

Exploring Literature Review Types in the Soft Sciences: The Case of Papers Published in Language and Linguistics, Management, and Sociology

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Abstract: The literature review plays a crucial role in academic research by effectively identifying research gaps in several dimensions, including conceptual, methodological, and theoretical aspects. This basic content analysis was an attempt to examine the types of Literature Review (LR) used by Persian researchers in the soft sciences, including language and linguistics, management, and sociology. To such an end, we followed Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) to conduct this systematic review, comprising 313 papers from the three journals (Language and Linguistics (n = 77), Iranian Journal of Sociology (n = 130), and Journal of Management Research in Iran (n = 106)). We codified the LRs in MAXQDA 20, using six major LR types: theoretical, argumentative, integrative, methodological, historical, and systematic. The descriptive results show similarities and differences concerning the types of LRs used by researchers across the three fields of language and linguistics, management, and sociology. The results also indicate that Persian researchers of soft sciences tended to use mostly theoretical (87.89%) and historical reviews (86.74%), and infrequently methodological reviews (11.51%). The Code Map results showed various co-occurrences and relationships among the historical, theoretical, integrative, and systematic reviews. Overall, we concluded that co-construction of knowledge, partially based on previous studies in LRs, is more theoretically- and historically oriented in the soft sciences research conducted by Persian researchers. The study has implications for student researchers and material developers of research writing.

Keywords: Basic Content Analysis, Literature Review, Persian Researchers, PRISMA, Soft Sciences

Introduction

Reviewing the literature in research articles, research proposals, theses, and dissertations constitutes one of the central sections of research activities. Researchers usually invest a large amount of time and energy in reading prior research to contextualize their study, help readers deduce its significance, and establish the gap for the study (Meihami & Esfandiari, 2024). Although some researchers tend to incorporate the review of previous research into the introduction and some reference guide manuals (e.g., American Psychological Association, 2020) do not recommend a separate section specifically devoted to the review, common practice in research articles is to use a heading with the title of "literature review" because of the significance attached to previous similar studies.

The way the literature review is developed differs across disciplines and discourse communities, depending on several factors. Some researchers tend to follow a thematic approach to present the review, while others may choose a chronological method to arrange the studies from the latest to the oldest, or vice versa. Other researchers tend to build on more innovative approaches and creatively combine several procedures to critically discuss the review. Whatever the method, the primary focus rests on the different types of review researchers present in this section and the motives

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behind the selection of one type over the other to "show how your work builds usefully on what has already been accomplished in the field" (APA, 2020, p. 138).

Although different subsections of a research article (RA) have been treated from different perspectives, the literature review is the section about which very little information exists. More specifically, the review type used in the literature review is an issue that merits empirical examination. In the present study, we focus on the types of literature reviews utilized by Persian researchers/writers of the soft sciences in their research articles. The ultimate goal is to quantify the review types and discuss the reasons for their use. The study tried to deal with the following research question:

Research Question One: What are the literature review types used in the research articles in Language and Linguistics, Management, and Sociology published in Iranian journals?

Literature Review

Key Characteristics of a Successful Literature Review

Although not all literature reviews share the same features and not all examiners draw on the same set of criteria to evaluate a high-quality review, properly executed reviews follow certain salient qualities. Beginning writers should consider these qualities when crafting their reviews. Boote and Beile (2005) have listed five standards that examiners use to assess the quality of a PhD dissertation in the United States of America. The standards include coverage, synthesis, methodology, significance, and rhetoric. As Boote and Beile commented, researchers should justify criteria for including or excluding information from the review; synthesize information in the review by contextualising the research study, placing the research problem in its historical context, and discussing the major variables, phenomena, and concepts relevant to the study; recognize the methodological advantages and disadvantages of prior research; point to the practical significance of the study, and present the ideas as coherently as possible in a way that a smooth flow of information is established in the review. Although Boote and Beile discuss these criteria in the context of PhD dissertation reviews that examiners choose to analyze, the criteria can be safely generalized to reviews in other research activities, such as research articles. This can be argued because research articles and PhD dissertations share a similar essence in methodology, form, and rationale. Table 1 outlines the standards (which Boote & Beile call categories) and criteria.

Table 1

Standards and Criteria in Examining Literature Reviews (extracted from Boote and Beile, 2005, p. 8)

Category	Criterion
1. Coverage	A. Justifies criteria for inclusion and exclusion from review.
2. Synthesis	B. Distinguishes what has been done in the field from what needs to be done.
	C. Places the topic or problem in the broader scholarly literature.
	D. Places the research in the historical context of the field.
	E. Acquires and enhances the subject vocabulary.
	F. Articulates important variables and phenomena relevant to the topic.
3. Methodology	G. Synthesizes and gains a new perspective on the literature.
	H. Identifies the main methodologies and research techniques that have been used in the field and their advantages and disadvantages.
	I. Relates ideas and theories in the field to research methodologies.
4. Significance	J. Rationalizes the practical significance of the research problem.
	K. Rationalizes the scholarly significance of the research problem.
5. Rhetoric	L. It is written with a coherent, clear structure that supports the review.

