EMBODIED INFORMATION IN WORKPLACE CONTEXTS

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What is known from the existing literature about how people are informed by their own bodies?

PURPOSE

This study contributes a portrait of the state of knowledge about embodied information by synthesizing research from allied disciplines as well as library and information studies (LIS). This study extends our understanding of embodiment by reaching beyond what has been examined to date within information behaviour and information practice (IB/IP) scholarship. This poster shares preliminary findings related to workplace settings.

BACKGROUND

Embodiment has been little examined in IB/IP scholarship, but a growing number of scholars advocate for greater attention to it (e.g., Keilty & Leazer, 2014; Lueg, 2015; Lloyd, 2010; Olsson, 2009).

There is no unified definition of embodiment (Violi, 2008, p. 53). For the exploratory purposes of this study, the researchers understand embodiment broadly, as the bodily process through which people perceive and act in the world. Embodied information, then, can originate:

- through our bodies' interactions with our surroundings, and

- through inward-focused perception of the state of our bodies.

METHODS

This study applies Arksey and O'Malley's scoping review method (2005), which is widely used in the health sciences to serve exploratory questions about the state of knowledge on an issue. This study uses it for the same purpose.

Searches across several databases, using broad terms, produced an intentionally large initial screening pool spanning 1990-2015 (see Figure One).

Through a round of test screening, the researchers increased their familiarity with the pool and developed criteria for including studies for full-text review. These inclusion criteria are:

- an empirical qualitative design

- a focus on conscious use of embodied information

- written in English

Both researchers screened all 3097 records, using the Covidence tool to indicate inclusion or exclusion. Discussion was used to resolve disagreement.

Thematic analysis of the full text of the 261 included studies is ongoing.

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

Most LIS studies touching on embodiment focus on work contexts, such as Veinot (2007), Lloyd (2007; 2009), and Olsson (2010; 2016). Similar studies originating outside LIS include Garay-Barayazarra & Puri on farmers (2011) and O'Connor on glassblowers (2007). These studies confirm that embodied information is crucial to people's ability to make sense of their work. Workplace IB/IP is manifestly embodied.

This study also finds insights into particularly physical workers: athletes. Examples include aerial skiers (Hauw, Renault, & Durand, 2008), collegiate athletes (George, 2005), dancers (Ehrenberg, 2015), and scuba divers (Allen-Collinson & Hockey, 2011). Methodological contributions from athlete studies could influence how embodiment is studied in LIS. For example, Hauw, Renault, and Durand (2008) adapt the self-confrontation interview in order to enable athletes to describe the process of being informed by their bodies, while minimizing the influence of their coaches' descriptions.

Pain, including how people make sense of pain and how they monitor, communicate, and act upon it in the workplace, is a predominant theme emerging from this study. Common workplace norms such as toughness, stoicism, and the need to "be normal" restrict how people interpret and share information about illness, stress, and pain (Crogan et al., 2010; Dailey, 2010; Harper, 2006). Thus, the social and embodied, and personal and professional, aspects of information practice can conflict, causing people additional strain.

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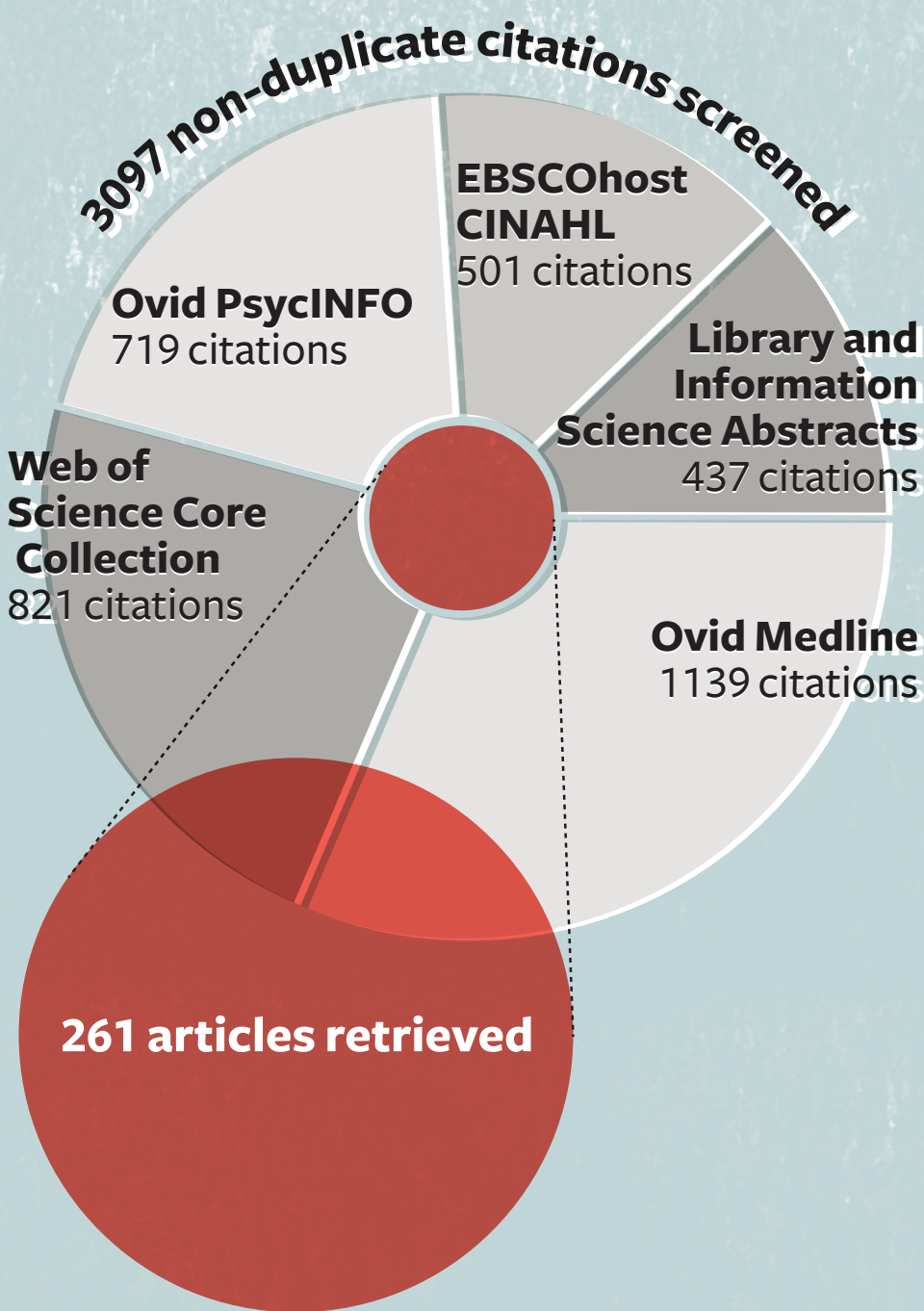
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