



Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

Seminar 1 for Doctoral Students

*Topic: Qualitative Research and
Systematic Literature Reviews*

Dr Eleni Koutsogeorgou
16th July 2021

Trawsnewid Addysg; Trawsnewid Bywydau
Transforming Education; Transforming Lives



www.uwtsd.ac.uk

Seminar Structure

- What is qualitative research
- Which are the main qualitative research methods
- What is a systematic literature review
- Steps to design a systematic literature review/search strategy
- Activity on designing a systematic literature review search strategy.

Defining Qualitative Research

- Qualitative research, rather than a cohesive and united continent, is an archipelago constituted by distinct islands, linked by – sometimes light, sometimes more intense – “familial resemblance” (Wittgenstein, 1953, as cited in Cardano, 2011).

Understanding Qualitative Research

- Qualitative research “does not start with hypotheses or preconceived notions. Instead, in accordance with its inductive nature, it involves the researcher’s attempts to discover, understand, and interpret what is happening in the research context” (Bowen, 2006, p. 3).

Understanding Qualitative Research

- Qualitative approach is useful for uncovering meaning and exploring the relationship between individual and collective dimensions, as well as any potential identity changes due to their illness (Pescosolido, Martin, McLeod, & Rogers, 2011)
- Qualitative research approaches are most suitable for eliciting an in-depth understanding of the meaning of everyday social interactions (MacDonald, Sauer, Howie, & Albiston, 2005).

Examples of Qualitative Methodologies

- In-depth interview
 - Focus group
 - Grounded Theory
 - Thematic Analysis
 - Ethnography
 - Participant observation
- and many more..

Strengths and logics of Qualitative methods

- Provides in-depth insights into participant experiences, beliefs, and perceptions
- Based on the interaction between researcher and participants.
- Validity is related to reflexivity of the researcher, which can increase the robustness of results in a qualitative research
- May have a degree of bias, as qualitative research has a subjective element of the researcher; thus cannot be 'tabula rasa'.

Researcher's reflexivity

- Reflexivity of sociology, otherwise the 'return' of science upon itself, is a term analysed also by Pierre Bourdieu, who stated that:

What distresses me when I read some works by sociologists is that people whose profession is to objectivize the social world prove so rarely able to objectivize themselves, and fail so often to realize that what their apparently scientific discourse talks about is not the object but their relation to the object. (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, pp. 68-69).

Researcher's reflexivity

- Bourdieu argued that apart from the issues of reflexivity of sociology already discerned by others, such as the social location (e.g. class, gender, ethnicity) of the researcher, and the position of the researcher in the field of cultural production (along with the researcher's position among possible theoretical, substantive and methodological stances), there is also what Bourdieu called the '**intellectualist bias**' – referring to the scholarly gaze that the sociologist casts upon the social world.

Researcher's reflexivity

- Thus, try to consider your role regarding the impact of the research process on the findings, and to be as **transparent** as possible about all issues encountered when conducting a research, not only in order to set the scene of the data collection and analysis process for the reader, but also to reveal most of the theoretical or practical personal stances through a 'contemplative eye', the interpretive lens of the researcher.

Literature Review vs. Systematic Literature Review

- Conducting a Systematic Literature Review video:
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WUErib-fXV0>

Defining Systematic Literature Review

- A systematic review can be explained as a research method and process for identifying and critically appraising relevant research, as well as for collecting and analyzing data from said research (Liberati et al., 2009).
- The aim of a systematic review is to identify all empirical evidence that fits the pre-specified inclusion criteria to answer a particular research question or hypothesis.

What is the potential contribution of a systematic review?

- There are several advantages and potential contributions of conducting a systematic review.
- For example, we can determine whether an effect is constant across studies and discover what future studies are required to be conducted to demonstrate the effect.
- Techniques can also be used to discover which study-level or sample characteristics have an effect on the phenomenon being studied, such as whether studies conducted in one cultural context show significantly different results from those conducted in other cultural contexts (Davis et al., 2014).

What are we looking to find in a systematic literature review?

- Should **include** empirical or primary research studies.
- Should **not include** other reviews, dissertations, research designs/protocols - that have not been implemented yet, editorials, etc.

What type of analysis can be conducted?

- Often, but not always, statistical methods, such as the meta-analysis, are used to integrate the results of the included studies. A meta-analysis is a statistical method of combining results from different studies to weigh and compare and to identify patterns, disagreements, or relationships that appear in the context of multiple studies on the same topic (Davis et al., 2014).
- However, to be able to perform a meta-analysis, the included studies must share statistical measures (effect size) to compare results (DerSimonian & Laird, 1986).
- Therefore, it is challenging to perform a meta-analysis on studies with different methodological approaches (Tranfield et al., 2003).

What type of analysis can be conducted?

