

Previous Studies and How to Employ Them in Scientific Research: A Methodological and Critical Approach

Les études antérieures et leur exploitation dans la recherche scientifique: une approche méthodologique et critique

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Abstract:

This study examines previous studies as a core component in constructing scientific research, whose role is not limited to presenting what researchers have accomplished, but extends to guiding the research trajectory and positioning it within existing cumulative knowledge. The study aims to clarify the concept of previous studies, their sources, and classification criteria; outline the procedural foundations for reviewing them; analyze how they are employed in constructing the research problem along with its theoretical and methodological frameworks; and highlight their role in revealing research gaps and determining the scientific addition of the current study. The study adopted a descriptive-analytical approach through reviewing and analyzing specialized literature and studies in scientific research methodology and previous studies.

The findings indicate that the scientific value of previous studies is tied to their relevance to the research topic, their academic quality, and the researcher's ability to analyze, critique, and link their findings to the problem, objectives, and methodology of the current research. Furthermore, treating previous studies merely as isolated summaries limits their scientific value, whereas employing them in an analytical and critical manner helps define the research problem, formulate its questions or hypotheses, select appropriate methodologies and instruments, and interpret findings in light of existing knowledge. The study concludes that the methodological and critical review of previous studies represents an essential mechanism for transitioning from knowledge consumption to the production of new scientific knowledge.

Keywords: Previous Studies; Scientific Research; Literature Review; Methodological Employment; Critical Analysis; Research Gap.

Résumé:

Cette étude examine les études antérieures en tant que composante essentielle de la construction de la recherche scientifique, dont le rôle ne se limite pas à présenter ce que les chercheurs ont accompli, mais s'étend à orienter la trajectoire de la recherche et à la positionner au sein des connaissances cumulatives existantes. L'étude vise à clarifier le concept des études antérieures, leurs sources et leurs critères de classification ; à définir les fondements procéduraux

de leur revue ; à analyser la manière dont elles sont exploitées dans la construction de la problématique de recherche ainsi que de ses cadres théorique et méthodologique ; et à mettre en évidence leur rôle dans la révélation des lacunes de recherche et la détermination de l'apport scientifique de l'étude actuelle. L'étude a adopté une approche descriptive-analytique en passant en revue et en analysant la littérature et les études spécialisées en méthodologie de la recherche scientifique et en matière d'études antérieures.

Les résultats indiquent que la valeur scientifique des études antérieures est liée à leur pertinence par rapport au sujet de recherche, à leur qualité académique et à la capacité du chercheur à les analyser, à les critiquer et à relier leurs conclusions au problème, aux objectifs et à la méthodologie de la recherche en cours. En outre, traiter les études antérieures comme de simples résumés isolés limite leur valeur scientifique, tandis que les employer d'une manière analytique et critique aide à définir le problème de recherche, à formuler ses questions ou hypothèses, à sélectionner les méthodologies et les instruments appropriés, et à interpréter les résultats à la lumière des connaissances existantes. L'étude conclut que la revue méthodologique et critique des études antérieures représente un mécanisme essentiel pour passer de la consommation de connaissances à la production de nouvelles connaissances scientifiques.

Mots-clés : Études antérieures ; Recherche scientifique ; Revue de la littérature ; Exploitation méthodologique ; Analyse critique ; Lacune de recherche.

Introduction:

Scientific research is one of the primary means humans rely on to produce knowledge, understand and interpret phenomena, and reach outcomes that contribute to resolving scientific and practical problems. Given that scientific knowledge is cumulative in nature, new research does not start from a vacuum; rather, it relies to varying degrees on studies, theories, and findings previously accomplished by earlier researchers. Consequently, previous studies emerge as one of the fundamental pillars upon which a researcher builds their study and determines its position within the scientific field to which it belongs.

