

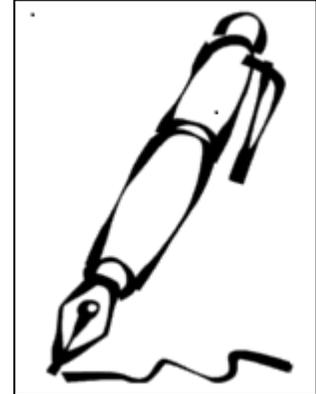
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The Literature Review

Traditional Components

Abstract
Introduction or Background
Review Strategy (databases searched, keywords used, etc.)
Literature Review Findings (usu. organized into headings)
Review Matrix or Review Profile section (usu. optional)
Discussion section
Conclusion
References



Overview of the Literature Review

I. What It's Not

- A. An essay or paper or plot summary
- B. Proof of a concept/theme

II. What It Is

- A. "Literature" = *major* published works on a *narrow* topic (mostly articles & books)
 - 1. "Major" defined by author/publisher
 - 2. "Narrow" means works dealing w/ *very specific* topic
- B. "Review" = a snapshot, capture, synthesis, consideration, and/or appraisal
 - 1. Major elements/concepts/outcomes analyzed
 - 2. Phenomenon presented from perspective (e.g., discipline/theory)
 - 3. Criteria explained
 - 4. Timeline included (as necessary/appropriate)

III. Types

- A. Narrative
 - 1. Most common, appropriate for *qualitative* studies

2. Organizes studies by conceptual logic, with adequate detail to support analysis
3. Limited number of references

B. Systematic

1. Appropriate for *quantitative* studies (usu. focuses on intervention)

C. Meta-analysis (Greek *meta* = "after," "beyond")

1. Type of systematic review
2. Stats to extract common truth about multiple, conceptually similar studies

IV. What It Does/Why It Does It

- A. Demonstrates relationship among studies according to some method
- B. Extracts key elements/concepts/hypotheses/outcomes from sources (Narr Rev)
- C. Contributes to clinical practice by assessing specific intervention (Syst Rev)

V. Purpose

- A. Improve understanding/knowledge/expertise
- B. Demonstrate knowledge in writing
- C. Educate or update reader about key elements/concepts/outcomes

VI. Techniques For Organizing

- A. Chronological – divides aspects of topic into decades (e.g., autism in the 50s known as "refrigerator mother syndrome," in the 60s as "psychological disorder of unknown origin," and in the 90s as "genetic susceptibility triggered by environment")
- B. Advancements – breakthroughs occurring over time (e.g., robot technology)
- C. Geographical (e.g., immigration)
- D. Questions – major issues/gaps addressed by researchers about topic
- E. Headings, figures, tables, graphs, appendices, plus keywords

VII. The Writing Process

- A. Collect sources (academic, peer reviewed journals, trade, etc.)
- B. Analyze (first scan title, headings, abstract – this is culling)
- C. Arrange (make outline based on pattern, list sources under each major point (e.g., breakthrough, major questions, etc.)
- D. Summarize (state gist of source and make transitions between each source)
- E. Synthesize (make connections among diverse materials in clear writing)

How to Create a Literature Review Outline

Start with a statement of the topic (usu. 1 para explaining your approach/viewpoint). In 1-2 sentences, introduce sources and identify them by strengths and weaknesses. Group sources under reasonable, logical headings (e.g., decades or critical questions). Number sources to create a tally.

Key Sources

- Bibliographies
- Online Catalogues
- Abstracting and Indexing journals
- Cochrane Collaboration (reference work, handbook for systematic reviews)

Systematic Review Criteria

- To answer particular question or test hypothesis vis-à-vis particular intervention on particular population
- To identify all known references relating to question, theory, intervention, etc.
- To select studies based on explicit criteria, e.g., minimum bias in evidence, randomized control trial, reproducible, etc.
- To reduce publication bias by including unpublished work that meets established criteria
- To describe future research directions (optional)

A Sample Outline of a Literature Review (non-medical)

Topic statement

The issue of underdevelopment in Africa is one that has left political scientists and sociologists at bay. This paper seeks to discuss what the reasons for underdevelopment are. I will explain these phenomena introducing three theories of underdevelopment: the modernization theory, the dependency theory, and the world systems theory. However, most of my facts will use the dependency theory to explain underdevelopment in Africa. This theory was oriented by third world scholars to give a plausible explanation for underdevelopment. Therefore, it is the one most suitable to explain underdevelopment in Africa. It accounts for historical factors like slavery and colonization which have been extremely detrimental to Africa's overall development.

Introductory statement

African underdevelopment. This section has some strength for my topic but is not spot on. Two articles discuss underdevelopment directly.

1. Abrokwa, C.K. (1999). Africa 200: What development strategy? *J Black Studies* 29 (5), 646-68.
2. Labinjoh, J. (1975). Book reviews: Underdevelopment in Kenya: The political economy of neo-colonialism. Race and class by Colin Leys. *Econ Underdevelopment* 17 (2), 214-15. Retrieved from Sage Full-Text Collection Database.
3. Ojie, A.E. (2006). Democracy, ethnicity, and the problem of extrajudicial killing in Nigeria. *J Black Studies* 36 (4), 546-69. Retrieved from Sociology as Sage Full-Text Collection Database.

Introductory statement

The dependency theory. This section is as strong as the articles directly discussing dependency theory.

4. Gould, L.V. (1983). Against trivialization: A brief commentary on dependency and epistemology. *Soc Sci Info* 22 (6), 867-94. Retrieved from Sociological Abstract Database.
5. Vodanovich, I. (1986). Book reviews: Introduction to the sociology of development. Andrew Webster. London, Macmillan, 1984. *J Sociology* 22 (3), 469-71. Retrieved from Sage Full-Text Collection Database.
6. Keet, M. (2002). Neo-Marxist dependency theory. Retrieved from <http://www.meteck.org>
7. Mufune, P. (1988). Where modernization and dependency meet: A comment on Weede's why poor people stay poor. *Intl Sociology* 3 (4), 433-35. Retrieved as Sage Full-Text Collection Database.