

Literature Review

Definition

Literature review is a comprehensive study of technical and authoritative content related to research keywords. It provides prior knowledge and details of research progress about a specific topic in a particular domain. Literature review involves recording, examining, summarizing and evaluating the existing findings and providing expert judgment of their methods and findings.

Functions

- **Informing oneself about the existing theories and findings related to the topic.**

Going through the literature available on a topic helps the researcher to understand the theories and approaches related to the topic. It helps the researcher to be aware of how others have dealt with the topic, and of what knowledge they have acquired.

- **Placing the research within the existing body of knowledge and establishing its significance.**

Researchers should be able to use previously done work as foundation for their own research. Understanding the progress made in a specific domain helps the researcher to identify what aspects have been examined by other researchers and consequently identify where the gap is (where can I contribute to an existing knowledgebase?) This leads to working out the research problem again with more clarity and relevance to the existing body of knowledge. After obtaining the results of the research, they need to be compared to the findings of others to see how they fit with them.

- **Improving research methodology.**

Reviewing the literature is essential, not only in providing a context for the research subject and specifically limiting and identifying the research problem, but also in providing you with important information for subsequent parts of the research investigation. The researcher gets acquainted with methods and procedures used by other researchers, their advantages and disadvantages. Therefore, they make an informed decision and selection for the appropriate method for their research.

Preparing the Literature Review section will require a longer literature search and more intensive reading than any other chapter of the project, but this reading should also inform other chapters of the study:

-To understand the rationale for investigating the topic and to inform the formulation of research question(s) (the Introduction section)

-For guidance in the design of data collection instruments (the Methods section)

-To identify how other authors explain their findings and relate them to the literature and the implications they draw (the Discussion and Conclusion sections).

Remarks

- A good Literature Review summarizes and critiques related studies and shows how their findings link to the problem being investigated. A good Literature Review should also present contrasting views about the topic. It is important to communicate to readers that differing perspectives on the topic are being considered, and that a valid basis exists for further study.
- Literature Review is not primarily a collection of quotations from other writers. While reporting about the findings and perspectives of others is an important part of the Literature Review, it must be done in a way in which your own flow of thought and organization is evident. Paraphrasing ideas, and comparing and contrasting perspectives expressed by different writers are important considerations in constructing the Literature Review. Avoid plagiarism by giving credit when paraphrasing or quoting someone else's ideas or words.

What Sources to Consult?

Researchers need as far as possible to use **authoritative sources**. These will usually be **academic**, meaning that they are written by authors usually affiliated to a university. When we say the author is an authority, this means that the work produced by this person has been critically reviewed by peers also knowledgeable about the field of study, and these have validated the work. This peer review is an important part of the quality control of academic work. The author may have published a number of pieces on the same general topic area, demonstrating a depth of knowledge about the field, and a development in his/her grasp of the issues.

Task 1: Sources of Information

Which of the following sources is the most appropriate to be used for literature review?

- Popular sources (News and Magazines)
- Professional/Trade sources.
- Conference proceedings.
- Scholarly publications (Journals)
- Government Documents.
- Theses & Dissertations.
- Internet article.
- Books / Book Chapters.
- Encyclopaedias and dictionaries.
- Text books.