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**Literature Review Overview**

**The aim of this resource is to provide you with:**

* **an overview of what a literature review is; and**
* **particular reasons for undertaking the task.**

**What is a literature review? A literature review:**

* is written to provide others with information about current or relevant literature in a particular field;
* addresses major texts in the chosen area of study; and
* discusses the content of related texts and comments on the effect of the noted research or theories.

**What must a literature review attempt to do? A literature review must:**

* compare and contrast different authors’ views on an issue;
* group together authors who draw similar conclusions;
* note areas in which authors are in disagreement;
* highlight gaps (or existing problems) in the area of study;
* identify particular shortcomings of past research (methodology used, data collection methods, flaws in findings, etc.);
* critically evaluate the literature related to the problem; and
* conclude by summarising what the literature says.

In addition, a literature review may:

* resolve a controversy and/or identify disagreements;
* establish the need for additional research;
* define a topic of inquiry; and
* outline a practical problem that needs resolution.

**Why do you do a literature review? A literature review is undertaken to:**

* communicate about the existing debate in an area of study;
* demonstrate ability to identify an issue for inquiry and discuss it in a meaningful manner; and
* motivate the reader to reflect on what has been discussed.

**An Example**

**Statement indicating the problem**

Even when substance-abusing individuals contact a treatment system, early drop-out is a significant problem. Lawendowski (1998) suggested that adolescents tend to be more ambivalent and resistant to change. Indeed, Szapocznik, Perez-Vidal, Brickman, Foote, Santisteban, Hervis and Kurtines (1988), in a study of treatment engagement, found that 62% of youth between the ages of 12 and 21 years refused to attend treatment sessions. Several studies have examined the relationship between age and dropout rates directly and some found evidence that, along the age continuum of substance abusers, youth is linked to higher treatment dropout rates (Ball, Lange, Meyers, & Friedman 1988; Feigelman 1987).

The general consensus is that runaway youth are difficult to engage and maintain in therapy (Morrisette 1992); Smart & Ogborne, 1994) and are “difficult to work with” (Kufeldt & Nimmo 1987). Given that treatment attendance is often a complicating factor for successful treatment outcome (Institute of Medicine 1990), and that few studies have examined predictors of treatment attendance among runaway youth and their families, further research in this area is needed to help guide treatment providers. This paper examines factors associated with treatment attendance among alcohol-abusing runaway youth and their families utilising a home-based versus office-based family therapy.

Runaway youth are beset with many problems, including physical and sexual abuse, high levels of alcohol and drug use, depression, teen pregnancy, and frequent prostitution (Johnson, Aschkenasy, Hebers, & Gillenwater 1996; Zimmet, Sobo, Zimmerman, Jackson, Mortimer, Yanda & Lazenbnik 1995). The alcohol abuse rate of runaway and homeless youths is estimated to range from 70% to 85% (Rotheram-Borus, Selfridge, Koopman, Haignere, Meyer-Bahlburg & Ehrhardt 1989; Shaffer & Caton 1984; Yates, MacKenzie, Pennbridge & Cohen 1988), and the level of alcohol involvement in runaways is at least double that of school youths (Forst & Crim 1994). Limited evidence suggests that rates of alcohol abuse are similar to rates reported among homeless adults (Robertson 1989).

Source adapted from: Slesnick, N & Prestopnik, JL 2004, ‘Office versus home-based family therapy for runaway, alcohol-abusing adolescents: Examination of factors associated with treatment attendance’, *Alcohol Treatment Quarterly,* vol. 22, pp. 3-19.

**Supporting statements**

**The authors proceed with the discussion by introducing factors that contribute to the problem statement**

**The authors have read literature about the problem and have summarised similar findings identified by two researchers in this area of study**

**Identifying the gap and suggesting a need for future research**

**Expansion of the first idea (thesis statement) indicated in paragraph 1**

**Supporting the argument further by relating to previous studies that have been conducted in this area**

**Use of literature to justify the problem statement**