

LITERATURE REVIEW (CHAPTER 2)

Review previous study related with your topic. The previous studies that must be selected for this chapter must be academic work/articles published in an internationally reputable journal.

For better organization, it has been generally accepted that the arrangement for a good literature review write up follows this order:

2.0 Introduction

2.1 Theoretical review

2.2 Empirical review

2.3 Conceptual framework

2.4 Summary of Literature/Research Gap

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definitions

Hart (1998: 13) defines LR as:

- ❖ the selection of available documents (both published and unpublished) on the topic, which contain information, ideas, data and evidence;
- ❖ [being] written from a particular standpoint to fulfil certain aims or express certain views on the nature of the topic and how it is to be investigated; and the effective evaluation of these documents in relation to the research being proposed.
- ❖ LR is “integral to the success of academic research” and contributes the “major benefit” of “ensuring the researchability” of the topic “before the ‘proper’ research commences”. (Hart, 1998)
- ❖ **A faulty literature review** derails the entire dissertation/thesis

- ❖ “a researcher cannot perform significant research without first understanding the literature in the field” (Boote & Beile, 2005, p. 3).
- ❖ In a study of the practices of Australian dissertation examiners, Mullins and Kiley (2002) found that Examiners typically started reviewing a dissertation with the expectation that it would pass; but a poorly conceptualized or written literature review often indicated for them that the rest of the dissertation might have problems
- ❖ On encountering an inadequate literature review, examiners would proceed to look at the methods of data collection, the analysis, and the conclusions more carefully. (Boote & Beile, 2005, p. 6)

Literature review

- Provides aspects of background information
- which jump-starts the research
- Proves the originality and value of your research
- Must be relevant to the problem – topics for review are derived from the problem statement
- Must be a critical analysis of selected works in light of your research – not mere citation or summary
- Is demanding and tests your ability to choose and critically assess relevant literature
- Helps to choose the right methods for data collection and analysis
- Shows gaps and/or directions for further research

Is LR as a process or a product?

- ❖ As a process, LR assists the researcher in developing their knowledge of the subject matter, helping to clarify:
 - ❖ what research is actually required, that is, it helps the researcher formulate their broad aims and specific objectives; and
 - ❖ practical ways to undertake the research (e.g. how previous similar work has been undertaken).

LR is a product of the above process– chapter(s) of the thesis

which informs the reader of the background to the research

- ❖ The rationale for the research;
- ❖ Previous work that has been undertaken in this area (what has been found and how these findings have been achieved)

What is the critical function of LR?

□ Periodically articulate the linkages between the existing literature and the research questions or objectives being addressed

- ❖ This assists the reader to keep track of how the arguments being raised in the LR relate to the aims and objectives of the research
- ❖ These linkages show that the researcher:
- ❖ Is consistently addressing relevant topics and

That the argument/s underpinning their aims and objectives are being generated from existing knowledge

Purpose of LR

Conducting a literature review is a means of:

- ❖ Demonstrating an author's knowledge about a particular field of study, including vocabulary, theories, key variables and phenomena, and its methods and history.
- ❖ Informing the student of the influential researchers and research groups in the field.
- ❖ Obtaining a legitimate and publishable scholarly document (e.g. state of the art in field X)

Roles of LR – depends on stage of research

1. Distinguishing what has been done from what needs to be done,
2. Discovering important variables relevant to the topic,
3. Synthesizing and gaining a new perspective,
4. Identifying relationships between ideas and practices,

5. Establishing the context of the topic or problem,
6. Rationalizing the significance of the problem,
7. Enhancing and acquiring the subject vocabulary,
8. Understanding the structure of the subject,
9. Relating ideas and theory to applications,
10. identifying the main methodologies and research techniques that have been used,
11. placing the research in a historical context to show familiarity with state-of-the-art developments,
12. Providing a framework for relating new findings to previous findings in the discussion section of a dissertation.

