Doing the literature review: do’s and don’ts

- Important to choose the right/relevant type of literature review approach (e.g. systematic approach viewed as more quantitative vs narrative approach viewed as more qualitative)
  Takeaway: Choose your style and be consistent in the application

- A summary of literature is not a literature review
  Takeaway: Need to integrate literature and get to a conclusion

- Structure: Start with a broad scope and move towards a more focused area – meaning, start with a general overview and then switch to a more focused approach with regards to a particular aspect. The type of literature used will be important (e.g. what you can get and how concepts are constructed)
  Takeaway: Incorporate good examples (be specific and also quote good examples)

- Use examples to make concrete statements (e.g. real life examples and concepts)
  Takeaway: Translate theory into practice

- Methodology is important
  Takeaway: Ask how and what literature must be included or not be included

- Systematize the concepts/terms (e.g. order and clarify definitions)
  Takeaway: Note that concepts/terms can be used interchangeably – note synonyms

- Classification of literature into themes is important
  Takeaway: Be specific and give structure

- Use graphics to ease the flow of the literature review
  Takeaway: Use for example a “word cloud” and a framework to ease reading/flow of text

- Give new direction to other scholars
  Takeaway: Aim to show/give direction for future/other research themes/opportunities

- Don’t be arbitrary in your choice(s)
  Takeaway: Explain your decisions in constructing the literature review

- Don’t be afraid to be controversial or to be not accepted in field
  Takeaway: Balance your approach between controversy and your publishing strategy (journal-sensitivity or peer scholar groups)

- Articulate a clear overview/structure in your literature review
  Takeaway: Follow a structured approach and link the themes to each other (complete product)

- Tables/graphs are effective ways of presenting data
  Takeaway: Good to link text with tables/graphs to explain or illustrate text with visuals (e.g. theoretical model)

- Be careful/sensitive when integrating in-text citation(s) in your writing.
  Takeaway: Focus on the flow of reading/text (e.g. use footnotes to ease flow and to avoid repetition)
In the methodology section describe in detail how you conducted the research
Takeaway: Describe methodology by answering the what, how and why questions in terms of the selection strategy, research terms, research themes and search engines/databases used

Be careful not to use jargon and abbreviations just for the sake of it
Takeaway: Be clear why you use certain terms and do not cloud the description(s) with terms used out of context

Be careful not to use words with a wide/debatable meaning/interpretation (e.g. the word “complex” have many interpretations and is a broad term)
Takeaway: Be careful not to use adjectives that can be difficult to explain or verify

Use a pragmatic style of writing
Takeaway: Follow the protocol in your field (e.g. a statistical review will adhere to a more heuristic style of writing)

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