

Dissertation Research Methods Workshop 3

During the methodology phase of research, the search for data is the strapline. In contrast, the literature review stage is characterized by the search for theory and concepts. This is crucial because, in soft domains, researchers must make informed choices to identify the theories and concepts that apply to their research questions. Unlike hard science, where there is a hierarchy of theories, different theories coexist in soft applied work, and context plays a critical role. The challenge is to identify the relevant theories and concepts that align with the research question. Failure to do this can lead to a vague and directionless literature review.

The purpose of the literature review is to provide researchers with a conceptual toolkit to support their research. The conceptual toolkit comprises theories and concepts that researchers can use to frame their research questions, design questionnaires, conduct interviews, and analyze data. Researchers should focus on identifying the theories and concepts that will help them conduct their research and not try to become experts in a particular subject area.

There are two general approaches to literature review: thematic and theoretical. The thematic approach involves reviewing concepts, while the theoretical approach requires researchers to select and review a specific theory. The thematic approach is preferable because it allows researchers to identify relevant themes and concepts that align with their research question.

Searching for information using keywords has now replaced traditional library research. Researchers can find relevant journal papers online using keywords. Once they have found a relevant paper, they can identify the references cited in that paper to find additional relevant literature.

It's important for master students to remember that finding the perfect journal paper can be a game-changer. Once you find one, you can easily access other studies that have cited it and check out the author's other works. This can save you a lot of time compared to spending weeks in the library trying to find relevant sources.

However, finding the right literature can be difficult. There's often too much information available, making it feel like searching for a needle in a haystack. To make things easier, you should focus on academic sources and avoid including newspaper articles, professional reports, or other non-academic sources in your literature review. Academic sources are written by experts and researchers in the field and are focused on concepts and theories. By sticking to academic sources, you can avoid contaminating your argument and ensure that your literature review stays on track.

It's also important to note that you should not mention your research question in the literature review. The purpose of the literature review is to explore concepts and theories related to your topic, and mentioning your research question can lead to confusion. Save your research question for later in your dissertation.

At 8:42, the speaker emphasizes the need to focus on concepts and theory without getting sidetracked by practitioner or professional body literature. When students become too comfortable with a topic, they start discussing what they know well instead of engaging with the concepts. This undermines their research and prevents them from working at a master's level. The speaker

encourages students to start with broad textbooks and then quickly focus on the concepts and theory that they will use in their research. They also need to select middle-range concepts that they can work with, instead of unworkable grand concepts like "love" or broad ideas like "CSR." By choosing specific areas of theory, they can create a clear and systematic definition of their research topic.

CSR is a complex concept that cannot be measured practically at the ground level, making it difficult to work with. However, when it comes to writing about it, you can start your literature review by introducing CSR and its key ideas and theoretical approaches. From there, you can quickly move on to the specific concepts or theories that you will be using for your literature. This approach is called core funnelling, where you start with general information from textbooks and other sources and narrow down to the specifics of your research interests. Journals are also an essential source of information in this process.

During a class, the speaker shared a video that illustrates an important point about literature review. The video demonstrated how individuals with a different language or limited vocabulary may not be able to differentiate between the colors blue and green. This comparison can be applied to researchers who lack the appropriate concepts from their literature review. Without a proper set of concepts, researchers may overlook important details and fail to identify critical aspects of their research. Hence, the literature review plays a crucial role in familiarizing researchers with the concepts they require to identify and explore in their research.

In the video, it was shown that certain tribes do not have the concept of blue in their language, and as a result, they cannot see it in the same way as the rest of us. However, they can be taught to see blue by introducing the concept of the color and teaching them to recognize it. The same principle applies to literature review - once researchers are familiarized with the concepts they need, their minds begin to recognize them, and they can then identify and explore them in their research.

The purpose of a literature review is not to write about a particular subject merely for the sake of writing. The primary objective is to find the concepts and theories that are essential for a researcher's work, much like finding the concept of blue. Literature reviews are iterative and may require several rewrites to achieve the desired result.

When conducting a literature review, researchers should look for gaps in the theory and identify the concepts that can address them. They should also consider the valuable findings and ideas in their research area that require further exploration. Additionally, researchers may introduce a particular theoretical approach they wish to take and confirm it in the literature review. The methodology used in the research can also be identified in the literature review.

Researchers should constantly question what they are doing and be critical of their work. The concepts and ideas obtained from the literature review should make them think differently and approach things from a new perspective. Ultimately, the literature review provides researchers with the conceptual toolkit they need to conduct their research and identify critical aspects that may have been overlooked previously.

As I mentioned earlier, the slide is a simple reminder that literature review should come before research. Once you have the necessary concepts, you can start thinking about the methodology, which is the next chapter.

