Writing a Literature Review Research Paper

Based on Writing Integrative Literature Reviews: Guidelines and Examples by Richard J. Torraco

What is an Integrative Literature Review?
The integrative literature review is a distinctive form of research that generates new knowledge about the topic reviewed. It is a form of research that reviews, critiques, and synthesizes representative literature on a topic in an integrated way such that new frameworks and perspectives on the topic are generated.

Why Write a Literature Review Article?
Most integrative literature reviews are intended to address two kinds of topics—mature topics or new, emerging topics. As a topic matures and the size of its literature grows, there is a corresponding growth and development in the knowledge base of the topic. An integrative literature review of a mature topic addresses the need for a critique of, and the potential re-conceptualization of, the expanding and more diversified knowledge base of the topic as it continues to develop.

The second kind of integrative literature review addresses new or emerging topics that would benefit from a holistic conceptualization and synthesis of the literature to date. Because these topics are relatively new and have not yet undergone a comprehensive review of the literature, the review is more likely to lead to an initial or preliminary conceptualization of the topic (i.e., a new model or framework).

Integrative Literature Review Checklist

Before Writing an Integrative Literature Review
Ask yourself:
(a) What type of review article will be written (i.e., review of a new topic or a mature topic?). Is an integrative literature review the most appropriate way to address the research problem/question?
(b) Is there a need for the integrative literature review? Will the review article make a significant, value-added contribution to new thinking in the field?

When Organizing an Integrative Literature Review
Ask yourself:
(c) Is the review article organized around a coherent conceptual structuring of the topic (e.g., a guiding theory, a set of competing models)?
(d) Are the methods for conducting the literature review sufficiently described? How was the literature selected? What keywords and procedures were used to search the literature?
What databases were used? What criteria were used for retaining or discarding the literature? How was the literature reviewed (e.g., complete reading of each piece of literature, reading of abstracts only, a staged review)? How were the main ideas and themes from the literature identified and analyzed?

**When Writing an Integrative Literature Review**

*Ask yourself:*

(e) Does the article critically analyze existing literature on the topic (i.e., is a critique provided)?
(f) Does the article synthesize knowledge from the literature into a significant, value added contribution to new knowledge on the topic?
(g) What forms of synthesis are used to stimulate further research on the topic? A research agenda (research questions or propositions), a taxonomy (or other conceptual classification of constructs), or an alternative model or conceptual framework, or meta-theory.
(h) Does the article describe the logic and conceptual reasoning used by the author to synthesize the model or framework from the review and critique of the literature?
(i) Are provocative questions for further research presented to capture the interest of scholars and/or practitioners?
(j) Does the review include the appropriate manuscript elements according to the most recent edition of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association?

For the additional and detailed information regarding how to write an integrative literature review research paper, you can access Torraco’s full article via the U of M online library at [http://hrd.sagepub.com.floyd.lib.umn.edu/content/4/3/356.full.pdf+html](http://hrd.sagepub.com.floyd.lib.umn.edu/content/4/3/356.full.pdf+html)