Other researchers draw on other features to describe a literature review. Kornuta and Germaine (2019) argue that literature reviews should focus on controversies, conflicting views, and differing perspectives. Such a perspective echoes that of Felix and Smith (2019), who believe helps researchers maintain a balanced review. Similarly, Paltridge and Starfield (2020) consider good literature reviews to encompass the major points and controversies that underlie the topic at hand. Felix and Smith (2019)

discuss the objectivity, continuity, and connectivity of reviews, explaining that researchers should avoid bias in presenting conflicting viewpoints and recommend maintaining a balanced treatment of different sides of an argument. Lunenburg and Irby (2008) point out that good literature reviews are closely related to the research study, critique prior research, and selectively include information.

Drawing on the discussion in the previous two paragraphs, we propose that satisfactory literature reviews be closely relevant to the issue being investigated, thorough enough, recent, and critical. To appeal to readers, literature reviews should focus on the most relevant studies in the field in which a researcher is working. As Lunenburg and Irby (2008) noted, an obvious sign of a poor review is the inclusion of all the sources the researcher has located, as irrelevant studies risk rendering the review incoherent and redundant. In addition to relevance, reviews should reflect state-of-the-art knowledge in the field. This requires locating and using the latest sources and citing them in the review to convince readers that the study is consistent with the latest developments in the particular discourse community (Feak & Swales, 2009). Using old sources tends to undermine the credibility of the study, raising questions about its originality and novelty. The third central feature is the extensive treatment of the various dimensions of the issue, offering readers a fuller picture of the study. The reviews need to offer a comprehensive account of all the major variables the study has dealt with, treat extensively previous research, include current developments, controversies, and breakthroughs, and explain relevant background theory (Walter & Stouck, 2020).

Finally, critiquing previous research is the hallmark of good literature reviews, a point which, as Paltridge and Starfield (2020) asserted, many student and novice writers most often find difficult to achieve. In Felix and Smith's (2019) words, "a literature review is not a collection of facts, figures and findings mashed together on pages in an incoherent manner" (p. 75), but "a good literature review summarizes and critiques related studies and shows how their findings link to the problem being investigated" (Kornuta & Germaine 2019, p. 34). Critiquing previous research, however, does not imply downgrading the previous research studies and running the repute of other researchers, a trap which some student writers may fall into. As Dörnyei (2007) reminds us, researchers should bear in mind that they need to discuss the negative and positive points, outline the shortcomings (theoretical, methodological, procedural, statistical), and integrate differing viewpoints to establish the rationale for their own work. Corpus studies are conducive for dealing with such topics (Ghonsooly et al., 2022; Vaziri et al., 2023)

Communicative Purposes of Literature Reviews

A literature review is a genre that tends to follow its own organizational structure and serves several communicative functions. Swales and Feak (2012), for example, regard literature reviews as part-genres that help writers to establish research territories. Badenhorst (2019) states that a literature review is a "keystone genre" (p. 263) that facilitates graduate students' entry into disciplinary conversations and their identification with different communities of practice. Walter and Stouck (2020) also characterize a literature review as a "threshold-crossing genre" (p. 2) for graduate students. As a distinct text type, a literature review, as these researchers suggest, plays several roles and serves a number of communicative functions that require explication.

Providing theoretical background to the study and contextualizing the research work include two broad functions, which Kumar (2006) has identified. These functions are, however, too broad to be meaningful. Ary et al. (2014, pp. 68-69) advise researchers to complete the review of the literature before the actual study commences. They explain six major functions that literature reviews serve in quantitative research in education studies, convincing readers why a good literature review is central to a successful study. The knowledge of related research, as Ary et al. state, helps researchers to define and expand the "frontiers of their field". Investigators can also establish a link between their own studies and the existing knowledge in their fields to contribute to the body of knowledge. Furthermore, the careful review of the existing literature results in operationalizing the constructs and leads to formulating refined research questions. Additionally, a thorough review of previous research and theory enables investigators to choose the right research design for their study, as well as the appropriate

methods for data collection and analysis. Drawing on prior research helps researchers avoid re-inventing the wheel and unintentionally replicating previous findings. Last but not least, being well-versed in relevant studies empowers researchers to discuss the findings more profoundly in light of previous research, "interpret the significance of their own results", and compare and contrast the findings of their own studies with those of similar previous studies.

Similar functions have been cited in other fields of study. Bitchener (2010), for example, has listed seven roles for a literature review in second language acquisition, including the identification of gaps in knowledge. Neupane (2021) builds on Mitchener and presents 10 major functions of literature review in research, which overlap considerably with those of Mitchener and Ary et al. Table 2 outlines the functions, roles, and uses Neupane has discussed in Neupane's article.

