

Lesson Five: Literature Review

Introduction

The literature review is like a map that helps researchers understand what's already known about a topic. It's crucial because every academic research, no matter the field, is built on connecting with and adding to existing knowledge. When planning a research project, a key initial step is to explore what others have already studied in the specific area you're interested in. This process sets the foundation for your own research journey.

1. What is a Literature Review?

Once the research problem is defined, researchers must begin by exploring existing knowledge about the topic. This step, known as a literature review, marks the beginning of any research. **'Review of literature' or literature review** consists of two words '*review*' and '*literature*'. From the traditional meaning, the word literature is used with reference to the language, e.g. Hindi Literature, English Literature, Sanskrit Literature. It includes subject content: prose, poetry dramas /, novels, stories, etc. In research methodology, the term literature refers to the knowledge of a particular area of investigation of any discipline which includes theoretical, practical, and its research studies. The term '*review*' means to organise the knowledge of the specific area of research to evolve an edifice of knowledge to show that this study would be an addition to this field. The task of review of literature is highly creative and tedious because the research has to synthesise the available knowledge of the field in a unique way to provide the rationale for his/her study (Singh, 2006, p. 35).

The term 'Review of Literature' has been defined in the following ways:

• According to W. R. Borg

"The literature in any field forms the foundation upon which all future work will be built. If we fail to build the foundation of knowledge provided by the review of literature, our work is likely to be shallow and naive and will often duplicate work that has already been done better by someone else".

• According to C. V. Good

“The keys to the vast storehouse of published literature may open doors to sources of significant problems and explanatory hypotheses and provide helpful orientation for definition of the problem, background for selection of procedures, and comparative data for interpretation of results. In order to be creative and original, one must read extensively and critically as a stimulus to thinking”.

• According to J. W. Best

“Practically all human knowledge can be found in books and libraries. Unlike other animals that must start a new with each generation, man builds upon the accumulated and recorded knowledge of the past. His constant adding to the vast store of knowledge makes possible progress in all areas of human endeavour”.

Reviewing the literature has two phases. **The first phase includes identifying all the relevant published material in the problem area and reading that part of it with which we are not thoroughly familiar. The second phase** of the review of literature involves **writing this foundation of ideas into a section of the research report.** For the researcher, it establishes the background in the field. For the readers, it provides a summary of thinking and research necessary for them to understand the study (singh, 2007).

2. Why do we need the Review of Literature?

The review of literature is essential due to the following:

1. It avoids the replication of the study of findings to take an advantage from similar or related literature (Identifying key authors, articles, theories, and findings in the area under observation). According to Onwuegbuzie & Frels (2016), a lack of awareness of existing knowledge might lead us to utilize practices that have been found previously to be ineffective. For example, if a primary school teacher decided to use a teaching strategy that researches previously had demonstrated as being not only ineffective, but also detrimental to academic achievements, this likely would have dire (very serious or extreme) consequences. **In such a case, before using the strategy, the teacher should find out as much as possible about it before adopting it.**
2. Assessing the current state of knowledge in the area under observation (It is very essential for every researcher to be up-to-date in his/her information about the literature related to his/her own problem already done by others).
3. Identify GAPS in knowledge in the area under observation
4. Justifying the choices and work

4. Sources of Literature

There are various sources of literature which may be used for this purpose. Examples of these are:

1. Books and textbooks material;
2. Periodicals;
3. Abstracts;
4. Encyclopaedias;
5. Handbooks and Guides;
6. Special Dictionaries;
7. Dissertations and Theses; and
8. The Internet.

6. How to Conduct the Review of Literature

To conduct the review of literature, the researcher should go through these stages:

Stage 1: Try to gain some impression of what the source is about; what a question or questions the author is trying to answer; how the source is structured, and whether, in fact, the questions tackled and the answers put forward are relevant to your needs.

Stage 2: If you decide that the source is relevant to your research subject, then you must formulate the question or questions you anticipate will be answered in the source. This enables you to locate the required information and will save you time and effort as you cannot afford to go reading aimlessly through the source. At this stage, you must **adopt an active and analytical attitude**.

Stage 3: After formulating the main question or questions that you anticipate the source will answer, you must review the source to look for answer for your questions. This involves locating the parts of the source where your questions are dealt with. You must then look for the answers or conclusions that the author has drawn, and also at how the author arrived at them.

Stage 4: Supposing that you have extracted the relevant information from the written report, you **must now record your data in note form**, so that later **you can retrieve it and use it easily at the appropriate stage** (Walliman, 2001).

7. Some Hints for the Review of Literature

Some miscellaneous hints are provided here on how to review the literature. These concern mainly:

- To realise that reviewing the literature is essentially the library phase of the project, and so we must become thoroughly conversant not only with the way in which libraries in general function, classify, and catalogue, but also with the way in which the specific library in which we work does these things.
- To recognise that there are only two criteria for good bibliographic research; accuracy and consistency. Therefore, from the very beginning of the review of literature, it is sound practice to begin recording the essential information accurately and exactly in the same way.
- To copy direct quotations and note the page number of the book or journal on which it appears because this will be needed in referring to the quotation.

8. Precautions in Library Use

The following precautions are to be taken in the use of library for review of literature:

- Avoid intellectual dishonesty.
- Guard against being conditioned by the view point of an earlier researcher and the temptation of blindly following his/her procedure.
- Merely listing of previous studies without reviewing them or giving their characteristics is not enough.
- It is always helpful to arrange the previous studies in chronological order so that the growth of the field is clearly known to the researcher as well as to the readers.
- A researcher should have a good grasp of library procedures which will help him/her to locate books and references needed by him/her without wasting most of time and energy. This process can be classified into two categories:

(a) *Preliminary Reading*: For the bird's eye view of the whole thing.

(b) *Critical Thinking*: The references and material which seem useful as a result of preliminary reading are noted down and are read critically and serious evaluation of the available data and information.

9. Reporting Review of Literature

Generally, the review of literature is reported in the second chapter of the dissertation. The following procedure should be followed in reporting it:

- the research should go through collected research studies of the field;
- the researcher should try to relate the collected research studies with his/her own study; and
- at the end, the researcher should show that his/her study is a derivation from the other studies.
- The reporting review of literature makes the research study very specific and up-to-date. It is an essential part in writing a dissertation.

References:

- Onwuegbuzie, A. J. & Frels, R. (2016). *Seven Steps to a Comprehensive Literature Review: A Multimodal and Cultural Approach*. London: SAGE Publications, LTD.
- Kothari, C. R. (2004). *Research Methodology: Methods and Techniques* (2nd Ed). New Delhi: New Age International Publishers.
- Marczyk, G., DeMatteo, D. Festinger (2005). *Essentials of Research Design and Methodology*. Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Singh, Y. K. (2006). *Fundamental of Research Methodology and Statistics*. New Delhi: New international (P) Limited, Publishers.