

UNDERSTANDING LITERATURE REVIEW AS A RESEARCH METHOD



 Adetayo O. Adeniran ^{(a)1}  Oluwadamisi T. Tayo-Ladega ^(b)

^(a)Department of Transport Planning & Logistics, University of Ilesa, Ilesa, Osun State, Nigeria; E-mail: adetayo_adeniran@unileisa.edu.ng

^(b)School of Healthcare Sciences, Bangor University, UK; E-mail: dami.jide@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Knowledge breakthroughs have been identified in many disciplines such as technology, science, engineering, management, social, business, finance, and health; as a result, it is quite challenging to get updates on the current level of advancements, and establishing gap in a subject matter without a literature review. The role of literature review in research papers cannot be overemphasized; hence, the need to explore suitable methods to conduct a literature review. This study aims at exploring literature review as a research method, with a view to identifying the suitable methods for reviewing literatures. Literature review is a study of academic references on a subject matter, and it helps in analyzing recent issues, models, and ideas, revealing appropriate hypotheses, concepts, theories, models, methods, and lacunas (gaps) in previous researches. Writing a literature review entails finding relevant publications in the form of journal articles or books, evaluating the publications without bias, and summarizing the findings. The fundamental processes of reviewing literatures are finding relevant material, reviewing references, identifying trends and issues, gap identification, and outlining the findings. Finally, the essence of literature review in researches is not to replicate everything that earlier authors have written on a subject but to critically appraise previous studies, identify gaps, and fill the missing gaps. This study appraised the methods of literature review, revealed the major steps for reviewing papers, and exposed the readers to the dynamics of writing sentences in their own simple way.

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INTRODUCTION

Information is referred to as “data” in the context of research. It is possible to retrieve many information from various sources, including text, numbers, pictures, links, audios, and videos (Shona, 2020). As a result, information represents the data gathered from the literature review to create a review (Fingeld-Connett & Johnson, 2013). The literature review process is a form of data gathering; it is a way to gather relevant information on a certain topic of interest. The literature review is a data-collecting strategy that entails finding, logging, comprehending, creating meaning from, and sharing information (Delvin & Steven, 2020). Gathering data makes the literature review process actual. The literature review, in its ideal state, is a systematic procedure for gathering well-defined data (Feddes & Gallucci, 2017; Nemati et al., 2017). The term “method” in research refers to particular techniques and approaches that investigators apply consistently, and it is shown in the study design, sampling design, data collection, data analysis, data interpretation, and other areas (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Literature review is a method that entails choosing from a variety of techniques and methods for finding, logging, comprehending, interpreting, and disseminating relevant material about a particular topic of interest (Vom Brocke et al., 2022). Research efforts, regardless of subject, begin with building research and connecting it to current information. It should be the top priority of every researchers to do conduct literature review uniquely, though it has become a more difficult process. Technology, social, and management science disciplines are experiencing rapid acceleration in knowledge breakthroughs; to identify the level of breakthroughs and its recency in those disciplines, the literature review becomes more important just like a methodology in research. A literature review can be defined as an approach of gathering and synthesising previous studies (Baumeister & Leary, 1997; Tranfield et al., 2013). A solid basis for knowledge advancement and theory is created by an efficient and well-conducted review (Webster & Watson, 2002; Zorn & Campbell, 2006). A literature review is also an invaluable instrument for combining research findings to provide evidence at a meta-level and

¹Corresponding author: ORCID ID: 0000-0002-6870-1212

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identify areas that require more studies, both of which are essential for developing theoretical frameworks and conceptual models (Rowe, 2014).

Nonetheless, conventional approaches to characterising and depicting the literature frequently lack a methodical approach and completeness (Tranfield et al., 2013); as a result, it can be challenging to understand what the body of research is truly pointing at. Because of this, it is possible that researchers base their studies on false presumptions (Henry, 2013). There are situations whereby researchers choose the evidence to base their studies and ignore information that contradicts their findings. Furthermore, gathering information for a literature review is akin to data gathering for data analysis (Delvin & Steven, 2020; Murray, 2011); in this case, the materials gathered are likened to data collected. Literature review combines quantitative findings (obtained from studies that use quantitative research methods) with qualitative findings (obtained from studies that use qualitative research methods) (Stahl & King, 2020). A literature review procedure is automatically transformed into a mixed research study when quantitative and qualitative data are synthesized within the same review (Stenfors et al., 2020).

