



# LITERATURE REVIEWS

## DEFINITION

A literature review is a thorough, critical compilation and summary of previous research that outlines established findings, conflicting evidence, and gaps in a body of research.

### Sources

Books, journal articles, government documents, abstracts, dissertations, Internet documents. Resources could also include interviews with experts in a given field, visits to schools and other institutions.

### Kinds of Literature Reviews

- Undergraduate assignment addressing about 10 sources, typically 5-10 pages.
- Extensive section of a graduate or PhD thesis dealing with many sources.
- Brief section in an empirical report (1-2 pages) or part of the introduction to an empirical report; it serves to conceptualize a study.

### Purposes

1. *To study the history of a problem.*
  - What have other investigators done and with what results?
  - What aspects of the problem have they studied?
  - What approaches have they used?
  - What difficulties have they encountered?
2. *To aid in the selection of investigative procedures.*
  - Knowledge of a variety of procedures and study designs enables researchers to assess the potential for application to the study problem and to make any necessary changes.
3. *To become familiar with the theoretical background of a problem or issue.*
  - Familiarity with a theoretical background helps the writer develop an initial statement on why the problem should be studied.
4. *To assess previous studies and suggest directions for further study.*
  - How valuable were previous studies?
  - How relevant were the studies to your problem?
  - Was the design a good one?
  - Were the data valid? Was the interpretation of the data sound?

5. To avoid *unintended duplication*.
  - It is appropriate to repeat a study only if you intend to challenge or verify findings or methods.
  
6. To justify the selection of your problem and the specific research you will perform.
  - Knowing the context of the literature will help you determine a relevant problem to study and how to carry out the study.

### **Developing The Review**

The introductory paragraph(s) should reveal the organizational plan, providing the criteria by which studies have been included or excluded. An example is provided below:

Much of the research on the relationship between drug use and juvenile crime suggests that drug use directly leads to criminal behaviour. Other researchers, however, demonstrate that although a link exists between drug use and crime, the relationship is not necessarily a causal one. In addition, several studies show that a combination of factors such as family background and gang involvement, along with drug use, causes criminal behaviour. The issue is indeed complex. The success of treatment programs depends on further research into the complex relationship between drug use and crime as well as other variables.

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:**

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