



Evidence-based data collection for ADR research

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ADRAC - Media Release: 3rd Annual Award for Excellence in Evidence-Based Research into ADR

ADRAC today announced the recipient of its third biennial Award for Excellence in Evidence-Based Research into ADR. Congratulating the young recipient, the Chair of ADRAC noted both the high standards of research design that now characterise evidence-based data collection about ADR in Australia, and the need for researchers to meet benchmark standards before being considered for this award. He emphasised that the award was for methodology, not for results.

The winning entry was an integrated sequence of research studies that incorporated all the best measures of rigorous empirical research, producing reliable data, from which valid findings have been drawn, and on which the practice of ADR can continue to build. Before embarking on her research project, this young woman observed a variety of dispute resolution processes as they were conducted, then developed her own hypothesis about what made them work, despite each process being completely different, and each presenting dispute having arisen in a completely different context.

She then devised an experimental methodology that would accommodate those differences while avoiding the influence of the research funders and the influence of her own biases upon either the research design or its outcomes. Having established a small research committee whose members included ADR practitioners as well as respected researchers, she worked with ADR practitioners themselves to develop a multi-faceted approach that would produce

both quantitative and qualitative data for analysis. The study included structured observational studies coupled with carefully designed surveys, and an action research component that spanned the length of the study; for the latter component, she enlisted the practical expertise of ADR practitioners to help design and conduct self-reflective components of the research study.

The ADRAC Awards Committee was particularly impressed with the experimental design of the winning entry. It avoided a number of relatively common pitfalls, including selection bias. In the survey instrument: key terms were clearly defined to avoid misinterpretation by survey subjects; no questions were included that could have been interpreted as being a threat to the survey subject's self-image or professional standing; no questions were included that may have exposed the well-recognised gaps between what people say they do and what they actually do; and the survey was designed so that it could be completed even by people with reduced capacity.

The Chair of ADRAC added:

This study is also commendable for avoiding the confounding effects of social desirability bias, and of eye witness unreliability.

He went on to commend and thank both the research and the ADR communities for their support and assistance to all the studies that had been submitted during the award process, and for their ongoing support for this ADRAC award over the past six years, including financial support.

A research endeavour such as this winning entry, demands time, effort, commitment, and resources from the researchers themselves, as well as from the organisations that support and fund them. On behalf of ADRAC, I thank them for that support and assistance.

The ADR research community has come a long way since ADRAC announced the first of these awards in 2018. Six years ago, the ADR research community was relatively small and self-contained. The studies submitted for this year's award demonstrate the extent to which collaborative research now dominates

the ADR sector, with research teams now being drawn from many disciplines previously not considered. It is this standard of empirical research that has placed Australia at the leading edge of best practice in ADR, and this award demonstrates ADRAAC's continued support for such high quality evidence-based data collection.

The Chair of ADRAAC concluded by saying:

Ultimately, the beneficiaries of this standard of research are ADR practitioners and the people who seek their assistance – the findings from rigorous empirical research studies such as this one can only help to continually improve the practice of ADR.

To view the research (including interviews with the researcher and her research committee, research documentation and videos), enter 'ADRAAC award research excellence' in your hologram device.