Previous studies are not restricted to gathering information or listing the titles of research that addressed a topic; rather, they require an organized review and a critical analysis of their contents, methodologies, and findings. Through this review, a researcher can determine what has been achieved, uncover points of agreement and disagreement, and identify aspects that still require investigation. They also assist in recognizing theoretical trends, methodologies, and instruments utilized in prior works, allowing the researcher to benefit from them in constructing the current study and avoiding unjustified duplication.

The significance of this process increases when the researcher moves beyond merely compiling previous studies to analyzing, comparing, and connecting them to the research problem and objectives, enabling the identification of the research gap from which the study proceeds. Hence, the quality of scientific research is not determined by the sheer number of previous studies it draws upon, but by how well they are selected, analyzed, and employed to generate new knowledge.

Study Problem: The primary problem of the study is formulated through the following central question:

How can previous studies be methodologically and critically employed in scientific research to contribute to constructing the study, identifying the research gap, and achieving a scientific addition?

This problem gives rise to several sub-questions:

1. What is meant by previous studies, and what are their primary sources and classification criteria?
2. What are the procedural foundations that should be considered when reviewing previous studies?
3. How can previous studies be utilized in defining the research problem and constructing its theoretical and methodological frameworks?
4. How does the critical analysis of previous studies contribute to identifying the research gap and achieving a scientific addition?

Study Objectives: This study aims to:

1. Clarify the concept of previous studies, their sources, and major classification criteria.
2. Outline the methodological foundations and steps necessary for reviewing previous studies.
3. Highlight the role of previous studies in constructing the research problem and its theoretical and methodological frameworks.
4. Explain how to analyze previous studies and employ them critically to uncover the research gap and determine the scientific addition.

Significance of the Study: The significance of this study stems from the position previous studies occupy in the scientific research process as a means enabling researchers to comprehend accumulated knowledge surrounding their topic, determine their study's position within the scientific field, and uncover aspects previously addressed versus those still requiring investigation. Its significance also lies in emphasizing the necessity of moving beyond a formalistic handling of previous studies to treating them as a cognitive and methodological resource that aids in formulating the research problem and its questions or hypotheses, selecting appropriate methodologies and instruments, and discussing findings in light of existing knowledge.

Study Methodology: The study adopted a descriptive-analytical approach based on a critical review of specialized literature dealing with scientific research methodology, literature review, and the use of previous studies in research. The sources examined included academic books, peer-reviewed journal articles, theses and dissertations, and other relevant scholarly works. The literature was selected according to its relevance to the study problem, its academic credibility, and its contribution to understanding the methodological and analytical dimensions of previous studies. The selected literature was analyzed comparatively and critically to identify common methodological principles, differences in approaches, and the main functions attributed to previous studies within the research process.

The analysis proceeded from defining previous studies and identifying their sources and classification criteria, to examining the procedures and stages of reviewing them, and finally to explaining how they can be employed in constructing the research problem, theoretical and methodological frameworks, and in identifying the research gap and scientific addition. Accordingly, the study does not merely compile or summarize previous literature, but seeks to synthesize its methodological insights and critically examine their implications for the effective employment of previous studies in scientific research.

Study Structure: To address the study problem and achieve its objectives, the topic was divided into eight main axes: Axis One addresses the concept of previous studies; Axis Two examines their sources; Axis Three deals with their classification criteria; Axis Four is dedicated to procedural aspects related to reviewing them; Axis Five covers the steps for reviewing them; Axis Six focuses on how to employ them in scientific research; Axis Seven highlights their significance in constructing scientific research; while Axis Eight discusses evaluating previous studies, building the research gap, and determining the scientific addition.

