

LITERATURE REVIEW: WHAT IT IS, TYPES AND HOW TO GO ABOUT IT?

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Introduction...

- One of the requirements in scientific research is a demonstration by the researcher that s/he understands the issues and facts surrounding the problem at hand.
- In order to understand the problem at hand, a researcher must extensively read several articles that relate, in any way, to the topic under investigation.
- This is referred to as literature review.

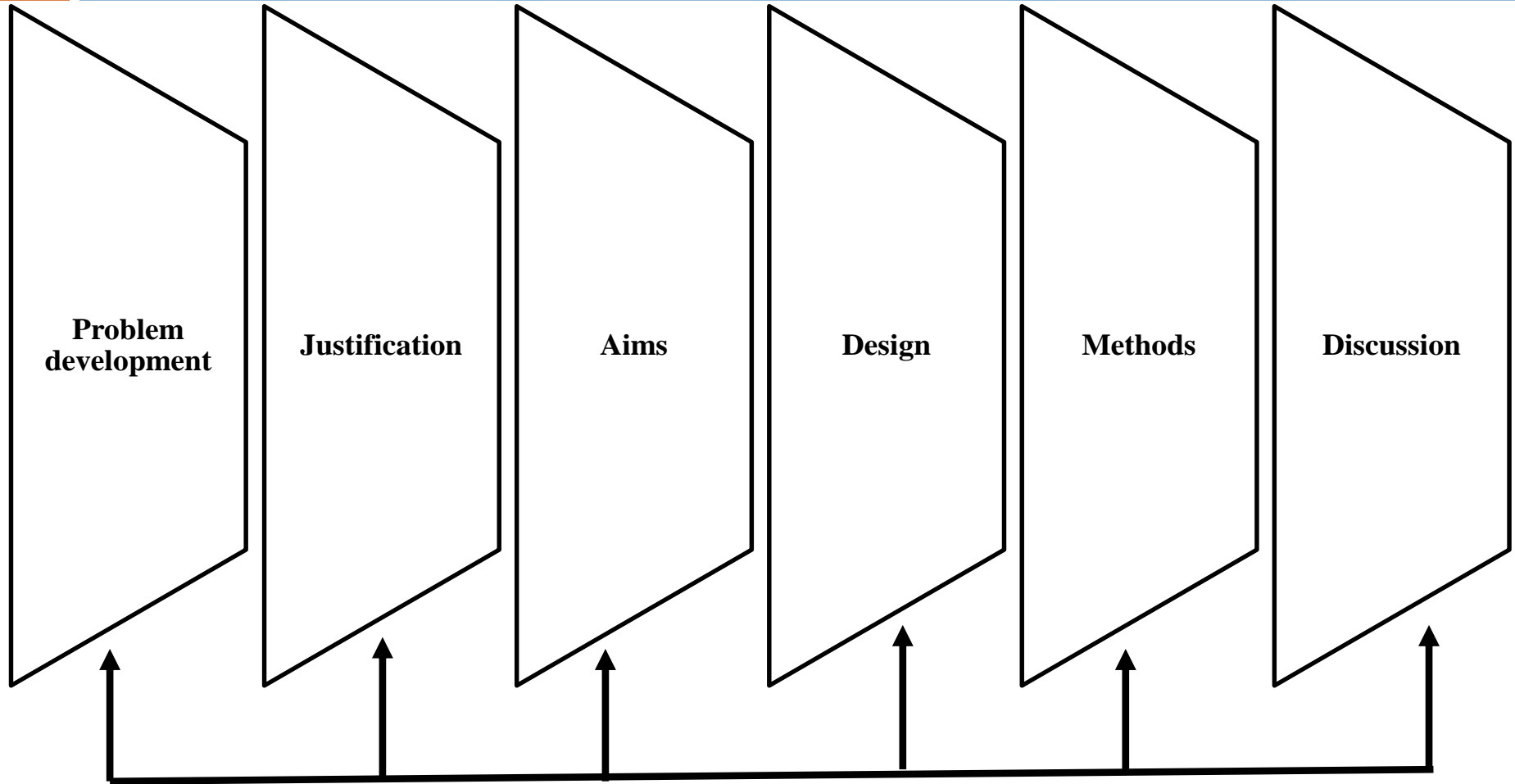
Conceptualizing Literature Review...

