

Literature Review as an Epistemological, Interpretive, and Methodological Practice in the Construction of Scientific Knowledge

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ABSTRACT:

The literature review is an essential component of the research process, as it enables the identification, interpretation, and organization of existing knowledge on a given phenomenon. From an interpretive perspective, this process extends beyond the mere collection of sources, involving the critical analysis of scholarly discourse to identify advances, conceptual tensions, and knowledge gaps within a particular field. This article aims to analyze the role of the literature review as an epistemological, interpretive, and methodological practice by examining its conceptual foundations, functions, and contributions to the construction of contemporary scientific knowledge. Specialized literature indicates that the literature review supports the development of the state of the art, the refinement of the research problem, the establishment of a robust theoretical framework, and the selection of appropriate methodological approaches, while simultaneously fostering the researcher's critical thinking. Furthermore, it situates the study within a broader epistemological context by connecting it with relevant theoretical traditions and ongoing scholarly debates. This chapter examines the literature review as both a hermeneutic and epistemological practice, emphasizing its conceptual foundations, principal functions, and contributions to qualitative research. It argues that a rigorous literature review not only synthesizes existing evidence but also strengthens the production of scientifically grounded, coherent, and contextually relevant knowledge capable of addressing the contemporary challenges of the social sciences.

Keywords: literature review; scientific research; research methodology

1. Introduction

The literature review occupies a central position in scientific research because it enables researchers to understand how knowledge surrounding a particular phenomenon has been constructed, which theoretical perspectives have

shaped its interpretation, and what gaps remain within contemporary scholarly debate. In the social sciences, where reality is influenced by historical, cultural, political, and symbolic processes, the literature review assumes particular significance. Rather than merely compiling

previous studies, it promotes a critical examination of the concepts, theoretical approaches, and scholarly discussions that have contributed to the development of a specific field of inquiry. Consequently, reviewing the literature involves interpreting scientific production, establishing connections among diverse perspectives, and understanding the processes through which knowledge has been generated, contested, and transformed.

Within this context, the present article aims to analyze the role of the literature review as an epistemological, interpretive, and methodological practice by identifying its conceptual foundations, functions, and contributions to the construction of contemporary scientific knowledge. This reflection is grounded in the premise that the literature review represents an intellectual process through which meanings embedded in specialized scholarship are reconstructed and the relationships among theory, methodology, and scientific knowledge are critically examined. Accordingly, the literature review should not be regarded as a formal procedural requirement but rather as a scholarly practice that actively contributes to the development of new understandings of the phenomena under investigation.

The study is framed within the interpretive paradigm, which conceptualizes knowledge as a situated construction emerging from the interaction between individuals, their lived experiences, and the sociocultural contexts in which meaning is produced (Schutz, 1967; Martínez, 2025). Consistent with this perspective, a qualitative approach was adopted, emphasizing the comparative and interpretive analysis of specialized academic literature to identify analytical categories, research trends, and conceptual debates that contribute to understanding the role of the literature review in scientific inquiry.

Methodologically, the research is grounded in the hermeneutic method, understood as an interpretive strategy that facilitates the analysis of scientific discourse, the reconstruction of meanings, and the examination of the conceptual

horizons from which knowledge is produced. This approach encourages a critical dialogue among authors, theories, and analytical categories, thereby fostering a deeper understanding of the epistemological dynamics underpinning contemporary research. In addition, the study incorporates the state-of-the-art approach as a systematic procedure for identifying advances, emerging trends, knowledge gaps, and future research opportunities within recent scientific literature (Martínez et al., 2024).

From this perspective, the literature review is understood as a cross-cutting process that supports every stage of scientific inquiry. Its contribution extends beyond the development of the theoretical framework to include the refinement of the research problem, the justification of methodological decisions, and the interpretation of research findings. At the same time, it promotes a critical stance toward existing scholarship by contextualizing previous studies, identifying conceptual inconsistencies, and assessing the scope and limitations of competing theoretical perspectives (Creswell, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Therefore, the literature review can be understood as an epistemological practice that integrates interpretation, critical analysis, and scholarly reflection, thereby contributing to the development of more rigorous, coherent, and theoretically grounded scientific research.

