



Module: English

Branch: Finance and International Trade

Level: Third year Bachelor

Lecture 02: Literature Review Steps

Introduction

A literature review examines published information on a specific topic, often within a set timeframe. For established topics, it critiques and possibly redefines the growing and diverse body of knowledge. For new or emerging subjects, it helps form an initial understanding, such as a new model or framework. Literature reviews serve various purposes, including informing policy, guiding research, and fulfilling academic requirements. Though it may seem daunting, a literature review goes beyond summarizing sources—it typically follows a structure that includes both summary and synthesis. Synthesis involves reorganizing information, offering new interpretations, or highlighting the field's development and key debates. It may also assess and recommend the most relevant sources.

1- What is a literature review?

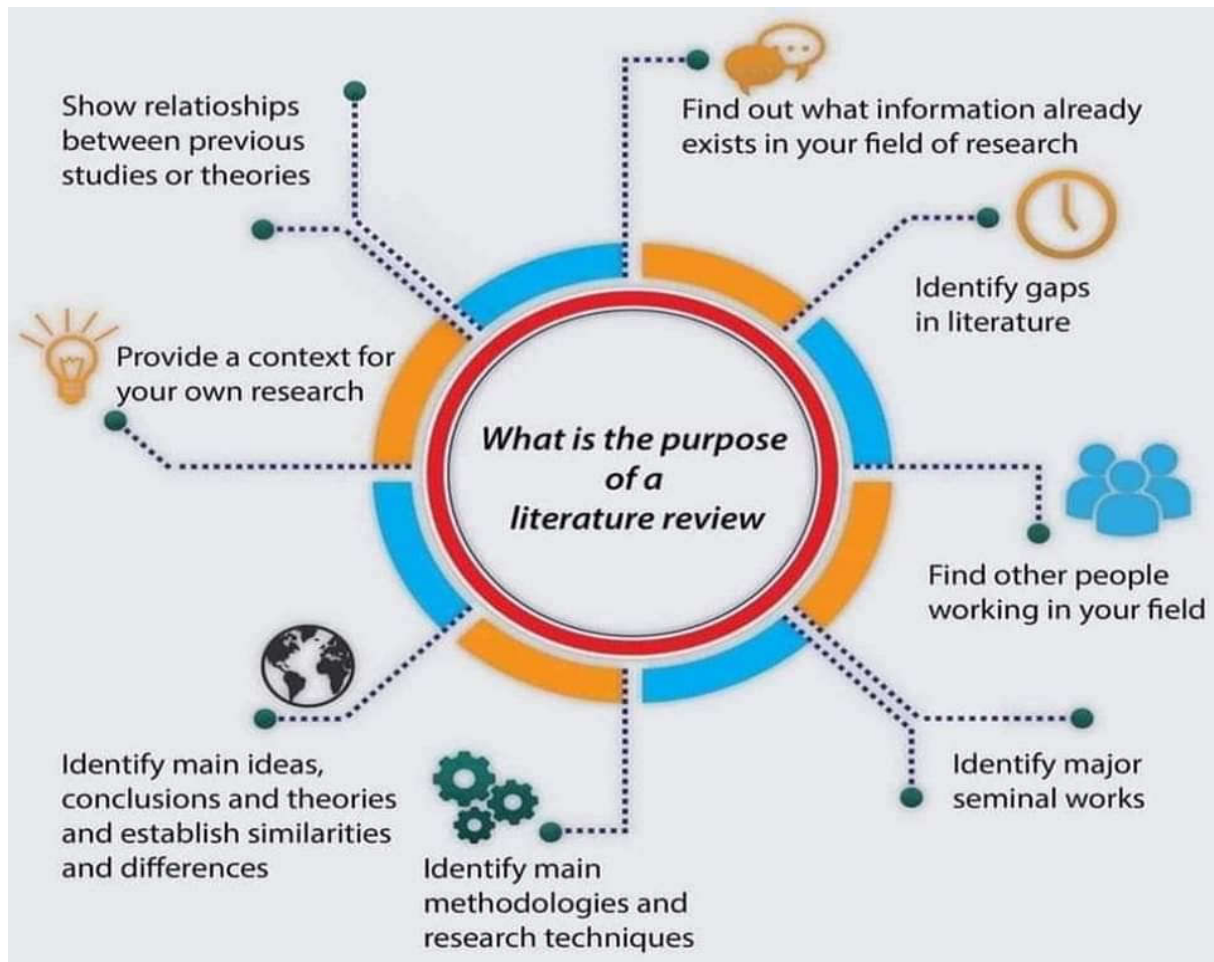
A literature review involves analyzing and synthesizing existing work related to a specific research area, particularly one that aligns with the research question being investigated—whether for a small-scale project, a master's thesis, or a doctoral dissertation.