There are disagreements in the definition of a good knowledge contribution even though the methodology for conducting the literature review is sound. Of course, there are established guidelines that are embedded in different forms of literature reviews, such as narrative or integrative reviews (Baumeister & Leary, 1997; Wong et al., 2013), systematic reviews, and meta-analysis or integrative reviews (Davis et al., 2014; Liberati et al., 2009; Moher et al., 2009; Torracco, 2005).

An effective method can be used to map theoretical approaches or themes to identify knowledge gaps in the literature using a semi-systematic review technique (Palmatier et al., 2022). An integrative review technique may be helpful in situations where a research issue calls for a more imaginative approach to data gathering, rather than trying to cover every article that has ever been published on the subject (Tranfield et al., 2013). In these situations, the goal of the review is to bring together many viewpoints to develop new theoretical models.

The aim of this study is to explore literature review as a form of research method, with a view to identifying the suitable methods for reviewing literatures. Other sections in the study entails literature review (which explained the essence of literature review and literature review processes), methods (which explained the methods for conducting a literature review), discussions (which delved into the discussion of literature review, quality of review, and how to publishing a literature review), and finally, conclusion.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review is an important component in all studies. It is an evaluation that typically consists of explanation, outline and critical assessment of previous research which serves as a foundation for current research, and a pointer to research questions (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2017). A compilation of published and unpublished works that incorporate data, ideas, and opinions is referred to as a literature review (Templier & Pare, 2017).

The literature review can be defined and assessed by drawing on the earlier study conducted by other authors. Any academic research is essentially a review of earlier discoveries (Bandara et al., 2011). To define and identify research topics that will inform future investigations in that discipline, a thorough analysis of a specific area of the scientific literature is crucial. Torres-Carrión et al. (2020) showed that there are several purposes for which literature reviews are studied, such as understanding the breadth of research on an area of interest, developing a theoretical foundation for more study, or resolving practical issues based on the experience of recent literature on the topic.

According to Jain et al. (2020), a literature review as a synthesis is the reorganization of information that informs the process of analyzing the research topic. A description, on the other hand, is the revision of important facts from the source. Through literature reviews, scientists may make the case that they are advancing existing knowledge, strengthening what is previously known, and addressing research gaps (Pare et al., 2017).

Essence of literature review

There is a need to factor in initiatives and ideals of previous essential literatures in a current study (Tranfield et al., 2013); this will be a framework for the current study to build on. Regardless of discipline, while reading an article, the author usually starts by summarising earlier studies to evaluate and map the research gap(s), which drives the study objectives and supports the research question and hypotheses. This is commonly referred to as “research background,” “theoretical framework,” or “literature review” (Randolph, 2020). A literature review must be exact, precise and reliable, and the methodology must be easily replicable in future studies. The usefulness of literature review depends on the study conducted, the results obtained, and clarity of report (Moher et al., 2009).

Different techniques, criteria, and guidelines can be created for performing a literature review, depending on the goal of the review. Literature reviews are usually the most useful guide for designing methodological instrument for answering research questions (Liberati et al., 2009; Randolph, 2020), this is why they must be thoroughly conducted. Reviews are helpful, for instance, when a researcher wishes to assess a theory or data in a particular field or investigate the veracity or correctness of a certain theory or rival theories (Tranfield et al., 2013). This strategy can be more general, like examining the body of data in a certain field of study, or it can be more focused, like examining the impact of the relationship between two particular factors. Literature reviews are helpful when presenting an overview of a particular topic or area of research. It can also be helpful in developing new theories or modifying existing theories (Baumeister & Leary, 1997; Torracco, 2005).

The literature review stages

The literature review involves six unique stages (Leitner et al., 2019; Templier & Pare, 2017):

Stage 1: Statement of purpose, rationale and formulation of research questions: This is the starting point of any research. In this stage, the purpose of the review is identified and in-line with the study aim and problem statement (Okoli & Schabram, 2010; Snyder et al., 2021). In essence, it is the main driver of methodology (Jesson et al., 2011; Liberati et al., 2009; Randolph, 2020; Tranfield et al., 2013; Wong et al., 2013).

Stage 2: Identification of existing relevant literature: This stage deals with identifying relevant literature in the subject matter (Pare et al., 2017; Wong et al., 2013). Wide-ranging coverage of works of literature is needed so that both published and unpublished articles are explored and their significant findings identified (Tranfield et al., 2013; Wee & Banister, 2018).

