E.ISSN: 2661-7404 *Academic Journal of Legal and Political Researchs* P.ISSN:2571-9971

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IDENTIFYING THE RESEARCH GAP IN ACADEMIC STUDIES: A METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

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Received: 24/08 /2024 **Accepted: 30/08 /2024** **Published: 25/09 / 2024**

Abstract:

Research within the domains of political science and international relations is subject to a rigorous set of methodological norms and practices. In light of its profound connection to the civilizational dynamics of societies, it becomes crucial for scholars to engage with academic pursuits that not only resonate with the progressive nature of scientific inquiry but also advance the agendas of sustainable development across various sectors. This article seeks to delineate one of the most critical methodological stages in charting the course of research: identifying the research gap. This gap often manifests as a disconnect between prior findings and their application, resulting in an expanding chasm between theoretical advancements and the tangible, practical needs of communities. Therefore, this paper serves as a comprehensive guide tailored for political science students, especially those new to the field, to aid in navigating prior literature and pinpointing areas lacking in research. This initiative helps prevent the redundancy of commonly explored topics, fosters the accumulation of innovative knowledge, promotes originality, and lays the groundwork for future studies through the critical evaluation of existing literature. This discussion is enriched with specific examples from the field of international relations.

Keywords: Research Gap, Academic Studies, Literature Review, Types of Research Gaps, Methodological Approach.

Introduction:

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The establishment of a knowledge-based society is heavily dependent on the caliber of its research outputs, which must be objective and aligned with the objectives of sustainable development. Assessing a nation's ability to implement effective public policies across various sectors is intrinsically linked to the creation of a coherent national research strategy.

Such a strategy is designed to narrow the divide between academic theory and practical application, keeping pace with rapid technological advances, addressing emergent societal challenges, and preparing the foundation for future strategic initiatives. In this context, researchers across disciplines are pivotal in driving this agenda by formulating research plans that commence with the identification of unexplored research gaps.

Nonetheless, the process is often hindered by inadequate methodological rigor in pinpointing and defining these gaps, leading to arbitrary topic selection, repetitiveness, a preference for quantity over quality, diminished scientific originality and innovation, and a disconnection from pertinent national and global developments.

Research Problem:

In response to these challenges, this article articulates the following central research question:

_How can precise methodological guidelines be established to identify research gaps in scientific studies, thereby enhancing the relevance and quality of research outputs?

Additionally, this study addresses several subsidiary questions, which are critical to the development of a robust research framework:

_What are the defining characteristics of a well-delineated research gap, and what are its primary categories?

_How vital are prior studies in the process of identifying research gaps?

_What are the methodological steps involved in gathering, presenting, and categorizing previous studies, followed by their critical analysis?

Study Hypotheses:

This research is predicated on several hypotheses:

_There exists a robust correlation between a researcher’s capability to critically assess prior studies and their accuracy in delineating the research problem.

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_The adoption of reference management tools, enhanced by artificial intelligence, significantly conserves time and effort in pinpointing the research gap.

_Identifying research gaps not only catalyzes new investigative avenues across all branches of knowledge but also promotes proactive planning and elevates the overall quality of research.

Study Objectives:

This research paper employs a descriptive methodological approach and is aimed at achieving the following objectives:

Firstly, on a conceptual level:

1. To precisely define the research gap and establish a theoretical framework for its understanding.

2. To devise a classification system detailing the characteristics and functions of research gaps.

3. To explore the interconnections between the research gap and related concepts such as the research problem, study objectives, study results, and research prospects.

Secondly, on a methodological level:

1. This interdisciplinary effort is designed to provide a framework that aids researchers and students in methodologically sound identification of the research gap within any academic endeavor, encompassing peer-reviewed scientific articles, research projects for postgraduate studies, doctoral dissertations, master's and bachelor's theses, and works from research centers and scientific laboratories.

2. To enhance the ability to review previous literature through a critical analytical lens, thus aiding in the articulation of the research problem, a pivotal element of the research gap. This also aims to underscore the knowledge, methodological, and practical value of previous studies in scientific research.

3. Drawing from the personal experience of the researcher in supervising and evaluating numerous postgraduate theses in political science and international relations, this study seeks to offer precise methodological guidelines for identifying research gaps and addressing the methodological challenges faced by novice scholars.

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THE FIRST TOPIC: THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter is structured into two primary sections. The first section focuses on defining the concept of the research gap, detailing its characteristics, and elucidating the sources from which the researcher may derive information. The second section aims to construct a standard classification of the various types of research gaps.

FIRST REQUIREMENT: DEFINITION OF THE RESEARCH GAP, ITS CHARACTERISTICS, AND ITS SOURCES

The term "research gap" refers to the general and abstract mental representation of one or more phenomena. Mastering this concept is a crucial step in any academic study, serving as a fundamental criterion for effective theorization and essential for establishing a robust methodology. This is the point of departure for our research.