Table 2

Functions, Roles, and Uses of Literature Review (Neupane, 2021, p. 2)

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1. To show the groundwork of research by means of summary, description, and critical evaluation (critique) of LR types (non-research LR to provide background and contextual information; theoretical LR to provide theoretical foundations; and research LR to present evidence for the present study.
 2. To establish the need for the research;
 3. To form a theoretical and empirical foundations to proceed ahead in your research;
 4. To show that the researcher has required knowledge in the research area;
 5. To identify and justify gap/niche/shortcoming in the previous studies;
 6. To assist in developing research questions;
 7. To guide in designing appropriate methodology;
 8. To trace out the way to interpret (discuss) the results;
 9. To develop theoretical/conceptual framework; and
 10. To compare your findings with the ones from the literature reviewed
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Literature Review Types and Families

Reviews of literature differ across disciplines and research traditions; however, as Sutton et al. (2019) noted, regardless of the discipline or research tradition, "taking stock of what has been written and seeking to position subsequent work in relation to what has gone before is considered essential" (p. 202). When reviewing the literature, researchers usually need to refer to various sources, read them discriminately, analyze and take notes, organize the notes, synthesize the information they have collected, and write up the review. This is a very laborious and cumbersome process that requires significant time, energy, and concentration to render the review coherent.

Reviewing previous research does not simply involve a read-to-write process, because much more is at play. Researchers should cite references to demonstrate evidence for their claims, adhere to the conventional structure of the review, build on prior research, engage with readers, and argue for the novelty of their research study. These are some of the processes that researchers need to consider simultaneously to produce a good literature review, which we call the development of the review.

The development of the literature review has taken on various structural configurations and types, with scholars presenting several classifications and typologies to characterize the review family. For example, Sutton et al. (2019) used 15 previous typologies as source documents to identify 48 review types, which are classified into seven broad review families: traditional reviews, systematic reviews, review of reviews, rapid reviews, qualitative reviews, mixed-method reviews, and purpose-specific reviews. The discussion of all 48 review types is beyond the scope of this study. In the following paragraphs, we explain the review types identified in the research articles analyzed in this study and refer readers to Sutton et al. (2019) for a comprehensive treatment of the various review types. The selection of these six typologies was based on their strong relevance to the composition of the literature review section in academic research papers, rather than to specific methodologies for conducting reviews, such as scoping reviews or meta-analyses.

An integrative review (also known as integrative synthesis) (Sutton et al., 2019) belongs to the family of traditional reviews and is a blanket term that researchers use to integrate quantitative and qualitative data. Following this review type, authors summarize and synthesize previous literature to offer a deeper understanding of a phenomenon that existed prior to the review (Tricco et al., 2016). In so doing, diverse methodologies such as experimental and non-experimental research are used to yield a thicker description of the phenomenon (Whittemore & Knafel, 2005).

A methodological review is one of the diverse types of purpose-specific review family, which, as Sutton et al. (2019) noted, is "the most difficult to characterize largely because of the heterogeneity of review types and methods" (p. 213). Also known as meta-method and methodology review, the methodological review "examine[s] and investigate[s] current research methods and potentially their impact on research quality" (Munn et al., 2018, p. 3). Methodological reviews are primarily carried out to investigate methodological issues (i.e., design, conduct and review of research studies, evidence synthesis, data collection methods and analyses, sampling procedures, and research methods), but, as Munn et al. observed, guidance for conducting these reviews is limited.

Historical reviews belong to the traditional review family and chronologically trace the origins and development of a concept over time to set the context for the topic. Such literature reviews, as Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2016) explain, situate the extant literature in historical contexts, framing explanations for phenomena within historical events. The ultimate goal of a historical literature review is to provide historical context for research, demonstrate familiarity with the latest developments in the field, and outline future research directions (Kornuta & Germaine, 2019).

Unlike methodological reviews, theoretical reviews primarily focus on a theory and the role the theory plays in shaping research and framing meaning-making. The theoretical literature reviewer attempts to elaborate on, explicate, exemplify, specify, and illuminate a theory (Onwuegbuzie & Frels, 2016). Theoretical literature reviews help readers understand existing theories, appreciate the interrelationships between them, and see how they have been examined, leading to the development of new hypotheses for testing (Feak & Swales, 2009). The ultimate goal of such a detailed analysis and discussion of extant theories is twofold: (1) to show the extant theories are inappropriate, and (2) to reveal the current theories are incapable of addressing the new or emerging problems (Gough et al., 2012).

Systematic reviews, as the name suggests, follow a strict methodology to select studies for review. The reviewer employs an organized method to identify, collect, and assess studies on a research topic, using predetermined criteria (Onwuegbuzie & Frels, 2016) and following a comprehensive search approach as a defining feature (Sutton et al., 2019). Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2016) outline four major features that systematic reviews must follow: "Explicit inclusion/exclusion criteria; a transparent search strategy; systematic coding and analysis of included studies; and some form of synthesis of the findings" (p. 63). Systematic reviews aim to minimize researcher bias as much as possible. However, it should be noted that all review types should be systematic because, as Sutton et al. (2019) state, "all research is expected to follow some system of inquiry" (p. 2).