Stage 3: Examination of concepts and references to be included in a study: This stage deals with the identification of concepts to conduct research (Liberati et al., 2009; Pare & Kitsiou, 2019). Upon finding the general concepts, the fundamental concept is usually identified based on topic relevance (Vom Brocke et al., 2017; Vom Brocke et al., 2022).

Stage 4: Identification of research trends and gap identification: This stage deals mainly with the identification of current issues being mentioned in new research (McColl-Kennedy et al., 2017; Wong et al., 2013) that blend with the subject matter, constructively criticizing those studies, and identifying gaps for improvement (Belcher et al., 2018; Ioannidis et al., 2017).

Stage 5: Outlining findings and analysis: This stage deals with the compilation of relevant knowledge on the subject matter (Cheung & Vijayakumar, 2018; Torraco, 2005). In reality, available data from previous studies in a quantitative form will help to create soundness during discussion (Carlborg et al., 2014; Schmidt, 2019).

Stage 6: Interpretation and summarization of data: The last stage is to interpret and summarize, the available data earlier mentioned, and the list of literature that is germane (Jesson et al., 2011; Witell et al., 2021). Literature reviews are more than article collection, they project into data collection and analysis (Bandara et al., 2017; Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999; Witell et al., 2021).

Methods

Literature reviews can be categorized in various ways. Each type of study should comply with clear methodological criteria that contribute to its overall purpose. Transparency on the aspects of reviews offers a way to develop review methods and critical assessments for designing, producing, assessing, and utilizing reviews (Okoli & Schabram, 2010). The creation of a synthesis of research requires many decisions that must relate to the fundamental aim and objectives for analysing a study. Each style of analysis is well suited to certain goals, issues, or concerns along with an adapted set of methodological guidelines and techniques (Hart, 2020).

Methods for conducting a literature review

The methods for conducting a literature review are listed below:

Systematic review

Systematic reviews are considered as the best standard of review because they ascertain whether causes or linkages are the same and of equal relevance. They are designed to present scientific data in a transparent, repeatable, and systematic manner (Snyder, 2021). Any empirical data that meets a predetermined set of criteria can be combined, evaluated, and synthesized from a single source in systematic studies. They rigorously adhere to rigorous methodological requirements and specific scientific norms.

Systematic review entails detailed approach that emphasizes the combination of thorough analyses and large data. The usage of systematic review in market or business analysis has not been dominant despite all the benefits (Randolph, 2020). Any empirical data that satisfies predetermined inclusion criteria is sought for by systematic research (Liberati et al., 2009). A framework and study process for classifying and assessing pertinent research, as well as for gathering and analyzing data from that research to meet a specific research question or hypothesis, are the components of a systematic evaluation (Wong et al., 2013). Publications and other descriptive statistics are analyzed using systematic and organized processes (Witell et al., 2021).

Narrative Reviews

The narrative review entails the summary of previously published works that are relevant to the current study. With narrative review, ideas and theories, research methodologies, or conclusions are usually the main focus (Pare et al., 2017). The most important components are comprehensive report on current knowledge in the study area, and collection and synthesis of previous studies (Snyder, 2021). In narrative reviews, new concepts are presented, literatures are analyzed, hypotheses are investigated. It is a form of review which benefits science by providing the necessary connections between large articles (Templier & Pare, 2017).

In addition to providing an appropriate foundation for future study and development, the narrative assessment helps researchers clarify and improve research topics and hypotheses (Jesson et al., 2011). Despite these concerns, this type of study is beneficial for compiling and synthesizing large body of literatures on a certain topic (Templier & Pare, 2017). As previously identified, its primary goal is to highlight the importance of new research while giving the reader a comprehensive framework for understanding what is already known.

Descriptive review

Descriptive reviews are primarily used to determine whether a body of data discloses patterns and trends that may be found in a certain subject concerning concepts, hypotheses, methods, or findings in a particular field of study. A systematic and transparent approach is followed in this type of review, which includes finding, assessing, and categorizing papers about narrative reviews. The structured search strategy is used in a pertinent example of a bigger publication category (Pare et al., 2017; Randolph, 2020). The authors of descriptive review extract certain key features from the individual frequency analysis sample (e.g., positive, negative, or non-relevant research findings) to generate quantitative findings, such as publishing year, research methods, data gathering techniques, and direction or intensities (Pare & Kitsiou, 2019).

