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RSM8101: Research Method and Publication

Lecture 03 (MSDS1:1, MIT 1:1 & MSCS1:1)

Literature Review

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Coming up with a good literature review

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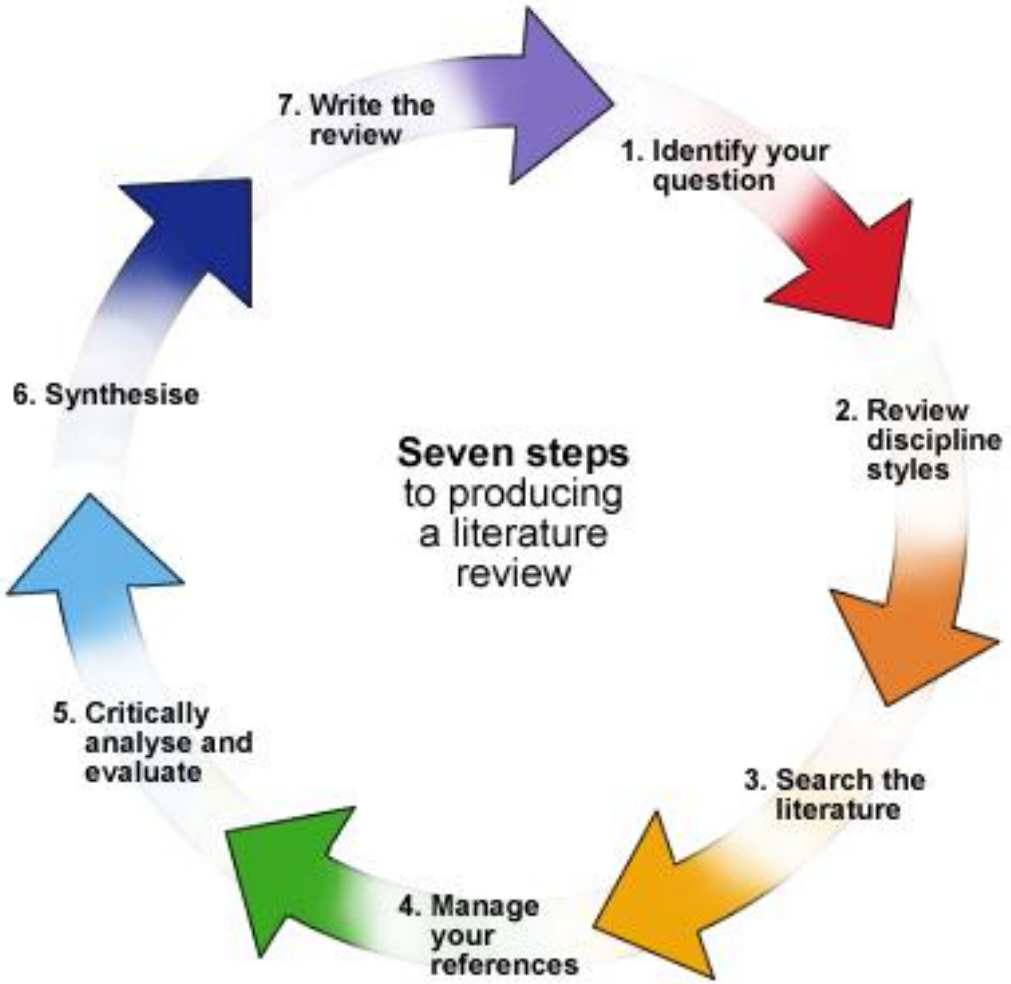


