



## LITERATURE REVIEW: ORGANIZING THE PERSUASIVE ARGUMENTS

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### Abstract

*Social science is a discipline that analyzes society and social relationships. This analysis helps imagine an alternate situation or future and gives a say in deciding and shaping society's collective future (Fuller & Lipinska, 2014). In the knowledge-based society, social scientists integrate a plethora of knowledge that roots from diverse intellectuals and a wide range of social institutions. Perhaps that is the reason a social scientist is called a 'Public Intellectual' (Sassower, 2014). The research processes in social sciences differ from that in other disciplines. A literature review is the lifeline of any research, even more so in the social sciences. Composing a literature review is a systematic activity. It requires rhetoric writing which becomes more manageable if it is a well-thought activity. The present article is meant for providing the budding researchers an insight for embarking on writing a literature review, especially in social sciences, so that they thrive onwards.*

**Keywords:** Academic Writing, Research Literature, Social Science Research, Dissertation Writing



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## Introduction

Writing is a creative process. This process involves goal setting, planning, composing and revising (Ferretti and Lewis, 2019). Research is a process meant for the creation of new knowledge. Research writing is persuasive writing. The researchers present their idea to make a rational argument based on evidence and reasons. Here, the writer describes the views in favour of the researched area complemented with facts. This is different from general creative writing. Here the researchers use their creativity to build a case based on evidence. These

evidences are in the form of relevant studies in the area of investigation. The literature review includes all these relevant published researches. It is meant to provide new insight into the existing knowledge base. The literature review also throws light on the fact if similar studies have been done earlier. Also, it clarifies how the research would question the current theories and concepts and how the present investigation would be appropriate to the field. Before the review writing commences, it is best if it is a well-thought activity and not a non-directed search that produces insignificant results.

### **Initiating the Literature Review**

While initiating a literature review, a general advisory for aspiring researchers is to obtain research papers or articles and begin the literature survey process. The correct source to collect them would be the libraries, and searchable databases, also called the electronic resources and academic portals. The databases have a selection of sources, and for comprehensive coverage, the search should be from more than one database. In these databases, the papers are ranked according to relevance and number of citations (Courage and Baxter, 2005). This helps the researcher to identify fundamental studies of the concerned area. While books and journals in a library are an excellent place to begin, electronic resources remain popular.

For the electronic resources the researchers should begin by searching keywords; also, applying filters during the search helps find relevant studies. The searches can be made efficient by applying few techniques. The Boolean logic operators are used in most databases. Operators of AND, OR, and NOT help connect keywords and phrases in a single search (Semertzaki, 2011). While AND narrows the search, OR expands and NOT excludes the query. This enables the search to combine synonyms and variant concepts to access relevant items. For example, while searching for studies related to emotional intelligence, specifically of teachers, the search can be narrowed by search operation of 'emotional intelligence AND teachers'. The search operation of 'thinking OR cognition' would expand the search for thinking, and the search operation of 'gender NOT transgender' would exclude transgender studies from gender-related researches.

Similarly, the proximity operators allow locating a keyword within proximity to each other. The standard operators are NEAR and WITH (Alexander, 2002). For example, the search operation of 'school education NEAR enrolment' would result in specified searches for enrolment in school education. A search operation of 'social WITH sciences' would result in

search results of social sciences. Searches with universal characters also result in desired searches, such as, while searching, a phrase bounding them in quotes would yield specified results. Putting an asterisk sign in place of a missing letter would help in locating the root word better. These techniques produce excellent search results with appropriate and relevant studies.

While yielding good search results, the researchers can select the appropriate articles. It is advisable to initially collect a small set of ten to twelve papers and subsequently increase the number. The studies can also be categorized according to the fundamental concepts or keywords. Grouping can be done according to chronological order, key-term and methodology of research in the studies. It is wise to take the supervisors, subject experts and senior researchers' advice during the literature review process. In case the search results are not satisfactory, the citations in the few relevant papers can be an excellent source for finding related studies.

### **Establishing the Rationale Argument**

The explanation given in the review clarifies the reasons and logic. To make a valid justification, previous studies are put forward as proofs. Firstly, for this, classic studies should be studied. They are the researches which have established the theoretical background of the concept being investigated. Secondly, the current studies that show the recent development in the related area. It is necessary to emphasize current researches as they help to identify the research gaps and tell the latest trends within the study area. The number of citations included in a review is not crucial. The comprehensiveness, relevance and analysis accomplished by the overall review are critical. All major concepts identified for the study are expected to be clearly defined and logically explained how they relate. The review should present how the key concepts interrelate with each other and support the rationale of the study. It is important to remember the research goals and the target group that the researcher wants to impact by the research outcome ultimately (Dasgupta, 2020). The literature review's academic rigor is reflected in the empirical evidence and the research design.

