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What is a Literature Review?

- A critical appraisal/ evaluation/ assessment/ critique of existing research on a topic or in a specific field.
- It **summarises** research in the field (like articles, books, etc.).
- It critically evaluates the **strengths and weaknesses** of that research.
- It assesses the ways in which existing research **contributes** to knowledge in the field, e.g. common or particularly original readings among scholars in that area.
- It maps the **impact** of this research, e.g. the extent to which the research successfully reflects lived experiences, and/or the extent to which such theories contribute to practical contexts.
- Most literature reviews analyse **many sources** in order to paint a broad picture of the field of study.
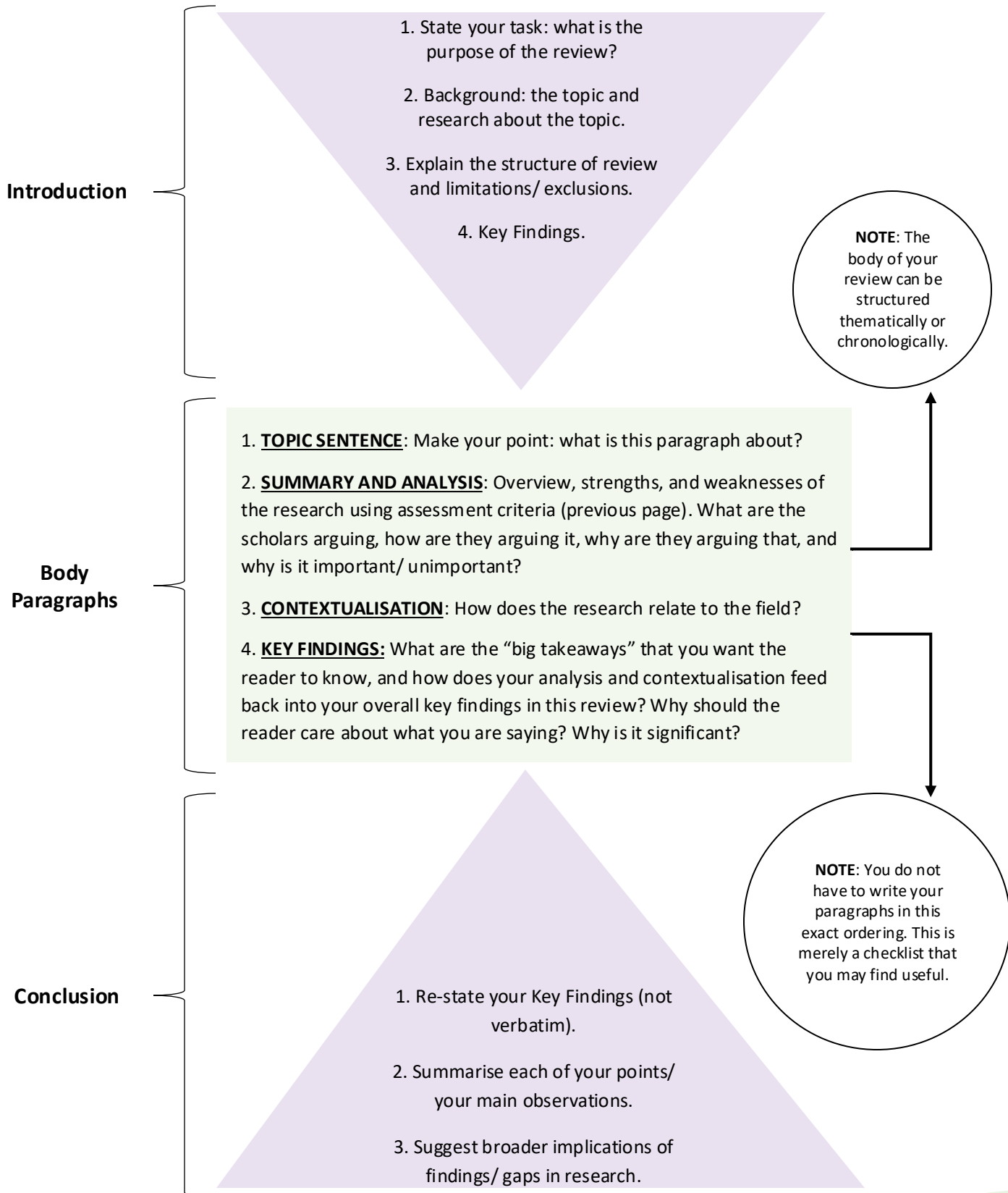
Why are Literature Reviews valuable?

- They provide information about the field for other scholars.
- They allow students to demonstrate their knowledge/ reading within the topic.
- They encourage students to engage with scholarly works in the field.
- They encourage contextual awareness.
- They enable scholars to identify gaps in current scholarship about a topic. This helps scholars to formulate more original and ground-breaking ideas, theories, and experiments.