1. Definition of Previous Studies

Previous studies include university theses and dissertations, as well as scholarly studies conducted within the researcher's home country, in neighboring countries, or abroad, which are directly or indirectly related to the research topic. When incorporating these studies, the researcher should analyze and discuss them in detail, highlighting the similarities and differences between them and the current research, and identifying the scholarly contribution that the current research seeks to make.¹

Previous studies are considered one of the most vital components contained within scientific research, as scientific research cannot be complete and sound without a section dedicated to previous studies. They are defined as that prior research cluster encompassing the topic addressed by the researcher in scientific research². The researcher relies on these studies to analyze their content, study them as required, and consequently determine the points of comparison between prior literature and the scientific research undertaken by the researcher.³

Previous studies are also defined as indispensable sources of inspiration for a researcher, given that every study is merely an extension of preceding research. Thus, existing studies surrounding a given topic serve as an exploratory path enabling the researcher to comprehend and rigorously delineate their specific research topic.⁴

¹ - Mansour Naaman & Ghassan Dhiab Al-Nammari. *Scientific Research*. 1st ed. Jordan: Dar Al-Kindi for Publishing and Distribution, 1998, p. 56

² -Aqil Aqil Hussein, *The Philosophy of Scientific Research Methodologies* (Cairo: Madbouly Library for Publishing and Distribution, 1999), p.26-27.

³ - Ibrahim Yahiaoui. "Previous Studies: Their Importance and How to Employ Them in Social Sciences Research." *Journal of Human and Society Sciences* 10, no. 1 (2021), p. 321.

⁴ - Maurice Angers. *Methodology of Scientific Research in the Humanities*. Algiers: Casbah Editions, 2023, p. 125

2. Sources of Previous Studies

Sources of previous studies vary and diversify according to their nature and their level of proximity to the original information, spanning primary, secondary, and tertiary sources. These sources hold paramount importance for the scientific researcher, as they constitute the cognitive and methodological foundation upon which the research problem and hypotheses are built across various fields of knowledge, which are represented as follows:

Primary Sources: Documents and publications containing new information, fresh perceptions, or recognized ideas that were recorded directly by the researcher based on observation, experimentation, statistics, or field data collection for the purpose of yielding new findings and previously unknown facts, such as university theses, articles, journals, research reports, and conferences.

Secondary Information Sources: Sources relying for their information on primary sources (relying on previously recorded data, such as books, studies, and dictionaries).

Tertiary sources include encyclopedias, bibliographies, indexes, abstracts, databases, and other sources that organize or synthesize information derived from primary and secondary sources. The internet, by contrast, is a medium through which primary, secondary, and tertiary sources may be accessed and should not be classified as a source category in itself.

For a researcher, the field is considered one of the primary sources for data collection, where the researcher undertakes data collection personally. As for the component of previous studies in scientific research, they are restricted to the following categories:

- a. Theories connected to the research topic.
- b. Partial facts representing findings of multiple studies from which the researcher constructs a hypothesis to launch their study, which may be mutually consistent, disparate, or contradictory.
- c. General fixed facts connected to the topic, or a set of consistent partial facts.⁵

3. Classification Criteria for Previous Studies

Previous studies are classified based on the fundamental study variables, chronological sequence, and thematic content. These classifications are detailed as follows:

- a. Thematic Classification of Previous Studies:** This criterion relies on categorizing previous studies according to the research questions and hypotheses, or according to the envisioned division of the study (themes, chapters, sections).
- b. Classification by Study Variables:** This classification relies on dividing previous studies according to the core study variables, their indicators, or the relationships existing among the variables. A researcher may utilize this classification if the research questions or hypotheses prominently investigate relationships among specific variables within the research problem.
- c. Chronological Classification:** This classification rests on dividing previous studies according to the chronological sequence criterion, where studies are arranged chronologically or

⁵ - Faiza Chaoui, Abdelkader Badji. "The Importance of Previous Studies and How to Include Them in Scientific Research." *Journal of Economic Problem and Development* 1, no. 2 (2022), pp. 105–106

historically in temporal periods based on study variables or relationships. It is worth noting that chronological ordering can also be applied implicitly within the two preceding classifications, arranging studies by topics, variables, or indicators in either ascending or descending temporal order.⁶

- d. Spatial or Geographical Classification:** The researcher arranges previous studies according to the location or geographical region where the study was conducted (local, Arab, or international).⁷

4. Procedural Components of Presenting Previous Studies

This section concerns the systematic presentation of relevant scientific studies—including master's theses, doctoral dissertations, peer-reviewed journal articles, and specialized conference papers—published in scholarly venues. Since scientific research is cumulative and previous studies provide an essential cognitive and methodological foundation for subsequent investigations, the researcher should present the selected literature in an organized manner, enabling the reader to grasp their core characteristics and direct relevance to the current research.

