Evidence Synthesis Research: Narrative Review for Masters&PhD

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Make today matter

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Rules for this Webinar

- Switch your cell phone off
- Ask a question at end of a slide
- Do ask questions

Learning Outcomes

At the end of this session, you should be able to understand the following:
- Purpose of a literature review as part of a Masters/PhD
- Types of reviews
- How to choose a type of review for your study
- Structure of a narrative review
- Step by step process for conducting a narrative review

Outline

- Defining a narrative review

- Steps involved in conducting a narrative review

- Structure of a narrative review

- Step by step for conducting a narrative review for Masters or PhD
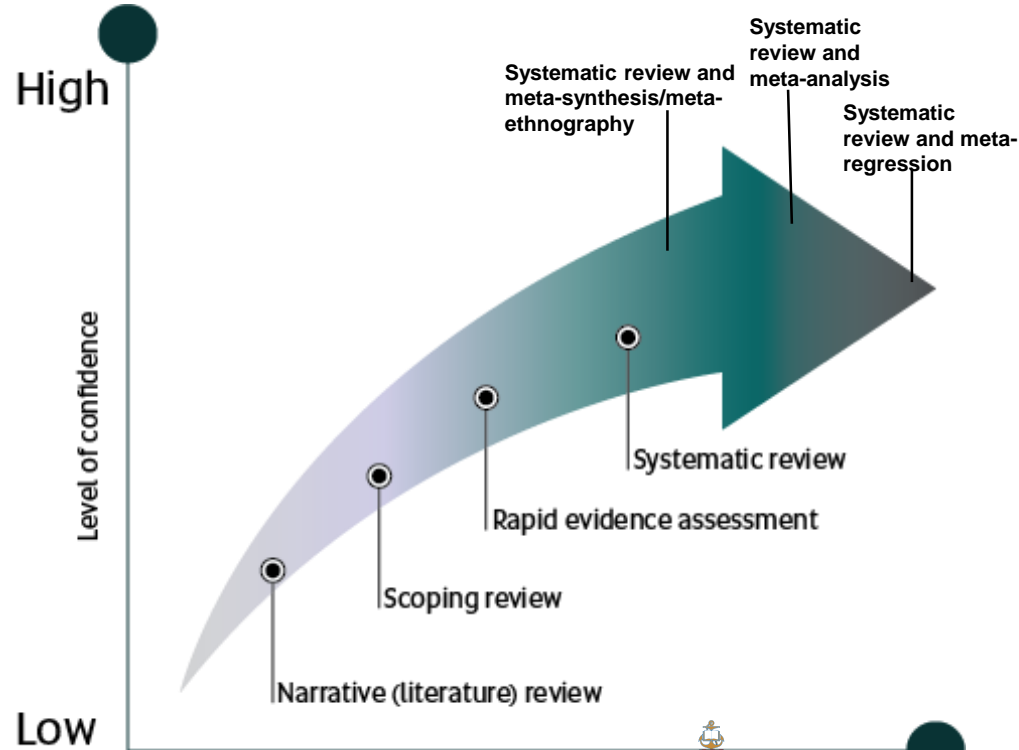
- Questions

Define narrative review

- Its purpose is to identify a few studies that describe a problem of interest

- Establishes familiarity with and understanding of current research in a particular field before carrying out a new investigation

- Conducting a literature review should enable you to find out what research has already been done and identify what is unknown within your topic

Level of Confidence for different reviews

- Reliability of the evidence to guide policy and practice
- Replicability of the study
- Level of trustworthy of evidence

High

Level of confidence

Low

Systematic review and meta-synthesis/meta-ethnography

Systematic review and meta-analysis

Systematic review and meta-regression

Systematic review

Rapid evidence assessment

Scoping review

Narrative (literature) review

Narrative review versus systematic review

- Narrative reviews have no predetermined research question or specified search strategy, only a topic of interest

- They are not systematic and follow no specified protocol

- No standards or protocols guide the review

- Reviewer will not arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the state of the science related to the research problem

Purpose of a narrative review for thesis/dissertation

- Thesis/dissertation narrative literature review must inform the thesis/dissertation objectives
- Provide foundation of knowledge on topic
- Identify areas of prior scholarship to prevent duplication and give credit to other researchers
- Identify inconstancies: gaps in research, conflicts in previous studies, open questions left from other research
- Identify need for additional research (justifying your research)
- Identify the relationship of works in context of its contribution to the topic and to other works
- Place your own research within the context of existing literature making a case for why further study is needed

Steps involved

Step 1: Establish an area of interest and keywords – inline with your Masters/PhD topic

- Focus on your degree topic area

- Work with your supervisor
    - Choose a research topic
    - Start with a problem statement

- Topic should at least have the following:
    - Population or setting of interest
    - Study phenomenon/disease of interest/procedure of interest

- Formulate keywords in line with the above list

Steps involved (cont)

Step 2: Identifying keywords

- Authors call out several keywords when publishing their research so others can identify the work during database searches
- Once you find a relevant article, use its keywords and similar ones in your search
- To find individual studies on similar topics, you must use the keywords that were used when they were indexed
- You may try numerous keywords before finding a paper that is pertinent to your review question

Steps involved (cont)

Step 3: Conduct a database search using your keywords

- The published scientific literature is indexed in a variety of databases
- Choose databases that are relevant to your field
- Search these databases for studies
- It is important to search numerous databases to ensure that the majority of relevant studies have been identified
- Neglecting a database in the search strategy will result in studies going unidentified
- Common databases for hospice and palliative care studies include PubMed, PsycINFO, and CINAHL.
- Common platform for database EBSCOHost

Steps involved (cont)

Step 4: Review Abstracts and Articles

- After the search is complete and all duplicates are thrown out, it is time to review the abstracts of the remaining articles to ensure that they address your review topic/themes

- Unlike systematic review, with narrative reviews, it is not necessary to include every article on a topic.

Steps involved (cont)

Step 5: Document Results

- Summarize and synthesize the findings from the articles you have found, and integrate them into your writing as appropriate
  - Compare and contrast the reviewed literature
- You do not need to document your literature search in a narrative review
- Reference the articles as you use information from the studies
- Your write up should be guided by results of your literature search not your opinion

Structure of the literature review

- Introduction
- Middle or main body
- Discussion and conclusion

Introduction

- Define your topic and provide an appropriate context for reviewing the literature;

- Establish your reasons – i.e. point of view – for reviewing the literature;

- Explain the organisation – i.e. sequence – of the review;

- State the scope of the review or the themes that you wish to focus on in this review– these should correspond to the thesis/dissertation objectives

Middle and main body

- Organise the literature according to common themes: guided by the study focus/main aim
- Revisit your problem statement
- Provide insight into the relation between your chosen topic and the wider subject area e.g. between obesity in children and obesity in general
- move from a general, wider view of the literature being reviewed to the specific focus of your research

Discussion and conclusion

- Summarise the important aspects of the existing body of literature focus – take away message for the reader
- Evaluate the current state of the literature reviewed
- Identify significant flaws or gaps in existing knowledge
- Outline areas for future study
- Links your research to existing knowledge

Recap

- Narrative reviews can be completed by a student and supervisor, no need for special training or inclusion of a big team
- Scoping reviews and systematic review are encouraged for high quality Masters and PhD
- Scoping reviews and systematic review require a dedicated trained team

High

Low

Level of confidence

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