Literature Reviews assess the strengths and weaknesses of criteria such as:

- Central **theses**, conclusions, and key findings of the sources, i.e. Were these reasonable, convincing, and applicable? Why/ why not?
- **Arguments** made within the sources, i.e. Were these arguments logical? Were the interpretations fair or were the connections tenuous?
- The authors' **methodologies** (how they conducted the research), i.e. Did they take a materialist approach (mapping their ideas alongside society/ culture/ science), or did they use a particular critical lens (postcolonialism, feminism, Marxism, etc.), or were they grounded solely in theory? How effective were these choices? What did they do in their lab experiments, and were these good/ replicable choices?
- **Theoretical frameworks**, i.e. how appropriate were the theoretical frameworks used? Were there better frameworks that would have been more appropriate? Why/ how?
- How appropriate were the **sources** the authors used? I.e. evaluate the bibliographies of each source and how the authors used them, and ask yourself: were they a bit dated? Are these essential studies in the field, or are they outliers? Do you know of any foundational or important works that would have been more relevant/ appropriate?
- Were there any **gaps**, **omissions**, **errors**, or **oversights** in the sources?
- **Contextual awareness**: how do the sources relate to the field more broadly, and to each other? Do the sources make sufficient contributions to scholarly discourse? What are those contributions and why are they valuable (or not)?

Structure and Checklist

Introduction

1. State your task: what is the purpose of the review?

2. Background: the topic and research about the topic.

3. Explain the structure of review and limitations/ exclusions.

4. Key Findings.

NOTE: The body of your review can be structured thematically or chronologically.

Body Paragraphs

1. **TOPIC SENTENCE**: Make your point: what is this paragraph about?

2. **SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS**: Overview, strengths, and weaknesses of the research using assessment criteria (previous page). What are the scholars arguing, how are they arguing it, why are they arguing that, and why is it important/ unimportant?

3. **CONTEXTUALISATION**: How does the research relate to the field?

4. **KEY FINDINGS:** What are the "big takeaways" that you want the reader to know, and how does your analysis and contextualisation feed back into your overall key findings in this review? Why should the reader care about what you are saying? Why is it significant?

NOTE: You do not have to write your paragraphs in this exact ordering. This is merely a checklist that you may find useful.

Conclusion

1. Re-state your Key Findings (not verbatim).

2. Summarise each of your points/ your main observations.

3. Suggest broader implications of findings/ gaps in research.

Literature Review: Introduction Example

The purpose of this literature review is to analyse and synthesise existing research concerning the psychological effects of remote work on employee well-being. With the widespread adoption of remote work arrangements – accelerated significantly by the global COVID-19 pandemic (Smith, 2022) – scholars have increasingly turned their attention to how such shifts impact workers' mental health, job satisfaction, and work-life balance (Jones, 2024; Moore *et al.*, 2025). The objective of this review is to identify prevailing trends in the literature, evaluate the strength of existing evidence, and highlight critical gaps for future inquiry.

Purpose

The move toward remote work has altered traditional employment structures, challenging long-standing assumptions about workplace productivity, social interaction, and organisational culture. Early studies in the 2000s primarily focused on telecommuting as a niche arrangement for a select group of knowledge workers (Kelly, 2006). However, more recent research has expanded to examine remote work as a mainstream phenomenon with profound implications for psychological well-being (Murphy *at al.*, 2020; Taylor, 2021). Themes such as digital burnout, social isolation, autonomy, and flexibility have emerged as focal points in scholarly discussions, often situated within frameworks of occupational health psychology and organizational behaviour.

Background

This review is structured into four thematic sections: (1) theoretical frameworks that explain psychological outcomes in remote work settings; (2) empirical findings about stress, anxiety, and burnout among remote workers; (3) factors that moderate well-being, such as job role, home environment, and managerial support; and (4) interventions and best practices proposed in the literature. The review is limited to peer-reviewed journal articles published from 2010 onward, reflecting the increasing relevance and evolution of remote work practices over the past decade. Studies focusing exclusively on gig workers, freelancers, or digital nomads have been excluded to concentrate on employees in long-term remote roles within formal organisations.

Structure, Limitations, Exclusions

The key finding of this literature review is that, while remote work is frequently associated with increased flexibility and perceived autonomy, both of which are factors linked to positive well-being (Williams *et al.*, 2023), it also poses risks related to work-home boundary blurring, decreased social support, and prolonged screen exposure. Notably, several studies highlight the disproportionate psychological burden borne by caregivers and individuals with limited access to dedicated workspaces (Gonzalez, 2019; Doyle, 2021). Despite a growing body of evidence, longitudinal studies and cross-cultural comparisons remain scarce, underscoring the need for more comprehensive research in this area.