2. Methodology

This study was conducted within the interpretive paradigm, which conceives knowledge as a socially constructed phenomenon shaped by meanings, lived experiences, and the historical contexts in which social realities emerge (Schutz, 1967; Martínez, 2025). From this perspective, the literature review is understood as an analytical process that extends beyond the compilation of previous studies, becoming a practice of critical interpretation through which the evolution of a field of knowledge can be examined, its epistemological foundations identified, and the relationships among theories, analytical categories, and methodological approaches explored (Martínez & Escobar, 2025).

Accordingly, the study aimed to analyze the literature review as an epistemological, interpretive, and methodological practice by identifying its conceptual foundations, functions, typologies, and methodological guidelines in order to understand its contribution to the construction and advancement of contemporary scientific knowledge.

A qualitative approach was adopted because understanding the nature of the literature review requires the interpretation of scholarly discourse rather than the quantification of information. This perspective emphasizes the reconstruction of meanings, the comparative examination of theoretical perspectives, and the identification of analytical categories emerging from specialized literature. Consequently, the analysis did not focus on describing individual publications in isolation but on interpreting the conceptual relationships that shape scientific debate and explaining the epistemological dynamics underlying knowledge production. In this regard, several scholars have argued that literature reviews foster the critical integration of concepts, theoretical perspectives, and research findings, thereby strengthening the understanding of complex phenomena and enhancing the theoretical and methodological foundations of scientific inquiry (Creswell, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Morales La Paz, 2020; Arnau-Sabatés & Sala-Roca, 2020; Donthu et al., 2021; Lozano, 2024; Romero-Sánchez et al., 2025; Martínez et al., 2025).

From a methodological standpoint, the study was grounded in the hermeneutic method, understood as an interpretive strategy aimed at analyzing scientific texts, reconstructing meanings, and identifying relationships among different conceptual perspectives. Critical reading, the comparison of arguments, and the contextual interpretation of analytical categories made it possible to understand how scholarly discourse is structured and how it contributes to scientific knowledge production. In this regard, Lozano (2024) argues that literature reviews require an ongoing dialogue between the researcher and the texts under examination, whereas Morales La Paz (2020) emphasizes the

importance of evaluating the epistemological, theoretical, and methodological relevance of the selected sources rather than merely identifying them.

To complement this methodological framework, the study incorporated a state-of-the-art review as a systematic procedure for identifying, organizing, and synthesizing the principal advances, conceptual gaps, and emerging trends within a specific field of knowledge. This approach enabled the analysis to be situated within broader academic debates while providing a comprehensive understanding of the theoretical and methodological evolution of literature review practices. Consequently, it contributed to a more integrated interpretation of the role of literature reviews in the construction and advancement of contemporary scientific knowledge (Martínez et al., 2024; Martínez et al., 2026).

3. Results

The findings presented in this section provide an interpretive analysis of the literature review as a fundamental practice in the production of scientific knowledge. Consistent with the objective of analyzing the role of the literature review as an epistemological, interpretive, and methodological practice by identifying its conceptual foundations, functions, and contributions to the construction of contemporary scientific knowledge, the analysis critically examines the principal theoretical contributions that underpin this research process. Accordingly, it identifies the epistemological, conceptual, and methodological foundations of the literature review, its primary functions within scientific inquiry, the major review typologies, and the methodological guidelines that support its rigorous development. Taken together, the findings demonstrate that the literature review extends well beyond the compilation of previous studies, emerging instead as a systematic, interpretive, and reflective process that integrates theory, methodology, and critical thinking while strengthening conceptual coherence, scientific rigor, and the overall quality of contemporary research.