Argumentative literature reviews tend to argue for or against a viewpoint. The argumentative literature reviewer collects evidence to confirm or disconfirm a point (Ridley, 2012). In so doing, the reviewer selectively searches the literature, locates relevant studies, analyses them, and uses the information as evidence to support or refute an argument, already established problems, and deeply rooted assumptions (Randolph, 2009). Such reviews attempt to convince readers to accept the existing policies, theories, and measures tend to be inadequate, incomplete, or uninformative (Bitchener, 2010). These reviews are most frequently used in social science research, such as education reform.

A review of the literature on the types of literature reviews used in the soft sciences reveals a significant research gap, especially concerning Persian-speaking researchers. There is a notable lack of studies addressing this specific area of inquiry. Furthermore, the process of developing literature reviews among Persian-speaking scholars in the soft sciences remains understudied. While the identified research gap pertains to the hard sciences, we have chosen to undertake an extensive study encompassing both fields. In this current study, we specifically present findings related to the

composition and development of literature reviews by Persian-speaking researchers within the realm of soft sciences.

Furthermore, it is essential to clarify the rationale behind the selection of the three journals: Language and Linguistics, the Iranian Journal of Sociology, and the Journal of Management Research in Iran. These journals were chosen due to their significant contributions to the fields of the humanities and social sciences in Iran. Our research aimed to explore an untested hypothesis positing that historical literature reviews may be more prevalent in disciplines closely aligned with the humanities, such as Linguistics. In contrast, we proposed that systematic literature reviews are more frequently encountered in social sciences, such as Management. This distinction is vital for understanding the varying methodologies and approaches to literature review across different academic domains, as well as the implications these differences may have for the development of scholarly practices within each field. By investigating these patterns, we sought to deepen our understanding of the literature review landscape and provide insights that could inform future research practices in both the humanities and social sciences.

Methodology

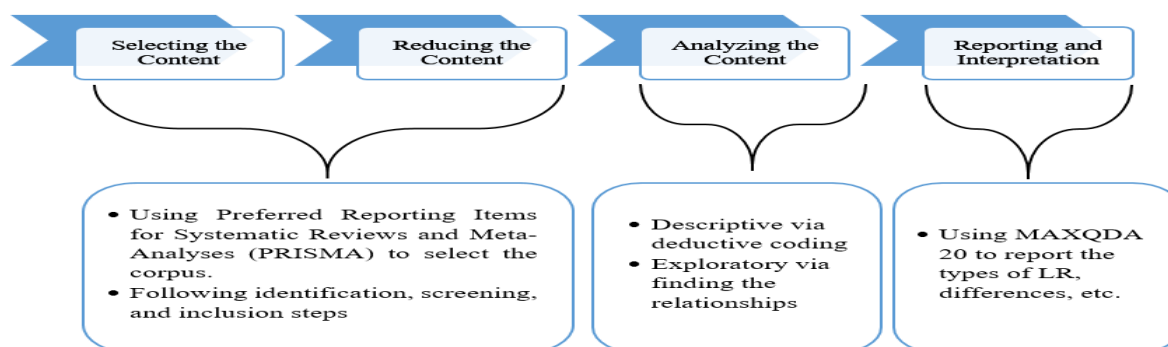
This study was a basic content analysis in which we adopted a systematic procedure to identify the types of LR composed by Persian researchers of language and linguistics, management, and sociology. There are several reasons why we used basic content analysis. Firstly, we aimed to compare the types of LR developed by Persian researchers across three fields, "to make evaluative comparisons of materials with established standards or goals and to establish the relative emphasis within the materials" (Drisko & Maschi, 2016, p. 26). Secondly, the basic content analysis helped us *describe* and *explore* the content simultaneously. Moreover, we could objectively explore the collected and analyzed data, thereby enhancing the clarity of the data analysis and reducing problems with interpreting the results (Drisko, 2013). Based on the researchers' purposes, they can utilize different basic content analysis research designs. We used a descriptive/exploratory design in the current study, explained below.

The Research Design: A Descriptive/Exploratory Design

We followed a descriptive/exploratory design to conduct this basic content analysis. Using a descriptive/exploratory design, we could first analyze the types of LRs deductively and then investigate the relationships among these types inductively (Drisko & Maschi, 2016). The deductive part of the design was to use the six major LR types as a priori codes to investigate the LR section of the papers published in soft sciences by the Persian researchers. Then, we examined the relationships and co-occurrences among the LRs inductively to specify which LRs are more interrelated. Figure 1 indicates the descriptive/exploratory design procedures we followed in this study.

