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Introduction to Research Methods

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MGM 333

Part 1: Starting the research process

CH2: Reviewing literature

Lecture 3

Chapter
02

Reviewing literature





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Session Outline

Chapter
02

Session Outline

- ☐ What is meant by literature review?
- ☐ Functions of literature review
- ☐ Steps of literature review
- ☐ Literature review process



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What is meant by literature review?

- ❑ A literature review is a critical discussion of all significant, publicly available literature that contributes to the understanding of a subject.

- ❑ Is the documentation of a comprehensive review of the published and unpublished work from secondary sources of data in the areas of specific interest to the researcher.

A literature review is a written document that presents a logically argued case founded on a comprehensive understanding of the current state of knowledge about a topic of study. This case establishes a convincing thesis to answer a studies question.
(Machi and McEvoy, 2009, 4)

❑ **Literature review is a 'runway' because it should:**

- Clarify your own research aims
- provide you with the depth and breadth of subject knowledge necessary
- Form the theoretical framework for your own empirical investigation
- Contribute to your research design.

- ❑ In order to produce a literature review you must:
 - ✓ Carry out a search of all the appropriate bibliographic sources in order to ensure that no significant documents have been missed.
 - ✓ From the retrieved literature you must record each item's existence uniquely
 - ✓ Appraise each item in terms of its contribution to the body of knowledge on the subject of the search,



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Functions of literature review

- ✓ Bring clarity and focus to your research problem
- ✓ Improve your methodology
- ✓ Broaden your knowledge base in your research area
- ✓ Contextualize your findings

- ✓ This will convey a sense of the research data available
- ✓ The validity of the methods you used to gather that data
- ✓ The ideas and theories which have been formulated by previous researchers, any gaps in current knowledge and the predicted contribution of your own impending work



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Steps of literature review

- Search for existing literature in your area of study;
- Review the literature selected;
- Develop a theoretical framework;
- Develop a conceptual framework;
- Writing up the literature reviewed



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Literature review process

❑ The literature review process requires four separate skills:

- ❖ Information seeking and retrieval
- ❖ Evaluation
- ❖ Critical analysis
- ❖ Research synthesis توليف/ تركيب البحث

☐ Information seeking and retrieval

The ability to search appropriate sources and scan the literature efficiently, using manual or online methods, to identify and obtain a set of useful articles, chapters and books.

- ❑ This is a brief overview of the steps involved in the search for material for your literature review:
- ✓ Define your search objectives
- ✓ Identify keywords, phrases and subject categories to be used in the search
- ✓ Identify and record the sources to be accessed in searching for information

☐ Evaluation

The ability to judge a source based on a number of criteria, including the source itself, the author and the subject.

- ❑ There are a number of criteria you can use to evaluate the quality of the information you have retrieved:
- ✓ **Authority:** You must consider the authority of the creator(s) of the document in order to appraise the reliability of the information provided.

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- ❑ There are a number of criteria you can use to evaluate the quality of the information you have retrieved:
- ✓ **Scope:** Consider what claims are made by the author(s) of the work. Most reliable pieces of research should set out clearly the scope, aims and objectives and the methods by which data were collected. Any works which fail to set out such information should again be regarded with caution

- ❑ There are a number of criteria you can use to evaluate the quality of the information you have retrieved:
- ✓ **Purpose:** Think about why a work was produced, as the reason may give an indication of its reliability

❑ Critical analysis

The ability to examine and analyze the content of the literature systematically

- ❑ In order to analyze the argument of the author you need to read the piece and identify all of those components.
- ✓ **A claim:** is the essence of an argument; it is the conclusion the writer intends to demonstrate by applying all other components of an argument in support of that claim.

- ❑ In order to analyze the argument of the author you need to read the piece and identify all of those components.
- ✓ **A reason:** The reasons a writer gives for making a claim are the first building blocks of any argument. Reasons comprise the second level of an argument, without which the first level, the claim, cannot stand.
- ✓ There are three questions to ask when trying to establish the value of a reason:
 - ✓ 1 Is the reason relevant to the claim it supports?
 - ✓ 2 Is the reason effective?
 - ✓ 3 Is the value invoked by the reason likely to be universal or selective?

- ❑ In order to analyze the argument of the author you need to read the piece and identify all of those components.
- ✓ **Evidence:** Most readers are unlikely to accept a claim based solely on the reason(s) given by the author; we would expect the author to support the reason(s). The more hostile or critical an audience, the stronger the evidence must be. It must be accurate, credible and given in sufficient quantity to convince the reader of the author's knowledge

- ❑ In order to analyze the argument of the author you need to read the piece and identify all of those components.
- ✓ **Drawing conclusions from critical analysis:** Once you have analyzed the text you must then draw your own conclusions from the work and begin to formulate your own argument; your review will ultimately provide a synthesis of the articles, research reports or other reviews that you have analyzed. Your conclusions will provide the framework for that synthesis

- ❑ In order to analyze the argument of the author you need to read the piece and identify all of those components.
- ✓ **Marking up the text:** When reading through an article it always helps to annotate the text as you go (if you have taken a photocopy that is!) in order to establish which part of the article does what in terms of the overall argument.
- ✓ **Fisher (1993) suggests one way of doing this:**
 - ✓ • A claim is identified in the text by underlining.
 - ✓ • A reason is identified in the text by square brackets: [....].
 - ✓ • Evidence is identified in the text by placing an asterisk at either side of the evidence statement: *...*.

❑ Research synthesis

The ability to synthesize the various concepts and evidence you have found into a structured piece of discursive prose that provides context and background on your topic area

Final synthesis: the review

Before you begin writing your review return to your purpose. You are writing a literature review to establish the context of your research, to demonstrate your knowledge of your chosen topic, and to identify any gaps that may exist in the published literature.

❑ Your review will consist of the following sections:

- ✓ **Introduction:** The introduction should include a clear statement of your purpose, outlining the scope and coverage of your review so your reader knows what to expect and understands the reason for any apparent omissions.

- ❑ Your review will consist of the following sections:
- ✓ **Methodology:** You may want to let your reader know how you engaged in the review process.

- ❑ Your review will consist of the following sections:
- ✓ **Discussion:** This is the main body of the review, where you discuss the collection of items reviewed and put forward your own 'argument'.

☐ Your review will consist of the following sections:

- ✓ **Conclusion:** This is your closing statement; there should be nothing new here as you have already provided your argument

❑ Your review will consist of the following sections:

- ✓ **References:** The referencing for a literature review should be of a very high standard; the list of references is as much a part of the review as the discussion and should be treated as such.



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Summary

- The four major skills of the reviewer – information searching and retrieval, evaluation, critical analysis and synthesis – are, like all skills, developed and honed through practical application.

- The paradox of the literature review is that you need a review to allow you to frame a relevant and worthwhile research question, but you need to have a question before you can investigate the literature.

- The truth is:

The literature review process is a continuous one throughout the lifespan of the research project; there will be a point at which your individual critical analysis of items will be synthesized but you will not stop there.

You will add to the review each time you locate a relevant piece of work that has a place in your theoretical framework.

- What you begin with is an idea for your research, a particular curiosity that needs to be formalized and placed within current knowledge surrounding that idea.

- From your review you can then move on to the next stage in the research process:
 - ✓ framing your research question, aims and objectives or hypothesis based on what you have discovered from within the published literature.



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Thank You