Key Findings

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Literature Review: Body Paragraph Example

Recent scholarship has increasingly explored the correlation between urban green spaces and mental well-being, yet discrepancies in methodological approaches, theoretical frameworks, and geographical scope have led to fragmented and sometimes contradictory conclusions.

Topic Sentence

Johansen and Lee (2019), for example, conducted a large-scale cross-sectional study integrating GIS mapping with self-reported mental health assessments across five major European cities. Their findings suggest a statistically significant association between proximity to green space and reduced symptoms of anxiety and depression. While the study's wide sample size and spatial precision provide strong external validity and replicability, its reliance on self-report measures introduces potential response bias, and its cross-sectional design limits the ability to draw causal inferences. In contrast, Banerjee (2021) employed a phenomenological methodology, conducting in-depth interviews with residents of low-income urban neighbourhoods to explore how individuals perceive and emotionally respond to nearby green spaces. This qualitative approach offers rich, context-specific insight into how access to nature is experienced, particularly among marginalised populations. As Banerjee notes, "green spaces are not simply physical amenities, but emotionally charged sites of memory, identity, and escape" (74); this suggests that affective dimensions of place remain under-theorised in much of the empirical research. However, the study's small sample and lack of longitudinal scope restrict its applicability and limit its capacity to assess sustained mental health outcomes. A further limitation across much of the literature is a narrow geographic focus. As Carmichael *et al.* (2020) and others note, most studies are concentrated in high-income, Western contexts, often neglecting how informal green spaces, cultural attitudes towards nature, and differing urban infrastructures shape mental health outcomes in cities across the Global South.

Overview + Analysis (Strengths/ Weaknesses)

Despite these gaps, the literature consistently reinforces the central thesis of this dissertation: the fact that urban greenery plays a vital role in enhancing psychological resilience and emotional regulation. These findings support a broader shift within public health and urban planning literature towards recognising the built environment as a key determinant of mental health.

Key Findings

However, the inconsistency in theoretical framing – ranging from biophilia to social ecological models – and a lack of cross-cultural comparative studies suggest a need for more interdisciplinary, inclusive, and longitudinal research. Addressing these shortcomings will be crucial for developing urban interventions that are not only evidence-based but also equitable and globally relevant.

Contextualisation + the Field

Literature Review: Conclusion Example

In conclusion, the literature on the Dada movement presents a nuanced understanding of its role not merely as a radical rejection of artistic conventions, but as a complex intervention that destabilised prevailing narratives of meaning, authorship, and sociopolitical authority in the postwar period. **Key Finding**

Foundational analyses by Weiss (2015) and Garcia (2018) effectively highlight how Dada's embrace of absurdity, chance operations, and anti-art gestures functioned as strategic disruptions to both aesthetic traditions and nationalist ideologies. These studies provide robust historical contextualisation, particularly situating Dada within the cultural trauma of World War I and the broader crises of modernity, thereby framing the movement as a critical site in which art and politics intersected. However, a notable limitation across much of the scholarship (Lopez *et al.*, 2009; Weiss, 2015; Garcia, 2018; Jones, 2023) is its predominant focus on European epicentres such as Zurich, Berlin, and Paris, which marginalises non-Western perspectives and the movement's global reverberations. Moreover, while theoretical discussions richly explore Dada's nihilistic and anarchic impulses, empirical investigations into its reception by contemporary audiences or its material influence on subsequent art movements remain underdeveloped. Some studies, such as Patel's (2021) interdisciplinary approach, attempt to bridge these gaps by linking Dada's historical context to its influence on contemporary digital and performance art; yet, these are exceptions rather than the standard across the field. **Summary of Review**

This imbalance suggests a need for more diversified methodologies and broader geographic scope in future research. My dissertation responds directly to these gaps by undertaking a comparative analysis of Dada-inspired artistic practices in postcolonial contexts (specifically in South Asia and Latin America), thus extending the movement's historiography beyond its traditional European confines. Additionally, through archival research and interviews with contemporary artists influenced by Dadaist aesthetics, this study introduces empirical methods to examine both historical reception and current reinterpretations of Dada, offering a more grounded account of its transnational and temporal impact. **Research Gaps**

Overall, the reviewed literature solidifies Dada's pivotal contribution to unsettling entrenched power structures within both art and society, but also reveals critical omissions that, if addressed, will deepen our understanding of its multifaceted legacy. By critically engaging with both the strengths and weaknesses of existing studies, this review highlights the importance of expanding beyond Eurocentric narratives and incorporating empirical analyses to more fully capture Dada's complex and ongoing impact on art historical discourse. **Broader Implications**