

**FACULTY**: **EDUCATION**

**COURSE UNIT: LIBRARY AND GENERAL RESEARCH METHODS**

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**LECTURER’S NAME: BR. DR. FRANCIS X. AGANZE**

**GROUP NINE (9)**

**Group Presentation**

**Question**

**Group Members**

1. LUGAYAVU EPAPHRADITO 18BSCE1468
2. MUKALAZI IGNATIUS 18BAED
3. AYESIGA RUTH 18BSCE

**Literature Review**

A literature review is a scholarly paper, which includes the current knowledge including substantive findings, as well as theoretical and methodological contributions to a particular topic. Literature reviews are secondary sources, and do not report new or original experimental work. Most often associated with academic-oriented literature, such reviews are found in academic journals, and are not to be confused with book reviews that may also appear in the same publication. Literature reviews are a basis for research in nearly every academic field (Chris, 2018). A literature review surveys books, scholarly articles, and any other sources relevant to a particular issue, area of research, or theory, and by so doing, provides a description, summary, and critical evaluation of these works in relation to the research problem being investigated. Literature reviews are designed to provide an overview of sources you have explored while researching a particular topic and to demonstrate to your readers how your research fits within a larger field of study.

**TYPES OF LITERATURE REVIEWS**

Literature reviews are pervasive throughout various academic disciplines, and thus you can adopt various approaches to effectively organize and write your literature review. The types include;

**Argumentative Review**

This form examines literature selectively in order to support or refute an argument, deeply embedded assumption, or philosophical problem already established in the literature.

**Integrative Review**

It is a form of research that reviews, critiques, and synthesizes representative literature on a topic in an integrated way such that new frameworks and perspectives on the topic are generated. The body of literature includes all studies that address related or identical hypotheses.

**Historical Review**

Historical reviews are focused on examining research throughout a period of time, often starting with the first time an issue, concept, theory, phenomena emerged in the literature, then tracing its evolution within the scholarship of a discipline.

**Methodological Review**

This approach provides a framework of understanding at different levels (that is; those of theory, substantive fields, research approaches and data collection and analysis techniques)

**Systematic Review**

This form consists of an overview of existing evidence pertinent to a clearly formulated research question, which uses pre-specified and standardized methods to identify and critically appraise relevant research, and to collect, report, and analyze data from the studies that are included in the review.

**Theoretical Review**

The theoretical literature review help establish what theories already exist, the relationships between them, to what degree the existing theories have been investigated, and to develop new hypotheses to be tested.

**IMPORTANCE OF A GOOD LITERATURE REVIEW**

A literature review may consist of simply a summary of key sources, but in the social sciences, a literature review usually has an organizational pattern and combines both summary and synthesis, often within specific conceptual categories. A summary is a recap of the important information of the source, but a synthesis is a re-organization, or a reshuffling, of that information in a way that informs how the researcher is planning to investigate a research problem.

**The purpose of a literature review is to:**

* Place each work in the context of its contribution to understanding the research problem being studied.
* Describe the relationship of each work to the others under consideration.
* Identify new ways to interpret prior research.
* Reveal any gaps that exist in the literature.
* Resolve conflicts amongst seemingly contradictory previous studies.
* Identify areas of prior scholarship to prevent duplication of effort.
* Point the way in fulfilling a need for additional research.
* Locate your own research within the context of existing literature [very important].

**STRUCTURE AND WRITING STYLE**

**1.  Thinking about Your Literature Review**

The structure of a literature review should include the following:

* An overview of the subject, issue, or theory under consideration, along with the objectives of the literature review,
* Division of works under review into themes or categories [for example; works that support a particular position, those against, and those offering alternative approaches entirely],
* An explanation of how each work is similar to and how it varies from the others,
* Conclusions as to which pieces are best considered in their argument, are most convincing of their opinions, and make the greatest contribution to the understanding and development of their area of research.

**The critical evaluation of each work should consider**:

**Provenance** - considering whether the author's arguments are supported by evidence.

**Methodology** – considering whether the techniques used to identify, gather, and analyze the data are appropriate to addressing the research problem

**Objectivity** – considering whether the contrary data is considered or is certain pertinent information ignored to prove the author's point.

**Persuasiveness** – looking into which of the author's theses are most convincing or least convincing.

**Value** – considering whether the author's arguments and conclusions are convincing.

**II. Development of the Literature Review**

There are four stages involved in developing a literature review.

* 1. Problem formulation. This deals with the topic or field is being examined and what are its component issues?
  2. Literature search. It involves finding materials relevant to the subject being explored.
  3. Data evaluation. This involves determining which literature makes a significant contribution to the understanding of the topic.
  4. Analysis and interpretation. Here, the researcher discusses the findings and conclusions of pertinent literature.

**III. Ways to Organize Your Literature Review**

**Chronology of Events**

If the review follows the chronological method, the materials are written about according to when they were published.

**By Publication**

Here sources are ordered by publication chronology, only if the order demonstrates a more important trend.

**Thematic [“conceptual categories”]**

Thematic reviews of literature are organized around a topic or issue, rather than the progression of time. However, progression of time may still be an important factor in a thematic review.   
**Methodological**  
Methodological approaches focus on the methods utilized by the researcher. A methodological scope will influence either the types of documents in the review or the way in which these documents are discussed.

**IV Writing Your Literature Review.**

When writing a review, the following are considered;

**Use of Evidence**

A literature review section is, in this sense, just like any other academic research paper. Your interpretation of the available sources must be backed up with evidence [citations] that demonstrates that what the researcher is saying is valid.

**Selective in nature**

Only the most important points in each source are selected to highlight in the review. The type of information chosen should relate directly to the research problem, whether it is thematic, methodological, or chronological.

**Use of Quotes Sparingly**

Some short quotes can be used if the researcher wants to emphasize a point, or if what an author stated cannot be easily paraphrased. Extensive quotes should not be used as a substitute for the researcher’s summary and interpretation of the literature.

**Summarize and Synthesize**

The sources are summarized and synthesized within each thematic paragraph as well as throughout the review. Recapitulating important features of a research study, but then synthesizing it by rephrasing the study's significance and relating it to the researcher’s work is important.

**The voice of the researcher**

While the literature review presents others' ideas, the researcher’s voice should remain front and center. For example, the writer can weave references to other sources into what he or she is writing but maintain his or her own voice by starting and ending the paragraph with his or her own ideas and wording.

**Use of Caution When Paraphrasing**

When paraphrasing a source that is not the researcher’s own, he or she must be sure to represent the author's information or opinions accurately and in his/her own words. Even when paraphrasing an author’s work, he or she must provide a citation to that work.

**V.  Common Mistakes to Avoid**

These are the most common mistakes made in reviewing social science research literature.

* Sources in literature review do not clearly relate to the research problem.
* Sufficient time was not taken to define and identify the most relevant sources to use in the literature review related to the research problem.
* Relying exclusively on secondary analytical sources rather than including relevant primary research studies or data.
* Uncritical acceptance of another researcher's findings and interpretations as valid, rather than examining critically all aspects of the research design and analysis.
* Not describing the search procedures that were used in identifying the literature to review.
* Reporting isolated statistical results rather than synthesizing them in chi-squared or meta-analytic methods.
* Only including research that validates assumptions and does not consider contrary findings and alternative interpretations found in the literature.

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