1.1 What is the Research Gap?

The term “gap” is defined in the *Oxford Learner’s Dictionary of Academic English* as a space between two things or in the middle of something, notably where a part is missing, exemplified by terms like a generation gap or a technological disparity between affluent and impoverished nations.[1]

Conventionally, the research gap represents a crucial component within the methodological framework of academic inquiries. It is defined by the scientific community as: "A problematic void that uncovers an unexplored facet of a topic necessitating deeper investigation. The primary aim is to contribute novel insights into a scientific, social, or humanitarian issue or phenomenon."[2]

It encompasses scenarios such as:

- Topics previously unaddressed or only superficially explored.
- Gaps in current knowledge within a specific field, imbalances in research focus, over-reliance on certain methodological approaches, or studies limited to specific time periods or geographic locations.
- Issues that prior research has not comprehensively tackled.
- Outdated studies riddled with contradictions or flaws that demand further examination and resolution.

[1] Gap(noun) in:https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/academic/gap/23/07/2024;20:45H.
[2] Antony Milles, "A Taxonomy of Research Gaps: Identifying and Defining the Seven Research Gaps," Doctoral Student Workshop: Finding Research Gaps - Research Methods and Strategies, August 2017, p. 2.

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Consequently, researchers embarking on studies to fill these gaps typically pose questions such as: "What will my research contribute to the existing body of knowledge in my field? How can I ensure my study is not merely a repetition of prior work?"

This process follows a sequence of steps: collating prior literature, critically evaluating it as pre-existing knowledge, identifying the research gap, determining its nature, formulating the new research problem, outlining study objectives to explain a new phenomenon or solve an existing problem, proposing fresh hypotheses, and concluding with findings that represent a significant addition to the field of study.[3]

1.2 Characteristics of a Good Research Gap:

The efficacy of scientific research largely hinges on the articulation of a well-defined research gap. The following table summarizes the key attributes of a sound research gap:

Table 01: Characteristics of a Good Research Gap

Characteristic	Description
Originality	Demonstrates the ability to generate novel outcomes or apply existing research in new contexts, thereby extending the frontier of knowledge within the field.
Clarity	Articulates the research gap in a manner that is scientifically precise and free from ambiguity, ensuring comprehensibility for the reader.
Feasibility	Is realistic, measurable, and actionable within the scope of the study's resources and methodologies.
Significance	Holds substantial research value, offering reliable and verifiable insights that substantiate its relevance and importance.
Novelty	Introduces new knowledge or perspectives to the research domain, ensuring that the study covers uncharted territory or employs unexplored variables.

[3] Yarub Adnan Hussein, "The Knowledge Gap in Scientific Research," College of Administration and Economics, Baghdad, March 2024, pp. 2-3.

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Relevance	Pertains directly to the field of the research problem, with outcomes that are pertinent and impactful to the topic under study.
Timeliness	Aligns with contemporary developments and innovations that influence the trajectory of scientific research.
Researchable	Is conducive to investigation that yields logical, precise, and verifiable results.
Specificity	Focuses on a specific aspect of a domain, whether it be conceptual, methodological, temporal, geographical, or theoretical.

Source: Prepared by the researcher.

1.3 Sources of the Research Gap:

The identification of research gaps necessitates a comprehensive assessment utilizing a plethora of research sources, encompassing both primary and secondary materials, or via field research as detailed in Table No. 2. This multifaceted approach includes the following key strategies:

1. **Reviewing Previous Literature:** Engaging with this foundational step involves sifting through an array of documents and scientific studies pertinent to the researcher's specific topic. This process includes accessing, reading, analyzing, and critiquing a variety of sources laden with rich information, ideas, data, and statistical analyses. The researcher's task is to critically assess these materials, categorize them based on their relevance and significance to the topic at hand, and synthesize this accumulated knowledge to pinpoint and address the deficiencies that contribute to the existing research gap.[4]

2. **Conducting Surveys with Experts in the Field:** This method taps into the wealth of knowledge possessed by the research community related to the specialty. It involves interaction with a broad spectrum of experts, including colleagues, supervising professors, editorial board members, and department heads, all of whom have profound insights into the research needs and gaps from both administrative and scientific viewpoints. These professionals help identify under-researched areas within the organization, be it a research center, university, laboratory, or journal,

[4] Harris M. Cooper, "Organizing Knowledge Syntheses – A Taxonomy of Literature Reviews," *Knowledge in Society*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1988, p. 108.

and gather valuable thoughts on unexplored topics and methodologies that have yet to be applied.[5]

3. **Attending Seminars and Engaging in Scholarly Exchanges:** Active participation in seminars, discussion rounds, and scientific meetings, along with reading recommendations from these gatherings, provides a dynamic platform for exchanging ideas with specialists. It also involves listening attentively to critical comments and engaging in discussions that underscore rapidly emerging issues, thus adding another layer to understanding and addressing research gaps.