The presentation of previous studies may proceed according to the following elements:

- a. Identifying the scope of previous research:** determining the number and general range of studies that have addressed the research topic or closely related aspects.
- b. Presenting each selected study systematically:** the researcher may provide the following information:
- Title of the study.
 - Name of the author or authors.
 - Type of study (master's thesis, doctoral dissertation, conference paper, peer-reviewed journal article, etc.).
 - Publication date and, where relevant, country or research setting.
 - Objectives of the study.
 - Research problem and, where applicable, research questions or hypotheses.
 - Research methodology, including the approach and data-collection techniques.
 - Sample and its main characteristics, where applicable.
 - Key findings and conclusions.
- c. Organizing the selected studies:** Previous studies may be arranged according to a criterion appropriate to the nature of the research, such as⁸:
- **Thematic classification:** studies dealing with different themes or dimensions of the research topic.

⁶ - Belal Boutraa, Al-Azhar Dhaif. "Reviewing Previous Studies in Scientific Research: Rules and Considerations." *Journal of Humanities* 19, no. 1 (2019), pp. 90–92

⁷ - Ibrahim Yahiaoui, Op. Cit., p. 334

⁸ - Mohammed Sarhan Ali Hammoudi. *Methodologies of Scientific Research*. 3rd ed. Sana'a: Dar Al-Kutub, 2019, p. 108

- **Classification by study variables:** studies addressing particular variables, indicators, or relationships relevant to the current research.
- **Chronological classification:** studies arranged from the most recent to the oldest, or according to significant periods in the development of the topic.
- **Linguistic or geographical classification:** for example, studies published in Arabic or other languages, or studies conducted in local, regional, or international contexts.

The researcher should select an organizational criterion that facilitates understanding of the literature rather than merely accumulating studies. The purpose is to provide a clear overview of the existing body of research and prepare the basis for its subsequent analysis and methodological employment.

5. Steps for Reviewing and Analyzing Previous Studies

Reviewing previous studies should go beyond describing the characteristics of individual studies. Its purpose is to develop an integrated understanding of what has already been investigated, how it has been investigated, and what remains insufficiently addressed. Accordingly, the researcher should proceed from a descriptive examination of the selected literature toward analytical and comparative reading⁹.

The process may involve the following steps:

- First, the researcher reads the selected studies carefully to identify their principal concepts, theoretical orientations, methodological approaches, findings, and conclusions. This enables the researcher to determine the major directions that have emerged in research on the topic.
- Second, the researcher compares the studies by identifying points of agreement and disagreement in their concepts, theoretical assumptions, methodologies, and findings. Where substantial differences exist among findings, the researcher should, where possible, consider the methodological, contextual, temporal, or other factors that may explain such differences.
- Third, the researcher synthesizes the findings of the reviewed studies rather than treating each study as an isolated contribution. This synthesis makes it possible to identify recurring findings, divergent perspectives, methodological tendencies, and areas that have received greater or lesser attention.
- Fourth, the researcher examines the theoretical and methodological implications of the literature for the current research. Previous theoretical and empirical studies may provide a basis for developing or refining the theoretical framework, defining concepts and variables, and selecting appropriate methodological approaches and research instruments.
- Finally, the analytical review should lead to identifying aspects that remain insufficiently investigated, inadequately explained, or in need of examination in a different context, using different data, or through a different methodological perspective. In this way, the review

⁹ - Mohammed Obeidat, et al. *Scientific Research Methodology: Rules, Stages, and Applications*. 2nd ed. Amman: Dar Wael for Publishing and Distribution, 1999, pp. 25–26

provides a reasoned basis for defining the research gap and establishing the need for the current study.