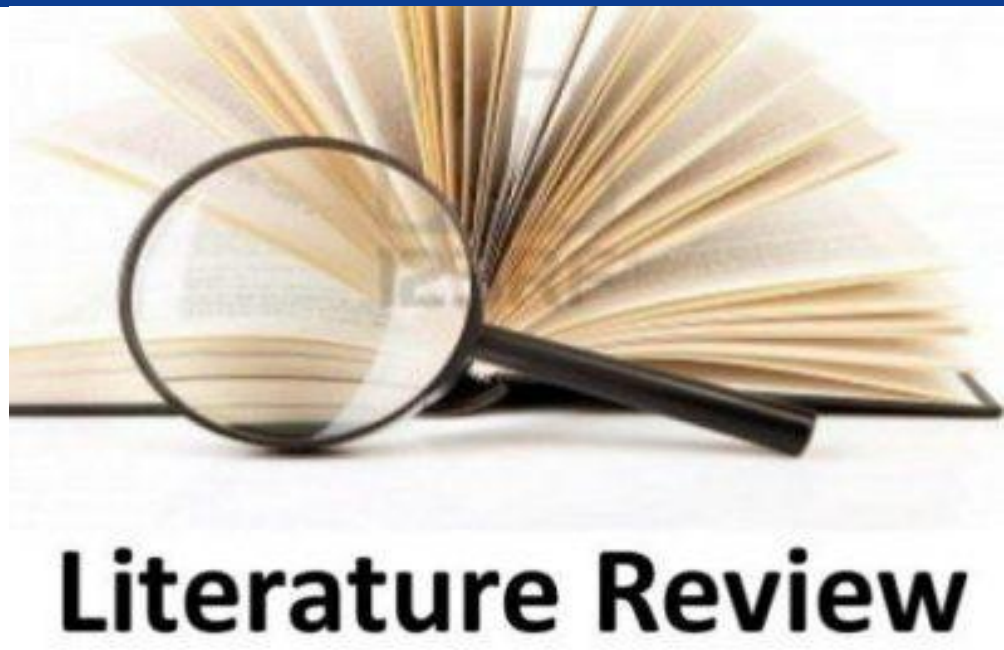
Important to Note

Just like most academic papers, literature reviews also must contain at least three basic elements:

I. an introduction or background information section;
II. the body of the review containing the discussion of sources; and,
III. finally, a conclusion and/or recommendations section to end the paper

Literature review Overview

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



Top academic research databases: https://paperpile.com/g/academic-research-databases/

Literature review- What is it?

A literature review is a *search* and *evaluation* of the available literature in your *given subject or chosen topic area*. It documents the state of the art with respect to the subject or topic you are writing about.

A literature review shows your readers that you have an in-depth grasp of your subject; and that you understand where your own research *fits into* and *adds to* an existing *body of agreed knowledge*.

Literature Review

- Introduction
- Sub-headings under which the literature is reviewed
- The review of the related literature should be guided by the objectives and the research questions/hypotheses
- It should be a substantial, selective, balanced, comprehensive and evaluative review of the relevant literature on or around the subject of the current investigation
- It should identify the gap in the literature that the research seeks to address

Please visit https://www.rlf.org.uk/resources/what-is-a-literature-review/ for useful info on Lit Rev

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Why write a literature review?

- Identifies the important works in your area and shows that you've read them.
- Provides an intellectual context for your own work, and enables you to position your project in relation to others in the field.
- Identifies opposing views.
- Puts your own work in perspective – are you doing something completely new, revisiting an old controversy in the light of new evidence, etc?
- Demonstrates your research skills – i.e. you not only know about work in your area, you also know how to access it.
- Identifies information and ideas that may be relevant to your project.
- Identifies methods that may be relevant to your project.
- Identifies gaps in current knowledge.
- Avoids reinventing the wheel – i.e. it saves you wasting time researching on something that's already been done.
- Allows you to show that you are building on a foundation of existing knowledge and ideas – i.e. carrying on from where others have already reached.
- Identifies other people working in the same field. Knowing who's already working in your area and getting in touch with them can be an invaluable source of knowledge and support.
- Demonstrates the depth of your knowledge about your research.

Objectives of literature review

A literature review has four main objectives:

1. It surveys the literature in your chosen area of study
2. It synthesises the information in that literature into a summary
3. It critically analyses the information gathered by identifying gaps in current knowledge; by showing limitations of theories and points of view; and by formulating areas for further research and reviewing areas of controversy
4. It presents the literature in an organised way