4. **Ongoing and Periodic Review of Publications:** Regular review of articles in peer-reviewed and specialized scientific journals renowned for their credibility, along with insights from scientific dissertations, theses, and idea banks, enriches the researcher's perspective. This ongoing engagement is instrumental in linking theoretical studies with practical realities, further enhanced by the researcher's personal expertise and creative skills developed over time.[6]

Table 02: Sources of Previous Literature

Type	Examples
Paper Sources	Books, Peer-reviewed scientific journals, Specialized dictionaries, University publications, Official legal documents, Governmental and non-governmental reports, University dissertations and theses, Conference and symposium research, Personal memos of political or historical figures
Audio-Visual Sources	Audio-visual materials in libraries (microfilm, microfiche), Scientific films, Audio recordings, Maps, Film slides, Videos of scientific lectures, political speeches, CDs, Recorded TV or radio programs
Electronic Sources	Search engines (Google, Yahoo), Databases (Maarifa, Qabas), Electronic encyclopedias (Wikipedia, the Arabic Encyclopedia), Electronic dictionaries (Wiktionary), Digital libraries (World Digital Library, Umm Al-Qura University Library), Online research

[5] Arlene Fink, *Conducting Research Literature Reviews: From the Internet to Paper*, Sage Publications, 2010, pp. 9-10

[6] Christoph Muller-Bloch and Johann Kranz, "A Framework for Rigorously Identifying Research Gaps in Qualitative Literature Reviews," completed research paper presented at the 36th International Conference on Information Systems, Fort Worth, 2015, p. 2.

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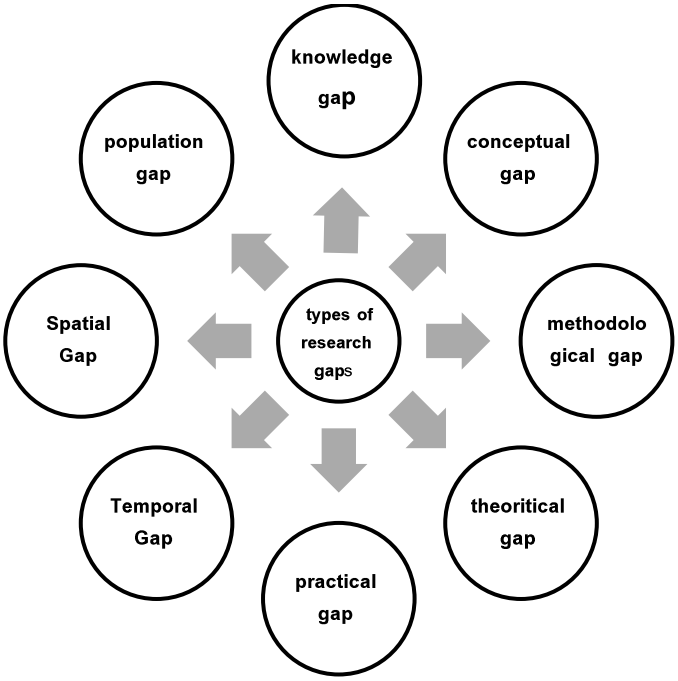
	with credible authorship, Online lessons on university platforms

Source: This table was prepared by the researcher, drawing from the organization of information as outlined in "Documenting References in Scientific Research," a presentation by Rehab Youssef during the Online Discussion Circle on Research Methodology, hosted by the Generation Research Center, Lebanon, on Saturday 13/03/2021. http// :www.jilrc.com/up-content/uploads/ 2021/03- 22 :30h .

SECOND REQUIREMENT: TYPES OF RESEARCH GAPS

The formulation of a universally accepted model for categorizing research gaps remains a subject of debate among scholars across diverse scientific disciplines. Despite this contention, this paper strives to delineate the most widely acknowledged types of research gaps that empower researchers to make meaningful scientific contributions within their areas of expertise. This section elaborates on eight distinct types of research gaps, as delineated in Figure No. 01, each accompanied by illustrative examples from the field of international relations.

Figure 01: Eight Types of Research Gaps*



Source: Prepared by the researcher

2.1 Knowledge Gap:

The knowledge gap pertains to introducing novel insights into topics that have been previously explored yet remain partially understood. This gap typically emerges in two scenarios: firstly, when a clear void exists within a specialty, indicating that the research community has yet to offer new insights, and secondly, when new findings challenge the established consensus.