3.1. The Literature Review as a Foundation for the Construction of Scientific Knowledge

The literature review occupies a central position in scientific research because it enables researchers to understand how a field of knowledge has evolved over time, which theoretical perspectives have shaped its development, and which issues remain unresolved within the scholarly debate. Rather than serving merely as a means of compiling previous studies, it represents an analytical process through which existing contributions are critically examined, theoretical convergences and divergences are identified, and persistent knowledge gaps are recognized. From this perspective, the literature review becomes a space for scholarly dialogue that connects authors, theoretical approaches, and research findings, thereby fostering a broader and more contextualized understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Martínez et al., 2026; Morales La Paz, 2020; Hart, 1998).

Its relevance also lies in its capacity to situate research within a specific scientific tradition while revealing how conceptual categories have been developed, debated, and transformed over time. Consequently, researchers move beyond describing existing evidence by critically interpreting previous contributions and establishing conceptual relationships that help refine the research problem and justify the relevance of the proposed study (Webster & Watson, 2002).

The literature review accompanies every stage of the research process. Its influence extends from the formulation of the research problem and the development of the theoretical framework to methodological decision making and the interpretation of findings, functioning as an integrative element that strengthens the internal coherence of the study (Morales, 2020; Snyder, 2019). At the same time, it provides conceptual references that support the organization of analytical categories and the selection of appropriate theoretical perspectives (Creswell, 2018), while facilitating the critical assessment of methods, techniques, and research instruments

employed in previous investigations (Booth et al., 2016).

Accordingly, the literature review can be understood as an epistemological and reflective practice that contributes to the production of scientifically grounded knowledge. It enables researchers to identify emerging trends, recognize new research opportunities, and strengthen critical thinking, all of which are essential for developing rigorous and conceptually consistent scientific studies (Arnau-Sabatés & Sala-Roca, 2020; Lozano, 2024; Martínez et al., 2026).

3.2. Epistemological, Conceptual, and Methodological Purposes of the Literature Review

The literature review represents a fundamental practice for the development of robust scientific research because it provides a comprehensive understanding of how knowledge has been constructed within a particular field of inquiry. Its value extends beyond organizing previous studies, as it critically examines the theoretical, methodological, and argumentative perspectives that have shaped scholarly production on a given topic. This process makes it possible to identify the current state of knowledge by recognizing advances, unresolved questions, conceptual tensions, and research gaps that continue to characterize scientific debate (Morales, 2020). Such understanding is essential for refining the research problem and demonstrating the relevance of new investigations.

Beyond identifying what is already known, the literature review also reveals conceptual limitations, theoretical inconsistencies, and methodological weaknesses in previous studies. In doing so, it opens new possibilities for analysis and interpretation while supporting the formulation of research questions and analytical perspectives capable of expanding the understanding of complex phenomena. As Lozano (2024) argues, a critical literature review goes beyond describing existing knowledge by bringing underexplored areas to light and proposing new directions for scientific inquiry.

Another important contribution lies in its capacity to position research within a broader

conceptual framework. By integrating previous studies, theoretical traditions, and specialized debates, the literature review promotes a contextualized understanding of the research object and prevents fragmented or isolated interpretations. According to Arnau-Sabatés and Sala-Roca (2020), this process strengthens conceptual frameworks by connecting relevant theoretical traditions with broader epistemological discussions. Through this analytical work, researchers select, compare, and integrate analytical categories, theoretical perspectives, and interpretive models that are consistent with the objectives of the investigation (Creswell, 2018).

The literature review also performs a significant methodological function. It enables researchers to identify methods, techniques, and research instruments used in previous studies, evaluate their strengths and limitations, and assess their suitability for similar research contexts (Booth et al., 2016). This process provides a sound basis for methodological decision making while enhancing the rigor and consistency of scientific inquiry.

Finally, the literature review contributes to the development of critical thinking by requiring the comparison of perspectives, the interpretation of scholarly arguments, and the reflective evaluation of available evidence. In this way, it enables researchers to recognize the epistemological assumptions and conceptual transformations that have shaped the evolution of a disciplinary field (Hart, 1998). As noted by Lozano (2024), researchers cease to be passive recipients of information and become active participants in scholarly debate. Consequently, the literature review is consolidated as an epistemological, interpretive, and methodological practice that is essential for producing coherent, rigorous, and scientifically relevant research.