In essence, studies that are part of the descriptive review are regarded as the analytical unit, and the body of literature as a whole provides a database that seeks to identify patterns that can be understood or make comprehensive judgments about the benefits of the concepts, theories, methods, and conclusions that are currently in use (Tranfield et al., 2013; Wong et al., 2013).

Critical review

Lastly, critical reviews make an objective effort to study and evaluate recent research in a particular area of focus to report on successes, failures, contradictions, conflicts, anomalies, and other pertinent issues about concepts, hypotheses, models, procedures, and findings (Pare et al., 2017). Unlike other types of analysis, critical review entail critical evaluation methods or procedures to assess the credibility of the research undertaken on a particular subject of interest. Additionally, by focusing on and guiding research to improve it more effectively, critical review improve knowledge generation by enlightening future researchers about the limitations of earlier studies (Templier & Pare, 2017).

Scoping review

The goal of the scoping study is to offer a novel assessment of the literary sector's size both now and in the future concerning a developing topic (Daudt et al., 2013). A list of novel subjects forms the basis of the literature. According to Pare et al. (2017), a scope assessment may be carried out to determine the type and extent of research efforts on a certain topic and to determine the necessity of carrying out a comprehensive structural analysis, or identify research gaps in the body of known literature. In line with the main goal, scope evaluations usually end by offering a thorough research plan for future projects including potential implications for further education and experience.

In contrast to narrative and descriptive assessments, it is necessary to provide as much detail as possible about the whole field, including grey literature. Determining inclusion and exclusion criteria is needed to assist researchers in excluding areas that do not align with the research. The abstractions of the search strategy may be reviewed by at least two different developers, who can then screen the entire text. Presenting the synthesis proof in tabular form via subject or topic research is comparatively simple (Pare et al., 2017).

Further classification on the methods for conducting a literature review

All categories of literature review can be beneficial and appropriate to accomplish a specific aim, depending on the approach required to meet the objectives. Depending on the stage of the review, these methods may be mixed-design, qualitative, or quantitative. Three major procedures of literature review are frequently employed as discussed below:

- The systematic literature review;
- The semi-systematic literature review; and
- The integrative literature review.

All of these review techniques can significantly aid in addressing a specific research problem when used appropriately. Nonetheless, that there are additional formats for literature reviews and that other methodologies' components are frequently blended. Given the breadth of these methodologies, further adaptations may be necessary for a given research.

Systematic literature review

Definition and applicaion: A systematic literature review is primarily created within the medical sciences as a means of synthesising research findings in a transparent, repeatable, and systematic manner (Davis et al., 2014). Despite the merits of systematic review, the approach has not been very common in social and business researches (Snyder et al., 2021; Witell et al., 2021). According to Liberati et al. (2009), a systematic review is a research method and procedure that is used to find and evaluate pertinent research as well as to gather and examine data from that study.

Finding every empirical data that meets the predetermined inclusion criteria to address a certain research question or hypothesis is the aim of systematic review (Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999). Bias may be reduced and trustworthy results that can be used to make choices and draw conclusions can be obtained by employing clear and methodical procedures when evaluating publications and other relevant data (Moher et al., 2009).

A meta-analysis is a statistical technique that synthesises findings from many researches to evaluate, analyse, and pinpoint trends, discrepancies, or connections that emerge when many studies are conducted on the same subject (Davis et al., 2014). Each study is abstracted and coded using the meta-analysis technique, and the results are converted into a common measure to determine the overall effect size (Glass, 1976). However, to compare results, the included studies must share statistical measures (effect sizes) to do a meta-analysis (DerSimonian & Laird, 1986). As a result, conducting a meta-analysis with many methodological philosophies may be difficult (Tranfield et al., 2013).

There are attempts to draw recommendations in the social sciences even though the systematic review approach originated in the medical sciences (Davis et al., 2014; Palmatier et al., 2022; Tranfield et al., 2013). Furthermore, studies on meta-analyses have been published in reputable journals with better rankings (Carrillat et al., 2022; Chang & Taylor, 2021).

To compare data and evaluate the quality and robustness of findings from various study types, additional qualitative techniques have been developed (Greenhalgh et al., 2004), and referred to as qualitative systematic review. This is a technique for comparing the results of qualitative research (Grant & Booth, 2009). In other words, published articles are gathered through a rigorous systematic review procedure, and their evaluation is done using a qualitative method.

