

Researching and Writing a Literature Review

Research paper or dissertation structure:

- Introduction/background
- Literature review/theoretical framework
- Methodology/methods
- Results/data
- Discussion
- Conclusion

Reasons for reviewing the literature:

- To conduct a 'preliminary' search of existing materials
- To organise valuable ideas and findings
- To identify other research that may be in progress
- To generate research ideas
- To develop a critical perspective

Short list a paper by reading the abstract and then the conclusion if you have access

In the proposal you don't have any outcome

How to focus your literature review

Your review is detective:

Your job is to narrow down the range of your search for relevant literature.

- Begin with the broad theories, concepts and definitions
- Then focus down to those that overlap with your study
- Then focus down further to a framework for analysis

Find broad articles to define an area

- Use definitions from authoritative sources
- Compare definitions to find the most useful ones for your purpose
- Find articles that use keywords related to your definitions and research questions
- Look for key articles that are close to your specific area
- Follow the trail to identify related articles

Theoretical Framework versus Literature Review

- A literature review needs to include a theoretical framework
- A theoretical framework is not simply a list of theories - it provides a structured theoretical way of understanding relationships between concepts