3.3. Epistemological, Hermeneutic, and Methodological Foundations of the Literature Review

The literature review represents an intellectual practice that enables researchers to understand how scientific knowledge is constructed, organized, and transformed within a particular

disciplinary field. Its significance extends beyond gathering previous studies or systematizing available information, as it encourages a critical examination of scholarly discourse, analytical categories, and theoretical perspectives that have shaped scientific production. From this standpoint, the literature review becomes a process of interpretation and reflection through which the relationships among concepts, theories, and research findings are explored, contributing to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

From a hermeneutic perspective, conducting a literature review involves maintaining an ongoing dialogue with scholarly texts and the intellectual traditions that support a given field of knowledge. Gadamer (1993) argues that understanding emerges through the interaction of different horizons of meaning, allowing researchers to interpret meanings and reconstruct the perspectives embedded in scientific discourse. Consequently, the literature review extends beyond identifying relevant information and becomes an exercise in critical understanding aimed at interpreting, contextualizing, and reexamining accumulated knowledge.

At the epistemological level, the literature review makes it possible to identify how specific concepts, analytical categories, and theoretical approaches have been historically developed within a discipline. Hart (1998) maintains that this process enables researchers to recognize the theoretical assumptions that guide scientific inquiry and to understand the evolution of the conceptual frameworks underpinning knowledge production. As a result, the literature review contributes to a more precise definition of the research object while strengthening the theoretical foundations of the study.

The literature review also requires a critical stance toward existing knowledge. According to Paul and Elder (2014), critical thinking involves examining arguments, comparing perspectives, and evaluating the consistency of available evidence. For this reason, reviewing the literature cannot be reduced to summarizing authors or describing previous studies. Instead, it requires

assessing the strengths, limitations, and contradictions found in the selected research. This analytical process promotes a more reflective and rigorous understanding of the phenomena under examination.

Finally, the literature review is supported by methodological procedures designed to ensure rigor, organization, and transparency throughout the research process. Webster and Watson (2002), Creswell (2018), and Booth et al. (2016) emphasize the importance of conducting systematic searches, applying explicit document selection criteria, and implementing rigorous procedures for data analysis and synthesis. Collectively, these contributions demonstrate that the literature review integrates interpretation, epistemological reflection, critical analysis, and methodological rigor. Its principal contribution lies in strengthening the theoretical foundations of research while providing a robust basis for producing scientifically relevant and conceptually grounded knowledge.

3.4. Typologies of Scientific Literature Reviews

The literature review is not a homogeneous practice within scientific research. Instead, it encompasses multiple approaches and review types that respond to different analytical purposes, methodological requirements, and epistemological perspectives. This diversity is particularly evident in the social sciences, where the complexity of social phenomena requires approaches capable of combining conceptual rigor with interpretive sensitivity. Within this context, the classification of literature reviews demonstrates that each review type addresses distinct research questions, analytical objectives, and levels of depth (Morales, 2020; Lozano, 2024; Martínez & Escobar, 2025; Martínez et al., 2026).

From an interpretive perspective, review typologies differ according to the role they play in the construction of scientific knowledge. Lozano (2024) explains that descriptive reviews focus primarily on organizing and synthesizing relevant information, making them particularly useful during the exploratory stages of research. However, when a deeper level of understanding

is required, critical reviews become more appropriate because they examine the argumentative coherence, methodological limitations, and conceptual consistency of previous studies. Similarly, integrative reviews seek to establish relationships among concepts, findings, and theoretical perspectives, whereas problematizing reviews are designed to identify contradictions, knowledge gaps, and conceptual tensions capable of generating new research agendas.