- Literature review involves the systematic identification, location, retrieval, analysis and evaluation of documents containing information that are related to the research problem as well as an analysis of casual observations and opinions related to the planned research.
- It is **an account of or a critical look** at the existing published and/or unpublished literature that is significant to the topic of your study interest.
- It may also be considered as '*An information analysis and synthesis, focusing on findings and not simply bibliographic citations, summarizing the substance of the literature and drawing conclusions from it*' (Educational Resources Information Center (1982;85))

How Different Individuals describe Literature Review...

- A way to find out what others have done in the area of interest
- Delving into current literature relating to my research topic and actively engaging and interrogating what has been said about the topic
- Critical appraisal of literature in field you are reviewing
- Summary of the advanced research
- Overview and analysis of the published literature
- Identifying gaps in the knowledge/research
- Reviewing past scholarship and research to determine where your intended research fits in
- Analysing what your peers have done in your area of research - learning from them
- Keeping yourself relevant and up-to-date in your field
- Evaluation of the written record of research done in a particular area or on a particular topic
- A critical discourse of multiple pieces of literature

Situating an academic reviews



The Foundation of an academic research output (thesis/article)

Source: Daniel and Harland (2017)

Why Review Literature?

1. Lit. review delimits, defines and refines the research problem appropriately.
2. It creates the basis for one's research, checking the current knowledge and thinking in one's subject area.
3. It provides an insight into the methods, measures, subjects and techniques already used, or proven useful or otherwise by other researchers.
4. It helps to identify new ways to interpret, and shed light on any gaps in previous research.
5. Resolves conflicts amongst seemingly contradictory previous studies.

A good literature...



6. Places each work in the context of its contribution to the understanding of the subject under review.
7. Prevents unintended duplication of previous studies by identifying what has already been done, and what needs to be done.
8. Provides a framework for establishing the importance of a study and a benchmark for comparing the results of a study with other studies.

Sources of Literature...

- **1. Preliminary sources:** These are also known as general sources of literature.
- They are the references that the researcher consults first to help him or her locate other sources related to the research problem.
- They are themselves not information, but they are pointers to information.
- Table of contents is an example of a preliminary source. One cannot read the table of contents, but only consults it to identify where a particular topic is found.
- Other examples of preliminary sources include Abstracts, Indices, catalogues, etc.

Sources of Literature...

- **2. Primary sources:** These are sources where ‘first-hand’ information is published or sources that are as close as possible to the origin of the information or idea under study.
- Examples of primary sources include: field data, government documents, articles from peer-reviewed scientific journals that summarize the results of original research, memoirs, personal correspondences, oral histories, and contemporary newspaper accounts and all publications by researchers describing their own work.

Sources of Literature...

3.Secondary sources: These are accounts written after the fact with the benefit of reflection, interpretations and devaluations of primary sources.

- They are not evidence, but rather commentary on and discussion of evidence.
- They provide analysis, commentary, or criticism on the primary source.
- E.g. bibliographies, biographical works, commentaries, criticisms, dictionaries, encyclopedias, histories; Journal articles (depending on the discipline can be primary), magazine and newspaper articles, textbooks (also considered tertiary), etc.

Sources of Literature...

4. Tertiary sources: These are filter and compile primary and secondary sources, e.g. almanacs, directories, fact books, guidebooks and manuals, abstracts, etc.

- They act as **both tertiary and primary sources:** e.g. bibliographies, dictionaries and encyclopedias and textbooks.

Requisite skills in Lit. Review...

- Literature sourcing, retrieval and management requires:
 - Effective reading
 - Effective researching
 - Ability to Summarize, classify, analyze, synthesize, do rationale-building,
 - Organization, and
 - Writing.

How to Review Literature...

- A proper literature review should proceed in two phases.
- The first phase is conducted during exploration and before a proposal is developed to help identify and define the problem.
- It provides the dimensions and the limits of the problem area by defining the extent to which the answer is already known.
- It also identifies possible procedures for solving the problem.
- The second phase is conducted after a problem is already identified.
- A literature search can be manual - using traditional paper approach or it can be electronically conducted, by means of a computer.
- The most popular search approach these days is the electronic method.

Reviewing Literature with the Use of a Mind Map...