I came across a quote that I really like from a principal in an American university. The quote talks about the difference between students at different levels of education and how they approach research. When students get to higher levels of education, they often struggle with information overload and feeling overwhelmed. They think that they can find the answers they need simply by doing searches, instead of being systematic and rigorous.

The quote also emphasizes the importance of using keywords to find the right information, like finding a needle in a haystack. You should be building your literature rather than just finding it. In a literature review, you're not just finding concepts and theory, you're also arguing for them and explaining why you're using them in your research.

You won't always find the perfect papers that answer your research question in your searches. Instead, you'll find pieces of a jigsaw puzzle that you'll need to put together. However, every so often, you may find that one paper that makes a big difference. When you find that paper, you can look at where it has been cited, the reference list, and the author to quickly build your literature.

Overall, the process is straightforward. You start with a research question and defined parameters, which generate keywords to use in your searches. Then, you obtain a list of literature and sources. It is important to be able to generate the necessary keywords and talk to the librarian about them during your research. This is a vital skill for researchers, and it takes practice to become proficient at it.

When you evaluate literature, you must decide which sections are useful and which ones are not. This is an intellectual challenge, but a rule of thumb is to keep every three or four papers you review. The key is to find one thing you can use in a paper and focus on that. It is easy to get caught up in the details of a single paper and lose sight of the bigger picture. You must be able to pick out the one or two things that are most relevant to your research and use them to develop your argument.

The circularity of the process is important because new ideas will come to you as you read and understand the concepts. You will develop new parameters and form new ideas that will help you with your research question. The more you practice this skill, the better you will become at it. You might propose to do research based on a specific question. But as you do your literature review, that question might change. As you read through the literature, it's possible that you may alter your direction. Even though you may be exploring the same topic, your question may adjust based on the learning gained from the literature review. This doesn't mean you're stuck. If the literature takes you in a slightly different direction, that's perfectly fine. In fact, it's good analysis because you're not just repeating information, but rather critically understanding and analyzing the concepts. It's like seeing not just blue, but also red. This means you're opening your mind to new ideas that you wouldn't have thought of otherwise, and your question may move a little in that direction. This is understandable and should be part of the discussion with your advisor.

Doing a literature review can be a daunting task. However, it's a crucial step in developing a good research question. A good research question should be based on the literature and concepts you'll be exploring. Once you have identified these concepts, you'll have the tools you need to start your research.

You should start by reading textbooks and general books in your area of interest to get a general understanding of the concepts. Then, you can summarize the key ideas and include the key writers who have contributed to the theory. From there, you can narrow down your focus to the specific concepts and theories you'll be using for your research.

It's important to note that your literature review will provide you with new insights. When you write your discussion chapter, you'll come back to the literature review and comment on how your findings relate to the literature. This is a fundamental part of the academic process.

Your literature review should lead into your methodology chapter. At the end of your literature review, you should summarize the concepts or theories that will be used in your research and make it clear that there is a connection between your literature review and the next chapter, which is methodology. Your literature review is done in order to develop a methodology to find the data you need.

When conducting a literature review, it's important to use keywords and be clear about your criteria. While being systematic is necessary, it's important not to go overboard. You should be able to identify whether something is relevant and useful and be able to explain why. Keywords are key when it comes to finding the right literature.

On the Moodle site, you can find a resource about how to do literature reviews. It explains how to use databases and other technologies to narrow down your search. Once you've found all the concepts and theories you need, you can move on to your research.

Remember, it's important to know when to stop, otherwise, your literature review can become endless. You can start your literature review wherever you choose. For example, you may start with a seminal work and use it as your starting point, then move on to other important papers. The arrows in a literature review show how the debate has been broadened.

The main idea behind King's seminal paper is that certain key concepts or theories develop over time in different areas. These concepts are further developed by different scholars, resulting in the emergence of new ideas and themes. Although many different areas of study exist related to a particular topic, usually five or six key concepts have emerged as important for research. The process of literature review involves identifying these themes and explaining how they have been derived from the seminal paper.

One approach to literature review is to take a thematic approach where you look at conceptual themes that have emerged from the seminal paper. For instance, if one of the key themes is identity, you would explain how this important theme has been derived from the seminal paper. Another approach is to focus on one theory, such as the one presented in King's seminal paper, and show how it has been developed over time by different scholars. Both approaches involve the same basic process of identifying key concepts or theories and explaining how they have been further developed.

It's important to note that the date of the seminal paper does not matter as much as the process of theory development. The main idea is to show how different scholars have contributed to the development of a particular theory or concept, regardless of when the original paper was published.

By following this process, you can develop a comprehensive literature review that explains the evolution of key concepts and theories in a particular area of study.

Starting from the top, it is not possible to begin your task 15 minutes ago. Although theories and themes are different, it does not matter which one you use. However, I suggest using a growth theme. The problem with using a theory is that you have to commit to using it in its entirety. You cannot mix and match different aspects of a theory. This can be a significant challenge in research, as I will explain later.