The specialized literature also recognizes review modalities that have become well established in international research. Morales (2020) highlights the systematic review as an approach characterized by explicit procedures for literature searching, study selection, and document analysis, ensuring methodological transparency while minimizing potential bias. Alongside systematic reviews, narrative reviews continue to play a prominent role in the social sciences because of their capacity to contextualize complex theoretical debates and provide comprehensive interpretations of specific phenomena. Scoping reviews have likewise gained increasing importance due to their usefulness in exploring emerging research areas and identifying trends across expanding fields of knowledge.

Methodological diversity extends to other review modalities, including conceptual, historical, qualitative, argumentative, realist, and integrative reviews, as well as meta analysis, which synthesizes quantitative findings from multiple studies. This diversity demonstrates that selecting a review strategy depends both on the nature of the research question and on the analytical depth required to address the research problem.

Within the social sciences and humanities, Martínez and Escobar (2025) emphasize the value of narrative reviews for developing theoretical frameworks and contextualizing the phenomena under investigation. Nevertheless, they acknowledge that certain studies require systematic reviews supported by explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria, analytical matrices, and transparent procedures for

organizing scientific evidence. Similar considerations have been highlighted by other scholars. Baumeister and Leary (1997) underline the interpretive flexibility of narrative reviews, Higgins and Green (2011) emphasize the reproducibility of systematic reviews, Whitemore and Knafl (2005) demonstrate the integrative potential of integrative reviews, Grant and Booth (2009) stress the analytical value of critical reviews, and Donthu et al. (2021) illustrate the usefulness of bibliometric reviews for examining publication trends, scientific productivity, and collaborative research networks.

The state of the art also represents a particularly valuable review modality because it enables researchers to identify advances, knowledge gaps, and future research directions within a specific disciplinary field, thereby providing a comprehensive understanding of its recent development (Martínez et al., 2024; Londoño & Maldonado, 2014; Romero Sánchez et al., 2025; Martínez & Escobar, 2025). Collectively, these perspectives indicate that literature reviews should be understood as flexible and strategically selected research practices. Their selection should not be determined by methodological preference alone but by the coherence among the research question, the study objectives, and the epistemological nature of the phenomenon under investigation. While narrative, critical, integrative, and problematizing reviews provide greater opportunities for interpreting social complexity, systematic reviews and meta analyses are particularly appropriate when methodological comprehensiveness, procedural transparency, and rigorous evidence synthesis are required.

3.5. Methodological Guidelines for Conducting a Rigorous Literature Review

Developing a high quality literature review requires considerably more than the systematic compilation of previous studies. It is an intellectual process that integrates methodological decision making, analytical reasoning, and ethical responsibility in order to critically understand the knowledge produced on a particular phenomenon. Consequently, a

rigorous literature review demands careful planning, conceptual organization, and a reflective perspective that enables researchers to interpret existing scientific production in a manner consistent with the objectives of the study.

One of the initial challenges involves clearly defining the object of inquiry. This process requires establishing the conceptual domain, identifying the analytical categories that will guide the review, and formulating search questions aligned with the research objectives. Lozano (2024) argues that a well defined conceptual scope enhances the relevance of the review while preventing unnecessary thematic dispersion. Similarly, Martínez and Escobar (2025) maintain that conceptual clarity constitutes an essential condition for developing systematic and methodologically consistent research.

A clearly defined research topic naturally leads to the design of an effective search strategy. At this stage, selecting appropriate keywords and combining them through Boolean operators becomes essential for broadening or narrowing search results according to the needs of the investigation. Arnau-Sabatés et al. (2020) emphasize that this procedure improves the precision of information retrieval and optimizes searches across specialized academic databases. Consulting recognized sources such as Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, PsycINFO, Google Scholar, PubMed, and SciELO further contributes to ensuring the quality and relevance of the literature selected for analysis.

Another fundamental aspect concerns the establishment of explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria. Study selection should not depend solely on the availability of publications but should follow clearly defined thematic, methodological, chronological, linguistic, and quality related criteria. According to Arnau-Sabatés and Sala-Roca (2020), applying these criteria enhances methodological transparency and contributes to the development of more coherent and trustworthy literature reviews.