6. Employing Previous Studies in Scientific Research

The effective employment of previous studies begins after their systematic presentation and critical analysis. The researcher should not reproduce the information extracted from previous studies merely as descriptive summaries; rather, the information should be used to construct and guide the current research¹⁰.

Previous studies can be employed in scientific research in several ways:

- a. Defining the research problem:** previous studies help the researcher understand the dimensions of the phenomenon and identify aspects that remain unclear or insufficiently investigated.
- b. Formulating research questions or hypotheses:** findings and theoretical propositions from previous research can contribute to developing relevant research questions or hypotheses.
- c. Constructing the theoretical framework:** previous studies provide concepts, theories, models, and theoretical explanations that can be critically examined and incorporated into the theoretical framework of the current study where appropriate.
- d. Guiding methodological choices:** previous research enables the researcher to compare methodological approaches, data-collection techniques, instruments, and sampling procedures and to determine their suitability for the current research context.
- e. Interpreting and discussing findings:** the findings of the current study can be compared with those of previous studies to identify areas of agreement, disagreement, development, or divergence and to provide possible explanations for these patterns.
- f. Avoiding unjustified duplication:** reviewing previous research enables the researcher to distinguish the current study from existing work and avoid unnecessarily repeating research that has already been adequately conducted.
- g. Establishing the research gap and scientific addition:** the analytical use of previous studies helps demonstrate what has already been achieved, what remains insufficiently addressed, and how the current study intends to contribute to existing knowledge.

Accordingly, the effective employment of previous studies requires an explicit connection between the reviewed literature and the current research problem, objectives, theoretical framework, methodology, and interpretation of findings. The value of previous studies therefore lies not in the number of studies presented, but in the researcher's ability to transform their findings and methodological insights into a meaningful basis for constructing and advancing the current study.

¹⁰ - Ahmed Ramadnia, Mohammed Sakhri. "The Importance of Previous Studies, Their Utilization, and Status in Research." *Al-Jami Journal for Psychological Studies and Educational Sciences*, no. 1 (2024), pp. 459–460

7. Significance of Previous Studies

A characteristic of sound research is its foundation upon solid ground by engaging with a substantial body of previous studies conducted on the investigated topic. This keeps the researcher informed of what others have done, enabling them to recognize flaws and strengths. Consequently, previous studies serve as an intellectual background empowering the researcher to select appropriate research instruments and rigorously delineate their topic. The significance of previous studies can be summarized in the following points:

- a. Becoming acquainted with findings reached by other researchers, allowing the researcher to start where others left off.
- b. Keeping abreast of recent studies, the evolution and diversification of research fields, and determining the researcher's own position and contribution, regardless of how limited or minor it may be.
- c. Gaining experience and understanding the methods by which other researchers conducted their studies.
- d. Acquiring new dimensions within the phenomenon under study noted by others, or identifying additional variables and factors not previously considered by the researcher.
- e. Assisting in recognizing theorization attempts on the topic, or specific alternative frameworks, theories, or models embedded within these studies.¹¹

Furthermore, the significance of previous studies lies in intensive literature review, enabling the researcher to achieve high familiarity with major works investigating a topic, as well as the breadth and depth of the topic. This helps the researcher make the research problem more specific and researchable, clarifies study concepts and converts them into operational definitions, and formulates hypotheses addressing relationships among variables while providing directions that determine the research approach.¹²

Moreover, previous studies provide the scientific background, appropriate climate, and necessary sources for conducting sound research, uncovering the roots of the problem and leading to an understanding of what was accomplished regarding it in prior periods. They also highlight aspects previously studied, which can inspire new research helping the researcher achieve an accurate and bounded formulation of their study's objectives and nature.¹³