The merits of systematic review: A systematic review can be conducted with several benefits and possible contributions in mind. For instance, it can be ascertained that an impact remains consistent throughout the research and identify future studies that are necessary to validate the effect. Additionally, methods can be employed to determine whether sample features or study-level factors influence the phenomena under investigation. For example, study conducted in one cultural setting may provide results that differ considerably from those conducted in another (Davis et al., 2014).

Semi-systematic review

Adoption and nature of semi-systematic review: For issues that have been conceptualised differently and explored by researchers across different disciplines and which hinder a complete systematic review process, the semi-systematic or narrative review technique is adopted (Wong et al., 2013). This implies that it is emphatically not feasible to evaluate each variables or constructs that are pertinent to a subject matter; therefore, an alternative approach needs to be devised. In addition to providing an overview of a subject, a semi-systematic review examines the evolution of a topic across research traditions or the historical trajectory of study in a particular field (McCull-Kennedy et al., 2017).

Generally, the semi-systematic review is aimed at finding and comprehending all essential research traditions that are significant within a subject area. Rather than utilising effect size measurement, semi-systematic review synthesises these traditions using meta-narratives (Wong et al., 2013), which makes difficult topics understandable. Although this approach covers a wide range of topics and study types, it maintains that the research process should be transparent and have a well-developed research strategy that allows readers to evaluate the reasonableness of arguments presented for the conclusions drawn from both chosen topic and methodological standpoint.

The results of a semi-systematic review can be analysed and summarised using a variety of techniques that usually resemble those employed in qualitative research. A common methodology for qualitative research is thematic or content analysis; this is defined as a process for finding, examining, and summarising patterns in the form of themes within a text (Braun & Clarke, 2006). There are certain exceptions to the general rule that a qualitative analysis emanates after this type of assessment. For instance, Borman and Dowling (2008) paired a statistical meta-analysis strategy with a semi-structured literature collection method.

Within a particular study field, this kind of analysis can help find themes, theoretical views, or common concerns. It can also be used to identify the constituent parts of a theoretical notion (Ward et al., 2009). A possible contribution may be the capacity to offer a historical synopsis or timeline of a certain issue or the ability to map an area of study, synthesise the current state of knowledge, and develop an agenda for future researches.

Integrative Literature Review

The integrative review is also referred to as critical review approach, is deeply related to the semistructured review technique. The goal of an integrative review, as opposed to a semi-structured review (Mazumdar et al., 2005), is typically to evaluate, analyse, and synthesise the literature in a way that makes room for the emergence of new theoretical frameworks and viewpoints (Torraco, 2005). Such reviews are uncommon, but they do exist in social science literatures (Covington, 2000). New and emerging issues as well as mature subjects are the main focus of integrative literature evaluations (Gross, 1998).

Developing subjects: The aim of applying an integrated review approach is to provide a broad overview of the body of knowledge, conduct a critical analysis and possible rethinking, and build upon the theoretical underpinnings of a particular issue. Developing first or preliminary conceptualizations and theoretical models is more important for recently emerging issues than reviewing previous models. Since the goal of this kind of review is typically to mix viewpoints and insights from many domains or research traditions rather than to cover every published article on a subject, it frequently calls for an innovative approach to data collection.

How can the analysis of integrative literature review be applied? Whittemore and Knafel (2005) noted that the data analysis portion of an integrative or critical review is not specifically prepared by a particular standard. Though there is not a set standard, the overall goal of data analysis in an integrated review is to evaluate and critically analyse the literature as well as the core concepts and connections of a problem. It should be highlighted that this calls for researchers to possess advanced abilities, such as outstanding conceptual thinking (MacInnis, 2011), while also being open and meticulous in their documentation of the analytic process.

What are the benefits of integrative literature review? An integrated review approach ought to produce advances in theory and knowledge rather than providing a summary or synopsis of a field of study. In other words, it should ideally provide a new conceptual framework or theory rather than being descriptive or historical. While there are several ways to conduct an integrated review, researchers are nevertheless obligated to report on the methodology employed according to established protocols (Torraco, 2005). Furthermore, there should be clarity on how the integration was carried out and how the articles were chosen. Although well-executed integrative reviews can contribute significantly to their field of study, but the demerit is that they frequently lack transparency or real research integration.