Main tasks in literature review

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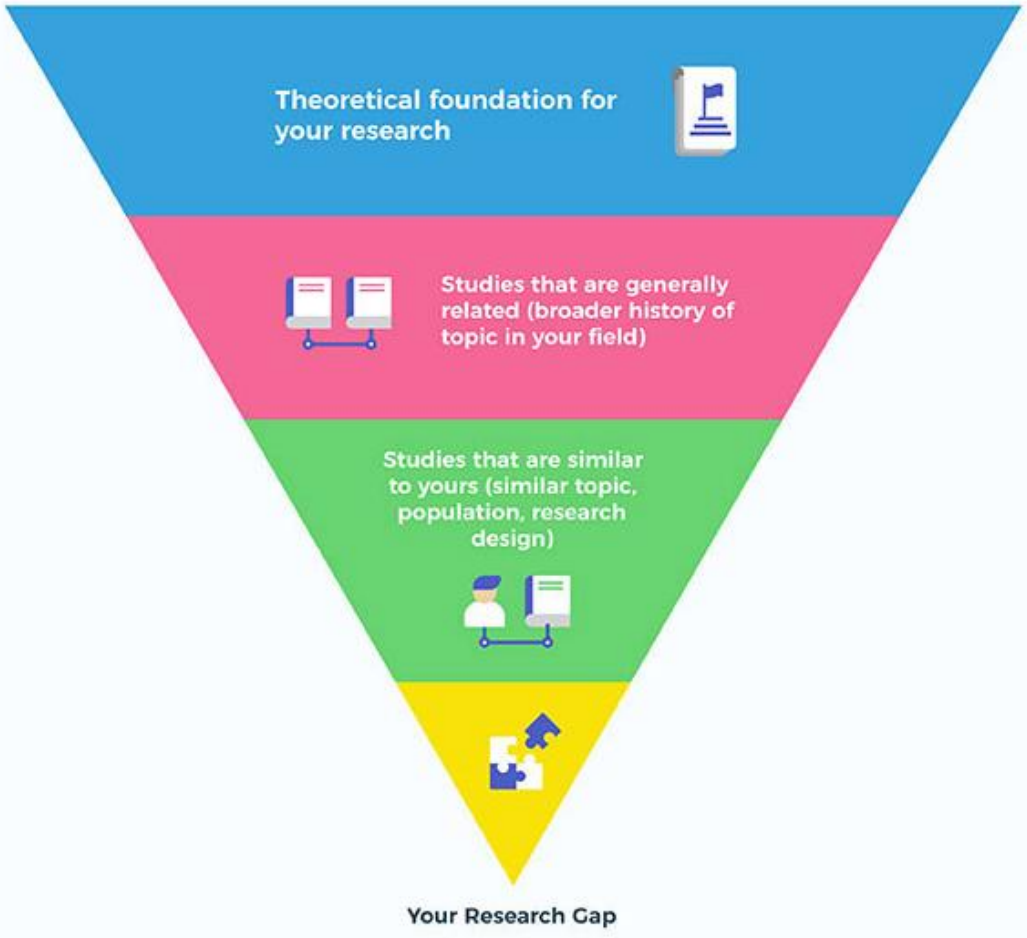
It helps to think of the organization of a good literature review as an inverse triangle. After first establishing the seminal theories and foundational research that inform your approach and topic, you then narrow your discussion to focus on the specific studies and methodologies that justify your research gap and design.



1. demonstrates a familiarity with a body of knowledge and establishes the credibility of your work;
2. summarises prior research and says how your project is linked to it;
3. integrates and summarises what is known about a subject;
4. demonstrates that you have learnt from others and that your research is a starting point for new ideas.

Literature Review Process

What to do before you start literature review process

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Define your research question