To pinpoint this gap, a researcher must evaluate the independent variables that prior studies have emphasized, interrogate which dependent variables have been neglected, and identify newly emerging dimensions that are garnering scholarly attention. These uncharted areas underscore the necessity for deeper investigation to enrich understanding.[7]

The pursuit of epistemology, or the philosophy of science, plays a pivotal role in assessing how knowledge is accumulated across various disciplines within the humanities and social sciences. This includes a critical examination of the enduring principles and foundations of knowledge. Frequently, this exploration results in the coexistence of multiple cognitive models (paradigms) without precipitating an epistemological break.[8]

Knowledge gaps are often linked to addressing practical, scientific, and technological challenges, ultimately enhancing our comprehension of global dynamics. For instance, current emerging knowledge gaps in international relations that demand research focus include topics such as artificial intelligence's impact on international dynamics, strategic shifts following the Russian-Ukrainian conflict and the Gaza war, the biotechnological revolution, implications of the COVID-19 pandemic, the escalating U.S.-China economic and military rivalry, advancing renewable energy technologies for environmental sustainability, improving water resource management, ensuring sustainable food security, and promoting climate justice to bolster environmental security.

2.2 Conceptual Gap:

Conceptual gaps arise when existing definitions of social and human phenomena become outdated due to historical and sociological changes, necessitating a reevaluation and refreshment of concepts within each specialty. This type of gap involves the researcher's ability to discern and define new or evolving concepts that have not been sufficiently addressed in previous studies.

[7] Antony Milles, *Op.cit.*, pp. 3-4.
[8] Matthew Wood, "Bridging the Relevance Gap in Political Science," *Politics*, Vol. 34, No. 3, 2014, pp. 275-286.

In the realm of international relations, the rapid evolution of global challenges and the complex dynamics of international affairs have compelled scholars to reexamine and redefine many foundational concepts.

The pressing need to address these conceptual gaps has led to a renewed focus on areas such as cybersecurity, electronic power, digital sovereignty, the dynamics of the smart arms race, cyberterrorism, principles of lean government, frameworks of global governance, challenges of the post-information society, issues surrounding environmental sustainability, climate justice, environmental asylum, perspectives on the global south, and the emerging strategies associated with the sixth generation of warfare.

2.3 Methodological Gap:

The methodological gap addresses the need for introducing novel methodologies, research tools, or techniques that have not previously been applied within the same study domain, or it involves the synthesis of multiple methods to comprehensively analyze phenomena, thereby yielding more robust and precise results. This gap is recognized by pinpointing shortcomings in the design and methodological instruments employed in prior research. Such an organized inquiry not only bridges gaps in research methodology but also aids in the development of rigorously tested scientific theories and classifications.[9]

In the context of political and international studies, there is a discernible shift towards methodological integrativity. This approach melds descriptive and analytical studies, combines quantitative with qualitative methods, and balances inductive and deductive reasoning. It also embraces a diversity of research methods that include descriptive-survey techniques on one hand and statistical analysis on the other.

Prominent methodological gaps in past international studies have been identified, such as a scarcity of empirical studies, inadequate control over inductive analysis tools within SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), an underemphasis on techniques for future-oriented studies, and a preference for individual research efforts over collaborative (team-based) research endeavors.[10]

2.4 Theoretical Gap:

The theoretical gap seeks to introduce new theoretical frameworks that have not been previously utilized in specific research contexts. As temporal and spatial

[9] Antony Milles, *Op.cit.*, p. 4.
[10] See: Ahmed Qasem Hussein, "Surveying the Field of International Relations in the Arab World: Realities and Challenges," *Syiassat Arabiya*, Issue 61, Volume 11, March 2023, pp. 44-45.

contexts evolve and as global events and issues shift from one era to another, several older theories lose their explanatory and predictive capabilities because they often focus only on certain variables while neglecting others.[11]

For instance, the traditional Marxist theory encountered a significant crisis post the dissolution of the Soviet Union, which led proponents of constructivist theory to adopt a new sociological lens for analyzing international relations, particularly focusing on ethnic minorities and identities in the post-Cold War era.

Current theoretical gaps in the field of international relations include challenges to the prevailing Western liberal model, particularly in light of the ethical and value-based crises highlighted after events such as the Gaza war.

There is rising academic interest in exploring alternative perspectives within international relations, such as post-colonial critiques that address the dominance of power over knowledge and the marginalization of the Global South, the Asian perspective, and the Islamic civilizational viewpoint. Additionally, there is a pressing need for researchers to delve into post-positivist perspectives and to contribute to the development of Arab theorization in the field.[12]

2.5 Temporal Gap:

This type of gap focuses on re-examining topics that have been previously explored but warrant further study due to changes over time, thus falling within the realm of cross-temporal comparisons. For example, an analysis of the arms race among major powers and its impact on their defense strategies can be dissected across different historical periods.