Once the literature has been collected, the information should be organized systematically.

Creswell (2018) recommends using analytical matrices, reference management software, and conceptual mapping tools to facilitate the comparison of findings, the identification of research trends, and the integration of theoretical categories. Nevertheless, organizing information represents only the preliminary stage of the review process. The principal contribution of a literature review emerges when researchers critically interpret the selected studies, compare theoretical perspectives, identify knowledge gaps, and evaluate the methodological and argumentative consistency of previous research.

Accordingly, a literature review should be written as a coherent scholarly narrative capable of integrating debates, advances, and conceptual tensions within the field of study. Rather than merely describing previous authors, the review should present an analytical argument that highlights conceptual relationships and demonstrates the researcher's own critical perspective. Throughout this process, ethical rigor remains essential. Proper citation practices, respect for intellectual property, and transparency in literature searching, study selection, and interpretation are fundamental requirements for ensuring both the credibility of the research and the academic integrity of the researcher. Under these conditions, the literature review becomes a critical and methodologically grounded practice that strengthens the quality of contemporary scientific production.

3.6. The Literature Review as a Strategy for Scientific Knowledge Construction: Epistemological, Interpretive, and Methodological Contributions to Contemporary Research

The literature review represents one of the most significant intellectual practices in contemporary scientific research because it not only organizes existing knowledge but also actively contributes to the development of new understandings of reality. Its relevance extends beyond the traditional function of compiling previous studies, becoming an epistemological, interpretive, and methodological exercise through which researchers critically engage with

existing scientific production in order to understand how knowledge has been constructed, identify its underlying foundations, and explore opportunities for its further development.

From an epistemological perspective, the literature review provides insight into the internal structure of a scientific field. Hart (1998) argues that this process enables researchers to identify the principal concepts, dominant analytical categories, and theoretical assumptions that have historically shaped knowledge production. Consequently, the literature review demonstrates that scientific knowledge is neither static nor neutral but rather the outcome of ongoing debates, consensus building, conceptual ruptures, and theoretical transformations. In this sense, it becomes an essential instrument for defining the research object and constructing stronger and more coherent theoretical frameworks.

From an interpretive perspective, the literature review assumes a distinctly hermeneutic character. Gadamer (1993) maintains that understanding emerges through dialogue between the researcher and the text, a process through which meanings are reconstructed and different horizons of understanding are brought into conversation. Reviewing the literature therefore involves far more than collecting information. It requires interpreting scientific discourse, identifying relationships among analytical categories, and understanding the structures of meaning that shape scholarly production. This perspective is consistent with Ricoeur's (1981) conception of interpretation as a process of resignification through which new understandings of social phenomena are generated. Consequently, the literature review becomes an active process of meaning construction rather than a simple documentary exercise.

Its critical dimension is equally significant. Paul and Elder (2014) argue that critical thinking requires examining arguments, questioning underlying assumptions, and evaluating evidence through reflective reasoning. From this standpoint, the literature review strengthens

researchers' analytical capacity by enabling them to identify contradictions, knowledge gaps, and methodological limitations in previous studies. Lozano (2024) similarly contends that a rigorous review does not merely reproduce existing knowledge but contributes to revealing unresolved issues and generating new research directions. Accordingly, the literature review becomes a productive scholarly practice that contributes directly to knowledge creation rather than serving solely as a mechanism for organizing scientific information.

From a methodological perspective, Webster and Watson (2002), Creswell (2018), and Booth et al. (2016) emphasize that literature reviews support the selection of research methods, techniques, and instruments while providing standards of rigor, systematicity, and transparency throughout the research process. Likewise, Snyder (2019) argues that literature reviews accompany every stage of scientific inquiry, from defining the research problem to interpreting findings, thereby functioning as an integrating element that strengthens methodological coherence. As a result, the literature review provides a sound basis for methodological decision making, minimizes potential bias, and enhances the scientific validity of research outcomes.