- More qualitative approaches have been developed to assess the quality and strength of findings from different types of studies and to compare results (Greenhalgh, Robert, Macfarlane, Bate, & Kyriakidou, 2004).
- A strict systematic review process is used to collect articles, and then a qualitative approach is used to assess them.
- For example, a thematic or content analysis is a commonly used technique and can be broadly defined as a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns in the form of themes within a text (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Important questions to consider in each step of the review.

Phase 1: design

- Is this review needed and what is the contribution of conducting this review?
- What is the potential audience of this review?
- What is the specific purpose and research question(s) this review will be addressing?
- What is an appropriate method to use of this review's specific purpose?
- What is the search strategy for this specific review? (including search terms, databases, inclusion and exclusion criteria etc.)

Phase 2: conduct

- Does the search plan developed in phase one work to produce an appropriate sample or does it need adjustment?
- What is the practical plan for selecting articles?
- How will the search process and selection be documented?
- How will the quality of the search process and selection be assessed?

Phase 3: analysis

- What type of information needs to be abstracted to fulfill the purpose of the specific review?
- What type of information is needed to conduct the specific analysis?
- How will reviewers be trained to ensure the quality of this process?
- How will this process be documented and reported?

Phase 4: structuring and writing the review

- Are the motivation and the need for this review clearly communicated?
- What standards of reporting are appropriate for this specific review?
- What information needs to be included in the review?
- Is the level of information provided enough and appropriate to allow for transparency so readers can judge the quality of the review?
- The results clearly presented and explained?
- Is the contribution of the review clearly communicated?

Source: p.336, Snyder
(2019).

Steps for conducting a Systematic Literature Review

STEP 1) Develop a Literature Review Question (also called a Research Question)

STEP 2) Identify search keywords

- Design your search strategy - use at least two scientific databases to identify research study journal articles that answer the research question. Set inclusion and exclusion criteria based on the topic of interest. For example, can include studies published in English, between 2015-2021, but exclude studies that are not empirical studies. Apply any filters in the database search accordingly. Use Boolean operators (i.e. AND, OR, etc.)

STEP 3) Screen, select, and analyse/synthesise

- Screen the abstracts first, to select which studies can be included for further reading of their full text. Then read them carefully and collect the main characteristics (e.g. aim, method, location, etc.) of the study and the findings that respond to your research question. Analyse the findings by synthesizing the information across the selected studies (e.g. by using thematic analysis).