- One approach to identifying possible research questions for your thesis is to make an initial pass through the literature in an area you are interested in.
- Organize this thematically in a mind map, and look for gaps or places you have ideas about how to make an original contribution.

Literature Review Template

**Guiding question: What is the purpose and value
of literature review?**

	Articles reviewed				
Elements reviewed	Article ₁	Article ₂	Article ₃	Article ₄	Article.._n
Aims/Objectives					
Research questions					
Methods					
Theory					
Conclusions					
Limitations					
So what then?					

Source: Daniel and Harland(2017)

Writing process—Author—Concept Centric Approach....

- Collect information/sources (peer-reviewed) e.g. databases, journals, etc.
- Analyse (from broader perspectives to narrow perspective—breadth and depth)
- Arrange your thoughts and literature (e.g. logical or sequential)
- Summarise and provide transitional connections between sections within the literature topics
- **Example:**

Narrative in nature: e.g. author (x) conducted an observational study and concluded that global warming is caused predominantly by human activities. Author (y) confirms this view, and explicitly identified deforestation and over fishing as additional factors causing environmental degradation

Researchers in human geography and environmental sciences have linked human activities such as over farming (author1; author 2; author3), over consumption (author 1; author 2), population growth and human longevity (author 1, author 2; author 3) to climate change. Though the link between human oriented activities and global warming is incontestable, there is a growing literature suggesting that a combination of human and natural factors (see for example, author1; author 3; author 4...)

Organisation of your literature



- Organised by major questions (what are the major questions in relationship to your topic)
- Shared views, disagreement, and etc.
- Chronological/timeline or historical development of concepts, variation, etc.

Synthesis of the Articles reviewed

Elements reviewed	Articles reviewed		
	Group...₁(articles)	Group...₂(articles)	Group.._n(articles)
Summary			
Shared conclusions			
Contrasting views			
Current debates			
Outstanding questions			

Source: Daniel and Harland (2017)

What to Critique....



- Arguments/rhetoric, logic
- Methods
- Theories, ideas, application, stability
- Established beliefs, values, systems, etc.
- Context and knowledge
- Time

According to Borg (1987)...

➤ There are eight ordered steps for effective literature review; namely:

1. Defining the research problem: The description of the problem should be short, precise and clear. A good definition is vital because it prevents the researcher from wasting time consulting irrelevant sources.

2. Review secondary sources: Peruse through one or two secondary sources. This should provide an introduction to the problem and help define it in more precise terms.

3. Select and skim through the most appropriate preliminary sources.

According to Borg (1987)...

4. Formulate appropriate search words to help you to make identification of information in indexes easy.
5. Search the preliminary sources for the most relevant primary sources.
6. Read the relevant primary sources in more detail now, taking notes by use of note cards.
7. Organize the notes.
8. Write the report.

Another Five Steps Followed in Reviewing Literature

- **Step1: Planning - What type of Literature Review am I writing? Academic Discipline - What field(s) am I working in?**
- **Focus**
 - ❑ What is the specific thesis, problem, or research question that my literature review helps to define?
 - ❑ Identifying a focus allows you to: Sort and categorize information (literature mapping) and Eliminate irrelevant information
- **Type**
 - ❑ What type of literature review am I conducting?
 - ❑ Theory; Methodology; Policy; Quantitative; Qualitative
- **Scope**
 - ❑ What is the scope of my literature review?
 - ❑ What types of sources am I using?

Step2: Reading & Research - What materials am I going to use?

- Collect and read material.
- Summarize sources:
 - Who is the author?
 - What is the author's main purpose?
 - What is the author's theoretical perspective?
 - What research methodology has been used?
 - Who is the intended audience?
 - What is the principal point, conclusion, thesis, contention, or question?
 - How is the author's position supported?
 - How does this study relate to other studies of the problem or topic?
 - What does this study add to my research project?
- Select only relevant books and articles

Step 3: Analyzing - How do I assess existing research?

- Remember...a literature review is never just a list of studies—it always offers an argument about a body of research
- Analysis occurs on two levels: Individual sources and Body of research
- In your own words, summarize and/or synthesize the key findings relevant to your study.
- What do we know about the study area?
- What are the key arguments, key characteristics, key concepts or key figures?
- What are the existing debates/theories?
- What common methodologies are used?
- Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the work

Step 4: Drafting - What am I going to write?