In summary, the literature review constitutes an epistemological practice because it explains how scientific knowledge is constructed, an interpretive practice because it promotes the critical reconstruction of meanings and scholarly discourse, and a methodological practice because it guides and legitimizes research decisions. Its greatest contribution lies in its capacity to generate knowledge that is more robust, reflective, contextually grounded, and scientifically sound, thereby making a substantial contribution to the advancement of contemporary research.

4. Discussion

The question concerning the role of the literature review as an epistemological, interpretive, and methodological practice demonstrates that this activity occupies a central position in the construction of contemporary scientific

knowledge. The findings indicate that the literature review cannot be understood merely as a preliminary stage devoted to collecting previous studies. Instead, it should be regarded as a reflective process through which scientific discourse is interpreted, conceptual foundations are examined, and analytical frameworks are developed to enhance the understanding of the phenomena under investigation. From this perspective, the literature review becomes a meeting point where theory, methodology, and interpretation converge, making a direct contribution to the development of more rigorous and conceptually grounded scientific research.

One of the most significant findings concerns the hermeneutic dimension of the literature review. According to Gadamer (1993), understanding requires an ongoing dialogue with texts and the confrontation of different horizons of meaning. This perspective is complemented by Ricoeur (1981), who conceives interpretation as a process of reconstructing meanings that broadens the understanding of reality. Viewed through this lens, the literature review becomes a scholarly practice through which researchers interpret arguments, identify conceptual tensions, and reconstruct the analytical categories embedded in academic production. Consequently, knowledge is not passively received but is critically reformulated through continuous processes of reading, interpretation, and reflection.

The discussion also highlights the epistemological significance of the literature review in the organization of scientific inquiry. Hart (1998) argues that reviewing the literature enables researchers to identify the concepts, theoretical perspectives, and underlying assumptions that have historically shaped a particular field of knowledge. In this regard, the literature review contributes to understanding the continuities, transformations, and conceptual shifts that characterize the evolution of scientific knowledge. Likewise, Morales (2020), Lozano (2024), Arnau-Sabatés and Sala-Roca (2020), and Manterola et al. (2023) agree that this analytical process strengthens the conceptual delimitation

of the research problem while reinforcing the theoretical coherence of scientific studies.

From a methodological perspective, the literature review serves as a strategic instrument for guiding research decisions. Snyder (2019) maintains that examining previous studies enables researchers to identify methods, techniques, and research instruments that have been employed in comparable contexts. However, the findings suggest that this function should not be limited to reproducing established procedures. Rather, the literature review provides opportunities to critically assess their strengths, limitations, and potential adaptations, thereby enhancing the methodological relevance of the research. This evaluative capacity is particularly important in qualitative studies, where methodological decisions are closely connected to the interpretive nature of the phenomenon under investigation.

The diversity of literature review approaches also represents an important aspect of the discussion. The existence of narrative, critical, integrative, problematizing, systematic reviews, and meta analyses demonstrates that there is no single way of engaging with scientific literature. The selection of a particular review type depends on the research question, the objectives of the study, and the epistemological perspective adopted. In qualitative social research, narrative, critical, and integrative reviews provide greater opportunities to interpret the complexity of social phenomena and to appreciate the diversity of perspectives represented in the scientific literature.

Finally, the literature review incorporates an ethical dimension that extends throughout the entire research process. Transparency in literature searching, the rigorous application of study selection criteria, and the appropriate citation of sources are fundamental requirements for ensuring academic credibility. In this regard, Paul and Elder (2014) emphasize the importance of critical thinking as a means of evaluating the validity and consistency of scholarly arguments. Taken together, these findings support the conclusion that the literature review constitutes a complex scholarly practice that integrates interpretation, epistemological reflection, critical

analysis, and methodological rigor, making it an indispensable component in the construction of contemporary scientific knowledge.