Pre-World War II analysis might focus on traditional balances of power, whereas the Cold War era (1945-1990) would typically concentrate on the principles of nuclear deterrence emerging from the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

However, ceasing analysis at these historical junctures would lead researchers to miss significant temporal gaps that are intricately linked to the era of the smart arms race, which is characterized by substantial technological advancements brought about by the information revolution and the development of artificial intelligence-driven weaponry.

[11] Ibid, p. 38.

[12] Mekia Nedjar, "Why is there no 'Arab Theory' of International Relations? Causes of the Deficiency of Arab Contributions into International Relations Theories," *Syiassat Arabiya*, Issue 61, Volume 11, March 2023, pp. 54-74.

2.6 Spatial Gap:

The eploration of spatial gaps involves studying topics that have been previously researched within specific geographical contexts but remain unexplored or underexplored in other regions. This gap has been particularly highlighted by the field of area studies, which originated in the United States.

A significant criticism of area studies is their limited scope in covering non-Western regions (outside of American and European contexts) and their often inadequate understanding of the civilizational, cultural, and intellectual contexts of various world regions. Therefore, researchers in international relations are urged to extend their focus to various regional circles to address the spatial gaps inherent in these studies.

This expansion should include areas such as Arab, Middle Eastern, African, Maghrebi, and Iranian studies, with an increased focus on regions that have been less covered in scholarly research, such as Southeast Asia, Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Balkans, and Latin America. This approach aims to diversify and enrich the geographical scope of research, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of global dynamics.[13]

2.7 Practical Gap:

Also referred to as the action-knowledge conflict gap, this gap focuses on the application of programs, models, or standards that have not been previously implemented in the current fields of research. It explores the extent of conflict between practical action and theoretical knowledge, revealing the deep-seated causes of discrepancies between the actual behavior of professionals and the theoretical models proposed by research.

Addressing the practical gap involves conducting empirical studies that align more closely with the real-world behaviors of the subjects under study, thereby resolving contradictions found in theoretical research outcomes.[14]

2.8 Population Gap (Under-researched Sub-Groups Gap):

This gap pertains to studies involving demographic groups or samples of individuals who have not been adequately represented or researched in the existing body of knowledge. Such groups are identified based on various variables, including but not limited to gender, race, age, ethnic affiliation, culture, religion,

[13] Ahmed Qasem Hussein, *Op.cit.*, p. 36.
[14] Antony Milles, *Op.cit.*, p. 5.

social class, educational level, and political or party affiliation. These are typically underserved populations that have been historically underrepresented in research.[15]

In identifying population gaps, researchers have noted that previous studies often concentrate on certain demographic groups while neglecting others. For example, while the influence of the Zionist lobby on U.S. foreign policy decision-making has been extensively studied, there exists a notable research void concerning the role of the Arab lobby in the United States.

This gap calls for an in-depth investigation into the political, economic, and socio-cultural barriers that undermine its effectiveness as a pressure group, aiming to challenge and rectify the stereotypes perpetuated by the West about Arabs and Muslims. Another illustrative case is the comparative lack of research on why Arab and Islamic communities in France have not established themselves as a potent, influential lobby within French foreign policy, unlike the Jewish lobby, which has managed to wield considerable influence despite its relatively small size.

THE SECOND TOPIC: METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter is systematically divided into two principal sections. The first section elaborates on the methodological steps a researcher undertakes to identify the sources and types of research gaps, with a particular focus on reviewing study literature, methods of writing, and their pivotal role in formulating new research problems and drawing conclusions for future research directions. The second section is dedicated to detailing the significant methodological, technical, and field challenges that obstruct the path to accurately identifying research gaps.

FIRST REQUIREMENT: METHODOLOGICAL STEPS FOR IDENTIFYING RESEARCH GAPS

In the realm of scientific inquiry, where knowledge is continually built upon previous findings, it is imperative for researchers to master three crucial skills to successfully articulate and determine the type of research gap: the skill of efficiently and intelligently searching and compiling previous literature, the skill of analytical thinking and constructive criticism, and the skill of transforming identified gaps into new research problems.

Following this, setting theoretical objectives and designing the study are essential. The methodological steps that should be followed to identify the research gap after defining the study's scope and introducing fundamental concepts include:

1.1Previous Literature Search:

[15] *Loc.cit.*

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This initial phase is centered on searching for and reviewing previous studies that could help the researcher unearth the research gap. This involves an exhaustive review of references and key studies pertinent to the topic within a specified field. Searches are executed using specific keywords across global databases of peer-reviewed journals, paper libraries, and electronic sites (refer to Table No. 02).