DISCUSSIONS

Literature review method covered a range of analytical questions and goals before identifying and deciding the method to be used in achieving the aim and objectives of the review (Snyder, 2021). For instance, there is more latitude in the finding and synthesis of papers in narrative reviews (Pare et al., 2017). Additionally, researchers have certain level of freedom in the usage of research methodologies, defining and selecting relevant scientific publications, characterizing their basic features, elucidating the workings of each study, and formulating hypotheses (Snyder, 2021; Witell et al., 2021).

Certain reviews, like scoping/mapping reviews, are experimental, while descriptive reviews are carried out to develop themes or to apply the synthesis approach, which may involve critical analyses conducted before review (Pare et al., 2017). Thus, before commencing a literature review paper, it is essential to select the ideal type of review, the purpose of review, and the strategies that will best achieve the intended goals.

The research topic and the specific objectives to review always define the best method to employ, even if it seems difficult to decide the most suitable approach for a certain type of study. Although a systematic review is perhaps the most thorough and reliable method of article collection since it guarantees that all pertinent facts have been covered, this method necessitates a specific research topic and may not be practical or even appropriate for all kinds of studies; as a result, a semi-systematic review is helpful, but it also present greater challenges because fewer phases in this process are clearly defined (Liberati et al., 2009).

The semi-systematic review process needs more development and customisation to the particular study, whereas the technique for systematic reviews is simple and adheres to extremely stringent regulations and standards (Liberati et al., 2009; Wong et al., 2013). To properly address the relevant literature, researchers should design criteria and thorough strategy to address their research topic and maintain transparency throughout the whole process. When done correctly, semi-systematic review will be more potent to covering more ground and subjects than systematic review.

There are few norms and guidelines to rely on when constructing a research strategy, making the integrative review much more challenging and placing additional duty and skill requirements on the researchers (Torraco, 2005). This raises the possibility that using an integrated review technique may not be wise and that the level of rigour may be lower than that of a systematic review. Adopting integrated review can be more significant as it offer fresh conceptual model and improve theory (MacInnis, 2011).

Quality of Review

Literatures should be judged and reviewed with the same rigour as empirical papers, but is this always the case? According to Palmatier et al. (2022), a good literature review should be thorough and rigorous; that is, it should identify a suitable method for choosing articles, gathering information, and providing new insights; it should also go beyond just summarising earlier studies. Furthermore, a good literature review must be repeatable, meaning that the methodology should be explained in a way that allow any reader to repeat the investigation and come to a similar conclusion. A literature review should be helpful to practitioners and academicians, but it may be difficult to evaluate various kinds of literature reviews.

To aid reviewers, writers, and readers in their evaluation of literature reviews, a few recommendations for constructing literature review articles across methodologies are proposed. These may slightly deviate from the many known stages of carrying out a literature review and it ought to be sufficiently inclusive to cover the majority of literature review kinds. To determine if a particular review satisfies the rigorous and in-depth requirements, it is crucial to check the standards that are unique to that kind of review. Certain principles may be applicable depending on whether the review is systematic, semi-systematic, or integrative.

Whatever the review format is, there is a need to carefully consider which research was chosen and why, as these choices ultimately determine the kinds of conclusion the authors draw. Ignoring a pertinent area of study, certain publications or years have significant impact on the findings and conclusions. Furthermore, the topic or field it contributes to should be considered while evaluating its contribution. Finally on the quality of review, what is considered sufficient in one field may be considered insufficient in another field.

Publishing a literature review

The essence of carrying out a detailed literature review cannot be far-fetched from or beyond the presentation of actual findings (known and unknown) from the collection of previous studies, contributing significantly to knowledge, and ease of publishing the literature review paper. When conducting a literature review, researchers often make mistakes that thwart their works from being published in a reputable journal. The following explanations are needed to achieve a thorough literature review paper that can be easily published.

Firstly, it will be difficult to assess the quality and significance of literature review if the study does not provide adequate information on how the literature review was carried out. These assessments frequently exclude information about the general research approach, included and excluded articles, limits for the search methods, effectiveness of search procedure, and methodology of the analysis.

Secondly, there is a need to overly restrict a literature search in an attempt to reduce the sample size and facilitate the review process. This can be achieved by restricting the number of journals and the period covered, or by excluding publications from similar topics that could have been pertinent for the particular review. Exclusion of some papers with respect to year of publication, language, keywords, methodology, and some other key indicators. Excessive sample limitation raises red flags since it compromises the rigour and depth of review, and can negatively impact the findings and contributions of the study. Narrowing down the study and giving it further thought is a better strategy to deal with excessive samples. Of course, there are situations whereby it is acceptable to limit the sample in different ways, but justifications for such actions must be clearly stated.