Figure 1

The Design of the Study: A Descriptive/Exploratory Design



As Figure 1 shows, the first two steps of a descriptive/exploratory content analysis design are selecting and reducing the content. To address these steps, we followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines to construct the final corpus of the studies eligible for inclusion. We will explain PRISMA further in the following section. The third step of a descriptive/exploratory content analysis design was the analysis of the content. Here, we needed to address the descriptive analysis done deductively by using a priori codes, which were the six types of LRs. Moreover, the exploratory part needed to be addressed by including the new information about the relationships and co-occurrences among different LRs. Finally, we reported and interpreted the results using different facilities provided by MAXQDA 20.

The Corpus of the Study

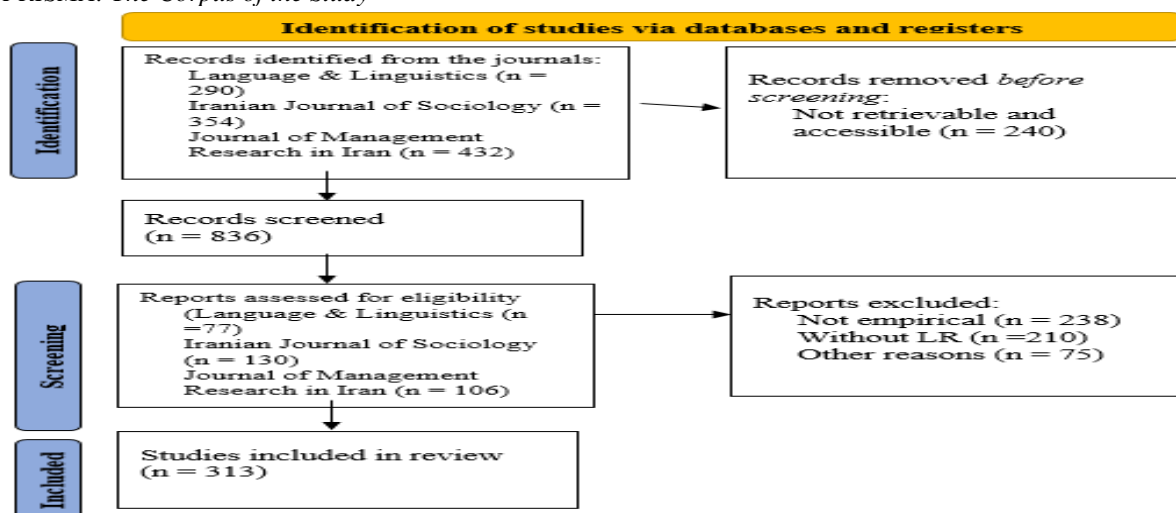
To construct the corpus of this study, we followed PRISMA (Page et al., 2021). First, we established eligibility criteria to follow PRISMA in selecting the most relevant studies for inclusion in the final corpus. We set the following criteria to address eligibility:

- The journals are in the realm of soft sciences (Humanities and social sciences) and related to the field of language and linguistics, management, and sociology,
- The journals have been published for more than ten years,
- Studies should be empirical studies (not editorials, commentaries, etc.),
- Studies should include a keyword such as literature review, relevant theoretical review, theoretical underpinnings, or LR integrated into the introduction, showing that the researchers have addressed LR in their study,
- Only Studies that have been published between 2005 and 2019,
- The researchers of the studies were from Iran,
- The quality of the journals has been confirmed by the Iranian Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology, and
- The language of the papers has to be Persian.

We used the above-mentioned criteria to create the final corpus of the study based on PRISMA, shown in Figure 2. As can be seen in Figure 2, we selected three journals, including Language and Linguistics, Iranian Journal of Sociology, and Journal of Management Research in Iran, based on the aforementioned criteria. We collected 313 papers from the three journals (Language and Linguistics (n = 77), Iranian Journal of Sociology (n = 130), and Journal of Management Research in Iran (n = 106)) to be included in the corpus of this study. It is worth mentioning that all the papers included in the corpus were in line with the criteria mentioned above.

Figure 2

PRISMA: The Corpus of the Study



Data Analysis: Deductive Codification

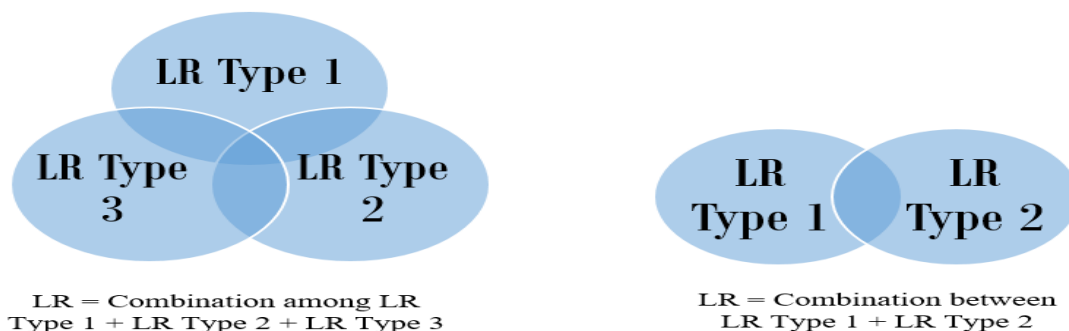
To analyze the corpus for inclusion of different types of LRs in language and linguistics, sociology, and management, we used deductive codification by applying a priori codes. The deductive codes we used were the six types of LR described below:

- **Argumentative Review:** The author tries to support or refute an argument, a deeply rooted assumption, or a philosophical problem already established in the literature
 Concept 1 – Study 1 (Support) – Study 2 (Refute) – Study (N) (Support –Refute)
 Concept 2 – Study 1 (Support) – Study 2 (Refute) – Study (N) (Support –Refute)
- **Integrative Review:** The author tries to integrate the reviews and critiques and synthesizes them to reach a new identification or framework
 Concept 1 – Study 1 + Study 2 + Study (N) = New Identification / Framework
- **Historical Review:** The author examines the related concept by focusing on the time interval
 Concept 1 – Study 1 (Time Interval 1) + Study 2 (Time Interval 2) + Study (N) (Time Interval N)
- **Systematic Review:** In this type of LR, the author tries to understand the relevant concepts by putting their relationships, cause-and-effect, etc., together
 Concept 1 & Concept 2 – Study 1 (Their Relationships) - Study 2 (Their Relationships) - Study (N) ((Their Relationships) = Understanding Concept 1 & Concept 2
- **Methodological Review:** As its name suggests, in a methodological review, the authors try to examine the related methodologies to find the ground for their research methodology
 Concept1 – Study 1 (Methodology 1) - Study 2(Methodology 2) - Study (N) (Methodology N) = Our Research Methodology
- **Theoretical Review:** The authors examine the relevant theories to find the most applicable theory for their study
 Concept1 – Study 1 (Theory 1) - Study 2 (Theory 2) - Study (N) (Theory N) = Our Research Main Theory

We codified the LRs based on these descriptions. It is important to note that some LRs combine two or three types of LRs. For instance, they both include methodological and theoretical reviews. Therefore, we codified twice when we encountered such LRs. It helped us address the exploratory part of the study since we could find the relationships and co-occurrences among the LRs. Figure 3 shows this point.

Figure 3

Conceptual Relationships among Different Types of LRs



Finally, we addressed the inter-coder agreement of the data analysis by asking another coder, a PhD candidate in applied linguistics, to codify 50% of the corpus. We introduced different types of LRs and asked her to codify the LRs in MAXQDA 20. Based on the intercoder agreement report provided by MAXQDA 20, there was 85% agreement between the coders.

Results

The first aim of the current study was to describe the types of LR in papers published in the soft sciences across three fields: language and linguistics, sociology, and management. Figure 4 shows the results. Figure 4 shows similarities and differences in the LR types used by Persian authors in the fields of language and linguistics, sociology, and management. The most used LR type in sociology was theoretical review (33.85%), and the least was methodological review (2.31%). Persian researchers of sociology also used historical review (19.23%), systematic review (18.46%), integrative review (13.08%) and argumentative review (13.08%). Similar to sociology researchers, Persian researchers of management used theoretical review (25.5%) more than other types of LRs, including systematic review (21.7%), integrative review (21.7%), historical review (20.8%), methodological review (6.6%), and argumentative review (3.8%). However, Figure 4 shows that, unlike sociology and management, Persian researchers of language and linguistics used historical review (46.8%) more than other types of LRs, including theoretical review (28.6%), systematic review (9.1%), integrative review (9.1%) and argumentative review (3.9%). Nevertheless, similar to sociology researchers, Persian language and linguistics researchers used methodological review (2.6%) the least in their papers.

Figure 4

LRs across Language and Linguistics, Sociology, and Management



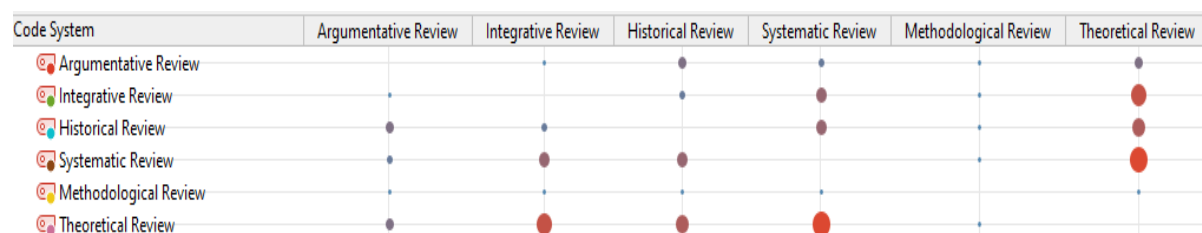
Note. The total exceeds 100% because some authors used more than one type of LR in their papers.