The requisite number of previous studies to consult can vary, depending on the study's type, its temporal scope, the nature of the topic, and the specific field. For emerging topics, available references might be scarce. Nonetheless, researchers are generally encouraged to consult a broad spectrum of recent and thorough references to enhance their understanding of the topic. This should include a significant compilation of primary (key) references and a smaller collection of general (secondary) references.[16]

1.2 A Taxonomy of Literature Review:

The objective of this second methodological step is to meticulously provide a comprehensive classification of the content from major prior research related to the selected study topic. Although there is no consensus among scholars on the exact criteria for this classification, the common approach focuses on arranging and classifying these studies in ascending chronological order, from the oldest to the most recent by publication date.

Additionally, the researcher employs content analysis to distill ideas, research orientations, methodologies employed, types of samples, and main study variables from these references.

To succinctly summarize previous studies, statistical processing methods are employed, including the use of illustrative tables, chart methods, and concept matrices. These tools aid in calculating numerical frequencies for specific categories within the literature, the percentages of data studied, and the percentages of variables that remain unstudied. The ultimate goal is to uncover 'empty slots' that signify a specific research gap through a meticulous coding process.[17]

These tables and figures are instrumental in understanding the direction and content of each study individually. The table below includes essential information specific to each study: the topic, objectives, methodologies, concepts, studied samples, and results. These elements are fundamental in controlling the classification of the literature:

[16] Christoph Muller-Bloch and Johann Kranz, *Op.cit.*, p. 5.
[17] *Ibid.*, pp. 6-8.

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Table 3: Taxonomy of Literature Review

Characteristics	Categories
1- focus «The material that is of central interest to the review »	Research Outcomes Research Methods Theories Practices or Applications
2- Goals « What the author hopes the review will accomplish »	Integration a) Generalization b) Conflict Resolution c) Linguistic Bridge-building Criticism Identification of Central Issues
3- Perspective « How the review's point of view influences the discussion of the literature	Neutral Representation Espousal of Position
4- Coverage « How reviewers search the literature and how they make decision about the suitability and quality of material involves methods and analytic process that are ….	Exhaustive Exhaustive with Selective Citation Representative Central or Pivotal
5-Orgaization « How a paper is organized? »	Historical Conceptual Methodological
6- Audience « The intended audiences of the various reviews can differ from one another	Specialized Scholars General Scholars Practitioner~ or Policy Makers General Public

Source: Harris M. Cooper, *Op.cit*, p.109.

1.3 Literature Review Analyses and Synthesizing Results:

The phase following the collection and categorization of previous research findings involves a critical examination of the literature. This process extends beyond merely cataloging past studies; it necessitates a profound critical analysis.

Key questions the researcher must consider include: What consensus or disagreement exists regarding how previous studies have addressed the issue? What are the main points of debate among experts in the field? Which aspects of these prior studies can be leveraged in the current research? What unique scientific contributions does the current study aim to make that differentiate it from earlier works?

The researcher's critical evaluation of prior studies begins with identifying connections between various references, analyzing prevalent trends within these studies, and discussing both similarities and differences in their approaches.

This includes recognizing overlaps in variables, samples, methodologies, theoretical frameworks, and the specific topics under investigation. At this juncture, the researcher also compares the findings of previous research with the anticipated outcomes of the current study to determine how past findings can be utilized. Each prior study is critically reviewed within a one-page commentary.

Criteria for critiquing previous studies emphasize adherence to neutrality and objectivity, constructive criticism, and structured, clear, and coherent reporting. Commentary should link back to the content and direction of the new research, bridging theoretical and practical elements, transitioning from past to present studies, and from the original language to other languages. Methodologically, references to previous studies are typically noted in the footnotes and also included in the reference list at the end of the paper, allowing readers to further explore these sources.[18]

1.4 Stage of Setting Study Objectives and Framing the Research Problem:

After a detailed commentary on the previous literature within the focused research field, the research gap is precisely defined, and its significance is underscored with an emphasis on innovation and originality.[19] This stage involves logically organizing and sequencing the elements of the research introduction.

It is critical to identify the type of research gap (whether cognitive, conceptual, methodological, demographic, practical, temporal, or spatial) as this guides the formulation of the study's objectives. These objectives are centered around the outcomes the researcher aims to achieve by addressing the identified gap. This step involves detailing specific phenomena or developing explanatory models to orient the new research.

[18] Arlene Fink, *Op.cit.*, pp. 4-5.
[19] Yarub Adnan Hussein, *Op.cit.*, p. 22.

Subsequently, the research problem is meticulously formulated by establishing the relationships between the independent and dependent variables. This leads to the formulation of hypotheses, the design of the study based on innovative methodologies, the precise collection of data, and the selection of tools and samples for field research, if applicable.

