future research and/or professional practice.

The conclusions of your research report should be linked to your research question(s) or objective(s). Conclusions need to be adequately supported by results presented in your research report.



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To write the discussion section of your research report, you will need to use your knowledge of the literature / existing evidence and compare your findings with the existing evidence (previously published relevant studies in the case of academic research). Your literature review will be an excellent source of information. You will likely need to search for additional literature and may end up updating and/or revising your literature review as well.

Discussion sections are difficult to write and that process will take time – and likely several drafts. Give yourself plenty of time. Ask for and get feedback on your work and integrate that feedback into subsequent drafts.



Tips for Research Students

Writing Discussion and Conclusion Sections for Academic Reports

- Writing discussion and conclusion sections for your academic research report will take a lot of time and a few attempts to get them right. Allow sufficient time and keep working on it.
- Keep in mind that your research supervisor does not expect the first written draft of your discussion and conclusions to be excellent, but it needs to be written before you can get the feedback. Make your best effort, embrace the feedback, learn from it and revise your work as best as you can. Then be ready for more feedback and more learning.
- Allow sufficient time for writing your discussion and conclusions – and for your research supervisor to provide feedback on those sections.
- Do your best to integrate the feedback you receive, be patient, and – most importantly keep learning!

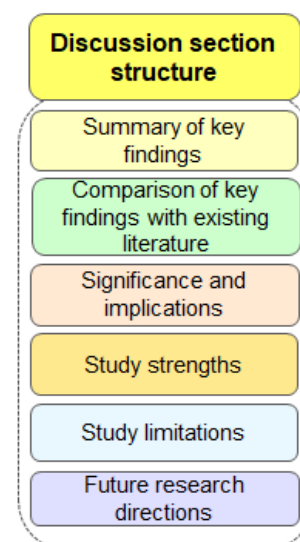
Guidelines for Writing Discussion and Conclusions Sections

Section	General guidelines
Discussion Section	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin your discussion section by briefly summarizing key findings • Emphasise the new and important aspects of the research • Compare and contrast results with other published articles (e.g., “In contrast to...”; “Consistent with...”; “Similar to...”; etc.) • Refer to key findings but do not repeat your results verbatim • Offer possible explanations for your findings • Discuss the implication of research findings for future research and/or professional practice, if applicable • State study strengths and discuss study limitations (no study is perfect) • Suggest directions for future research
Conclusions Section	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link conclusions to the objective(s) of the study • State only conclusions that are adequately supported by presented data (i.e., the conclusions need to be reasonable) • State the importance and relevance of study conclusions • State if the research could change policy or practice in the relevant field

Structuring the Discussion Section of Your Research Report

The discussion section should be well structured and have a reasonably logical flow. If writing a scientific journal article, note that many journals specify what they want covered in the discussion section and/or the order in which these should be addressed. Below are some suggestions:

- Summarise the key study findings in the first paragraph of the discussion section. (For example: “*Key findings of this study are: 1) ...; 2) ... and 3) ...*”)
- In the subsequent paragraphs, discuss each of the key findings in a separate paragraph. Organise these paragraphs in the same order as the order of key findings above.
- When discussing key findings, start each paragraph by restating a particular key finding from your study. Continue the paragraph by comparing your findings with results from previously published relevant research. Discuss the research that showed similar findings as well as those that showed different results. If applicable, offer possible explanations for differences in findings reported by different studies. Emphasise new and important aspects of your study.
- After discussing key findings individually, write a paragraph (or two) summarising the significance and implications of your research findings for future research and/or professional practice. Alternatively, state that information at the end of a paragraph that discusses a relevant finding.
- Outline the strengths of your study.
- Discuss study limitations and how those limitations may have influenced your results. No study is perfect. Assure the readers that your results are valid despite the described study limitations. Inform the readers how future studies could overcome those limitations.
- Finish the discussion section by stating recommendations for future research on the same topic.



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Writing a discussion section takes time. You will be referring to the previously read literature and may be looking for other relevant literature to make and/or support claims made in your discussion section. Along the way you may end up rewriting some parts of your literature review as you gain new insights.