When examining the corpus, we found that theoretical (87.89%) and historical reviews (86.74%) were the most used LR types by Persian researchers of soft sciences. Figure 4 also shows that methodological review (11.51%) was the least used type of LR. Moreover, the analysis of the corpus illustrates that Persian researchers of soft sciences used systematic review (49.25%), integrative review (43.87%), and argumentative review (20.75%).

The second aim of the current research was to identify relationships and co-occurrences among the LR types. To address this, we used the Code Relations Browser (CRB) provided by MAXQDA 20. Figure 5 illustrates the results of relationships and co-occurrences among different types of LRs.

Figure 5

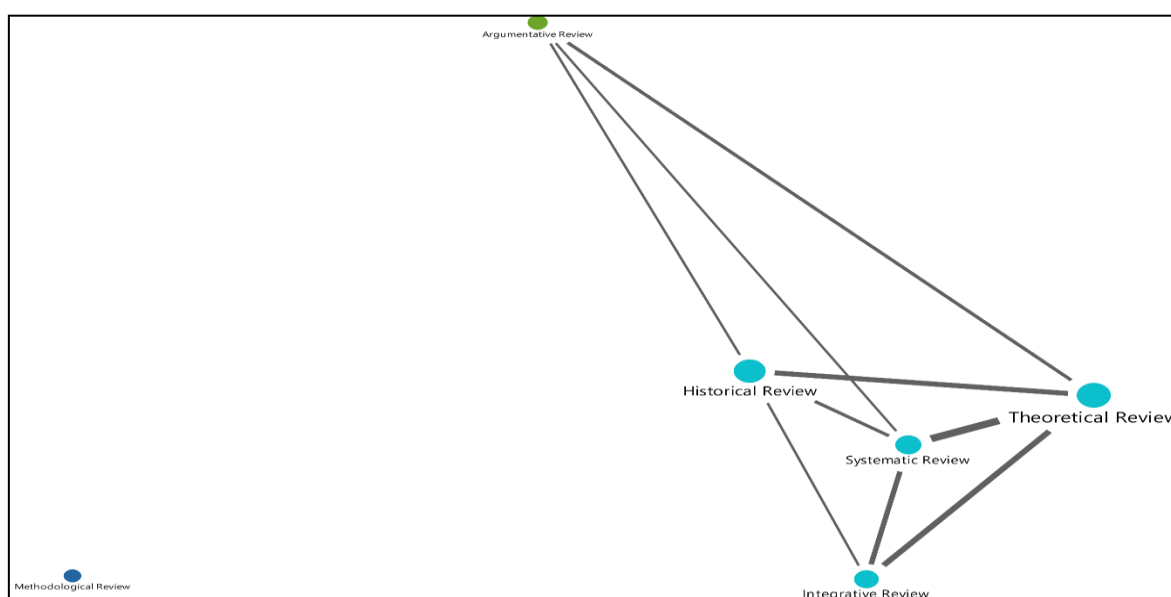
The Relationships and Co-occurrences among Different Types of LRs



The results of CRB show that there are relationships and co-occurrences among all types of LRs. The circles in CRB represent the co-occurrences of LRs; the bigger the circles, the more co-occurrences among the LRs. Figure 5 illustrates that theoretical reviews have the most relationships and co-occurrences with other LR types, including argumentative, integrative, historical, and systematic reviews, while methodological reviews have the fewest relationships and co-occurrences with other types of LRs. CRB thus shows that the theoretical review is the most frequently used by Persian researchers in language and linguistics, sociology, and management. Researchers also included other types of LRs within their theoretical review. In other words, the researchers attempted to embed various LR types into the theoretical review, including argumentative, integrative, historical, and systematic reviews. To further explore the relationships and co-occurrences among the types of LRs, we used the Code Map of MAXQDA, which illustrates the possibilities among different types of LRs. Figure 6 shows the results of the Code Map.

Figure 6

The Code Map of LRs



The results of the Code Map confirm what we have already illustrated (Figure 5): the methodological review is too distinct from other types of LRs to co-occur with them. However, there are some highly probable co-occurrences among the LRs as follows:

- Historical Review + Theoretical Review + Integrative Review
- Historical Review + Systematic Review + Integrative Review
- Historical Review + Systematic Review + Theoretical Review
- Theoretical Review + Systematic Review + Integrative Review

The above-mentioned co-occurrences show that Persian researchers of soft sciences (language and linguistics, sociology, and management) tend to use these LR types. Moreover, the Code Map illustrates less probable combinations of LR types as follows:

- Argumentative Review + Historical Review + Theoretical Review
- Argumentative Review + Historical Review + Systematic Review
- Argumentative Review + Theoretical Review + Systematic Review

Although these co-occurrences were possible and happened in the corpus, the distribution in the Code Map shows that they are not common due to the long distance between the argumentative review and other LR types.