It provides a comprehensive summary of the existing literature on a topic, usually aimed at addressing a specific research question. Literature reviews are highly valuable because they offer an overview of the entire body of relevant research, rather than focusing on individual studies. They can be compared to a completed jigsaw puzzle, where each study represents a single piece. When assembled, the review presents a full picture of the current state of knowledge. Without this broader context, there's a risk of misinterpreting individual studies, and such misinterpretations have occurred in the past.

Literature reviews are a vital part of a research project or paper, and they are particularly important during graduate school.

2-The Purpose of a Literature Review

A literature review highlights your research skills and reflects your knowledge of the chosen subject. Including it in your project or thesis allows you to present the key theories and studies related to your topic, offer evaluations and comparisons of those works, and point out any gaps in the existing research. This not only helps your reader gain a clearer understanding of your work but also enhances your credibility as a well-informed and trustworthy author.



3- Steps in the Literature Review Process

Given the particular processes involved in systematic reviews, meta-analysis and meta-synthesis, the focus of the remainder of this article is on the steps involved in undertaking a traditional or narrative review of the literature. Cronin et. al. (2008) argue that the first step involves identifying the subject of the literature review. The researcher undertaking a quantitative study may have decided this already. However, for the individual undertaking a non-research based literature review this will be the first step

a. Choosing a Review Topic

- The first and often most challenging step is selecting a topic, especially for non-research-based reviews.

- To help choose, skim textbooks for broad topics, read related chapters, explore key terms, and talk to experts.
- Make sure enough literature exists on the topic to complete the review within time and word limits.
- Start with a narrow, focused topic and broaden if necessary.

b. Searching and Selecting Articles

- Use a structured, systematic approach to find relevant literature.
- Focus on comprehensive and relevant sources: theoretical works, empirical studies, and reviews.
- Prefer **primary sources** (e.g., peer-reviewed journal articles) over secondary sources (e.g., textbooks).
- Use electronic databases effectively and keep track of search keywords and strategies.

c. Analyzing and Synthesizing Literature

- Begin with a quick read using abstracts, then classify sources by type.
- Use tools like **synthesis matrices** to compare studies by purpose, methods, findings, and themes.
- Apply structured techniques like **PQRS (Preview, Question, Read, Summarize)** to stay organized.
- Summarize findings and identify patterns, similarities, contradictions, and gaps in the literature.

d. Organizing the Review

. Introduction

- Introduce the review's purpose, outline the problem, and explain key search terms and scope.
- Highlight trends, gaps, and your review's contribution.

. Main Body

- Group studies by theme, methodology, or theory.
- Summarize individual studies based on relevance and contribution.
- Use visuals (tables/figures) for clarity and synthesis.
- Discuss relationships, debates, and differences among sources.

. Conclusion

- Summarize key findings and gaps.
- Justify the need for further research.
- Possibly develop a conceptual framework based on identified themes.
- Include implications for practice, education, or future research.

. References

- List all sources cited in the review using a consistent and complete referencing format.