

# Post Doctoral Research Fellowship

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# *Literature Review*

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# What is Literature Review?

- Literature review is a collection of sources of information on your topic that includes books, journal articles, websites, *etc*
- Both summary and synthesis are required in a literature review.

# What is a Literature Review?

- ◉ A process of gathering information from other sources and documenting it, but few have any idea of how to evaluate the information, or how to present it.
- ◉ A literature review can be a precursor in the [introduction of a research paper](#), or it can be an entire paper in itself, often the first stage of large research projects, allowing the supervisor to ascertain that the student is on the correct path.
- ◉ A [literature review](#) is a critical and in depth evaluation of previous research. It is a summary and synopsis of a particular area of research, allowing anybody reading the paper to establish why you are pursuing this particular research program.
- ◉ A good literature review expands upon the reasons behind selecting a particular research question.

# Literature Review is not.....(?)

- It is not a chronological catalog of all of the sources, but an evaluation, integrating the previous research together, and also explaining how it integrates into the proposed research program. **All sides of an argument** must be clearly explained, to avoid bias, and areas of agreement and disagreement should be highlighted.
- It is not a collection of quotes and paraphrasing from other sources. A good literature review should also have some evaluation of the quality and findings of the research.
- As a general rule, certainly for a longer review, each paragraph should address one point, and present and evaluate all of the evidence, from all of the differing points of view.

# Why undertake Literature Review?

- The Literature Review is there for you to:
  - > provide details about the motivation for the project
  - > state why the problem addressed by the dissertation is important
  - > set the scene for the work described in the dissertation
  - > describe what others have done and hence sets a benchmark for the current project
  - > justify the use of specific solution techniques or problem solving procedures in your work

# Why undertake Literature Review?

- ◉ Is it academic punishment?
- ◉ Similar work done elsewhere at a different time, usually contains useful lessons that can be drawn from
- ◉ Allows you to sharpen your ideas or concepts as you see the strengths and weaknesses of previous related works

# Literature Review

- The processes involved in building an argument from a body of literature include:
  - > reading and reflecting;
  - > interacting with the literature/data and commenting on it;
  - > identifying key themes and coding for them;
  - > extracting from the codes '**gold dust**' quotes to be used when writing up;
  - > linking similar ideas from different articles/transcripts;
  - > identifying contradictions in arguments;
  - > comparing dissimilarities in articles/transcripts;
  - > building one's own argument/analysis with links to supporting evidence in the data/literature.



# Literature Review Tools

- Researchers have developed various strategies to deal with the amount of material a literature review generates.
- In the past few years, bibliographical software has emerged as the favoured tool to organise literature.
- Packages such as EndNote, Reference Manager, ProCite, *etc*, have excellent tools to manage references.

# Literature Review Tools....

- They have direct links with word-processing packages, making it easy to insert the correct citation at a point in the text.
- They also have the ability to generate bibliographies in the house styles appropriate to a wide range of journals

# Literature Review Should:-

According to Caulley (1992) of La Trobe University, the literature review should:

- compare and contrast different authors' views on an issue
- group authors who draw similar conclusions
- criticise aspects of methodology
- note areas in which authors are in disagreement
- highlight exemplary studies
- highlight gaps in research
- show how your study relates to previous studies
- show how your study relates to the literature in general
- conclude by summarising what the literature says

# Purposes of Literature Review

The purposes of the review are:

- to define and limit the problem you are working on
- to place your study in an historical perspective
- to avoid unnecessary duplication
- to evaluate promising research methods
- to relate your findings to previous knowledge and suggest further research

# A Good Literature Review is:

- **Focused** - The topic should be narrow. You should only present ideas and only report on studies that are closely related to topic.
- **Concise** - Ideas should be presented economically. Don't take any more space than you need to present your ideas.
- **Logical** - The flow within and among paragraphs should be a smooth, logical progression from one idea to the next
- **Developed** - Don't leave the story half told.
- **Integrative** - Your paper should stress how the ideas in the studies are related. Focus on the big picture. What commonality do all the studies share? How are some studies different than others? Your paper should stress how all the studies reviewed contribute to your topic.
- **Current** - Your review should focus on work being done on the cutting edge of your topic.

## Summary:-

- A good literature review, therefore, is critical of what has been written, identifies areas of controversy, raises questions and identifies areas which need further research.

# Introduction, arguments and evidence

A good literature review needs a clear line of argument. Make sure that:

- you include a clear, short introduction which gives an outline of the review, including the main topics covered and the order of the arguments, with a brief rationale for this.
- there is always a clear link between your own arguments and the evidence uncovered in your reading. Include a short summary at the end of each section. Use quotations if appropriate.
- you always acknowledge opinions which do not agree with your thesis. If you ignore opposing viewpoints, your argument will in fact be weaker.

# Rules of Engagement

## 1. Ensure relevance

- Reviewed literature should be relevant to topic
- Should not be based on the first reading material you get across



# Rules of Engagement

## 2. Avoid over-citation

- One or more sources repeatedly cited in the same text
- Do not allow personal feelings to get in the way of academic endeavors

# Rules of Engagement

## 3. Be comprehensive

- ◉ Internet greatly helps
- ◉ Do not confuse comprehensive with length

# Rules of Engagement

## 4. Do not be eclectic

- ◉ When you blindly borrow concepts rooted in different theoretical perspectives from articles, the review is referred to as being eclectic

# Rules of Engagement

## 5. Sectioning

- ◉ Should be sectioned in some logical manner
- ◉ Think through thoroughly
- ◉ Three critical elements:
  - > Background
  - > Underpinning theory
  - > Conceptual framework

# Rules of Engagement

## 6. Substantiation

- All facts should be substantiated
- Ideas, not words, are the key
- Separate fact-based statements from propositions
  - > E.g. Jonker (2009) postulated vs Jonker (2009) discovered

# Rules of Engagement

## 7. Form your own opinion

- ◉ Do not just repeat what others have said
- ◉ Offer a critique, not criticism
- ◉ A theory or concept very remote from your own study is not worth wasting time on.

# Rules of Engagement

## 8. Have some originality

- Literature review is not a passive regurgitation of published works
- You can agree to use a concept and offer reason or modify the concept with reasons
- If you are coming up with a new concept ensure the thought process behind this is clear in terms of why you need a new concept and the academic inspiration behind it

# Rules of Engagement

## 9. Establish linkages

- Literature review should link up with your research questions/objectives and your hypothesis
- This way you avoid wondering off into the unknown and the irrelevant
- Do not drive without checking the review mirror!



# Rules of Engagement

## 10. Use peer reviewed, not grey literature

- Grey literature: consultancy reports, government documents, newspaper articles, etc
- In order of importance:
  - > International publications (journals and books)
  - > Regional publications
  - > National publications
  - > Project reports
- Use grey literature only in background section



**THANK  
YOU**