Tips for Locating Empirical Research

What is Empirical Research?

Empirical Research is defined as research based on direct or indirect observed and measured phenomena. It is research that derives knowledge from actual experience rather than from theory or belief.

What are Empirical Research Articles?

An empirical article may report a study that used quantitative research methods, which generate numerical data and seek to establish causal relationships between two or more variables. They may also report on a study that uses qualitative research methods, which objectively and critically analyze behaviors, beliefs, feelings, or values with few or no numerical data available for analysis.

How can I tell if an article is empirical?

- Check the publication in which the article appears. Is it scholarly? The vast majority of empirical articles will be in scholarly journals.
- Read the article's abstract. Does it include details of a study, observation, or analysis of a number of participants or subjects?
- Look at the article itself. Is it more than three pages long? Most empirical articles will be fairly lengthy.
- Look at the article itself. If it contains a subsection marked "Methodology" and another called "Results," it is probably empirical.
- See if the article mentions a study, an observation, an analysis or a number of participants or subjects. Was data collected, a survey or questionnaire administered, an assessment or measurement used, an interview conducted? All of these terms indicate possible methodologies used in empirical research.
**Empirical articles often contain these sections:**

- Introduction
- Literature review
- Methodology
- Results
- Discussion
- Conclusion
- References

The sections may be combined, and may have different headings or no headings at all; however, the information that would fall within these sections should be present in an empirical article.

**Recommended Databases:**

A. PsycINFO and PsychARTICLES. After entering search terms in boxes at top of screen, scroll down to Methodology in the tool bar on the left side, and select: “Empirical Study.” Note that there are subsets of Empirical Study below this entry that you could use (e.g., Quantitative Study or Clinical Case Study).

B. ERIC collection (Education Resources Information Center). Type in your search terms and then change the values for Publication Type in the tool bar on the left side of the screen to:
   - Information Analysis --OR--
   - Numerical/Quantitative Data --OR--
   - Reports-Research

C. Other databases (e.g., Academic Search Complete or Education Research Complete). Enter your search terms and then paste this string of terms into an additional search box:
   - study OR methodology OR subjects OR data OR results OR findings OR discussion
   - Select "AB Abstract or Author-Supplied Abstract" from the dropdown menu