Writing a Literature Review

Student & Library Services
Session Outline

This session is not subject specific, and will cover:

• Pulling the literature together into a coherent whole
• Structure, style, linking ideas and synthesis
• What constitutes a good review
7 steps to producing a literature review:

1. Identify your question
2. Review discipline styles
3. Search the literature
4. Manage your references
5. Critically analyse and evaluate
6. Synthesise
7. Write the review
What concerns you about writing your literature review?
What are the concerns?

• Getting started
• Word count
• How to relate the literature to research question
• How to be critical not descriptive
• Balance
• How to draw out themes
• Layout and structure of the review
• How much information to include about each study
What is a literature review?

• Provides a background for your research
• Gives an overview for the current context in which your research is situated
• Discusses relevant theories and concepts
• Introduces relevant terminology and how you will use those terms in your work
• Describes related research and how your work extends or challenges this, or where there is a gap
• Provides supporting evidence for your research, showing its significance

(Ridley, 2012, p. 107)
Good Practice

• Always relate to your research question

• Two stages to writing: writing to understand and then writing to be understood
  • Keep records

• Don’t be fazed – you may find:
  • Themes and topics that overlap with your research
  • Gaps in the literature, and shortcomings of research
  • Agreement and disagreement on topics

• Introduction, main body, conclusion (like an essay!)
Tell the story: it’s not a list
• Evaluate what you find

• Be critical
  • what is the ‘argument’?
  • what evidence is used to support the ‘argument’?

• Appraise the methodology
  • Consider the validity of the research method
  • You may need more in-depth appraisal for papers closest to your topic

• Connect
  • Compare/contrast different ideas
When to do a literature review

• Before you start your own primary research - this can inform how you do your research
• Should be a continual process throughout as new literature may be published
• This will demonstrate your grasp of current debate
Possible Structure/Organisation

• Distant > Close
• Chronological
• Methodological
• Thematic

Can usually use headings
FIGURE 6.2 Organisational patterns for the literature review
Source: Wellington et al., 2005: 82
Paragraph structure

• Use WEED model (Godwin, 2019, p. 38)
  • **What** - topic sentence
  • **Evidence/Example 1**
  • **Evidence/Example 2**
  • **Do** - sum up – so what?
The attitudes of nurses and nursing students towards people living with HIV/AIDS have long been under scrutiny. Past studies showed that some nurses and nursing students were reluctant to provide care for people with HIV/AIDS because of fear of contagion (Goldenberg and Laschinger 1991; Tierney 1995; Robinson 1998). According to a United Nations AIDS taskforce report (UNAIDS 2006), negative attitudes and reluctance to provide care result in a poorer quality care. This review focuses on nursing students, as they become the practising nurses of the future. Nurse educators have an obligation to ensure that nursing curricula provide students with sufficient knowledge of HIV/AIDS to enable them to deliver safe, high quality and compassionate care to people with HIV/AIDS.
Exercise 2

• Read the paragraph on the next slide.
• How could it be improved?
Sexual harassment has many consequences. Adams, Kottke, and Padgitt (2003) found that some women students said they avoided taking a class or working with certain professors because of the risk of harassment. They also found that men and women students reacted differently. The research was a survey of 1,000 men and women graduate and undergraduate students. Benson and Thomson’s study in Social Problems (2010) lists many problems created by sexual harassment. In their excellent book, The Lecherous Professor, Dziech and Weiner (2007) give a long list of difficulties that victims have suffered.

How could it be improved?

• Sexual harassment has many consequences: what are they? Don’t just say there is a list of them
• Give detail on results, not methodology
• Value judgements e.g. ‘excellent book’
• Do not need to give the title of book
• Less description of the literature, more analysis
Grouping studies together

However, the existing reviews of bullying literature using the ecological model (Hong and Espelage, 2012; Huang et al., 2013; Patton et al., 2013) tend to focus on the multiple levels that risk and protective factors might operate on, as they contribute to bullying involvement.

Help with Writing

University of Manchester (2018) Academic Phrasebank
http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk

A bank of phrases appropriate for use in academic writing. It contains two pages which are particularly helpful for literature reviews:

1. Referring to Literature: http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/referring-to-sources/

2. Being Critical (of literature):
   http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/being-critical/
Help: with searching for sources and writing

• Tutorial with an Academic Librarian
  • [http://libguides.tees.ac.uk/lrs/tutorials](http://libguides.tees.ac.uk/lrs/tutorials)
  • Librarians can help you plan your search for relevant sources of information

• Learning Hub one-to-one tutorials for writing
  • [http://libguides.tees.ac.uk/learning_hub/tutorials](http://libguides.tees.ac.uk/learning_hub/tutorials)
  • Advisors can look at style and structure but not content

• For help with subject content: ask your tutor/supervisor
Resources

  - Available as an ebook
  - Helpful for organising in-depth reviews, which include critical appraisal


Resources continued

• Sage Research Methods Literature Review
  • Online resource - books and video clips

  • Available as an ebook

  • Available as an ebook
Online Learning Hub Support
http://libguides.tees.ac.uk/learning_hub

• Critical thinking https://libguides.tees.ac.uk/critical_thinking
• Critical writing https://libguides.tees.ac.uk/critical_writing
• Referencing https://libguides.tees.ac.uk/referencing
• Strategies for reading academic articles https://libguides.tees.ac.uk/read_article
Questions?

Is there anything from your initial concerns that we have not covered?