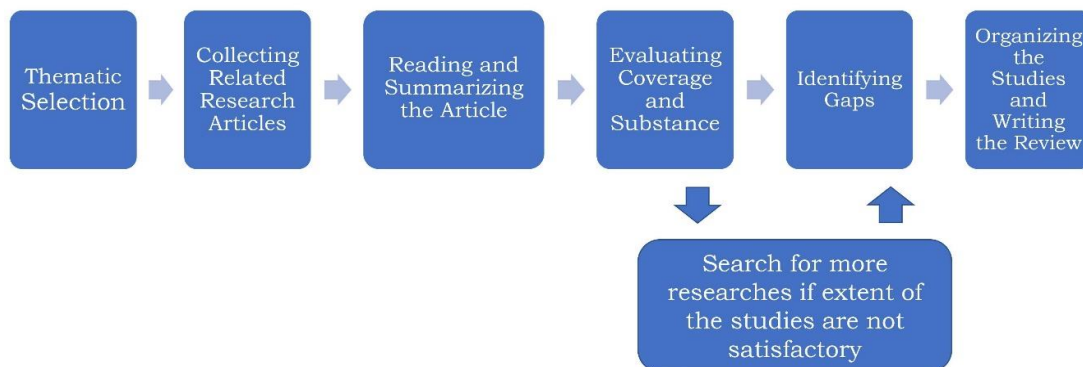
It is crucial to read the research articles completely before selecting it for review. The reading should ensure that the key concepts and research design is clearly understood. The reading should initiate understanding to identify research gaps, new ideas, and writing techniques that create insights (Dasgupta, 2020). Research gaps are missing point in the existing knowledge base and can be identified based on (Locke & Golden-Biddle, 1997):

a) Incompleteness: if the present literature has not adequately discussed some problem or phenomenon

b) Inadequacy: if the present literature has not yet incorporated different perspectives on the problem or phenomenon, and

c) Incommensurability: if the present researches have taken a wrong path and the existing theoretical discussion is misguided and incorrect

A literature review has to accurately provide information and writer's opinion in the reviewer's own words and not words used in the published text. Here, it is not acceptable to rewrite text by replacing synonyms. The correct process would be to restate the central idea in the researcher's own words. Summarization of the reviewed literature is always in the form of a paragraph. Quotation marks are not used while summarizing. While paraphrasing and summarizing a source, it is necessary to give a citation, and the citations should always be complemented with a bibliographic reference. An appropriate citation style following the latest version of its manual should be used.



**Fig 1. Process for the literature review**

A holistic view of the process of organizing the review can be understood by the figure 1. It initiates from selection of the theme of the research, collection of the relevant studies, summarizing and paraphrasing of the collected articles, evaluation of the coverage and relevance of the article. If the researcher is not satisfied with the extent of the coverage of the studies then they can search further to a satisfactory level. Now the gaps in research can be identified and finally the review is organized to establish the argument.

### **Features of a Good Review**

When the literature review is organized it can be judged on four critical parameters to be considered as a good review, i.e., coverage, synthesis, rhetoric and relevance, (Boote &

Beile, 2005; Nakano & Muniz, 2018). These parameters can be used for writing dissertations, research articles and academic papers.

a) The review's main framework can be judged in terms of the extent of its coverage. The text must cover relevant citations. The review should emphasize deeper discussion rather than insignificant arguments. Those arguments should identify, organize, and present the relevant literature rather than increase the number of irrelevant citations. The organization of the main ideas should be consistent with critical concepts. The review's length should be adequate for an insightful discussion on the topic rather than a superficial overview of several topics.

b) The synthesis of ideas where relevant references are summarized and connected together contributes to making the argument interesting. Concerns and concepts are put together in a logical arrangement. A fresh perspective is made. This synthesis of logical sequence of ideas can be written in the format of questions or propositions also. They can be either verified or answered in the research that is being reviewed.

c) The best suited writing style for any literature review is the rhetoric writing, which is compelling and persuasive writing. Here, it is essential to remember that while writing the language should be clear and the rational ideas should be presented in a well-articulated text. Any assertion made should not be unsupported and missing evidential reasoning.

d) The importance and relevance of the research problem should be significantly reflected in the review. The research problem should have evidence in the theoretical aspects also. This should be reflected in the review.

### **Conclusion**

The literature review is crucial to any research and the logic and reasoning presented in it are decisive of the direction the investigation takes. The research gaps identified in the literature review decide the future of the research. The literature review includes finding relevant research in the field, reading the material thoroughly, summarizing and paraphrasing the most relevant articles, evaluating literature's coverage, and organizing the studies in a logical sequence to establish a good link with the topic. While composing a review, it helps to recheck, revise, rewrite and rework wherever needed. When the literature review becomes a well-thought action, it becomes a well-directed effort. It is advisable always to plan and then begin the literature review process.

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