Research Reviews

Purpose

Research reviews are secondary research that

- analyse, synthesise, and establish exiting knowledge on a topic
- identify methodologies used to investigate a specific topic
- provide new interpretations that extend the existing research
- draw conclusions that may inform policy or practice
- point to specific areas for further research

Characteristics

- Two types: systematic and non-systematic

Systematic Reviews	Non-Systematic Reviews
• Objectively follow a clearly defined rigorous and replicable process to search, select, evaluate, and analyse literature • Conclusions are strongly evidence-based and are objectively derived • **Examples: systematic reviews, integrative reviews, scoping reviews, rapid reviews, umbrella reviews, and meta-analyses**	• Literature selection may depend on the author's choice • Conclusions may be subjective, being shaped by the author's expertise and experience • **Example: narrative reviews, purposive reviews, expert opinion articles**

- Credibility of research reviews is strengthened with
  - rigorous and replicable methodology
  - credible sources
  - thoroughness in the literature search
  - objective data selection, analysis, and synthesis
  - logically constructed conclusions and recommendations

A Selection of Review Types

Narrative Review

Purpose: To summarise and interpret; to provide an early exploration of the topic and/or build theory

- non-systematic research that may use thematic analysis to analyse data
- provides a broad overview of the existing research
- summarises and interprets existing knowledge on a policy or practice issue
- may identify gaps in the research
- may highlight a context or a perspective from a defined discipline/community of practice
- may offer theoretical insights
- choice of sources, analysis, and synthesis is dependent on author's expertise and experience

Scoping Review

Purpose: To map the breadth of the evidence, especially for emerging fields of study, or to inform further research

- systematic research: follows and reports a rigorous and replicable methodology
- reports the breadth and type of research on a specific topic with the view to identifying and mapping key concepts or perspectives in a field of study
- describes existing research but may not always appraise its quality (depends on purpose and availability of literature)
- useful for emerging fields of study or when there is little research available
- may be undertaken to determine if further research is feasible and provide direction for that research

Integrative Review

Purpose: To combine diverse evidence and theory in a multidisciplinary synthesis

- systematic research: follows and reports a rigorous and replicable methodology
- explores multiple perspectives by integrating literature from various disciplines/communities of practice
- incorporates research of various research designs and reporting approaches
- highlights the juxtaposition of multiple perspectives
- may find a new direction for future research

Rapid Review **Purpose: To provide quickly available evidence for policy or clinical guidelines**

- systematic research: follows and reports a rigorous and replicable methodology
- condensed, less thorough version of a systematic review
- synthesises literature that has been objectively selected using systematic methodological processes
- useful to explore a narrowly defined research question when time constraints prohibit a full systematic review

Systematic Review **Purpose: To answer a focused question with comprehensive evidence, especially to provide clinical guidelines**

- considered the gold standard of reviews
- follows and reports a rigorous and replicable methodology
- provides comprehensive, objective analysis and synthesis of a large number of research articles focused on a narrowly defined question
- may integrate multiple perspectives, but the purpose is to draw high-confidence conclusions
- requires extensive time and resources to achieve comprehensive exploration of the evidence

Meta-analysis **Purpose: To statistically synthesise quantitative results and provide a quantitatively derived estimation of an effect**

- systematic research: follows and reports a rigorous and replicable methodology
- statistically combines results from a large number of quantitative research articles with similar methodologies, e.g., randomised control trials and observational studies
- focuses on specific variables
- aims to describe reliable estimates of effects, pointing to causal relationships
- can be useful for generalising results
- provides results with strong statistical power

Types of Reviews: Comparison Matrix

Low methodological rigour → High methodological rigour
Broad range of literature → Narrow range of literature

