

Literature Reviews

Senior Thesis

Literature Overview

- Detailed description of at least 6 empirical studies including the purpose, hypothesis, methods, results, and conclusions.
- Discussion of results from 8-10 other empirical studies
- Adequate transition between discussion of various studies; transitions that connect the commonalities of the studies together

How do I start?

- Scan all of your articles to get a general overview
- Based on your overview, group articles by category
- Use the format that I have provided to review each article
- Draw definitions from articles (operational definitions)
- Look for key statistics to use in your intro
- Look for methodological strengths and weaknesses
- Identify the major trends in the results of previous studies
- Identify gaps in the literature
- Note how closely articles are related.

Analyzing Quantitative Research Literature

- What is the design (i.e., descriptive, correlation, experiment)
- Random assignment, groups?
- Sampling?
- Cause-and-effect?
- Reliability & Validity of Instruments
- How is the variable measured across studies
- Demographics (i.e., representative samples)
- How large a difference (not just statistically significant)
- Flaws within studies

Tables in Lit Reviews?

- You may want to consider using tables to summarize literature
 - Table of definitions
 - Table of research methods
 - Summary of research results
- Always interpret and discuss the table for the reader
- See examples

Example 1

Table 7.1.1

Definitions of Psychological Empowerment Relevant to Tobacco Control Initiatives

Domain	Attributes	Definitions
Intrapersonal	Domain-specific efficacy	Beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce specific changes related to tobacco control.
	Perceived sociopolitical control	Beliefs about one's capabilities and efficacy in social and political systems.
	Participatory competence	Perceived ability to participate in and contribute to the operations of the group or organization, through talking at meetings, working as a team member, and so on.
Interactional	Knowledge of resources	Awareness of whether resources exist to support the group and how to acquire them.
	Assertiveness	Ability to express your feelings, opinions, beliefs, and needs directly, openly, and honestly while not violating the personal rights of others.
	Advocacy	Pursuit of influencing outcomes, including public policy and resource allocation decisions within political, economic, and social systems and institutions that directly affect people's lives.

Example 2

Table 7.1.2
Definitions of Child Abuse Over Time (1945 to 2005)

Author	Definition	Notes
Doe (1945)	Defined as...	First published definition. Does not include psychological abuse.
Smith (1952)	Defined as...	
Jones (1966)	Defined as...	First definition to mention sexual abuse.
Lock (1978)	Defined as...	
Black & Clark (1989)	Defined as...	
Solis (2000)	Defined as...	Legal definition in Texas.
Ty (2003)	Defined as...	Most widely cited definition in recent literature.
Bart (2005)	Defined as...	

Example 3

Table 7.2.1
Primary Study Characteristics (Methods)

	Pope (1994)	Preyde (2000)	Cherkin (2001)
Sample size	<i>n</i> = 164	<i>n</i> = 98	<i>n</i> = 267
Recruitment of participants	Those attending clinic	University e-mail & advertisements in newspaper	Mailed letters to HMO
Presenting condition	Nonspecific low back pain	Subacute low back pain	Persistent low back pain
Type of massage	Massage	Comprehensive massage	Therapeutic massage
Duration of study	Not indicated	1 year	6 months
Outcome measure	Visual Analog Scale	Roland Disability Questionnaire	Symptom Bothersomeness Scale

Synthesizing Literature

- What is the purpose of your review?
- Reorganize notes on thematic lines
- Create an outline that achieves your argument
- What are gaps in research (will help you write future research section)
- Explain how individual studies relate to the overall advancement of your thesis
- Summarize periodically
- At the end of each study, tell the reader how that study supports or refutes your thesis