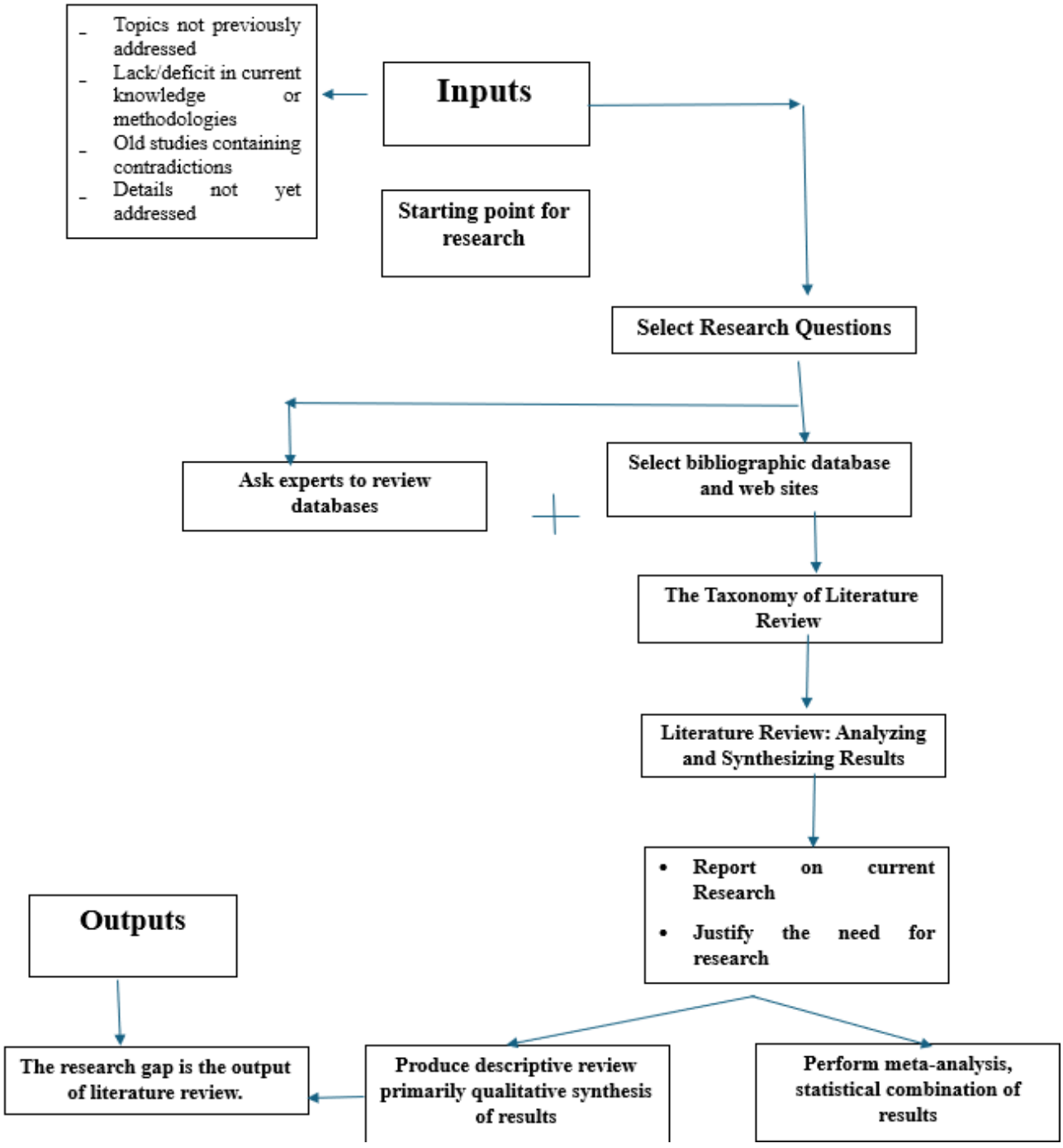
At the conclusion of the study, the researcher's efforts result in the production of new and reliable research outcomes that not only guide future studies but also open up further research opportunities that continue to engage the scientific community within each specialty.[20]

These methodological steps can be summarized as follows:

Figure 02: Process of Identifying the Research Gap through Review of Previous Literature

[20] *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

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Source: Arlene Fink, Op.Cit, p.04.

SECOND REQUIREMENT: DIFFICULTIES IN EXPLORING THE RESEARCH GAP IN ACADEMIC STUDIES

These difficulties can be summarized in the following categories: methodological, technical, and field-related.

2.1 Methodological Difficulties:

_ Focusing on reviewing a specific type of previous literature without diversification (relying only on books, for example).

_ Limiting reviews to references that agree with the researcher's current study outcomes.

_ Presenting previous studies randomly without categorizing, statistically processing, or arranging them chronologically.

_ Trusting the outcomes of previous research and quoting from them without verifying their reliability and the accuracy of their information.