	Narrative (Traditional)	Scoping	Integrative	Rapid	Systematic	Meta-analysis
Purpose	• summarise and interpret literature • explore a topic • build theory	• map the breadth of evidence • identify gaps to inform further research	• captures, bridges, and juxtaposes diverse perspectives from a range of disciplines	• address a focused research question in a short time-frame • provide evidence for policy or clinical guidelines	• answer a focused question using rigorous methodology • provide evidence for policy or clinical guidelines	• statistically synthesise quantitative results • estimate an effect
Scope of literature	• broad range • includes literature from multiple disciplines • may include grey literature and theory, depending on topic and purpose • dependent on author's choice	• broad range • may be from multiple disciplines, may include grey literature • current literature may be scant in emerging fields • may be narrowed by discipline or research paradigm	• broad range • from multiple disciplines, including grey literature • may include theory, depending on topic and purpose	• narrow range relating to a specific question • from one discipline* • limited number of articles, e.g., from one research paradigm or narrow choice of databases	• narrow range but large number of articles relating to a specific question • from one discipline* • varying methodologies and research paradigms may be included, depending on the research question	• narrow range but large number of articles relating to a specific question • from one discipline* • restricted to articles of similar methodologies, especially statistical analysis

* If literature is from one discipline/community of practice, common ontological and epistemological perspectives are likely; similarity in research design is therefore also likely. Ontology relates to what exists: the nature of being, existence, and categories of reality. Epistemology relates to the study of knowledge; its nature and its sources, assumptions, frameworks, and justifications for the knowledge.

	Narrative (Traditional)	Scoping	Integrative	Rapid	Systematic	Meta-analysis
Literature selection	• dependent on author's choice	• defined inclusion and exclusion criteria • defined search terms, databases, and screening protocols • adjusted depending on literature availability	• defined inclusion and exclusion criteria • defined search terms, databases, and screening protocols	• may be restricted • defined inclusion and exclusion criteria • defined search terms, databases, and screening protocols	• comprehensive • defined inclusion and exclusion criteria • defined search terms, databases, and screening protocols	• comprehensive • defined inclusion and exclusion criteria • defined search terms, databases, and screening protocols
Literature Appraisal	• limited or absent, depending on author's preference and purpose	• absent as purpose is to describe and map the available research rather than synthesise results	• recommended to improve rigour • adopts multiple appraisal frameworks for varied research methodologies*	• adopts relevant defined critical appraisal frameworks *	• adopts relevant defined critical appraisal frameworks*	• adopts s relevant defined critical appraisal framework*
Synthesis of data	• qualitative, interpretive • narrative synthesis methods**	• categorises and describes the existing literature: concepts, gaps, and types of evidence	• narrative synthesis methods** for qualitative and quantitative evidence	• narrative synthesis** • may include statistical synthesis methods	• structured synthesis • narrative synthesis**, may include statistical synthesis methods	• statistically pooling of results • provides effect size estimation

*For example, the CASP (Critical Appraisal Skills Programme), JBI (Joanna Briggs Insitute) Tools, Cochrane Risk of Bias Tool, MMAT (Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool), and PRISMA

** For example, thematic analysis and content analysis

	• **Narrative (Traditional)**	• **Scoping**	• **Integrative**	• **Rapid**	• **Systematic**	• **Meta-analysis**
Strengths	• flexible scope and methodology • achievable in a short timeframe • brings together a diverse range of literature	• less restrictive than a systematic review • achievable in a short timeframe • brings together a diverse range of literature	• evidence-based interpretations • achievable in a short timeframe	• evidence-based conclusions • achievable in a short timeframe	• strong evidence-based conclusions • rigorous methodology • comprehensive synthesis	• objective analysis • rigorous methodology • strong, statistically-derived conclusions
Limitations	• limited literature appraisal • may lack depth of analysis • lack of methodological transparency • potential for selection and confirmation bias	• Limited literature appraisal • Limited depth of analysis	• can be difficult to integrate results from divserse research paradigms across multiple disciplines • may be difficult to generalise results to specific contexts due to synthesis of multiple perspectives	• limited range of literature with highly restricted search criteria • potential for publication bias	• time consuming • potential for publication bias • may be difficult to generalise results to diverse populations or contexts	• time consuming • potential for publication bias • requires sources of same methodology and statistical analysis

