Literature Reviews

What is literature?
- Scholarly writings on a topic (journal articles, books, conference proceedings, dissertations, primary sources)
- A continuously evolving group of works that interact with each other on a topic
- Formative sources – original and influential sources on a focus of study

What is a literature review?
A literature review offers an informative overview of current research on a particular topic. Its purpose is to objectively discuss major scholars and key issues. A literature review can function as an independent document or as a section of a larger work.

Why do we need literature reviews?
A literature review helps the researcher to:
- Understand the topic
- Focus the purpose of their research and develop ideas
- Demonstrate knowledge of the research topic and sources

Steps for Reviewing the Literature (Roberts, 2010)
1. Locate literature (sources)
   a. Create a detailed and specific research question to guide your research.
   b. Identify key terms, phrases, and descriptors to use when searching for sources.
   c. Search for sources through the library, university databases, and online.
   d. Evaluate sources for credibility.
2. Analyze the literature
   a. Read sources and take notes.
   b. Include publication information to cite sources correctly.
   c. Consider major themes, issues, commonalities, and differences.
   d. Continue searching for more sources to fill in gaps or questions.
3. Synthesize
   a. Research Matrix
   b. Literature Map
   c. Concept Map
4. Organize
   a. Chronological
   b. Thematic
   c. Methodological
   d. General to specific
5. Draft
   a. Use headings and sub-headings to organize sections of the paper.
   b. Emphasize relatedness between sources – similarities and differences.
   c. Be selective in the discussions of sources and only include material that is directly related to the research focus.

Reference:

Write your own future!