Thirdly, it is common to make mistakes based on the pattern and direction of presenting and clarifying review findings. Commonly, graphs, tables, and figures are presented without any commentary or explanation. This makes it difficult to interpret what they truly signify or what was discovered. It is typical to spend time outlining the methodology and particular analytical technique, but to devote less time to analysing and elaborating the actual findings and implications of these conclusions which can benefit both quantitative and qualitative assessments. Evaluating the contributions of the study becomes difficult when the results are not contextualised. Lastly, no matter how good and thorough the review paper is, it will not be published in high rated journals if it does not offer novel knowledge contribution(s).

Literature reviews entails descriptive summaries of studies done between specific years; they include details such as year of publication, number of papers published in the subject area, subjects covered, number of citations, author details, and sometimes a synopsis of methodology employed. Although it is not usually common to conduct descriptive summary of literature review, but it gives a more plausible result to a literature review study.

It is possible to go beyond merely summarising the literature and achieving original content that is worthwhile and significant in a subject (Carrillat et al., 2022). To make a review article stand out, a strong research methodology that satisfies the quality standards for conducting literature reviews must be used (Edeling & Himme, 2022). There are situations whereby literature reviewed studies were successfully published in high impact factor journals but the studies does not consider quality literature review perse (Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999). For instance, a literature review study can rely on meta-analysis without following the rudiments of meta-analysis (Edeling & Himme, 2022; Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999).

It is important to note that performing a meta-analysis alone does not justify publication of a manuscript; the study must also address an exciting, pertinent problem that resolves some sort of research conundrum and advances the body of knowledge on the subject matter (Witell et al., 2021). Furthermore, there has been a growing interest in technology, social and business researches for evaluations that leverage computer-based text analysis and machine learning (Antons & Breidbach, 2022; Witell et al., 2021). The simple application of these techniques is insufficient if they are not executed effectively and with a specific objective in mind, even though text analysis may be a fantastic way to help (Antons & Breidbach, 2022).

Many text analysis techniques are usually descriptive in nature, which offer little synopsis of subjects or themes without producing any detailed research (Rodell et al., 2021). However, these analysis are equally valuable as they produce a timeline for analysing and projecting the direction of a field; a comparison of various related terms or constructs that can be used as a foundation for theory development; help in identifying actual knowledge gaps in previous studies (Boyd & Solarino, 2021). It is rare but still highly desirable to find a well-written literature review that presents a novel theory, has a strong research agenda, or makes suggestions that other researchers can build upon to advance the field (Mazumdar et al., 2005; Rodell et al., 2021).

If done correctly, this type of analysis can significantly improve the specific subject of study, even if it is time-consuming and requires that researchers should possess excellent analytical skills. When a published information is republished without any addition or subtraction, it does not contribute to knowledge. To address a research topic, there is need to select a suitable technique, with relevant specific research questions in mind.

CONCLUSIONS

Literature review is a compilation of published and unpublished works which include facts and figures, concepts, and perceptions. It formed the basis for future studies and models. However, to conduct the entire literature reviews, appraise the soundness and quality of available literature may be difficult; it is note that this study provides some fundamental criteria for doing a thorough and effective literature review and, ultimately, better research. This study entails a synopsis on how a literature review can be conducted. The sequential steps for conducting a literature review are: statement of purpose, rationale and formulation of research question(s); identification of existing relevant literatures; examination of concepts, terms, and references to be included in a study; identification of research trends; gap(s) identification; and outlining findings, analysis, interpretation, and summarization. In addition, detail methods for reviewing literature were provided. While there are various methods for reviewing a study, this study revealed those methods and the differences among them. Five literature review methods were identified, they are: systematic review; scoping review; narrative review; descriptive review; and critical review. The literature review methods have varying and unique strategies for reviewing literatures. Knowledge gap is usually considered to be highly logical in research if there is trust in the literature analysis. It will be much simpler to identify real research gaps rather than just carrying out the same research over and over again, to create better and more focused hypotheses and research questions, and ultimately to raise the standard of research as a community with relevant data. Future studies may dwell more on literature review methods.

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