

Assessing and summarizing research

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Methods of looking at literature

- Scanning or looking through the literature
 - To know what has been already been done in your area (or subject) of interest
 - To strengthen your arguments or substantiate your point of view
 - To learn about opposing view points
- Systematic Review of the literature
 - To understand what works best
 - To provide an exhaustive summary of literature relevant to a research question
 - To find gaps in the literature to identify future areas of research

Some types of study design used

- Experimental design - where randomised assignment to the intervention is made (Randomised Control Trials)
- Quasi-experimental designs that include comparison groups etc
- Time series, cross-sectional and panel data studies
- Natural experiments
 - Only primary studies where impacts have been clearly identified and documented are used for systematic reviews

Assessing study quality

- Is there sampling bias for cross section studies
 - How representative is the conducted survey and what population is represented
- Were the mechanism of assignment for control or comparison groups adequate
 - was the allocation or identification method able to control for selection bias?
- Were there any spill-overs or contamination
 - was the study adequately protected against performance bias?
- Are the conclusions reached in the study supported by evidence within the paper?

For Synthesis

Before you begin

- Group the studies that you have found
- List out the aspects you would like to look at
 - Actors
 - Objectives
 - Methods
 - etc

For systematic reviews

- Meta Analysis (Quantitative methods)
- Narrative (or meta) synthesis (Quantitative, Qualitative, mixed methods)