

Common Terms used for Literature Reviews

Writing a literature review can be challenging enough...but then on top of that, there is **vocabulary** associated with literature reviews that can be **confusing!** Let's see if we can help you to break these terms down.

Theory: A group of ideas, definitions, or assumptions used to explain and support a study.

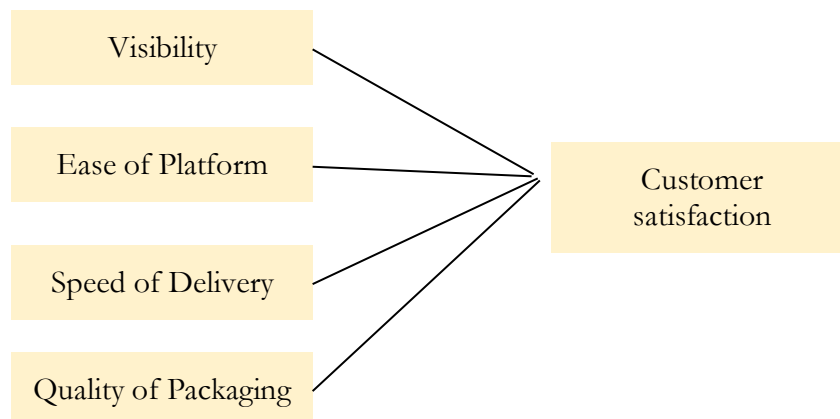
Example: Essential Management Theory, Principles of Administrative Management, Cognitive Learning Theory, and Constructivist Learning Theory.

Concept: An idea, most commonly a generalized idea about a group of things based on experience.

Examples: Relativity, gravity, old, young, intelligent.

Conceptual framework: Organizing your ideas in a way that identifies the purpose of your study.

Example: If I wanted to determine what influences my customers' satisfaction rates, I would do research to see the most common aspects that impact satisfaction levels for online stores, specifically. I determine that visibility, ease of platform, speed of delivery, and quality of packaging are the three most influential factors (or, my variables). Thus, my framework will be:



Theoretical framework: A process of explaining a theory and importance of why the research problem being studied exists.

Example: If I wanted to understand why my clientele rarely returned after the initial purchase in my online shop, I would research the connection between loyalty and satisfaction. Let's say Author 1 links satisfaction with met expectations and Author 2 links

Common Terms used for Literature Reviews

satisfaction with fulfillment. I would analyze these, break them down, and then explain which definition is most fitting for my study in regard to how my computer functions and what it promises to offer. Then, I could propose the Customer Satisfaction Model proposed by Thomassen (2003) as the model I will use in my study to evaluate satisfaction and loyalty of my company.

An extended example of this can be found [here](#).

Research: A well-thought-out study that determines new information or knowledge on a topic.

Example: There is an achievement gap between male and female students at a high school. The researcher wants to determine what is causing that gap.

Empirical Research: Research that is based on observation, testing, and experience.

Example: An experiment is conducted where participants are asked to give a presentation. Prior to the presentation, one group of participants engage in a controlled breathing exercise for 5 minutes, and one group does not. They are observed while giving their presentations. The results from this research will provide empirical evidence about if the breathing exercises influenced calm and confidence or not.

Qualitative Research: Collecting and analyzing information that is not numbers, so that leaves what? Words. These words can either be written or spoken. This information is used to gain insight on experiences, opinions, or certain concepts (which is why you hear it referred to as ‘exploratory’).

Example: Research is done on customer satisfaction through structured interviews using open ended questions. The customers could talk about their experience in depth so that the researcher could get a better grasp of their experience.

Quantitative Research: Collecting and analyzing data that is in the form of numbers (think ‘hard data’). In this type of research, we typically have two concepts we are studying (variables) or two hypotheses. Below, you see the example of two variables, time to write an essay and fair expectations.

Example: A standardized testing company wants to research how much time it takes on average for students to complete an essay to ensure fairness when setting time allotments for the examinations.