Discussion

This study attempted to examine the types of LRs used by Persian researchers of soft sciences publishing their papers in Iranian journals, including Language and Linguistics, Iranian Journal of Sociology, and Journal of Management Research in Iran between 2005 and 2019. The descriptive results show similarities and differences concerning the LR types used by researchers across the three fields of language and linguistics, management, and sociology. The results also indicated that Persian researchers of soft sciences tended to use mostly theoretical (87.89%) and historical reviews (86.74%), and infrequently methodological reviews (11.51%). Moreover, the findings showed various co-occurrences and relationships among the historical, theoretical, integrative, and systematic reviews. There are several possible explanations for these results.

The first is the concept of discourse community, according to which each discipline develops its conventions for conducting and publishing research (Hyland, 2011). Such conventions are related to writing style, selecting research methods, and reporting research outcomes in different genres. Given the importance of LR in the process of research and writing the final paper, Persian researchers in soft sciences aim to align with the conventions practiced by the discourse community to establish their position within it. The researchers' tendency to use mostly theoretical (87.89%) and historical reviews (86.74%) indicates that the discourse community of soft sciences emphasizes such LRs.

Moreover, the similarities and differences observed among the three fields, language and linguistics, management, and sociology, reflect that the principles of discourse community can be applied at a micro level when the researchers of a field, let us say language and linguistics, construct their own conventions for a research study, including composing LRs. The conventions at the micro-level align with what the discourse community requires. For instance, in sociology, while the least and most used LR types were in line with the soft sciences discourse community, there were some differences between sociology and the other two fields. It can be argued that by adhering to the micro discourse conventions of the discourse community, researchers aim to establish coherence in their research, thereby facilitating their membership in the academic community (Hyland & Paltridge, 2011).

Furthermore, as part of an academic text, researchers compose different types of LRs as modes of argument to establish control over the epistemic conventions of the discipline (Hyland, 2011). Therefore, the similarities and differences observed among the types of LRs used by the researchers in

the current study could be due to their attempts to use LRs to construct appropriate evidence and arguments for their studies. They tried to make their text meaningful for the readers, and, logically, it is not possible to have the same tendencies among the researchers of the three fields since each field has its own methods of persuasion.

The results also showed co-occurrences among the LR types (Figures 5 and 6). One explanation for such results is the multidimensionality of the topics researched in the soft sciences. The three fields of language and linguistics, management, and sociology are considered multidisciplinary (e.g., Kayi-Aydar, 2019). Addressing topics in such fields requires a comprehensive identification of the issues. Therefore, the researchers have to use different LR types to present a multidimensional view of the concepts and ideas under review. By doing so, they can achieve a more comprehensive understanding and create a framework for their studies. Furthermore, they can discuss the results of their studies from different points of view.

A contextual reason for the results obtained in this study can be a situational option (Gesuato, 2009), which constrains the researchers to follow rubrics and guidelines provided by the journals. Researchers understand that the journals where they want to publish have their own policies, including the types of LRs. They should compose their LRs to conform to those policies and requirements if they want to enhance the probability of publication. Kumar (2013) believed that the following situational options can help researchers publish their papers and make them discoverable after publication. Therefore, it seems that Persian researchers in the field of soft sciences tend to use various types of LRs and combine some of them to align their papers with the requirements of the journals where they want to publish. The differences observed among the three journals support this argument, as each journal has its own situational options, which lead to variations in the types of LRs used by researchers in different fields.

Conclusion and Implications

This study aimed to examine the types of LRs used by Persian researchers in the soft sciences. The results indicated that although there were similarities and differences in the types of LRs used by researchers in the fields of language and linguistics, management, and sociology, six types of LRs were employed: theoretical, integrative, systematic, historical, methodological, and argumentative reviews. Different discourse communities, LR as part of an academic text, and situational options can be the reasons for differences in LR types across the fields. Moreover, the findings indicated that there were co-occurrences and relationships among different types of LRs, which could be due to the multidisciplinary nature of the investigated fields. Overall, we concluded that the co-construction of knowledge, partially informed by previously conducted studies in LRs, is more theoretically and historically oriented in the soft sciences research conducted by Persian researchers.

There are two pedagogical implications for the current study. First, the findings showed that some types of LRs are used more in some fields than others. Research writing courses can incorporate this specificity into their syllabus by helping student-researchers learn how to align with the discourse community. Second, the combinations among some of the LRs found in this study suggest that pedagogical instructions be developed for student-researchers, helping them combine different types of LRs to comprehensively identify concepts and ideas. Further research could examine which types of LRs are used by Persian researchers of soft sciences while composing their articles in languages other than Persian. Furthermore, comparing the types of LRs in the hard and soft sciences in papers published by Persian researchers could be a topic for follow-up research. Finally, comparing Persian research writers and non-Persian researchers in soft and hard sciences could identify similarities and differences in how they address the LR of their papers.

No study is without limitations. A limitation of the present research was the inability to collect data from a broader range of subjects within the soft sciences. Additionally, owing to the relatively recent establishment of the journals examined, it was not possible to investigate the types of literature reviews over an extended historical period. As a result, the findings are primarily relevant to the current timeframe.

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The authors have no conflict of interests.

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