Steps to Writing a Research Review

1. Plan the review
    - Identify the area you intend to research
    - Consider time allocation for each stage of the research
2. Perform scoping searches and identify the research question
    - Consider the existing literature; determine the gap in the research that your review will address
    - Develop and confirm your research question
3. Decide on the type of review and gain ethics approval
    - Confirm the review type suitable for addressing the research question
    - Decide the research methodology (search strategy, literature screening and appraisal, and data analysis)
    - Submit the research proposal
4. Begin the research
    - Draft the introduction and methodology chapters and an introductory literature review chapter if this is required for your review type
    - Follow your methodology to identify the literature, keeping records of your process (e.g. PRISMA flow diagrams)
    - Screen and then critically appraise the literature in order to obtain a complete set of literature as data for your review
5. Analyse the literature
    - Use tables to record characteristics and findings of the literature, noting differences in methodology and how they may impact on the findings (see page 2 of the Literature Reviews guide)
6. Synthesise the literature
    - Identify themes and subthemes
    - Write the results chapter (some review types combine results with discussion)
7. Discuss the findings
    - Answer the research question by discussing the themes and subthemes
    - Explain how the findings relate to the existing body of knowledge identified in the introduction and/or the literature review chapter
    - Highlight and explain commonalities and variances in the literature results
    - Explain the meaning of the findings in the broader context of the topic as identified in the introduction chapter
8. Write the concluding sections
    - Write the conclusion and recommendations, if appropriate for your topic
    - Detail the limitations of your research
    - Identify areas of future research
    - Ensure the reference list is complete and accurate
9. Finishing touches
    - Edit and proofread carefully
    - Format the document according to APA 7th edition style
    - Format the references and citations according to APA 7th edition style
    - Check that all front matter pages and appendices are included in the correct order

Research Review Checklist

Use the following questions to check your research review is thorough.

	Check Point	**Check**
1.	Is the title succinct and does it encapsulate the topic and purpose of the review?	
2.	Does the abstract include the background, purpose, method, results, and conclusions as well as three to five keywords for indexing the review if published?	
3.	Are all other front matter pages included as outlined in the project requirements and numbered with Roman numerals?	
4.	Does the background and contextual information adequately introduce the topic and point towards the research question?	
5.	Is the purpose of your research justified (what gap in the existing body of knowledge does your research address)?	
6.	Are the research question and the research objectives clear and succinct?	
7.	For systematic review types, is the methodology fully described and justified, including databases, search terms, inclusion and exclusion criteria, screening and critical appraisal processes, and data analysis process?	
	• Is the methodology replicable by another researcher?	
	• Has the review objectively included a comprehensive range of relevant literature, including any that may have opposing points?	
	• Are clear reasons mentioned for excluding literature (e.g., PRSIMSA flowchart)?	
	• Has the included research been critically evaluated and the critical evaluation framework/s and results included?	
8.	In the discussion, has variability in the evidence been comprehensively explained?	
9.	Is the strength of comparisons, contrasts, and associations clear, showing which are stronger and which are weaker?	

	Check Point	Check
10.	Have the strengths and limitations of the included research studies been addressed, including acknowledgement of any biases, and how these may impact on their results?	
11.	Has the discussion been presented with a clear, logical structure with the points justified with evidence?	
12.	Is empirical evidence clearly distinguished from expert opinion (if applicable, e.g., in an integrative review)?	
13.	Are the results discussed in relation to how they are placed within the existing body of knowledge on the topic?	
14.	Are the conclusions and recommendations straightforward and logically constructed given the evidence presented?	
15.	Is the research question answered (either conclusively or inconclusively, depending on the evidence)?	
16.	Are the research objectives addressed?	
17.	Does the report explicitly identify limitations of your research review?	
18.	Does the report explicity identify future research directions that logically follow given your conclusions?	
19.	If required, are appendices attached after the reference list and labelled Appendix A, Apendix B, and so forth?	
20.	Is the reference list complete and does it follow APA 7th edition referencing requirements?	
21.	Does the report formatting follow APA 7th edition style requirements ?	

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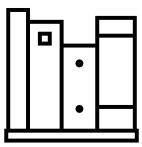

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