

CRITICALLY DISCUSS YOUR 'DISCUSSION SECTION': SOME TIPS TO THE TOP!

Noor Liza, PhD
Faculty of Accountancy,
25 May 2017
PPS Sharing Session

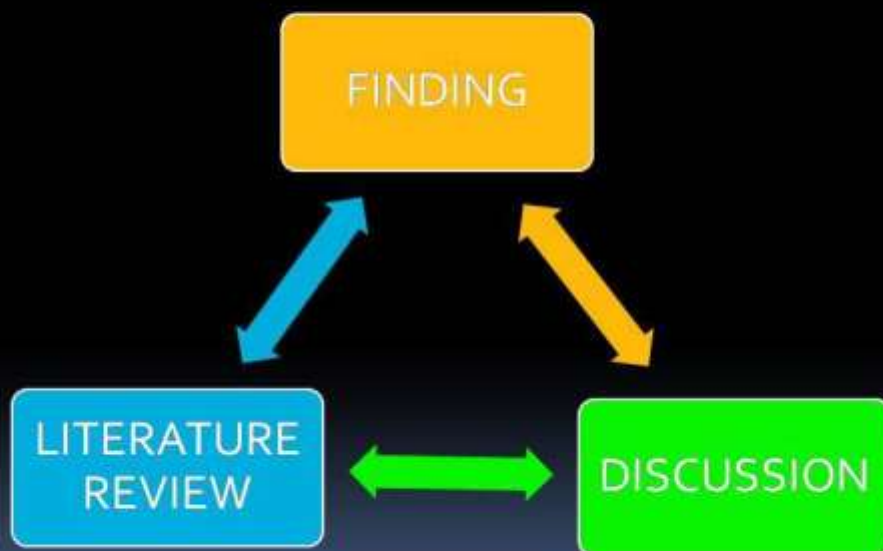
The most exhaustive, interesting,
challenging, other "...ing" part!

- you will need to **blend all necessary skills** you have:
 - **your analytical and critical thinking, problem-solving;**
 - most importantly, your **writing skill !**
- deliver it to your readers in the most **critical and convincing manner,**
- not forgetting, **substantiate it by previous researches.**

Here is where you will shine and leave your mark !

- **Tell a story** - a story that your data is trying to tell.
- **Don't be so unfair** to your data - help your data to deliver a story to the readers.
- So, take some time to sit, ponder and refresh your work right from the beginning to the end – **connect the dots here and there!**
- To **answer the questions** that you have asked earlier (remember your research questions?).

The process...



So, what if many of your hypotheses are not supported??!!



So, what to do?? (1)

- Start your discussion by addressing the **first research question**.
- Look at all possible meanings conveyed by your data - Its **mean value**, **standard deviation**, **minimum** and **maximum** score, **median**, and any other possible **indicators**.
 - **Std deviation and min & max scores** can tell something about how yr respondent feel. Don't just focus on mean values...
 - Try to justify why some respondents give the **min value**, while there are some who give the **max value**... some totally agree, while some totally disagree! Don't you think it is rather interesting? Doesn't it invite further probe?
 - **Std deviation** – is it big or small? If it's **big**, then why do u think your respondents are having diverse opinion? A sign that **something interesting is waiting for you to dig!**

So, what to do?? (2)

- Scrutinize each item in the questionnaire one by one – try to get the **feel of the respondents**.
 - Relate with the respondents' background.
 - Who are they? Why do they give this response?
 - Has it got to do anything with their demographic info, like race, religion, age, education level, income level, industry, etc?

So, what to do?? (3)

- Discuss it **BY HYPOTHESES**, one after another – H₁, H₂, H₃, H₄, etc...
 - **JUSTIFY** your finding, **NOT** just to **REPORT** it!
 - Do **ADDITIONAL ANALYSIS** to support your arguments... like t-test or ANOVA to support your justification.
 - If the result of the analysis support your justification, then **update your LR, add the analysis** to your Chpt 4, and **discuss it**. Where applicable, **relate it to the theory** used.
 - Don't forget to always **answer your research question**.