Previous studies enable the researcher to acquire several key inputs, most notably:

- Forming a theoretical background on the topic, given that the researcher is not the sole person studying the subject; rather, predecessors preceded them, exerting efforts, expressing opinions, and obtaining results. However, this does not mean the topic is unresearchable, nor that they are

¹¹ - Amer Mesbah. *Methodology of Preparing Scientific Research: The Chicago School*. Algiers: Mowers for Publishing, 2006, pp. 59–60

¹² - Wassila Zerouati. "The Importance of Previous Studies in Scientific Research." *Al-Qabas Journal for Psychological and Social Studies*, Medea, Algeria, no. 2 (December 2021), p. 59

¹³ - El-Ouannas Aissa. "The Role of Previous Studies in Scientific Research in the Field of Humanities and Social Sciences." *Annals of the University of Algiers, Abou Bakr Belkaid University*, Algeria, vol. 1, no. 1 (June 2021), p. 67

the last to study it; rather, the views and results of their research will be added to the general accumulated knowledge pool on the subject.

- Informing the researcher of difficulties encountered by predecessors, whether cognitive, financial, or related to handling fieldwork if applicable.¹⁴

8. Evaluating Previous Studies, Constructing the Research Gap, and Determining Scientific Addition

Following the overview of the concept of previous studies, their sources, review methods, and employment, the importance of evaluating them critically to uncover their scientific value and relevance to the research topic comes to the forefront. This evaluation permits identifying the research gap and illuminating the scientific addition the current study can offer.

1.8. Criteria for Evaluating the Quality of Previous Studies

Selecting previous studies should not be restricted to whether their titles relate to the research topic; rather, the researcher must evaluate their appropriateness and academic quality prior to employment. This includes examining the nature of the source, its direct relevance to the research problem, methodological soundness, clarity of study procedures, and utility of its findings within the current research context. Importance should also be assigned to peer-reviewed academic sources and works published by trustworthy entities or publishers, while taking into account the nature of the topic and the currency of associated knowledge.¹⁵

2.8. Critical and Comparative Analysis of Previous Studies

The scientific value of reviewing previous studies is not achieved merely by summarizing each study independently; rather, it requires analyzing, comparing, and synthesizing the contents, findings, and methodologies of the studies. Therefore, the researcher should determine points of agreement and disagreement among studies, connecting results, concepts, and shared issues, instead of presenting a sequential list of studies and authors. Webster and Watson emphasize that effective review should be centered around core concepts and ideas, because author-based organization and presenting each study independently may lead to summarizing literature without achieving true synthesis¹⁶.

Additionally, the scientific critique of previous studies should be balanced, focusing on explaining result patterns and boundaries of existing knowledge, rather than merely recording shortcomings. The purpose of critical analysis is to demonstrate how knowledge evolves and what the current study can build upon, while noting methodological or cognitive deficiencies when directly relevant to the research topic.

¹⁴ - Miloud Safari. "Methodological Foundations in Employing Previous Studies." *Journal of the University of Constantine for Humanities*, Constantine, Algeria, special issue (1995), p. 40

¹⁵ -Yu Xiao, Maria Watson, "Guidance on Conducting a Systematic Literature Review," *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 39, no. 1 (2019), pp. 94–95.

¹⁶ - Hannah Snyder, "Literature Review as a Research Methodology: An Overview and Guidelines," *Journal of Business Research* 104 (2019), p. 334. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.07.039>

3.8. Identifying the Research Gap

Identifying the research gap represents one of the most important outcomes a researcher can reach through systematic analysis of previous studies. A gap emerges when literature analysis reveals a cognitive, theoretical, methodological, or practical dimension that has not received sufficient study, or when studies reveal disparate findings requiring explanation, or when there is a need to test prior knowledge in a different context. Hence, identifying a gap is not based merely on claiming a lack of previous studies, but on demonstrating what has been accomplished and what remains in need of further investigation.

