Title of Literature Review

Your Name

Westcliff University

DOC720: Literature Review

Professor's Name

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Chapter Two: Literature Review

This opening section sets the stage for the chapter. It introduces the purpose of the literature review, explains the scope and boundaries of the review—what will and will not be covered—and describes how the chapter is organized. The introduction may also briefly restate the research questions or objectives in order to clarify how they guided the selection, inclusion, and structuring of the literature.

The introduction must also explain how the literature was sourced. This includes identifying the databases searched, such as *ProQuest*, *JSTOR*, or *EBSCO*, as well as the keywords and phrases used during the search process. It should also describe inclusion and exclusion criteria, such as limits based on publication date, peer-reviewed status, population, or relevance to the research questions. This sourcing paragraph demonstrates that the review is grounded in a thorough and systematic search strategy and supports the credibility of the literature review process.

Your literature sourcing criteria must prioritize peer-reviewed, scholarly journal articles. Where peer-reviewed sources are not available—particularly in emerging or highly specialized fields—the next most credible sources are government-issued or government-sponsored research reports and white papers. (For applied projects (i.e. Doctoral Research Projects) your sources should include a balance of scholarly and practice-oriented materials, with at least 50% coming from peer-reviewed journal articles. You should also incorporate credible gray literature—such as government reports, policy briefs, or organizational publications—when directly relevant to your setting or topic.) The use of textbooks, such as Creswell and Creswell, is not permitted in the literature review, as these are methodological references, not peer-reviewed research.

Dissertations, non-peer-reviewed studies, books, conference proceedings, blogs, .com websites, or other popular and non-scholarly sources are also prohibited.

For those completing a traditional dissertation, the literature review must include at least 80 references, with most sources published within the last five years to ensure relevance and currency. The chapter should be no fewer than 30 pages in length, demonstrating depth, breadth, and scholarly rigor in engaging with the existing body of research.

For DRPs, the literature review must include at least 40–to–80 references, with most sources published within the last five years to ensure relevance and currency. The section should be no fewer than 20 pages in length, demonstrating depth, breadth, and scholarly rigor in engaging with the existing body of research.

Theoretical *or* Conceptual Framework

The opening section of the literature review is followed by the theoretical or conceptual framework. This section builds on the preliminary framework identified in your prospectus to provide a thorough, literature-based foundation for your study. The framework—whether theoretical or conceptual—should help explain the phenomenon under investigation, support the development of your research questions, and guide your study's design, including your data collection and analysis approach.

You must identify the theory, model, or key concepts that form the foundation of your study. This includes:

- Stating the full name of the theory or model
- Naming the originating author(s) and the year it was introduced
- Citing relevant, peer-reviewed sources that demonstrate the framework's credibility and application in similar research contexts

Your explanation must describe the core components of the framework and show how they align with your research problem and purpose. You should clearly discuss how the framework will inform the interpretation of your findings.

Note: Depending on your study's design, you will use *either* a theoretical framework *or* a conceptual framework—not both. Therefore, it follows that your heading for this section will be Theoretical Framework *or* Conceptual Framework.

Here is a basic distinction:

Theoretical Framework	Conceptual Framework
Draws from one or more established theories in literature	Synthesized key concepts or constructs from prior research
Often used in quantitative studies	Often used in qualitative studies
Explains why a phenomenon occurs	Clarifies what elements are central to the study and how they relate
Examples: Social Cognitive Theory, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs	**Examples**: Model built from themes like engagement, identify, or persistence

- **Theoretical Framework**: Drawn from one or more established theories. Often used in **quantitative** research. Helps explain *why* a phenomenon occurs.

   Example: Bandura's social cognitive theory

- **Conceptual Framework**: Synthesizes key concepts or constructs from prior research. Often used in **qualitative** research. Helps clarify *what* elements are central to the study and how they relate.

   Example: A model built from themes like engagement, identity, or persistence

You must also include a brief discussion of three to four **alternative frameworks** that were considered but not selected. For each, provide:

- The name of the theory or model

- The originator and timeframe

- Key concepts and relevance to the topic

- A short explanation of why the framework was not selected (e.g., misalignment with the research questions or limited applicability to the study context)

This comparison demonstrates critical thinking and strengthens your rationale for the selected framework.

While Chapter One of your prospectus introduces your framework briefly to establish alignment with the problem, purpose, and questions, this section (Chapter Two) should demonstrate a deeper scholarly engagement. Your discussion must be grounded in **current, peer-reviewed literature**, highlight how the framework has been applied in prior studies, and acknowledge any critiques, limitations, or ongoing scholarly debates related to its use.

Review of Relevant Literature

(organized by trends, themes, theoretical perspectives, methodologies, or chronology)

Once you have established your theoretical or conceptual framework for your study, it's time to move to the review of the literature. This is the core of the literature review section and should be divided into logically structured subsections using APA Level 1 and Level 2 headings. These headings must reflect the thematic, chronological, or methodological organization most appropriate to the study. **The generic heading "Review of Relevant Literature" should be removed** and replaced with analytical headings relevant to specific areas of literature being discussed to help guide the reader through the scholarly conversation.

Each subsection of the literature review should focus on a key area related to the research problem, organizational strategy, or study variables and should be clearly aligned with the

study's research questions and purpose. The literature should be synthesized rather than summarized, emphasizing areas of agreement, disagreement, patterns, methodological strengths or weaknesses, and relevance to the current study. The writing should demonstrate critical engagement by linking studies together to highlight broader insights and gaps.

The number and nature of these subsections will vary based on the topic and complexity of the field but should collectively support the rationale for the proposed study.

Gap in the Literature

This section of the literature review highlights what is missing, inconsistent, underexplored, or outdated in the existing research or professional practice and explains how the proposed study will address that gap. While references to gaps may appear throughout the review, this section consolidates them into a clear rationale for the study.

For traditional dissertation studies, the gap may involve an unstudied population, emerging context, methodological limitation, or unresolved theoretical issue that warrants further investigation.

For applied research projects, the focus may instead be on a problem of practice, such as an ineffective process, policy, program, or intervention that requires evidence-based improvement or innovation.

In all cases, the identified gap or problem of practice must align directly with the study's problem, purpose, and research questions, and should demonstrate why the proposed research or project is both timely and necessary to advance knowledge or practice within the discipline.

Summary

This final section summarizes the key themes and findings discussed in the literature review. It should restate the purpose of the review and highlight the most important conclusions

drawn from the synthesis. The summary must reaffirm the existence and significance of the identified gap or problem of practice and make clear how the proposed study is positioned to address it.

This section also provides a transition to Chapter Three, which will describe the methodology of the study. The summary should briefly preview the next chapter's content, including the research design, data collection methods, and planned analysis procedures.

No new sources or arguments should be introduced here; the focus should remain on reinforcing the rationale for the study and preparing the reader for the detailed description of methods to follow.

References

The reference list contains all sources cited in the literature review. There should be one-to-one correspondence between the citations in text and those included in the references. The references follow APA 7th edition and start on a new page after the conclusion of the literature review.

While formatting references, ensure:

1. They are organized alphabetically.

2. A hanging indent of 0.5" is used.

3. They are double-spaced with no additional space 'before or after.'

4. DOIs are used whenever available, and hyperlinked.

5. Database URLs are not included.

6. References are predominantly from the last five to ten years.

7. References are from credible sources.