So, what to do?? (4)

- **Throw in questions –**
 - Qs that you are wondering, and of course, your readers (examiners?!) will also be wondering!!
 - Then, focus on answering those Qs – so your discussion will be more focused.
 - So, debate on this Q. **DEBATE!** And then **conclude** in your favour, based on extant LR.
 - This is **quite risky**, though – if you can't satisfactorily answer these Qs (which your readers might not even wonder pun in de 1st place), then you are at risk of entering your own trap!

So, what to do?? (5)

- **DO NOT** support your discussion with a literature that has **NOT BEEN DISCUSSED IN YOUR LR** (chapter 2)!
 - Whatever citation that you want to use to justify your answer in this section, **must first be discussed in your Chptr 2.**
 - So, if you do additional analysis to support your argument, then find the LR to support yr argument, then **update your LR, add in the new analysis** in Chptr 4, then only **discuss it in Discussion** section.

So, what to do?? (6)

- **INTERVIEW** some respondents to validate your findings... (if most of your hypotheses are not supported)
 - Pick a **few respondents (5?!)** to be interviewed
 - This is to **confirm your justification...**
 - So the examiners will not ask you to do it again !!!

Example... Hypo n finding

Hypotheses	Findings
H_z(a): Idealism is negatively related to dysfunctional PMS behaviour	a significant positive relationship (t-value = 1.82 ; p<.05) (contrast)
H_z(b): Relativism is positively related to dysfunctional PMS behaviour.	a significant negative relationship (t-value = 4.3, p<.01) (contrast)

- with regards to ethical ideology, a rather interesting findings emerged which contradict the findings in extant literatures.

The results of this study somehow suggest that, the higher a person espouses moral values, the more tempted they become to behave immorally. Such contradictory findings would surely open a rich avenue for future discussion and debate. In light of these

Example... discussion

▪ Throw in the questions...

▫ 1.

With regards to ethical ideology, both dimensions of Idealism and Relativism exhibited contradictory findings in this study. This is rather interesting: (i) why did Idealism appear to have a positive relationship with dysfunctional PMS behaviour when most extant literatures suggested that Idealism promotes ethical behaviour?; and (ii) how come Relativism denoted a negative relationship when it is believed that Relativists judge ethical issues on situational basis, hence are more tolerance to aberrant behaviour?

▫ 2.

With regard to the significant positive IDEAL/DBE relationship, one might wonder, how come ones who highly uphold absolute moral rules and principles and give primacy to maximising others welfare turned up to be the ones who agreed most to the information manipulation practices? Forsyth's (1992) offered two possible explanations: (i) the

▫ 3.

Idealists. Interesting questions surface – when moral norms regarding such manipulation are not salient enough that even high Idealists cannot detect them, then how come Relativists who are frequently reported as less sensitive to ethical tones react negatively to such act? Could it be that Relativists are actually not less ethical as previously labelled in the extant literatures? Or are they only more open in their views about an issue, hence are more flexible in their ethical judgment?

▪ Look at various indicators given by your data (could the difference be due to the nature of your respondents?)

▫ Do additional analysis to prove your argument!

When further categorized into four ideology taxonomies, the respondents formed four almost equal size groups, with each group constituted by 24 – 28% of the respondents. Exceptionists and Situationists seemed to report almost the similar mean score of DBE (41.95 vs 41.24) and these two groups formed 53% of the total respondents. Therefore, this study exhibits that Exceptionists and Situationists have almost the similar judgment regarding DBE. This finding seems to support the findings of Forsyth et al. (2008) and Axinn et al. (2004) who discovered that many of the Malaysians are Situationists and Exceptionists. From the interview conducted, all participants admitted that they make