_ The inability to provide a critical analytical reading of the references, relying instead on lengthy descriptive presentations of the studies.

_ Using less reliable references, such as predatory international journals and conferences issued by institutions with no significant scientific reputation, and relying on non-scientific articles published in newspapers and magazines.

_ The issue of bias and ideological orientations in the researcher's choice of references, which should be avoided in social and humanities research in general.

2.2 Technical Difficulties Associated with Using Electronic References and Artificial Intelligence Technologies:

_Lack of compliance with scientific research quality standards when using electronic references due to their unreliability: This concerns web pages that contain authorless articles and social media platforms (like Facebook, Twitter) which are considered personal sites and not scientific sources. Also, some sites may disappear or be modified, making documentation challenging.

_Challenges in managing reference management software, whether free like Zotero and Mendeley or subscription-based like EndNote, RefWorks, and JabRef. These programs enable researchers to handle, manage, and cite a vast amount of references, and build and organize libraries. Benefits include saving time and effort, organizing and storing references, and

facilitating the insertion of references in word processing programs (like Word).[21]

_Ethical challenges in research and scientific integrity when using AI technologies to summarize contents of existing literature. Important tools include Research Rabbit, Skimmit.ai, Elicit.org, and Tech Crunch summary.[22] It's imperative to control these technologies amidst the developments of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Researchers must recognize these as tools for aiding scientific creativity, not substitutes for human intellect. Therefore, fostering ethical and scientific awareness for a balanced approach during their use is essential to ensure scientific integrity and research quality.

2.3 Field Difficulties:

_Limited financial resources to access all necessary research sources, especially in large-scale field projects.

_Difficulty handling complex variables and the limitations of field research tools, such as undocumented personal interviews.

_Challenges in accessing previous studies due to hurdles in the borrowing process from public and academic libraries or because they are not available online due to their recent publication.

_Time management difficulties during the research process can lead to insufficient time dedicated to thoroughly reviewing previous studies, potentially resulting in hasty judgments about their content and methodologies. Effective time management might include using reading cards that provide a brief overview of the reference data (author's name, title, place, and date of publication, and a summary of the main idea), using cameras to photograph book covers to save time, and creating folders on the computer to organize and classify previous literature.

_Mastering foreign languages to access a broader range of previous literature, particularly English, which is crucial in fields like political science and international relations.

Conclusion:

[21] Rehab Youssef, *Op.cit.*, pp. 60-61.
[22] Amy Butros & Sally Taylor, "Managing Information: Evaluating and Selecting Citation Management Software, a Look at Endnote, RefWorks, Mendeley, and Zotero," Conference Paper, January 2011, pp. 2-4.

E.ISSN: 2661-7404 Academic Journal of Legal and Political Researchs P.ISSN:2571-9971
Year: 2024 Vol : 08 No : 02 Page : 743 - 765

Identifying and defining the research gap remains a meticulous and exacting endeavor within the realm of scientific research. This process is crucial because it facilitates:

_Bibliographic mastery over research within a specified field, effectively mitigating redundant investigations into well-trodden topics. This opens up novel avenues in theoretical, conceptual, methodological, cognitive, historical, human, and practical dimensions, thereby augmenting the general comprehension of phenomena. It culminates in recommendations and studies that substantially contribute to and guide future scholarly inquiries.

_The broadening of knowledge and the enhancement of specialized literature pertinent to the study, thus elevating the caliber of research through the resolution of scientific quandaries and the provision of practical solutions aimed at sustainable development.

_The bolstering of critical and analytical faculties necessary for the appraisal of antecedent studies, acquainting researchers with the challenges faced by their predecessors on the subject.

Ultimately, it can be stated that identifying the research gap in any scientific study represents the foundational and critical step in a structured, hierarchical sequence of activities, serving as the added value to science or the elusive element that must be pursued in new investigations. This element is integral to defining the research problem and its distinct identity, as well as to delineating its objectives and the novel outcomes anticipated.

Considering the dynamic nature of political science and international relations, which necessitates continual updates to its issues, methodological tools, and evolving conceptual frameworks, it is imperative for the research community within this field to prioritize the identification of research gaps. This focus will facilitate the exploration of fresh research vistas and render the field more adaptable and responsive to both contemporary national and global changes.

Suggestions:

To streamline the process of identifying research gaps across diverse academic disciplines, it is recommended to:

_Implement a definitive national research policy that orchestrates research endeavors and delineates developmental priorities concerning scientific research.

_Establish robust bibliographic oversight of theses and scholarly research at the national scale.

_Articulate explicit criteria for the selection of emerging research topics.

_Found centers for measurement, create databases, and devise statistical programs dedicated to the analysis and categorization of research, integrating telecommunications services, the internet of things, and the annual renewal of research indices through the application of artificial intelligence technologies.

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