Common Terms used for Literature Reviews

Mixed-Methods: Take a look above! Do you see our qualitative and quantitative research definitions? With this type of research, you get to combine them. So, you are collecting and analyzing **both** those words and those numbers!

Example: A researcher wants to understand how high school students feel about taking tests. The researcher creates a survey that students take after a series of five tests that include both open-ended questions (short response) and close-ended questions (multiple choice).

Variable: To put it simply, a variable is that which you are studying - the object of your study. Now, there are different types of variables which are worth exploring (binary, nominal, ordinal).

Example: A researcher wants to understand how the number of students in a classroom impact student achievement. My two variables? That's right! number of students and academic achievement.

Methodology: The reasoning behind why something was done. In the dissertation, this would include why you chose to carry out your experiment the way that you did. Really, you are answering 'how'.

Example: A researcher explains that she wanted to determine the validity of an elementary schools' tests that were created by each teacher. She collected each mid-year exam and final exam that the students were required to take from grades 3-6. She answered 'C' on each question, which is the most typical correct answer on any test (if test makers are not properly trained), to determine how easy it would be for a student to pass if they were not even reading the answers provided.

Data Collection Methods: Choosing how you will collect your data (think: interviews, focus groups, surveys, etc.)

Example: To determine student experience in the psychology department, the researcher will conduct six focus groups.

Data Analysis Methods: Choosing how you analyze the data that you collect. Now, this will depend on what type of research you are doing. For qualitative studies, you will need to code your information before doing anything else. After that, you can choose how you want to further analyze it (common ways: Discourse analysis, narrative analysis, IPA, etc.). For quantitative studies, you will most likely be using either inferential or descriptive statistics.

Example: Discourse analysis, coding, narrative analysis, IPA, grounded theory, inferential statistics, descriptive statistics.

Common Terms used for Literature Reviews

Synthesizing: Combining information to find similarities, differences, or connections.

Example: Markson (2015) found that 75% of all employees are most motivated by financial incentives. Nelson (2012) determined that 67% of employees will leave an organization if they are not appreciated. So, if I **synthesize** that information, I could say: In order to retain and motivate employees they need appreciation and clear incentives in place for working hard (Markson, 2015; Nelson, 2012).

Hypothesis: An idea or a guess that is not yet proven, but it is a possible outcome for a study.

Example: Let's say I was doing a study to look at the relationship between exercise and quality of sleep. My hypothesis might be: individuals who engage in exercise during the day will have improved quality of sleep.

Peer Review: A review of a work by those who are considered experts in the field to ensure that the piece is valid, reliable, and credible. This can be blind, double-blind, or just a peer-review.

Example: I wrote an article entitled, "Teaching, learning and unlearning." I sent it in to be published in the Journal of Teaching. They send it off to Dr. Smith who has a doctorate in education and has been teaching for over 32 years. She reads my article to make sure I am making claims that I back up, I have done quality research, and what I claim that I have proved, I actually proved.

Population: A group of people who participate in a study.

Example: Oceanographers in South California or mid-level managers at SMEs.

Sample: A subgroup from the general population one is studying. In essence, it is a part of the entire group.

Example: Picking 100 students from a large university setting.

Sampling: Selecting the group you will collect your data from (i.e. your sample). There are many types of sampling that you can learn about [here](#).

Example: Putting a flyer on the front entrance of a university to get participants.

Probability Sampling: You are choosing the participants by random! (which means it is easy for you to generalize the information for that entire population)

Example: Putting a flyer on the front entrance of a university to get participants.

Non-Probability Sampling: You are not choosing by random.



Common Terms used for Literature Reviews

Example: Asking your work colleagues to take your survey.

Probability: A statistical approach of making predictions to randomly choosing a sample size from a larger population of something occurring again over time.

Example: When using 100 students at a large university, how students will wear a green shirt to class.