- Inclusions
- Exclusions

Identify relevant search terms

- Scoping searches
- Terms in related reviews

Develop your search plan

- Combine terms with AND / OR, or as phrases
- Apply truncation / wildcards

Test and refine your search

- Check results for key articles
- Apply limits or filters

Select relevant databases and Run searches

Document and manage search results

- Save searches
- EndNote

Key points to remember

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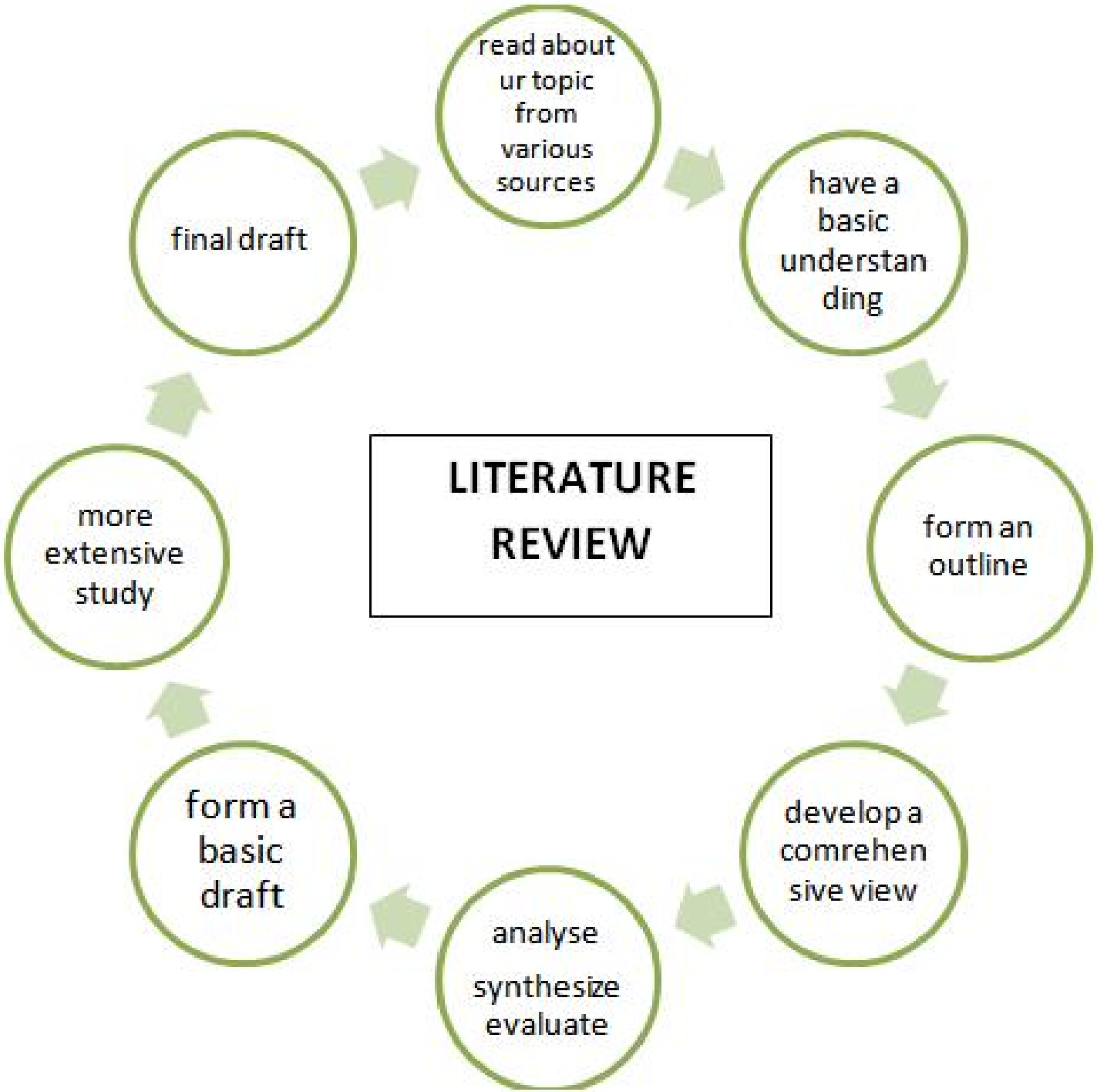
1. It is not a descriptive list
2. It is not a book by book and article by article summary
3. It is not a survey of every single thing that's ever been written about your topic
4. It must be defined by a guiding concept i.e. essay question, research project or objective
5. It must tell the reader what knowledge and ideas have been established and agreed in your area and outline their strengths and weaknesses


LITERATURE REVIEW
read about ur topic from various sources
have a basic understan ding
form an outline
develop a comrehen sive view
analyse
synthesize
evaluate
form a basic draft
more extensive study
final draft

The structure of a literature review

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1. **Introduction**
   a) define your topic and provide an appropriate context for reviewing the literature;
   b) establish your reasons – i.e. point of view – for reviewing the literature;
   c) explain the organisation – i.e. sequence – of the review;
   d) state the scope of the review – i.e. what is included and what isn't included. For example, if you were reviewing the literature on obesity in children you might say something like: There are a large number of studies of obesity trends in the general population. However, since the focus of this research is on obesity in children, these will not be reviewed in detail and will only be referred to as appropriate.

The structure of a literature review

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2. Main body

a) organise the literature according to common themes;
b) provide insight into the relation between your chosen topic and the wider subject area e.g. between obesity in children and obesity in general;
c) move from a general, wider view of the literature being reviewed to the specific focus of your research.