Surprisingly, Absolutists (who are high on Idealism but low on Relativism) reported the highest level of DBE as compared to Exceptionists (who are low on both dimensions) and Situationists (who are high on both dimensions). On the other hand, Subjectivists (who are high on Relativism, but low on Idealism) came out last at a much lower score than the other three groups. A statistically significant difference was noted in dysfunctional PMS behaviour scores for three ideology groups of Absolutist, Subjectivist and Exceptionist. This is in contrast to other previous studies (like, Chonko, Wotruba, & Loe, 2003; Elias, 2002; Hartikainen & Terstila, 2004) who reported Absolutists as the strictest in their judgment of ethically questionable behaviour. Somehow, this finding happens to be in line with the finding of Forsyth and Nye (1990) who discovered that although Absolutists espouse a philosophy that condemns harming others, they also appeared to be the most likely to behave immorally than other ideology groups.

▪ Throw in as many arguments from different angles...

On closer inspection, the argument that Relativists make wiser and fairer ethical decisions (at least, pertaining to the respondents in this particular study) seems to be aligned with what has been preached and practiced in Islamic teachings. Islam has set out the rules of the *halal* (the permissible) and *haram* (the forbidden), which should guide any Muslim of the right and wrong. Muslims are to adhere to these teachings as they

Another possibility of the equivocal findings in this study might lie in Axinn et al.'s (2004) argument that the "standards of ethics" may not be so different among people, but often it is influenced by the cultural values which act to determine personal priorities. Hence, there is a possibility that the different cultural background of the Malaysian bankers may play a role in influencing their ethical ideology and the way they carry out

The equivocal findings of IDEAL/DBE and REL/DBE relationships might also be attributed to a few methodological aspects. First, the EPQ used as a measure of moral thought might also pose an issue. Forsyth et al. (2008) warned that when the EPQ is

The second possible explanation relates to the consequence of the action. Forsyth (1992) posited that Idealists might have a higher tendency to engage in dysfunctional PMS behaviour as they emphasize the need to achieve positive humanitarian consequences.

In the case of dysfunctional PMS behaviour, the role of middle managers often put the branch bank managers in dilemma. On one side, they seek to satisfy their top managers expectation, while on the other side, they mean to alleviate some of their subordinates (and theirs, as well) work stress. Working in such environment would inevitably

Lastly, can dysfunctional PMS behaviour also be a result of role conflict or work stress? Extant literatures have provided sufficient evidence that increased pressure to achieve target set or the conflicting role one has to burden may invite dysfunctional behaviour (Fisher & Downes, 2008; Tang et al., 2008). From the interviews conducted, all bank

- **Conduct interviews to verify your finding**

Exceptionists. From the interview conducted, all participants admitted that they make their judgements based on situations rather than solely referring to the acts or rules. All of them would use their discretion as bank managers when they face any situations that may not be allowed by the bank rules, but may be more convenience to the customers.

269

supported by the results of the interviews made. These situationist bankers, though admitted that they may put the banks' rules aside and applied their discretion in certain deals, but emphasized that their decisions would always be in the interest of the bank. As mentioned by Bank Manager B, *"To win the customers' heart, we have to accommodate them, try to fulfil their needs as best as we can. So sometimes, we have to use our discretion as the bank manager to accommodate their needs... though I make sure that it will not harm the bank's interest."*

- **Conclude it with an astounding conclusion that depicts your significant contribution!**

As a conclusion, though findings from this study seem to contradict those reported in the extant literature, but it certainly adds some insightful knowledge to the body of literature. Perhaps it is evidence that Relativists are actually wiser decision makers. Though they loosen their grips on the moral absolutes (though not totally putting them aside) but they seem to be sensitive enough to factors lurking in their circumstances that certainly lead them to making better and fairer ethical judgment, as proven by the findings of the interviews. However, it should be kept in mind that personal ethical ideology may not

- Thank you...
- Hope it helps, even a bit!!

Noor Liza Adnan