The significance of this step lies in distinguishing between knowledge already attained and aspects still requiring further research, allowing the current study to be directed toward a question or problem not adequately addressed.¹⁷

4.8. Determining the Scientific Addition of the Current Study

Following the identification of the research gap, the researcher must articulate the addition their study can offer compared to existing knowledge. The addition is not required to consist of investigating a topic never before touched upon, as it can be achieved by developing an existing explanation, testing a theory or finding in a new context, utilizing a different methodology or instrument, or re-examining prior findings in light of fresh data. The significance of this step lies in transitioning from merely consuming previous studies' results to employing them in constructing a research question of scientific value¹⁸.

Accordingly, the relationship between previous studies and the current study must be based on a logical sequence beginning with selecting relevant literature, evaluating its quality, analyzing and comparing it, arriving at the research gap, and concluding with clarifying the scientific addition the current study aims to achieve. Thus, previous studies become a foundation for constructing and guiding the research, rather than a mere descriptive section included at its outset.

Conclusion:

This study demonstrates that previous studies constitute an essential component in building scientific research, as they provide the researcher with a cognitive and methodological base enabling them to comprehend their topic and determine its position within existing scientific accumulation. They contribute to refining the research problem, clarifying its concepts, constructing its theoretical framework, guiding its methodological choices, and enabling the researcher to recognize trends and findings reached by prior research alongside points of agreement and disagreement. Consequently, the value of previous studies is not measured by their quantity, but by their relevance, academic quality, and the researcher's ability to analyze and benefit from them.

It was also revealed that the scientific employment of previous studies transcends merely displaying their data or summarizing their results, extending to reading them analytically and

¹⁷ - Richard J. Torraco, "Writing Integrative Literature Reviews: Guidelines and Examples," *Human Resource Development Review* 4, no. 3 (2005), p. 358. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1534484305278283>

¹⁸ - Jane Webster and Richard T. Watson, *Op. Cit.*, p. xix.

critically, comparing their contents, methodologies, and findings, and linking them to the research problem, objectives, and methodology. This approach allows the researcher to identify the research gap, uncover inadequately studied aspects, and subsequently determine the addition their research can offer. Thus, previous studies transform from a formal element in research into an essential tool guiding the research process and contributing to the production of new scientific knowledge.

Findings:

1. Previous studies play an essential role in defining the research problem and formulating its questions or hypotheses by uncovering existing knowledge and aspects still in need of study.
2. Previous studies contribute to constructing the theoretical and methodological frameworks by guiding the researcher toward concepts, theories, methodologies, and instruments most relevant to the research topic.
3. The scientific value of previous studies depends on the quality of their selection, analysis, and critique, rather than their abundance or mere presentation as separate summaries.
4. Analytical and critical employment of previous studies contributes to identifying the research gap and scientific addition, avoiding unjustified duplication, and enhancing research originality.

Recommendations:

1. The necessity of adopting clear scientific criteria when selecting previous studies, foremost among them being direct relevance to the topic, academic quality, and appropriate currency for the nature of the research.
2. The necessity of training researchers and students in analytical and critical reading of previous studies, avoiding limitation to summarizing or describing them.
3. The necessity of organizing previous studies according to a criterion fitting the nature of the research, such as theme, variables, chronological sequence, or geographical field, while articulating the relationship between them and the current study.
4. The necessity of obligating the researcher to identify the research gap and scientific addition they seek to achieve, while accurately documenting information and findings drawn from previous studies.

Future Research Perspectives

Future research could examine the employment of previous studies within the digital environment, particularly given the use of scientific databases and artificial intelligence tools in literature search, classification, and analysis. This should focus on criteria for verifying source quality and reliability, as well as the capacity of these tools to support methodological and critical review without undermining the researcher's analytical role.

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