On the other hand, if you identify the conceptual themes that emerge from various theories and explain why they are important to your research, it can be easier and more structured. In my experience, it is rare for a single theory to provide all the answers. The phenomenon you are interested in is multifaceted and multidimensional and cannot be explained by a single theory. If you want to use a theory to explain your research question, that is perfectly acceptable, but you have to use it correctly. You cannot just pick and choose aspects of a theory that you like. If you claim to be using a theory, you have to use it in its entirety. The concepts, such as identity or trust, exist in various theories, and you should explain how these concepts arise in different theories and why they are relevant to your question. This will help you understand why your research question allows you to see the bigger picture. This is a discussion that you should have with your advisor. I hope this clarifies the difference between theory and concepts.

The purpose of theory is to explain things. Whether it's scientific theory explaining the movement of objects in space or consumer behavior strategies, theory is meant to help us understand and make sense of a real phenomenon. If a theory is not helping us explain and make sense of something, then it is not really a theory. A well-known phrase is that theory is practice. When we use theory, it helps us understand what we observe. It is built using concepts that interact and work together within the theoretical framework. This theory has been tested and shown to be valid in the research context.

The point of theory is to explain something and identify the important concepts in relation to the phenomenon being explained. For instance, the theory of planned behavior helps explain how intention leads to behavior through the interaction of attitudes, self-efficacy, and norms of behavior. The different concepts work together and predict a behavior, creating an intention to do something and then behave in a particular way.

The theory of reasoned action is one of the most important theories in psychology. If you want to use this theory in your research, you have to use all of its components, including self-efficacy, norms, attitudes, and intentions. You can't just pick and choose what you want to use from the theory, as it won't work that way.

Concepts, on the other hand, are mental constructs that allow us to see the world in a different way. They have characteristics that we need to understand to comprehend the concept. For example, when we think of a pen, we think of its characteristics like the way it writes and how we use it. The self is also a concept that has different characteristics such as self-esteem, social self, self-knowledge, and so on.

Concepts are not causal but have their own unique characteristics, while a theory shows how different concepts are related to each other and how they work together to form a map of causality. When

doing a literature review, it is essential to understand the concepts related to the topic and how they work together.

These are some of the key elements that you might want to include in your literature review. For example, you may want to write about self-esteem and explore the different theories related to it. Although it may seem daunting at first, writing a literature review is not as difficult as it sounds. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to ask, as I'm here to help.

There are two approaches to writing a literature review: thematic and theoretical. I suggest focusing on the thematic approach, which involves identifying key concepts and exploring them in detail. In this approach, you draw on various theories to support your arguments and ideas.

On the other hand, the theoretical approach involves selecting a specific theory, such as reasoned action, and examining it in detail. While this approach may seem more structured, it can be more challenging to apply the theory to your research.

In general, I recommend the thematic approach as it allows you to explore a broad range of ideas and concepts, drawing on different theories to support your arguments. However, it can be more challenging to structure your ideas in this approach.

Ultimately, the approach you choose will depend on your research question and the specific challenges you face. But remember, I'm here to help you navigate through any challenges you may encounter.

The discussion is about the importance of a literature review in academic research and how it helps understand consumer behavior. If you want to write a literature review, you should decide whether to follow a thematic or theoretical approach. If you choose a theoretical approach, you have to focus on writing about the theory you have selected and conduct research accordingly. On the other hand, if you choose a thematic approach, you have to write about a set of concepts that are common in different theories. It is essential to choose appropriate side titles for each concept, and you should not have a lot of them.

If you want to conduct a theoretical literature review, you should write about the origins, criticisms, adaptations, and empirical evidence of the theory you have chosen. However, it is a hard chapter, and you should consult with your advisors to write it properly. Nonetheless, a good literature review, whether theoretical or thematic, can provide you with the concepts you need and guide you on what to look for in terms of research.

The literature review sets the research in an academic context, and it is crucial to focus on concepts and theories rather than any other factors. You can use reports such as CIPD or Mintel, given that they relate to the concepts that allow you to build your argument. However, the key message is that the literature review should focus on concepts and theories to provide a clear academic context for research.

Of course, a literature review should be based on a range of sources. When it comes to the number of

references in a literature review, there is no fixed answer. However, people often suggest having roughly 100 words per reference. So, if your literature review is around 4000 words, it would have approximately 35 to 40 references. But, it's okay to have fewer or more references based on good reasons.

The literature review is about concepts and theories, which lead into the methodology section. Your literature review should inform the next stage of your research. Therefore, it's essential to start broadly. For instance, if you are writing about CSR, you can write a page or two about its conceptual context, why it's important, and where it came from before diving into specific theories. By contextualizing your work, you can provide a bigger picture of your research, which will make it easier for your readers to understand. Textbooks can be a great resource in this regard.