Without establishing the state of the previous research, it is impossible to establish how the new research advances the previous research i.e. new, original contribution

Typical questions answered by LR

- ❖ What do already know in the area/s under investigation?
- ❖ What are the key concepts, factors or variables?
- ❖ What are the existing theories?
- ❖ What are the inconsistencies, limitations or problems in the existing research?
- ❖ How does the existing knowledge relate to your study?
- ❖ Why study this problem?
- ❖ What contribution could the present study make? (i.e. who will benefit?)

What LR is/is not

- Purpose of LR is not to convince the reader that you are knowledgeable about the work of others
 - Need to convince the reader not only that the proposed study is **distinctive** and **different from the previous studies** but that it is **worthwhile doing**. Your work is at the Centre – not that of others. Others works (selected) is supposed to support your arguments or show alternative arguments that need to be considered
- LR is not a compilation of facts and feelings/opinions
 - LR is a **coherent argument** that leads to the description of the proposed study

- LR synthesis is used to develop a **conceptual framework, research questions and/or hypotheses**
- LR does not have to contain only original arguments
 - Permissible to draw upon the thoughtful arguments of others and incorporate them into your own – **no need to reinvent the wheel**. It is like a **jigsaw puzzle** in which some of the pieces have been designed by you while others are borrowed in their prefabricated form from the contributions of others

Traps to Avoid

- **Reading everything!**
 - If you attempt to read a lot, you will never finish!

You probably get confused and lost
- Remember the purpose is to survey the most relevant and significant work
- **Reading and not writing**
 - Writing can help you to understand and find relationships between your work and that of others
 - Writing is a way of thinking! Write as many drafts as necessary, changing your ideas as you learn more
- Remember you will be reading and writing throughout your research
- **Not keeping bibliographical information**
 - Choose a reference style at the beginning & write your references as you come across the articles, e.g. using Endnote

Suggestions for Good LR

- **Remember the purpose.** e.g. To show:
 - Why your research needs to be carried out
- how you came to choose certain methodologies or theories
 - how your work adds to the research of others

- Read with purpose
 - Summarize the work you read as you go on
 - decide which ideas/info is important to be included
- look for major concepts, theories, conclusions, arguments, etc. and similarities/differences with yours
- Write with a purpose
 - your aim is to evaluate and show relationships between past work and between this work and your own

Common Mistakes in LR

- ❖ Not clearly relating the findings of the literature review to the researcher's own study;
- ❖ Not properly defining (if at all) the best descriptors and identifying the best sources to use in review literature related to one's topic;
- ❖ Relying on secondary sources rather than on primary sources in reviewing the literature;
- ❖ Uncritically accepting another researcher's findings and interpretations as valid, rather than examining critically all aspects of the research design and analysis;
- ❖ Not reporting the search procedures that were used in the literature review;
- ❖ Not considering contrary findings and alternative interpretations in synthesizing quantitative literature.

Framework for self-evaluation of LR

- 5-category framework for evaluating LR (Bootes and Beile, 2005)

Coverage

- Have you justified criteria for inclusion and exclusion from review?

Synthesis

- ❖ Have you distinguished between what has been done in the field and what needs to be done?
- ❖ Have you placed the topic or problem in the broader scholarly literature?
- ❖ Have you acquired & enhanced the subject vocabulary? Have you articulated important variables and phenomena relevant to the topic?
- ❖ Have you synthesized and gained a new perspective on the literature?

Methodology

Have you identified the main methodologies and research techniques that have been used in the field, and their advantages and disadvantages?

Have you related ideas and theories in the field to research methodologies?

Significance

Have you rationalized the practical significance of the research problem?

Have you rationalized the scholarly significance of the problem?

Rhetoric

Was it written with a coherent, clear structure that supported the review?