Example of PRISMA Flow Diagram

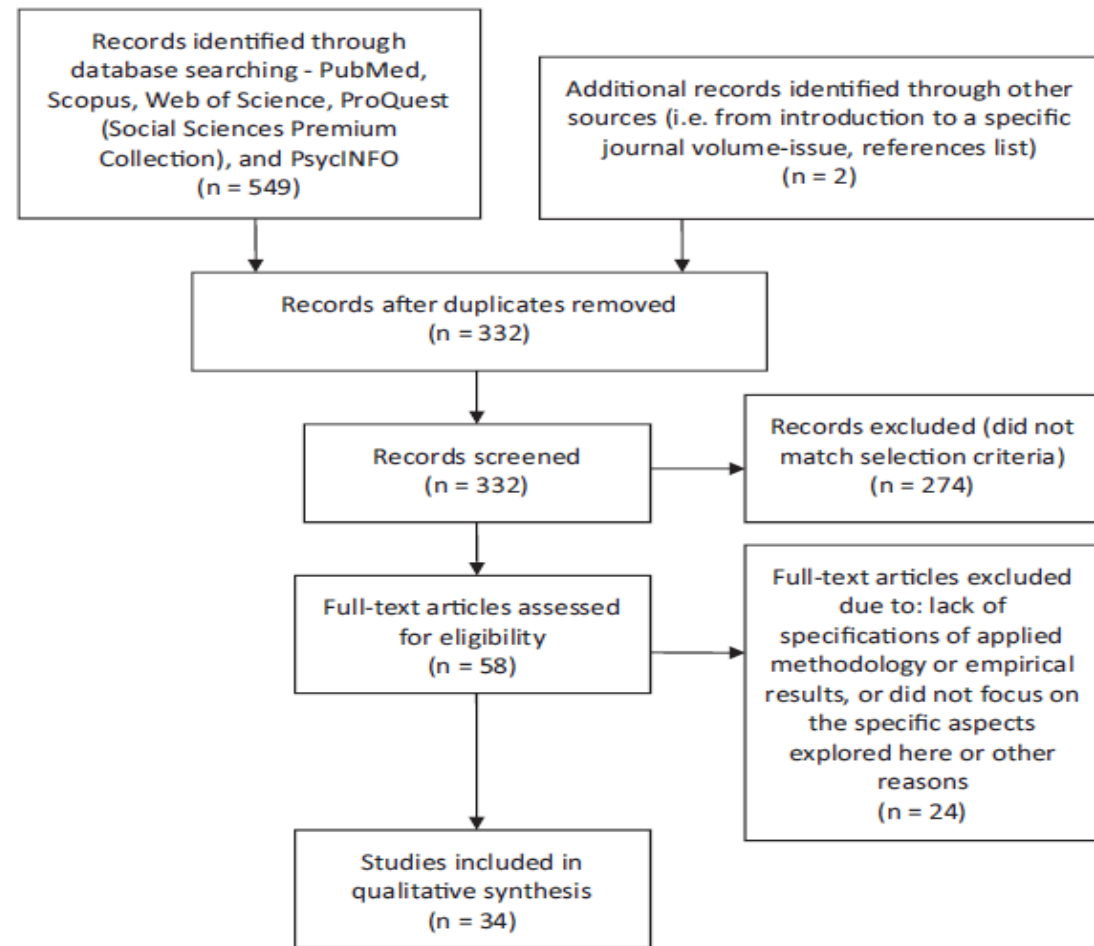


Figure 1. Process of inclusion of studies in the current systematic literature review (PRISMA Flow Diagram [21]).

Example from: p.3439,
Koutsogeorgou, E., Chiesi, A.M., &
Leonardi, M. (2020)

Activity

- For the next 30 minutes, develop a **research question** and based on it, consider the following in order to design your systematic literature review:
 - Which **databases** you would use?
 - Which **keywords** you would select for your search strategy?
 - What **inclusion criteria** you would set for your selection of studies?
 - How many **results** did you find?
 - What **filters** you would apply to narrow down your results?
-
- Share your thoughts.

Conclusion

- Qualitative research provides an in-depth exploration of the experiences and narratives of the participants.
- There are many qualitative methods to choose from, depending on the topic of interest and context.
- Researcher's reflexivity is important, particularly in qualitative research.
- Systematic literature review is conducted following specific steps to ensure any relevant study to the topic of the interest has been screened and included.
- For analysis of systematic literature review data can be used quantitative (e.g. meta-analysis) or qualitative methods (e.g. thematic analysis).

Bibliography

- Bowen, G. A. (2006). Grounded Theory and Sensitizing Concepts. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 5(3), 1-9.
- Bourdieu, P., & Wacquant, L. J. (1992). *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, 77–101
- Cardano, M. (2011). *La ricerca qualitativa*. Bologna: Mulino.
- Davis, J., Mengersen, K., Bennett, S., & Mazerolle, L. (2014). Viewing systematic reviews and meta-analysis in social research through different lenses. *SpringerPlus*, 3, 511.
- DerSimonian, R., & Laird, N. (1986). Meta-analysis in clinical trials. *Controlled Clinical Trials*, 7, 177–188
- Flick, U. (2009). *An Introduction to Qualitative Research* (4th ed.). London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Flick, U., von Kardorff, E., & Steinke, I. (2004). *A companion to qualitative research*. Glasgow: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Greenhalgh, T., Robert, G., Macfarlane, F., Bate, P., & Kyriakidou, O. (2004). Diffusion of innovations in service organizations: Systematic review and recommendations. *Milbank Quarterly*, 82, 581–629.
- Koutsogeorgou, E., Chiesi, A.M., & Leonardi, M. (2020) Social capital components and social support of persons with multiple sclerosis: a systematic review of the literature from 2000 to 2018, *Disability and Rehabilitation*, 42:24, 3437-3449,
- Liberati, A., Altman, D. G., Tetzlaff, J., Mulrow, C., Gøtzsche, P. C., Ioannidis, J. P. A., ... Moher, D. (2009). The PRISMA statement for reporting systematic reviews and meta-analyses of studies that evaluate health care interventions: Explanation and elaboration. *Annals of Internal Medicine*, 151, W–65.
- MacDonald, E., Sauer, K., Howie, L., & Albiston, D. (2005). What happens to social relationships in early psychosis? A phenomenological study of young people's experiences. *Journal of Mental Health*, 14(2), 129-143.
- Pescosolido, B. A., Martin, J. K., McLeod, J. D., & Rogers, A. (Eds.). (2011). *Handbook of the Sociology of Health, Illness, and Healing* (Vol. Handbooks of Sociology and Social Research). New York: Springer Science+Business Media, LLC.
- Snyder, H., 2019. Literature review as a research methodology: An overview and guidelines. *Journal of Business Research*, 104, pp.333-339.
- Tranfield, D., Denyer, D., & Smart, P. (2003). Towards a methodology for developing evidence-informed management knowledge by means of systematic review. *British Journal of Management*, 14, 207–222.

Thank you

Any questions?

Dr Eleni Koutsogeorgou

e.koutsogeorgou@uwtsd.ac.uk