5. Conclusion

Guided by the research question, What is the role of the literature review as an epistemological, interpretive, and methodological practice in the construction of contemporary scientific knowledge?, this study demonstrates that the literature review occupies a central position within the research process. Rather than representing an initial stage devoted exclusively to gathering previous studies, it constitutes a continuous intellectual practice that accompanies the formulation, development, and interpretation of scientific inquiry. Its significance lies in its capacity to integrate theoretical foundations, methodological decisions, and knowledge construction processes, thereby promoting a deeper understanding of the phenomena under investigation. In this sense, the literature review emerges as an exercise in critical analysis and systematic reflection that strengthens conceptual coherence, scientific rigor, and argumentative consistency while contributing to the production of contextually grounded and epistemologically robust knowledge.

One of the principal findings of this study is the recognition of the literature review as an inherently interpretive practice. From a hermeneutic perspective, engaging with scientific texts involves considerably more than identifying relevant information. It requires interpreting meanings, reconstructing conceptual frameworks, and establishing relationships among different intellectual traditions. Within this context, the literature review enables researchers to identify scholarly debates, conceptual tensions, and research gaps that guide the formulation of new research questions and broaden the understanding of the phenomena under examination. Consequently, the literature review becomes a process of meaning construction that extends well beyond documentary description.

The findings also demonstrate that the literature review performs a fundamental epistemological

function by facilitating a deeper understanding of the internal structure of scientific knowledge. Through the identification of analytical categories, theoretical perspectives, and methodological assumptions, researchers are able to examine how scholarly discourse is constructed, transformed, and contested within a particular field of inquiry. This capacity for critical reconstruction strengthens theoretical frameworks, refines the definition of the research object, and reinforces the conceptual coherence of scientific investigation.

From a methodological standpoint, the literature review serves as a guiding framework for research decision making. It enables the critical examination of methods, techniques, and research instruments employed in previous studies, the assessment of their strengths and limitations, and the identification of methodological alternatives that are consistent with the nature of the phenomenon under investigation. Consequently, the literature review contributes not only to methodological knowledge but also to enhancing scientific rigor and procedural coherence throughout the research process.

Another important conclusion concerns the diversity of literature review approaches. The coexistence of narrative, critical, integrative, problematizing, systematic reviews, and meta analyses demonstrates that there is no single legitimate way to engage with scientific literature. Instead, the selection of a particular review approach should be determined by the research objectives, the epistemological perspective adopted, and the level of analytical depth required. This methodological diversity broadens interpretive possibilities while allowing the literature review to be adapted to different research contexts and scholarly purposes.

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The study further concludes that the literature review incorporates an ethical dimension that is inseparable from scientific inquiry. Transparency in literature searching, the explicit definition of document selection criteria, accurate citation practices, and intellectual integrity constitute essential conditions for ensuring the credibility and academic legitimacy of research. Within this context, critical thinking plays a decisive role by enabling researchers to evaluate the consistency of scholarly arguments, challenge underlying assumptions, and avoid superficial interpretations of existing knowledge.

The principal contribution of this study lies in demonstrating that the literature review does more than organize and synthesize previously published information. It actively participates in the generation of new scientific knowledge. From an epistemological perspective, it contributes to the reinterpretation of analytical categories and the expansion of conceptual horizons. At the theoretical level, it strengthens the relationship between interpretation, critical analysis, and conceptual development. From a methodological perspective, it supports well founded research decisions while facilitating the identification of emerging research opportunities. Consequently, the literature review should be understood as a productive scholarly practice that enhances the explanatory, interpretive, and reflective capacities of contemporary scientific research.

In summary, the literature review represents an interpretive, critical, and methodologically grounded process that enhances analytical depth, conceptual coherence, and scientific legitimacy. Its greatest value lies not only in recovering existing knowledge but also in its capacity to reinterpret, problematize, and extend that knowledge toward new ways of understanding social reality and advancing contemporary scientific inquiry.

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8. Author Declaration

- Confirm originality of work
- St | ate no conflicts of interest