Steps in conducting LR

Five steps in planning and executing the LR (Carnwell and Daly, 2001):

1. Defining the scope of the review
 2. Identifying the sources of relevant information
 3. Reviewing the literature
 4. Writing the review
 5. Applying the literature to the proposed study
- ❖ Note: these do not necessarily occur concurrently, but can be simultaneously undertaken, to some extent e.g. defining the scope of the review continues over time

Questions to keep you focused

- ❖ What is the **specific** thesis, problem or question that my LR helps to define?
- ❖ What **type of LR** am I conducting? Am I looking at theory? Methodology? Quantitative research? Qualitative research?
- ❖ What is **the scope** of LR? What types of publications am I using (journals, books, Internet, ...)? What are my key areas?
- ❖ How **good is my information seeking**? Has my search been wide enough to ensure I find all relevant material?
- ❖ Have I **critically analyzed** the literature I use?
- ❖ Have I cited and discussed **studies contrary to my own**?

- ❖ Will the reader find my LR relevant, appropriate and useful

Purposes of literature review

- Generate and refine your ideas
- Critically review existing works to gain good knowledge foundation for your area of research
- Help refine research questions and objectives
- Highlight research possibilities that have been overlooked
- Discover explicit recommendations for further research – can provide justification for your research
- Help to avoid repeating work that has been done
- Acquaint the research with latest knowledge in the area
- Discover and provide insight into research approaches, strategies & techniques appropriate for the type of research

Literature sources

- **Primary sources** – the first occurrence of work
 - Reports, including conference reports
 - Theses
 - Journal articles
 - Publications e.g. government publications
 - Unpublished manuscripts
- **Secondary sources**
 - Newspapers
 - Internet
 - Books
 - Journal articles
- **Tertiary sources – search tools**
 - Indexes

- Abstracts
- Catalogues, etc.
- NB – Primary sources can be difficult to locate (grey Literature1)

Tools

- ❖ Mendeley
- ❖ EndNote
- ❖ Bibliographic Tools
- ❖ Style sheets

Conceptual framework

- Definition
 - The **structure, frame**, etc. of your study
 - An explanation of some property that attempts to explain its behaviour or characteristics
 - The **lens** through which you view the phenomena under study
 - determines what you are curious about, what puzzles you, what questions you ask
- **Note:** - the frame of study will:
 - draw upon concepts, terms, definitions, models, and theories of a particular literature base and disciplinary orientation
 - In turn generate the problem, questions, data collection and analysis techniques and how data will be interpreted

Why require CFs?

- To **guide and help organize** our research (the questions/objectives or hypotheses and methodology)
- To **test applicability** in certain contexts
- To **explain** observations/occurrences/patterns or simply to explain our research

- To **challenge** underlying assumptions of existing theories
- To show that your work has **scientific1 basis**
 - to show **seriousness1 & respectability1**
- To make contribution to existing body of knowledge

What are the benefits?

- A sound theoretical explanation can:
 - Broaden our understanding by accounting for a wider range of phenomena
 - Deepen our understanding by reducing the laws to a common set of principles
 - Have the ability to infer causality in order to offer explanations
- **Note:** - a research framework must:
 - be linked & be pertinent to the defined problem
 - used to guide data collection and analysis
 - be referenced in the conclusions and recommendations, e.g. how useful was the framework in understanding a phenomenon, in prediction, etc.

Types of research frameworks

- **Theoretical Frameworks**
 - Rely on formal theory that has been established and chosen for the study
 - Questions are then rephrased in terms of the formal theory that has been chosen
- **Conceptual framework**
 - An argument including different points of view, and culminating in a series of **reasons for adopting some points and not others**. They are based on previous research, but built from an array of sources. May be based on different theories and various aspects of practitioner knowledge, depending on what the researcher can argue to be relevant and important to address about a research problem
- **Note:** Some literature uses the two interchangeably

Conceptual framework

- What do you think is going on with the issues, settings, or people you plan to study?
- What theories, beliefs, and prior research findings will guide or inform your research, and what literature, preliminary studies, and personal experiences will you draw on for understanding the people or issues you are studying?
- Notes:
 - Derived from literature review
 - Influences/drives goal(s) and research questions/objectives, and in turn, the data acquisition and analysis methods