

What needs to be included in literature review

Background of a study

It provides background information relating to the social/political/historical/ educational (etc) context of the study.

- It may include historical, cultural, political, social or organizational information about the context of the research
- May include a theoretical starting point
- May include personal motivation

Literature Review

What needs to be included in a review of the literature?

- The key issues which underlie the research project
- The major findings on the research topic, by whom and when
- The main points of view and controversies that surround the issue being investigated
- A critical evaluation of these views, indicating strengths and weaknesses of previous studies on the topic
- General conclusions about the state of the art at the time of writing, including what research still needs to be done; that is, the gap that remains in the research that the study will aim to fill

Steps and strategies for writing a literature review

Steps	How to do?
Locate relevant literature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sources may be in hard form as well as in soft form • Identify key authors and journals • Use Google Scholar for computerized searches • Use Tables of Contents from key journals to find relevant articles • Use reference lists from articles, books and chapters
Critically read the literature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify themes in the literature • Identify strengths and weaknesses of individual articles • Identify strengths and weaknesses of the field as a whole
Prepare to write	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the expected length and format of the literature review • Make a preliminary outline • Organize the literature you will cover • Limit the scope of the review to the topic you have chosen
Write the review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write the introduction • Write subsections • Combine and critically evaluate the literature • Avoid plagiarism
Indicate the gap	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the review to lead to your study and research question/s

Reading and summarizing previous studies

Technique	Questions to be answered
Summarizing a previous study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the major research questions or hypotheses in the study? • What were the main findings of the study? • Why was it important to carry out the research? • What is the relationship between this study and your own

	project? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What other research studies were conducted in the same area? • What is the relationship between these studies and your own project?
--	--

Typical tenses used in the literature review

Tense	Example	When to use
simple present	Richard (1989) shows that..... "	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A generalization is being made • A reference is being made to the state of current knowledge • Previous findings are being presented/are accepted as facts
simple past	Richard (1989) showed that"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A reference is being made to a single study • A specific piece of research and its findings are being referred to
present perfect	Research has shown that"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A general area of investigation or inquiry is being referred to • A general statement is made about previous research

Sample

Islamic finance is a financial system, the fundamental aim of which is to fulfill the teaching of the Holy Quran, as opposed to reaping maximum returns on financial assets. The basic principle in the Sharia (Islamic Common Law) is that exploitative contracts based on Riba (interest or usury) or unfair contracts that involve risk or speculation (Gharar) are unenforceable. However the Holy Quran contains no condemnation of morally acceptable investments that yield fair /legitimate profits and economic/social "added-value" (Siddiqi 1999). Two more principles are fundamental to understanding Islamic finance. First, the Islamic law reflects the totality of Allah' (God's) commands that regulate all aspects of the life of a Muslim. Second, Islamic finance is directly involved with spiritual values and social justice. Under Islam, there is no separation of mosque and state or of business and religion (Nicolas 1994).....
 (Continued)

Reference:

Siddiqi A Moin. 1999. "The growing popularity of Islamic banking." Middle East, London, 291, 33_35.
 Nicholas B; Angell. 1994. "Islamic and Western banking: Part I -Major features, structural forms, comparison with Western banks, Riba." Middle East Executive Reports. 17; 12; 9_14.