

EDITORIAL: Corporate governance and regulation: The literature review as a research methodology and research method

Dear readers!

Volume 10, issue 4 (special issue) of the *Journal of Governance and Regulation* is a special issue and as usual it is replete with cutting-edge research studies covering a wide array of important topics dealing with corporate governance and regulation. The special issue therefore reflects this statement from the editorial note policy of the *Journal of Governance and Regulation*, “providing a continuous development that enables our readers to outline the new and most challenging issues of research in corporate governance and related topics”.

Rather than providing a complete overview of the themes or key topics addressed in the special issue, it has been decided to focus on a key topic reflected by the special issue: the review of literature. The special issue features two articles that bear perusal and discussion.

Before we proceed, it is important to note that the terms “methodology” and “method” are often used interchangeably but the words denote two different things. A research “methodology” refers to an overall systematic approach or conceptual framework on how to conduct research. A research “method” refers to a particular technique used to conduct research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Consequently, when we consider research design, indeed when we consider the design of anything, we are reminded of this essential standard: “form follows function”. And fortuitously, the two studies that are the focus of this discussion certainly meet that essential standard.

Andreas Irodos Rodakos, Andreas G. Koutoupis, Anna Thysiadou, and Christos Kampouris demonstrate the use of the technique known as “systematic review” of the literature. *Haitham Nobanee, Hiba Zaki Shanti, Lina Subhi Abukarsh, Fatima Youssef Al Hamadi, Fatma Abdulaziz, Aysha Falah Alqahtani, Shayma Khalifa AlSubaey, and Hamama Abdulla Almansoori* conduct a “bibliometric review”.

Both studies work from the assumption that current research should always be guided by or “grounded” in prior research studies and prior conceptual treatises. This basic tenet of the scientific method is considered so essential that discussion of the literature review would seem pedantic at best and superfluous at worst. Yet it is precisely because the literature review is indeed so essential that it has been decided to focus this editorial note on two studies that use the literature review as their research method.

Snyder (2019) offers insights as regards using a literature review as a research methodology. According to Snyder (2019, Table 1) there are three types or approaches to a systematic review of literature: systematic, semi-systematic, and integrative. A well-known example of a systematic review of literature is the meta-analysis (Snyder, 2019).

A key tenet of using a literature review as a research methodology is that the review of literature is limited to studies providing empirical evidence dealing with pre-specified research criteria (Snyder, 2019). The value to this approach is two-fold. Firstly, the scope of the literature is pared down to demonstrably relevant literature. Secondly, the critique of the literature, i.e., the synthesis of the literature can be focused on how samples are selected, how data are collected, and how data are analyzed.

Andreas Irodos Rodakos, Andreas G. Koutoupis, Anna Thysiadou, and Christos Kampouris pare down the related literature germane to their research topic by limiting their review to studies that provide empirical results concerning “...the internal audit implementation in European and non-European public hospitals or public bodies...”. Additionally, the literature

review by *Andreas Irodos Rodakos, Andreas G. Koutoupis, Anna Thysiadou, and Christos Kampouris* includes studies only from the disciplines of "...public administration, economics and management, health policy and management, business economic, and international applied accounting...". By doing so, the paper addresses a paucity of related literature on comparative data drawn from different countries.

A full discussion of systematic literature review is beyond the scope of this discussion. A text by Gough, Oliver, and Thomas (2017) offers a good place to learn more about systematic literature reviews or to refresh one's skills regarding systematic literature reviews. The text provides excellent general guidance on literature reviews and presents detailed guidance on how to conduct various types of systematic literature reviews.

Haitham Nobanee, Hiba Zaki Shanti, Lina Subhi Abukarsh, Fatima Youssef Al Hamadi, Fatma Abdulaziz, Aysha Falah Alqahtani, Shayma Khalifa AlSubaey, and Hamama Abdulla Almansoori report on the literature related to the issue of sustainable medical insurance. The researchers use a well-designed sampling strategy to select 638 articles retrieved from the Scopus database.

The researchers identify three "research streams" including health financing, health insurance, and global health. The study makes other significant contributions: "...insights in publication output, most influential authors, keywords analysis, most influential sources, most cited documents, and publications output by countries".

The study findings are useful because they offer insights on scholars' focus regarding sustainable health care. Additionally, the study findings present a pathway to create a taxonomy or framework for a meta analysis that could provide important insights for policy makers seeking to adopt or to modify legislation and policy related to sustainable health care. So, *Haitham Nobanee, Hiba Zaki Shanti, Lina Subhi Abukarsh, Fatima Youssef Al Hamadi, Fatma Abdulaziz, Aysha Falah Alqahtani, Shayma Khalifa AlSubaey, and Hamama Abdulla Almansoori* have used the bibliometric review to generate insights that are of scholarly and of practical importance.

The terms "bibliometric method", "bibliometric review", and "bibliometric analysis" are often used interchangeably (Qui, Zhao, Yang, & Dong, 2017). The terms refer to techniques used to identify and classify bibliographic data germane to a research study, to frame samples of bibliographic data, and to select methods to analyze them (Qui et al., 2017). The terms also refer to approaches to identify and to understand networks of scholarly communication and the impact score of scholarly publications (Wang & Barabási, 2021).

In sum, the special issue features two studies that contribute to the scholarly literature on corporate governance and regulation by using data that could be described as "hiding in plain sight". The literature review as a research method is deceptively and elegantly simple and well suited to a world in which access to research studies is unprecedented and scholarly influence is closely measured.

So, you are invited to carefully review the two studies that have been discussed. You may find they motivate you to try a new approach to a well-known research problem or to explore a new or emerging research problem. You may well discover something about corporate governance and regulation "hiding in plain sight".

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