

Literature Review Outline Template

Title Page

(Include a properly formatted [APA 7th edition title page](#) here.)

Introduction

Include the following elements in brief:

- **Purpose and Scope:** Note the overall purpose of the literature review and define what the review will and will not cover in relation to your research problem and questions.
 - **Organization of the Chapter:** Indicate how the literature will be grouped (e.g., by themes, historical trends, theoretical approaches) and why this structure is appropriate for your study.
Research Questions: Include a brief restatement of your research questions to clarify how they shaped the inclusion and arrangement of sources.
 - **Search Strategy:** Outline the databases you used (e.g., *ProQuest*, *JSTOR*), your key search terms, and your inclusion/exclusion criteria (e.g., publication date, peer-reviewed status, relevance to topic).
 - **Source Requirements:** Confirm that your sources are primarily peer-reviewed journal articles. Non-scholarly sources such as dissertations, textbooks (e.g., Creswell), blogs, .com sites, and books are not permitted.
 - **Thematic Preview:** List the main themes or categories you will cover and briefly note how they build toward your conceptual framework or study rationale.
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Outline

Present the major themes and subthemes you have identified in the existing literature that relate to your research problem and questions. Your outline should focus on synthesizing ideas, not summarizing studies. Each theme should reflect a pattern or conversation in the research and explain how this body of work connects to your study. Use bullet points or brief paragraphs for each subtheme. Under each subtheme, include at least two peer-reviewed sources and explain how they are connected, complementary, or contradictory, and how they will support your literature review.

Theme 1: [Analytical Heading Reflecting a Key Trend, Debate, or Concept]

Synthesis of Ideas: Briefly explain the key insight or tension emerging in this theme. What trend, debate, or research gap does this theme highlight? How does it connect to your research problem or questions?

Connected Sources & Analysis:

- Author (Year) used [method] to investigate [concept], concluding that [finding].
- Author (Year) extended or challenged this by [explanation].
- These studies collectively show [your interpretation of the pattern, contradiction, or evolution in the literature].
- Include *at least* two sources for each theme.

- Identify and analyze methodological similarities/differences, opposing viewpoints, or evolving definitions, explaining their significance for your research questions.
- **Sub-Theme 1.1: [Analytical Subheading within the Theme]**
 - **Synthesis of Ideas:** Briefly explain the key insight or tension emerging in this subtheme. What trend, debate, or research gap does this subtheme highlight? How does it connect to your research problem or questions?
 - **Connected Sources & Analysis:**
 - Author (Year) used [method] to investigate [concept], concluding that [finding].
 - Author (Year) extended or challenged this by [explanation].
 - These studies collectively show [your interpretation of the pattern, contradiction, or evolution in the literature].
 - Include *at least* two sources for each theme.
 - Identify and analyze methodological similarities/differences, opposing viewpoints, or evolving definitions, explaining their significance for your research questions.

Theme 2: [Descriptive Title Reflecting a Key Trend, Debate, or Concept]

- Follow the same structure as Theme 1, introducing subthemes, synthesizing findings, and providing detailed citations.

Gap in the Literature

Identify Gaps: What limitations or unanswered questions emerged across your themes and subthemes?

Summary

Justify Your Study: Briefly explain how your research will address these gaps or extend current knowledge.

Preview Your Contribution: State how your study will build on the patterns you have identified and add to the scholarly conversation.

References

(Include a properly formatted [APA 7th edition reference page](#) here with all cited sources.)

[Template Exemplar](#)

[Synthesis Verbs for Literature Reviews](#)