The structure of a literature review

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3. Conclusion

a) summarise the important aspects of the existing body of literature;
b) evaluate the current state of the literature reviewed;
c) identify significant flaws or gaps in existing knowledge;
d) outline areas for future study;
e) link your research to existing knowledge.

Watch this clip to enhance your knowledge on Literature review
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vc_Yu_61Ymg

Outline Your Literature Review's Structure

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pOK1-H8Vafs

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o2v94gxeCMY

How to do a literature search

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Define your terms. The first thing to do is to define your topic or research project; or, if you have been given a set question, make sure you understand it. Ask yourself what the key concepts are. Compile a list of keywords – and synonyms for them – and this will help you to develop a research strategy.

Search creatively. When you've done this, you need to identify all the relevant information sources. This may include: libraries, indexes and electronic databases, and the Internet.

Use the library. Do you know what's in your institution's library that's relevant to your topic? Make sure you do – it's an obvious place to start so don't forget it! Remember that every book and journal published in the UK is held at the British Library and you can do inter-library loans. Ask your library staff for assistance.

Journals. Remember that journals are the best place to find the most recently published research. And don't forget that many journals are now online only publications.

Newspapers and magazines are a good source for current topical issues, although they are not always very useful for in-depth analysis. For example, if you are writing on a business-related topic you may find useful items in *The Economist*, *Fortune* and *Harvard Business Review*.

Don't limit yourself to obvious sources. For example, libraries contain books and journals but they also contain unpublished MA and PhD theses that may contain research relevant to your topic. Similarly, make sure you do speculative searches i.e. try typing in 'The Journal of [Your Topic]' – you may be surprised what comes up.

Research and Internet

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The Internet has a wealth of information and very advantageous in various reasons:

a) Students delve into the Internet to gather lots of very useful academic information for research purposes
b) The information contained on the Internet can be useful for academic research. It is a potential research tool and opens up a new and comprehensive source of information

Internet offers online books, databases, Journal articles, conference proceedings, National and local Government publications, publishers' website, etc

Credibility of the information accessed

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Generally, a credible or reliable source is one that experts in your subject domain would agree is valid for your purposes. This can vary, so it is best to use one of the source evaluation methods that best fits your needs. Do remember that credibility is contextual!

It is important to critically evaluate sources because using credible/reliable sources makes you a more informed writer. Think about unreliable sources as pollutants to your credibility, if you include unreliable sources in your work, your work could lose credibility as a result

5 W Questions (5Ws)

SMART Check:

CRAAP Test:

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•Who is the author? (Authority)
•What is the purpose of the content? (Accuracy)
•Where is the content from? (Publisher)
•Why does the source exist? (Purpose and Objectivity)
•How does this source compare to others? (Determining What's What)

•Source: Who or what is the source?
•Motive: Why do they say what they do?
•Authority: Who wrote the story?
•Review: Is there anything included that jumps out as potentially untrue?
•Two–Source Test: How does it compare to another source?

•Currency: Timeliness of the information
•Relevance: Importance of the information for your needs
•Authority: Source of the information
•Accuracy: Truthfulness and correctness of the information
•Purpose: Reason the information exists

Literature Review for Introduction vs. Discussion

Introduction

Use previous literature to introduce your research

Discuss subject-specific literature after the general introduction

Identify knowledge gaps based on previous literature

Discussion

Use previous studies to explain or reinforce your findings

Only include references that are directly relevant to the topic/target audience.

Do not cite review articles unless essential

#SmartShorts

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Resources for your Literature Review

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https://opensource.com/article/18/6/open-source-literature-review-tools

Software you can use for your literature review

1. GNU Linux
2. Firefox
3. Unpaywall
4. Zotero
5. LibreOffice
6. LaTeX
7. MediaWiki

Important video links

1- **What is Literature Review**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KkAnKGuX7fs

2- **Writing a Literature Review**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zIYC6zG265E

3- **Searching for Relevant Literature**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u0KVJ0lj8rw

4- **Identifying Themes and Gaps in Literature**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hMGdwIhiwzU

5- **Outline Your Literature Review's Structure**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pOK1-H8Vafs

5- **Literature Review – Step by Step Guide For Graduate Students**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rk_jgtdJOD0

Five Steps to Write a Literature Review

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Assignment 3: Literature Review

Search and download 8 relevant publications in the area of your research. Review these and come up with a three page literature review.

Deadline for submission is 4th Oct, 2025

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