- Always begin with an introduction to the review & end with a summary
- Make the connection for the reader between the subtopics & the topic
- Use direct quotations infrequently
- Always cite your sources
- Present *your* knowledge on the topics & subtopics
- Summarize each subtopic
- Include a transition paragraph from one subtopic to the next

Step 5: Revising - How can I fine-tune my draft?

- **Title:** Is my title consistent with the content of my study?
- **Introduction:** Do I appropriately introduce my review?
- **Thesis:** Does my review have a clear claim?
- **Body:** Is the organization clear? Have I provided headings?
- **Topic sentences:** Have I clearly indicated the major idea(s) of each paragraph? Use strong and clear ‘umbrella’ sentences at the beginning of paragraphs, or ‘signposts’.
- **Transitions:** Does my writing flow?
- **Conclusion:** Do I provide sufficient closure?, A brief ‘so what?’ summary sentences.
- **Spelling and Grammar:** Are there any major spelling or grammatical mistakes?

Types of Literature Review...

1. Conceptual reviews – review of papers that explain what given concepts mean. Such papers are essential in enabling a reader understands the different meanings of a concept. They include seminal or other conceptual papers.
2. Theoretical reviews - usually explore how theory shapes research or a review of literature about a research as it relates to the theory.
3. Empirical reviews – review of papers where empirical results of a study are published.
4. Methodological reviews - are descriptions of research design, methods, and procedures that can be employed in literature reviews or research in general.

Types of Literature Review...contd

5. Historical reviews - provide analyses that situate literature in historical contexts.
6. Systematic reviews - occur when literature is structured according to a particular criteria e.g. time period, events, etc.
7. Integrative reviews - pull together the existing work on a topic and work to understand trends in that body of scholarship e.g.. Meta-analyses.

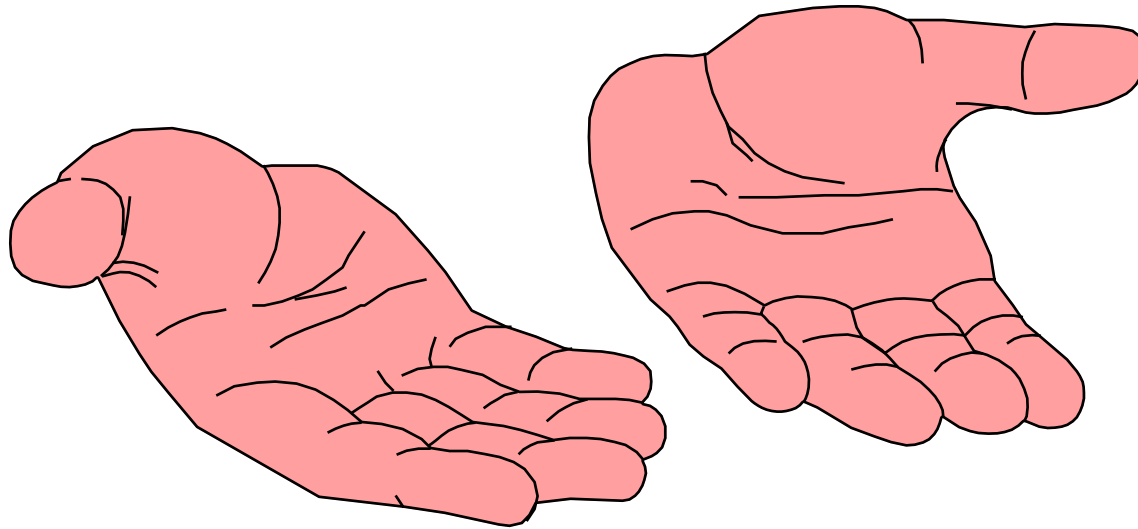
Characteristics of a Good Lit Review

- Extensive
- Critical
- Analytical
- Up-to-date
- Logical
- Clearly written
- Well-structured

Conclusion...

- One major problem with literature review is how much literature one must review to be considered sufficient for a scholarly study.
- Or, how does a researcher organize his or her notes into a meaningful literature review?
- Although there is no universal structure for a good literature review, it is given that it must be related to the study objectives.

Thank you for your attention!



Any questions or comments ?